



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL T. COLLINS

Rustic coffee table

Michael T Collins makes a beautiful rustic-looking coffee table

I have long been a proponent of recycling wood and when a friend of mine said they wanted a rustic coffee table I jumped at the chance. I got to use some reclaimed barn boards to craft a new coffee table.

Making the top

1 The size of the tabletop is determined by the boards available. Here I have made the tabletop first and let the rest of the construction flow from this. Choose the widest and most stable boards. Before allowing your sharp tools to touch old wood, make sure the boards are free of any

foreign material. Where I live it is not uncommon to find nails, barbed wire and even the occasional bullet embedded in the wood. I suggest using a metal detector, wire brush, facemask and eye protection when cleaning old wood.

Planing the top

2 Start with a scrub plane or jack plane with a 255mm ground radius and a slightly aggressive iron, work diagonally across the face side of each board. Check for flatness as you go. Then switch to a jointer and plane the length of the boards, this will

Cut list

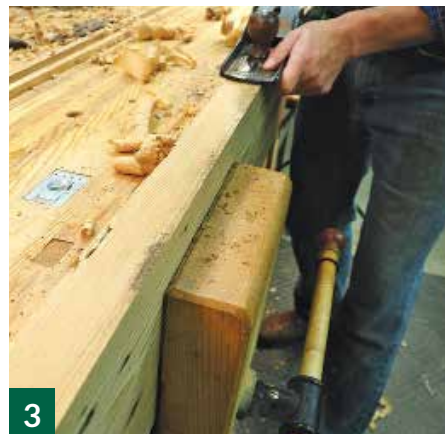
Top – three boards make a 45 x 610 x 997mm top
 Edging – enough to frame the top
 End rails – 2 @ 441 x 125 x 38mm
 Front rail (drawer) – 1 @ 832 x 150 x 38mm
 Back rail – 1 @ 1010 x 125 x 38mm
 Legs @ 4 (see profile diagram)
 Drawer guide – 610 x 20mm oak dowel
 Drawer bottom – 10mm x drawer depth
 Drawer sides – 70mm x drawer depth



