

LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GROUP PROJECT

SHROPSHIRE WOODCARVERS

To celebrate London 2012 and the part played by Dr William Penny-Brookes of Much Wenlock in the revival of the Modern Olympics the Shropshire Woodcarving group agreed on creating a commemorative plaque to mark the occasion. After much discussion a design emerged consisting of a plaque made up of thirty relief carvings depicting the host cities of the modern Olympics. The structure to display the carvings consists of a three foot diameter disc that can be rotated vertically on an axis supported by a circular base. The disc consists of three concentric sections that open and turn independently on the axis to create the impression of a sphere representing the World. The carvings are mounted on both sides of the disc and arranged in chronological order.

The task of producing the plaque was shared by the group with thirty members carving a section each and our resident engineer constructing the basic structure and carving the lettering into the base. The wood selected for the project was lime and the individual arced sections were laser cut to shape and given an indented margin to create a uniform frame and depth to each carving. The precision cutting using a CAD program was necessary to ensure that the carved sections fitted together snugly onto the curved sections of the disc.

The carving process began with members drawing lots as to which city they were to carve. The next step was then for each carver to research their city and produce a sketch of how they thought the city could best be represented in their relief carving. To assist with this task a briefing session was used to offer guidance on appropriate content such as famous buildings, landmarks and national symbols. Some cities were far easier than others to represent in this way. Each completed sketch was then viewed and discussed for its content and lay out. This was followed up with a work shop on relief carving techniques for those new to this style of carving.

An unexpected and intriguing debate arose over the orientation of the individual carvings when placed on an upright circular mount. Should they be aligned to face into the centre of the disc like the Roman numerals on a clock face or arranged as the digits on an analogue clock. Members of the group expressed strong opinions as to how they visualised the orientation of the carvings and this, surprisingly, was divided largely on gender lines. In the end the decision on orientation had to be made by the project leader.

The finished carvings were treated with Danish oil and glued to the disc. The project from inception to completion took just over a year and as well as resulting in a splendid carving it provided the opportunity for the group to develop their relief carving skills and social bonding.