

Planing and thicknessing with your router

Is there no end to the router's talents? Apparently not, says **Derek Jones**

The router has got to be the most versatile machine in the workshop. Whether mounted in a table, attached to a trammel bar or used free-hand, there seems to be no end to its talents. Of course we're all used to using the router for moulded work, templating and producing joints, but how about some of the other tasks that we associate with larger machines?

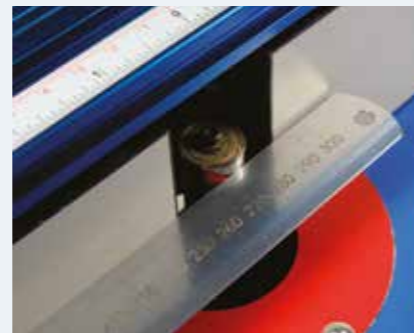
Working alongside Anthony Bailey, a man with a reputation for routing, I'm never that far away from a little extra router know-how when it comes to the virtues of this invaluable piece of kit, and it is with his guidance that I have put a couple of techniques together to prove once again that the router is undoubtedly man's best friend.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GMC/ANTHONY BAILEY

Wealden T2420 1/2
Surface Trim
3-Wing cutter

Tech 1 - edge trimming



Offset the outfeed fence in line with the bearing

One of the benefits of working with machines is the ability to produce multiple repeat components from a single setting. The router table is the perfect tool for the job with a straight bearing-guided cutter. The bearing's only function is to act as a point of reference for a straight edge to gauge the amount of offset for the outfeed fence, this distance being the amount of material removed in a single pass. A router table that allows adjusting the outfeed fence separately is the best option, but perfectly good results can be had by attaching a piece of veneer with double-sided tape to the face of the fence. In exactly the same way as a planer will level bowed stock, this technique will produce the same results. For a final pass to remove less than the thickness of the offset, place a strip of glossy paper – a magazine front cover for example – on the infeed fence.



Your router has just become a very convincing planer

Tech 2 - surface skimming

Frequent students of woodworking journals will be familiar with this technique, but in most cases it appears to be far more complicated than is necessary. Using the router to make a series of consecutive passes across the surface of a wide board, at a controlled depth, will achieve results only possible on, say, a speed sander or CNC. Key to success is the right choice of cutter – a three-winged bottom cutting bit with either rounded or chamfered corners is best.

Mount the workpiece in a cradle with blocks at strategic points to prevent it from moving and support it similarly from beneath. Using the router fence bars, mount a pair of skis that are long enough to traverse the width of the cradle either side of the cutter. The lower the router is set in the skis the more depth of travel you will have. Put



Blocks and packing are used to support the workpiece in the cradle



The cutter is set to skim the surface of the workpiece held in place in the jig below

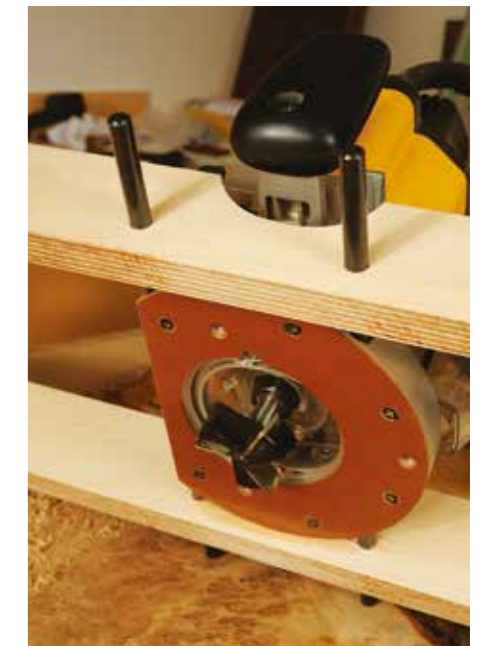
stops at each end to prevent you from coming into contact with the cradle sides as you go back and forth. The skis need to be thick enough to remain stable under the weight of the machine and may need some minor adjustments where handles protrude.

At the end of the cradle attach stops to the side rails to prevent you from de-railing and you're set to go. To make the going easy I applied some sanding sealer and then waxed the skis and rails. I found I could easily remove up to 2mm in a single pass as long as they weren't the full width of the cutter.

With one side flat you can flip the board over and adjust any packing so that its level and thickness match the board from the other face. A similar jig can also be constructed to work components that are too small to feed through a planer thicknesser. ■



The bars need to be a tight fit so no other fixings are required



The three-winged cutter extends below the level of the skis



Attach stops to the end of the skis



The router moves within a jig that runs up and down a fixed cradle