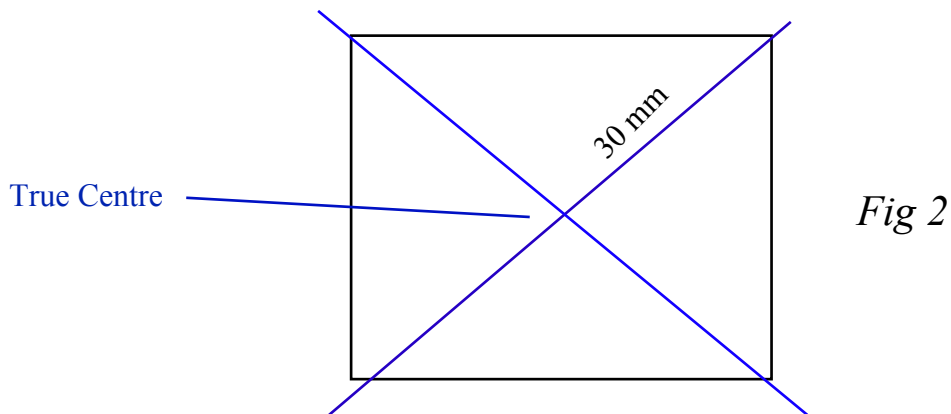
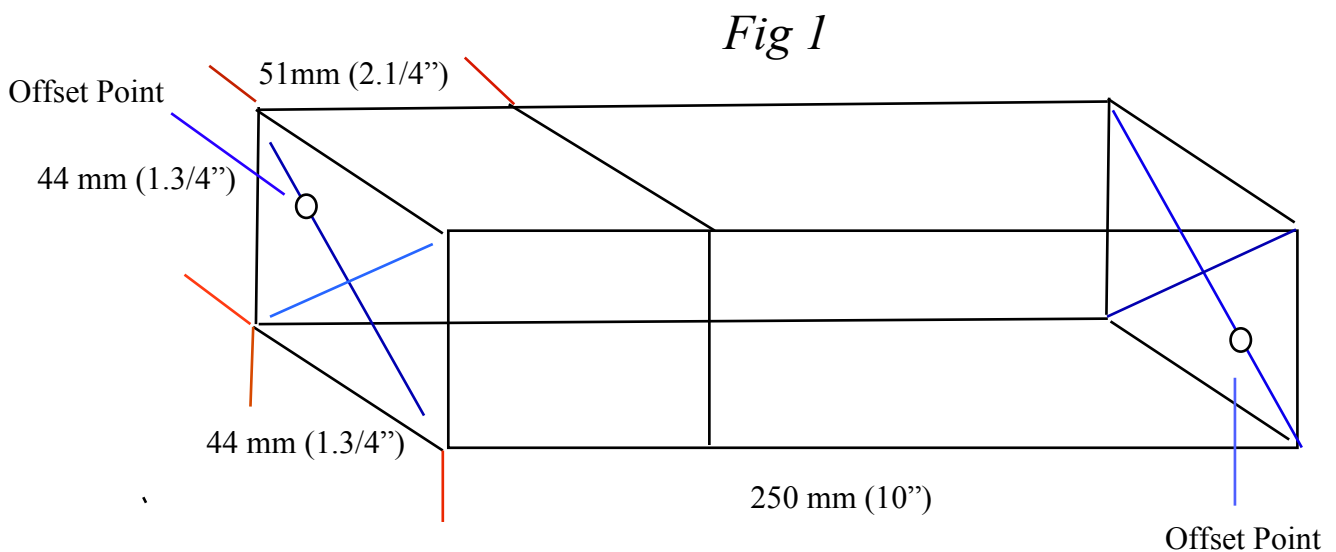


