

# Let's get burning!

If you have an artistic bent and fancy trying out your drawing skills on wood, then this signature pyrography machine from Peter Child could prove to be just the ticket

**W**ell, in for a penny, in for a pound! Pyrography is another area where I don't have masses of experience, but this is one of those crafts where it's more about your artistic abilities as opposed to woodworking skills. I've been to plenty of shows where the demoing pyrographers let the kids present have a go at it, so I guess if they're able to do it, then surely I can? It'll be interesting to see how good my drawing skills are but not before having a look at the unit in general.

## A need for dexterity

First off, pyrography, like other art-based work where brush, pen or pencil is involved, requires a degree of dexterity, so any restrictions in this area will hinder free flowing movement.

Therefore the lightweight pen that holds the burning tips, along with a flexible cable to provide power to the tip in order to get it hot enough to do the burning, is certainly welcome; I found it as easy to hold and control as my favourite handwriting pen.

## Machine setup

The setup is very unobtrusive, comprising of

a small transformer and the pen along with a few spare burning nibs and a coil of wire to make your own designs, which is ideal for creating repeat patterns. The transformer has a carry handle with a small spring clamp alongside to store the pen when it's not in use, which is also handy for allowing it to cool down safely. The heat is controlled via a dial on the transformer with a maximum temperature of 1,100°C, so it will certainly do some serious burning if needed.

There's no indication of minimum operating temperature, nor any indicators on the transformer to show the actual temperature it is running at, but it's a 'suck it and see' type experience where you need to experiment with the dial to find the best position for what you are trying to achieve – defining lines, shading and so forth.

I also discovered that the heat required is also dependent on the timber you are working: light coloured, close-grain hardwoods are best such as maple, or a light coloured veneered ply is also a good choice and will allow you to get the best contrast from the burning work.

## Pen tips

The supplied pen tips are a wishbone pattern, held with simple slotted screw clamps, although there's no screwdriver supplied – but let's be honest, there can't be many

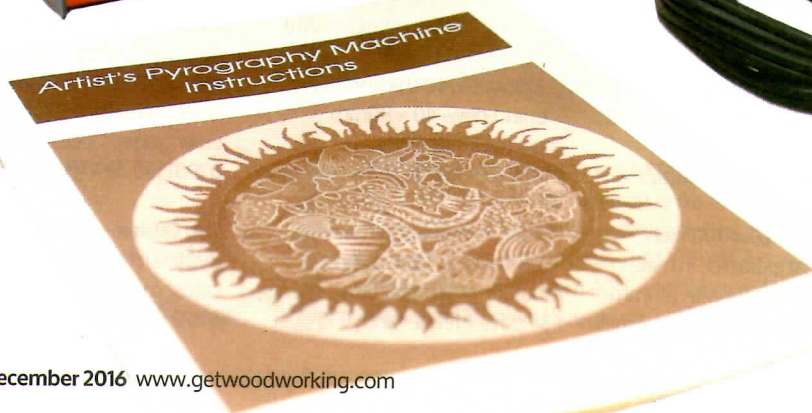
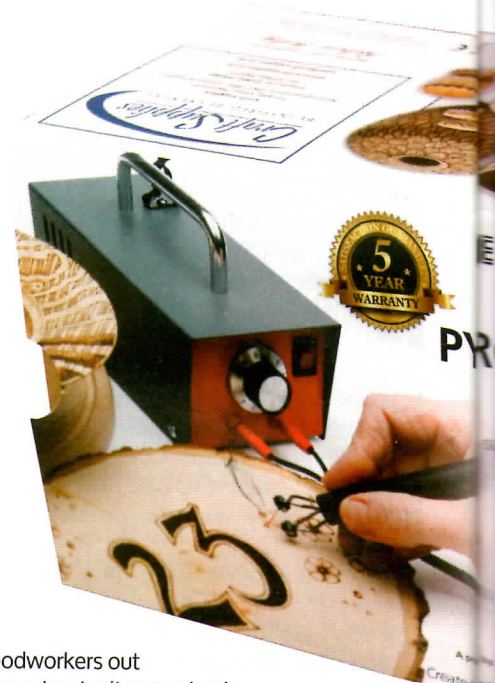
woodworkers out there who don't own a basic slotted driver, so I don't see this omission posing a problem.

The style of tip and thickness of wire used for the tip also affects the amount of burn at a set temperature, so a lower heat setting with a fine tip may burn too deeply, whereas a thicker gauge tip that doesn't heat so readily will offer more control, as will a flatter spoon-shaped bit for shading work. You can even make these yourself using a pair of needle-nose pliers and a small hammer to shape and flatten the tip.

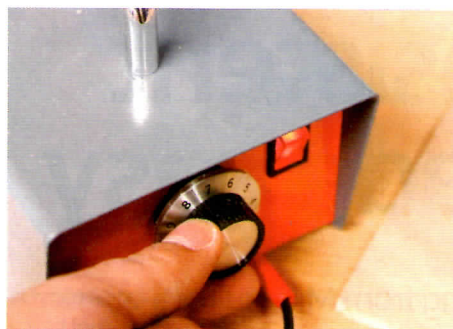
## In use

Having a dabble at freehand sketching first, once I got the temperature where I wanted it, the pen was easy to control and I didn't notice a 'hot' feeling in my hand while holding it, which was reassuring.

