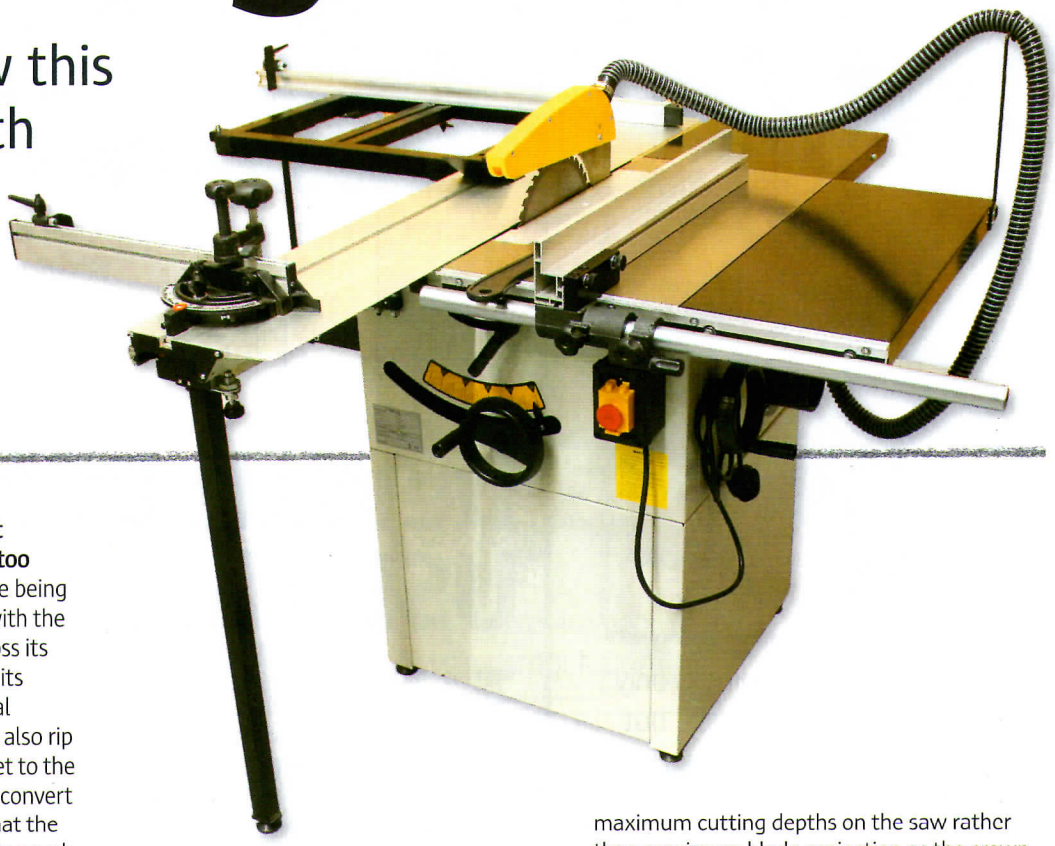
Ripping saw

As a budget saw this one is well worth considering if your workshop has the length to take it



If you are on the hunt for a saw that doesn't dominate your workspace too much, the W660 will impress. While being able to crosscut up to 1220mm wide, with the ability to convert a full sheet of ply across its width, it only takes up 1460mm across its tables without accounting for the actual crosscut fence for the carriage. You can also rip up to 620mm wide with the rip fence set to the right of the blade so it's a saw that will convert sheet stock economically no matter what the cut. Of course, if you are likely to be doing such crosscutting work then the overall width required will need consideration.

Ripping work is not so problematic, however, as the sheets will be predominantly on the saw itself, but of course, whatever you put in has to come out so you need to either have a long workshop, or be able to site the saw where the work can extend outside as needed.

The support offered by the tables is good; the main cast-iron table and its side table in steel are 650 x 620mm and behind the blade is a take-off table of 350 x 550mm. The latter offers good support at the end of the cut.