Cabriole Leg

By
Andy Lodge

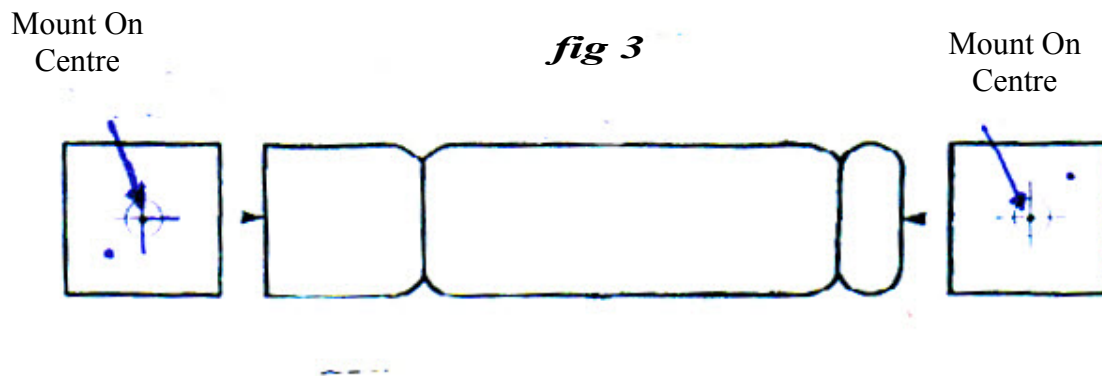
The dimensions given are for a foot stool or low coffee table etc. By increasing or decreasing the dimensions you can turn legs to fit almost anything.

The rectangular piece to the left of *fig 1* will take the mortises for the rails (These can be cut in before you turn the legs if you prefer.) by measuring the distance from the true centre to the outside corner and then halving it, you have the amount of offset required to turn a cabriole leg. *Fig 2*



From the true centre to the outside is 30 mm in this example, so 30 mm divided by 2 makes a 15 mm offset. Mark each end for true centre and the offsets, remembering to make the offsets diametrically opposed see *fig 1* and punch in the marks either with a centre pop or a bradawl.

Now mount on the true centres at both ends (see *fig 3*), using a skew, cut the shoulder of the rectangular piece you left for the mortises, make this cut as clean as possible (It will be difficult to clean up later) and make sure the cut goes all the way round. Using your roughing gouge, take the remaining part below the skew cut down to a cylinder.



Then turn a bead on the bottom using either a skew or a spindle gouge to get a bead that looks balanced. Measure the diameter of the cylinder and divide by 3, i.e., A 45 mm cylinder divided by 3 = 15 mm, this is then the width of the bead. Mark the width of your bead on the cylinder and machine in, try to make your bead as balanced as possible, because this is a prominent feature of a cabriole leg fig 3.

Now that you have machined your first leg to this stage, remove and machine the remaining legs to same stage.

Note:

If you think you can machine them all the way through to the end product individually and get them matching, think again. It is almost impossible, believe me, I've been there and got the "T" shirt.

Now comes the difficult bit.

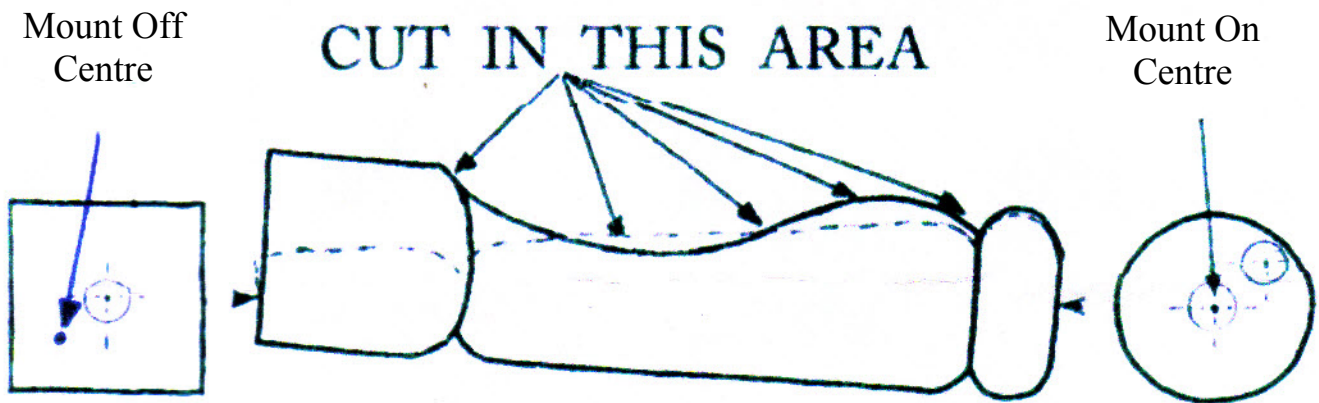
Place the end where the mortises are going in it's offset position. Pull the rest back and adjust so that it just clears the work piece and firmly lock it into position. Turn the lathe on with the speed set about 2000 revs. This may seem high, but the reason the revs need to be at this level is the air time. (Put simply, the time between the tool leaving a cut and starting the next one could be as much as $\frac{3}{4}$ of a revolution of the piece. The faster we have the lathe running, the less time the chisel is cutting fresh air. The better the tool efficiency. This leads to a better finish.