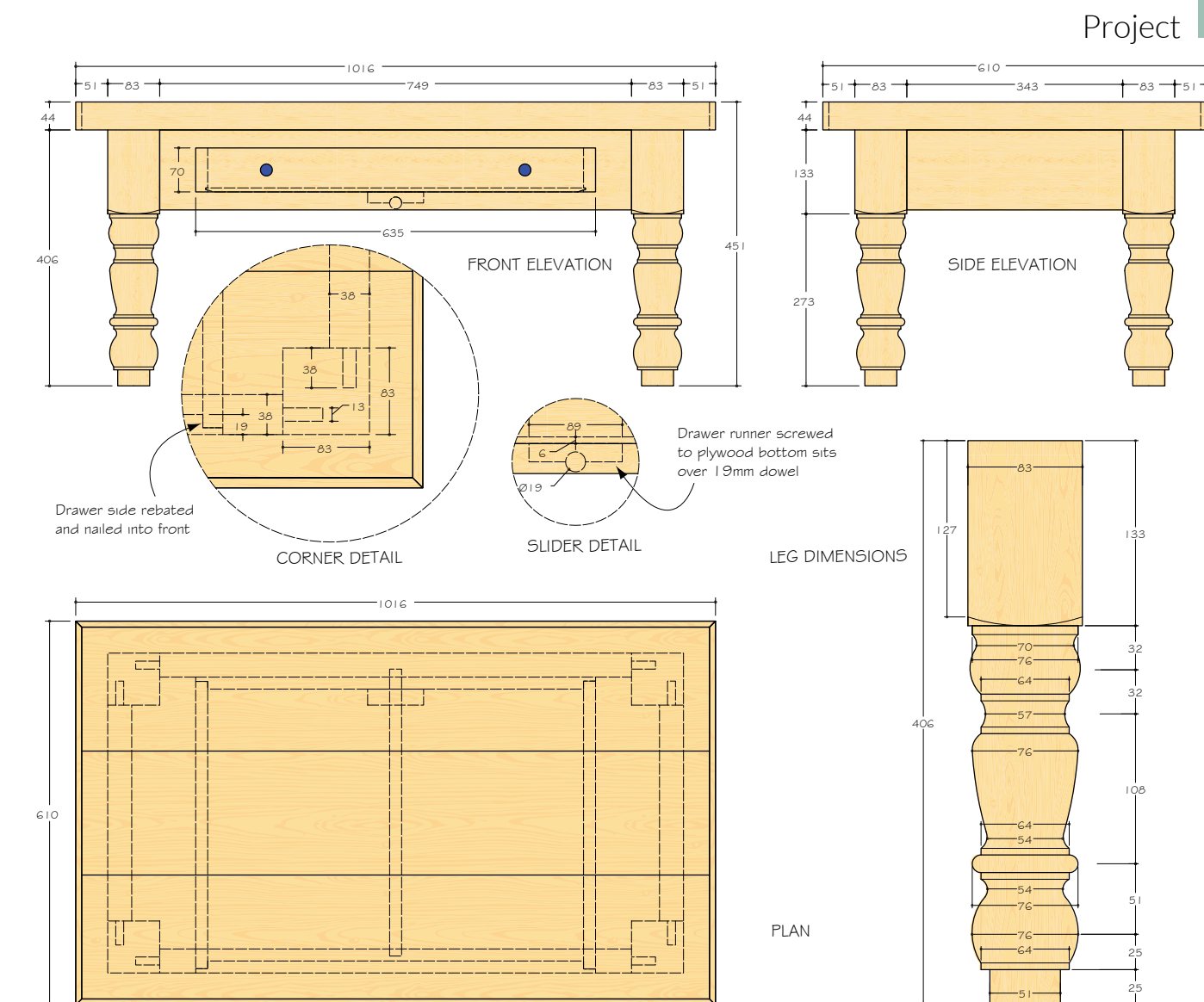
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remove the ridges. Continue until you are removing continuous shavings, indicating that the board is flat. Repeat for the other boards. The underside only needs a few passes with the Jack plane to bring the roughness down.

Jointing the boards

3 Put the boards together and try to match the grain. Mark these as the face side. Plane an edge at 90° to the face.

4 Check for flatness along the length of the wood. Be careful to avoid creating a convex surface – a slight concave surface is better and will provide a stronger ‘spring’ joint. Repeat for all the other boards.

Glue up

5 Spread the glue on one surface and then take the mating piece and create a rubbed joint by using a back and forth motion until friction prevents it from moving without force. In an ideal world your surfaces will match perfectly and there is no need

for clamps, just make sure that the boards remain flat and the mating joints are flush. I carry a ‘feeler gauge’ with me all the time – my index finger – it is amazing how accurate it is at discerning misalignment. If you created a spring joint you will need a clamp in the middle. Glue squeezed out can be removed with a paint scraper once dry. Don’t forget to wear eye protection! Once the glue is dry, repeat the planing process across all the boards. ➤



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The legs

6 I wanted a 'chunky' look to the legs, so laminated pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) construction boards together. Turn the legs using a template (see diagram). Make sure that the top/mortise section is at least the depth of the rails.

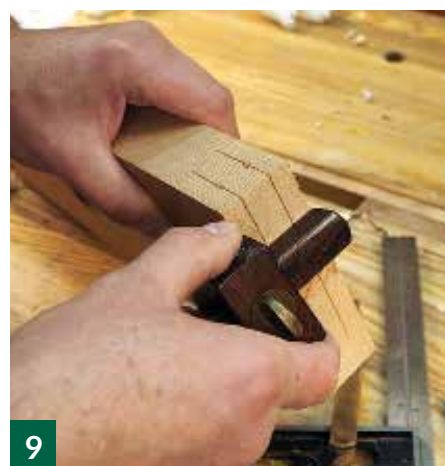
7 Once turned, look for the best faces and arrange them as they will be in the table. The pattern created on the legs from turning is 'wild', but these are going to be painted and isn't an issue. Mark where the mortises will go – this will avoid any errors...