The crosscut carriage sits on top of the saw, tight alongside the blade, and this is usually seen as the most accurate type of construction as it doesn't drift like an offboard carriage can be prone to.

There are jacking adjusters to get the travel smack on as well, allowing the saw to be used as a precision fitting and dimensioning tool as well as a workhorse stock converter.

Converting stock

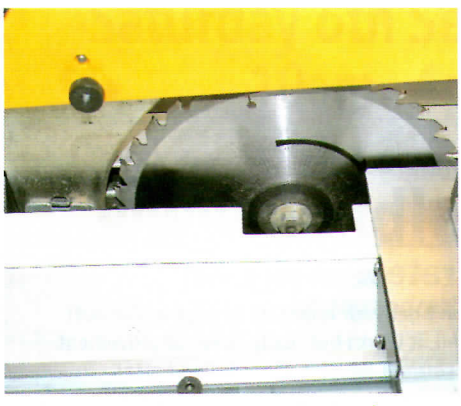
Stock conversion as a general rip saw is powerful enough, with my oak and sapele test stock dealt with at a decent rate without the saw labouring, even on a 70mm ripping cut in oak.

It's good to see Charnwood quoting maximum cutting depths on the saw rather than maximum blade projection as the crown guard sits lower than the top of the blade and takes into account this, as well as allowing for tooth gullet clearance.

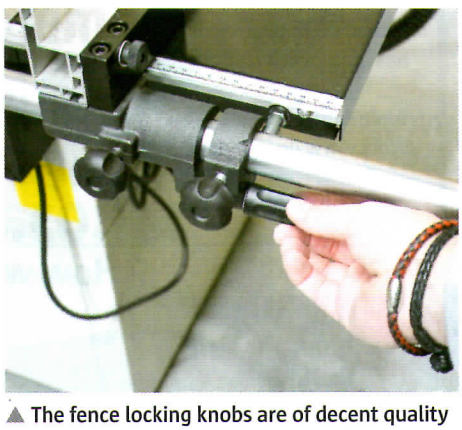
However, basic stock ripping is maybe not so prevalent as in days of old, and many of us look for a finer and more accurate cut directly from the blade so I'm glad to report that the saw fence is a solid affair that allows this.

The aluminium fence extrusion is fitted to a solid cast-iron shoe that, when combined with the smooth-running motor, ensures a fine accurate cut can be made.

A fine adjuster on the fence can shave a cut by a fraction allowing work to be fitted straight from the saw if needed. That said, though, it



▲ The carriage slides away to give good access to the blade for changing over



▲ The fence locking knobs are of decent quality and there's a micro adjuster to fine-tune the cut

▲ Blade adjustments are made with smooth-running wheels

would be worth upgrading the supplied blade if you are aiming more in this direction as the one supplied is a generic general-purpose one. Even so, a few compound mitre cuts on the oak gave pretty decent results, the intersection between the cuts crisp for a tight joint but with some breakout on the exit side of the cut.

Crosscut carriage

Any such compound work or subsequent repeat work is where the crosscut carriage comes into its own, and with a pair of crosscut fences supplied you can work short or long stock accordingly. Both fences can be set for angled cuts, and both re fitted with flipstops for repeat work.

On the shorter fence you can make repeat cuts up to 560mm long while the longer fence has a capacity of 1020mm using the stop. The shorter fence locks into the T slot on the aluminium carriage and has a hold-down post to secure the work while the longer fence fits to the 600 x 460mm steel outrigger frame, securing with a Bristol lever from the underside. There are also offset cam studs to set the fence position accurately at 90°.

The test model never had any scales on the outrigger to indicate angles, nor were there any tape scales on the mitre fences although there is a facility on the longer fence for a tape to be located.

It was a new demo machine though so this is likely to be included as part of the package as the rip fence arm has a similar extrusion with the scale fitted.

Blade adjustments are made with two smoothly running hand wheels, allowing easy setting of heights and bevels, complimenting the sweet-running fence and carriage.