So getting back to the job in hand, using a spindle gouge (6 mm). Start your cut from the left hand side almost up to the square shoulder that you cut earlier for the mortises. The reason I do the cut from the left is to prevent breakout from unsupported wood, which you nearly always get when working the first cut from the right. Follow the rest of the shape, as shown in Fig 4. Taking care not to cut into the nice skew cut we did at the start.

Note:

Important. Machine all your legs to the same stage.

fig 4



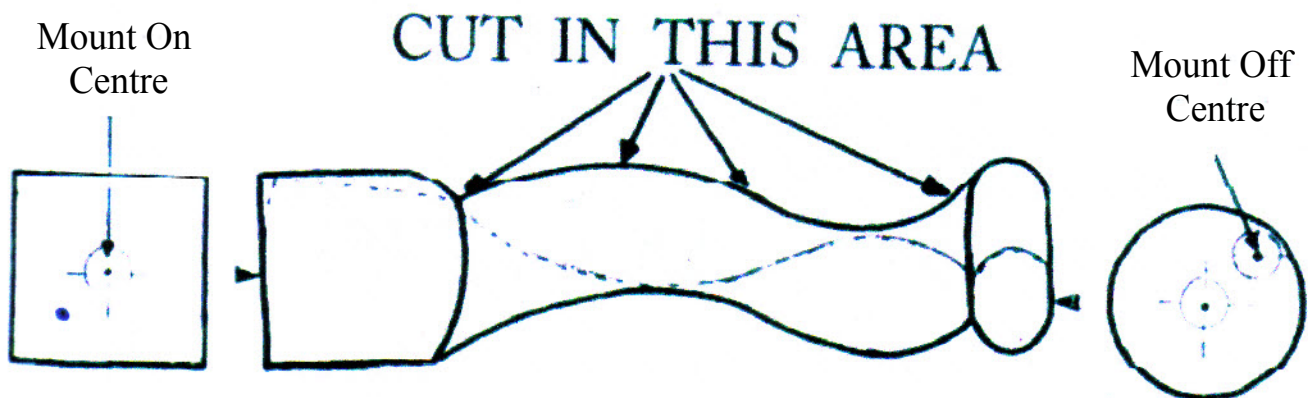
Now put the left hand side back onto its true centre and put the right hand side onto its off centre.

Note:

Never is the wood turned on both off centres at the same time.

Make your first cut again with the spindle gouge, but this time from the right hand side for the same reason as in the previous stage. Machine to the shape as shown in fig 5 blending the cut into the bead you formed in fig 3.

Fig 5



The more you make of these, the more you can alter the shape to suit your own style, by machining more in different areas than others. You can sand them to your required finish at this stage by putting them back into their different off sets or alternatively take them off the lathe and hand sand them.

I hope you enjoy this project. It is a little more difficult than normal spindle turning but a lot more satisfying.

Andy Lodge

Email andy.lodge@hotmail.co.uk