8 Mark the tenon depth based on the mortise depth (38mm). Gang the rails and scribe the shoulder line on all side. Set the mortise gauge using the width of the chisel (16mm).

9 I make my tenons half the width of the stock. Adjust the mortise gauge so that the mortise is in the centre of the rail. Mark the tenons using the face side. Set the rails aside for now.

10 Take the mortise gauge and, without changing the setting, mark the location of the mortises. To chop the mortise, place the wood over a leg of your bench so that the chopping is well supported. You can draw a line or add a bit of tape on the chisel as a depth gauge. Note: If you want to add a reveal between rails and legs simply increase the gap between the mortise gauge fence and the first spur. The mortises are 100mm long. Full details on chopping mortises can be found in issue 1.

11 Take the side and back rails and cut the shoulders first. Create a 'V' groove on the waste side and using a bench hook and a tenon saw, saw down to the tenon scribe marks.



12 Place the rail in the vice at 45° and mark a small 'V' notch on the waste sides of the tenon line. Now rip down to the scribe marks. Rotate the wood in the vice saw at 45° using the previous kerf as a guide, now remove the triangle of wood in the kerf and the waste should fall away. Repeat on all sides and test fit. If need be, you can clean up with a chisel by paring towards the tenon. Note: The tenon is 100mm long and should be positioned so that when seated in the mortise the top of the rail is flush with the top of the legs.



13 Bevel the ends so that it won't snag on the fibres in the mortise.

Adding a drawer

14 Take the drawer rail and mark the drawer front section in the centre. Rip the top and bottom and then cut the centre section into three pieces with a draw front 635mm long. Clean up all the saw marks and glue the outside pieces together. Now cut the tenon on this piece as before. Plane the rail down to match the height of the other rails.



Glue up

15 Take a 20mm oak dowel (drawer guide) and place this in two holes drilled in the centre of the front and back rails. Apply furniture wax to reduce friction. Glue and clamp the base checking for squareness.

Making the drawer

16 This drawer is going to use simple nailed rebates. Take the drawer front and rip this in half – this will form the front and back of the drawer – plane the sawn faces.

17 Use a combination plane to cut a 6 x 6mm groove 6mm up from the bottom on all draw sides. ➤



18 The back panel rests on the drawer bottom and so the section below the groove can be removed. Mark the rebate size 10mm on the end grain with a marking knife and remove with a saw and chisel.

19 Position the drawer side and glue and nail together.

The drawer bottom

20 This is made from a piece of 10mm ply, the edge is chamfered to slide into the groove. Apply glue to the front edge. Test fit the drawer and plane accordingly. Make a 'C' shape runner and screw to the back of the drawer bottom.

Attaching the top

21 Wood moves with the humidity, so secure the top to the base with 'pockets' that will allow the top to 'float'. Using a 20mm gouge make two evenly spaced pockets on each of the rails, then drill a 3mm hole from the 'pocket' through the top of the rail, elongate the top so that the screws can 'wiggle' back and forth. Use a washer and screws to secure the top.

The finish

22 For the top apply one coat of Danish oil – we want this table to have some protection and yet continue to develop character over the years. Give the legs one coat of blue, followed by one coat of cream milk paint. Over time the cream will wear through revealing the blue, giving the table a 'shabby' antique worn paint look – you can speed the process with sand paper. Add a 10mm boarder, nailed to the top, to even up the rough edges I added crystal drawer pulls. And there you have it – barn boards upcycled to produce a very nice rustic coffee table that would grace any home. ■



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Supplier list

Milk paint: www.milkpaint.com

Barn boards:

www.Barnwoodaddicts.com

Michael T. Collins – Custom

Woodworking:

www.sawdustandwoodchips.com

@sawdustandwoodchips