Conclusion

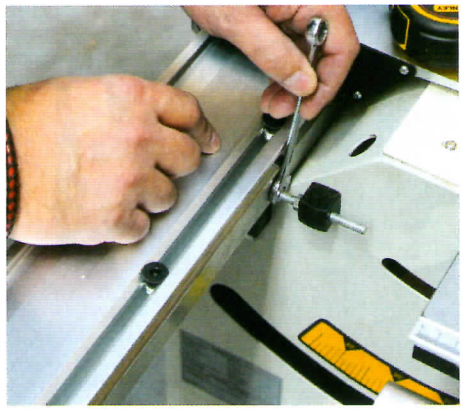
All this makes the Charnwood a very decent saw for the price band and workload it's aimed for. While there are a couple of budget-based adjustment knobs as per usual on machines coming in at the lower end of the spectrum, these are still better than many I've seen. Overall then this saw is well worth a look at level as it is solidly built with easy adjustments and is relatively compact for its capacities.

The Woodworking Verdict — Good

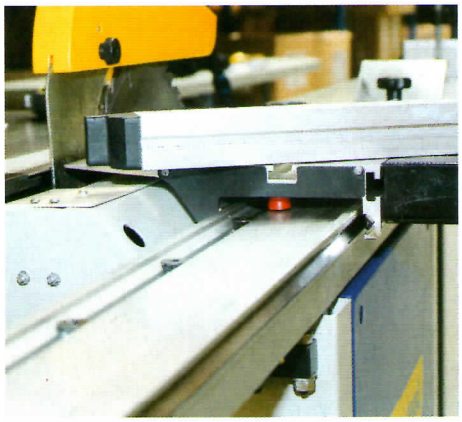
+ Compact size; good capacities; accurate carriage; micro adjust fence
– No scale on carriage fence; can be a little sticky to adjust carriage fence

Rating ★★★★½
Typical price: £1199.00
Rating: Trade
Motor: 2200W
Speed: 4000rpm
Cutting depth @ 90°: 75mm
Cutting depth @ 45°: 45mm
Blade diameter: 254mm
Web: www.charnwood.net

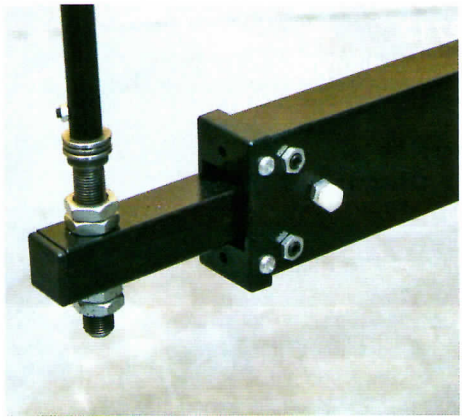
▲ The squaring frame can be repositioned on the carriage to suit the cut being made



▲ The carriage can be accurately aligned with the jacking bolts



▲ The carriage runs smoothly on bearings

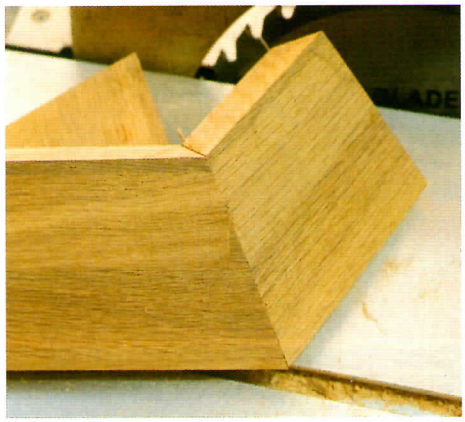


▲ The outrigger can be adjusted to level up the squaring table

▲ A clamping shoe is fitted to the smaller mitre fence

▲ Ripping oak was a cinch, with plenty of power available

▲ Deep ripping was equally successful, with no sign of stalling



▲ The supplied blade gave a decent joint line on this compound cut