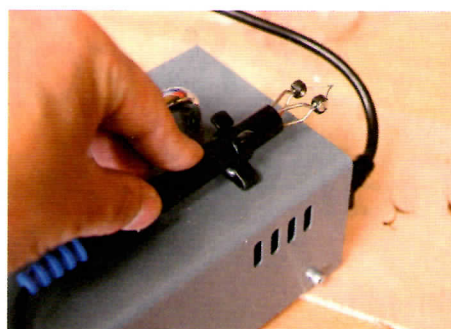
The tip can pick up the occasional spot of burnt debris and resin if the timber is of that type, and as pointed out in the supplied information brochure, I found that pine is one to avoid for fine tip work as the grain structure burns unevenly; although a wide or flatter tip can be used to good effect.



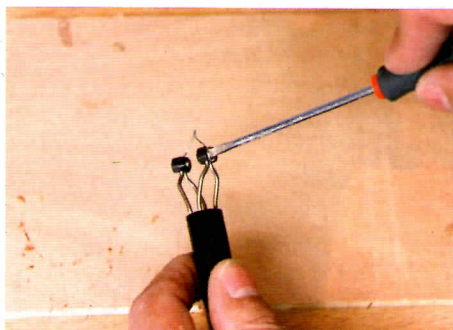




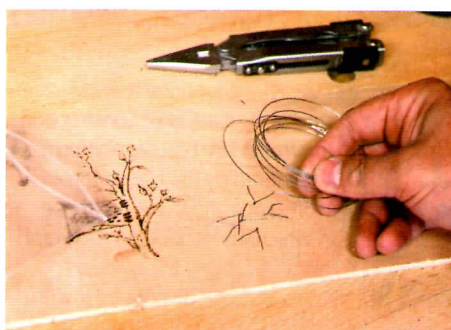
The heat output is controlled via this dial – note the separate on/off switch



A clip on the top of the machine holds the pen securely for storage or while cooling down



Burning tips are secured in simple screw clamps



The kit is supplied with a few tips and a coil of wire so you can have a go at making your own

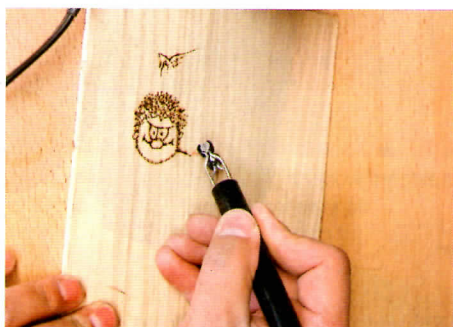
## Conclusion

Having never really had much of a chance to try my hand at pyrography, I did find it to be a very relaxing and easy activity, and if you have an artistic flair or are skilled at copying from existing pictures, then this little unit will prove very rewarding either from a relaxation point of view or as a little cottage industry side line for craft fairs. If I eventually get to retire, alongside my attempts at woodturning, I may have found a new hobby to while away my days! **GW**

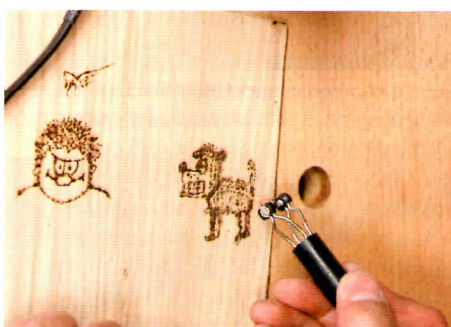
## Specification:

- ▶ **Maximum temperature:** 1,100°C
- ▶ **Output voltage:** 12V
- ▶ **Suitable wire gauges:** 22-26

- ▶ **Typical price:** £109.75
- ▶ **Web:** [www.craft-supplies.co.uk](http://www.craft-supplies.co.uk)



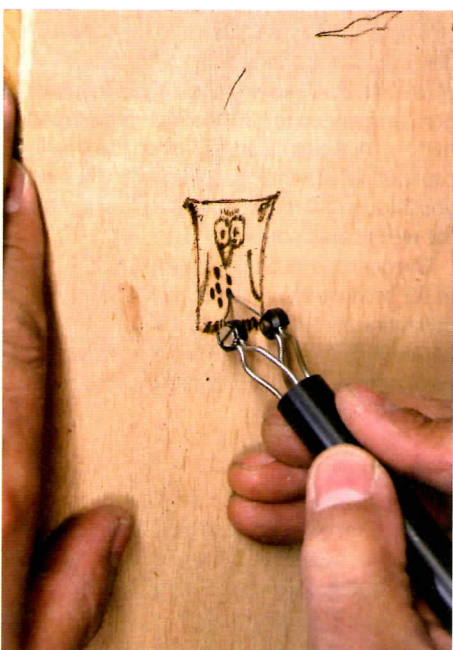
As a fully paid up member of the *Dennis the Menace* fan club, I guess I'd best pay homage...



... swiftly followed by a quick interpretation of his dog Gnasher

## THE GW VERDICT

- ▶ **PROS:**  
Very easy to use; flexible and free movement; variable heat is very controllable
- ▶ **CONS:**  
No temperature indicator
- ▶ **RATING:** 4.5 out of 5



I had a go at drawing an owl on a branch but he looks like he's got a broken beak...



... but I don't think he's worried; in fact he couldn't give a hoot! (I'll get my coat...)



Varying the tips, speed at which you work and the heat output allows shading and fine line work to be achieved