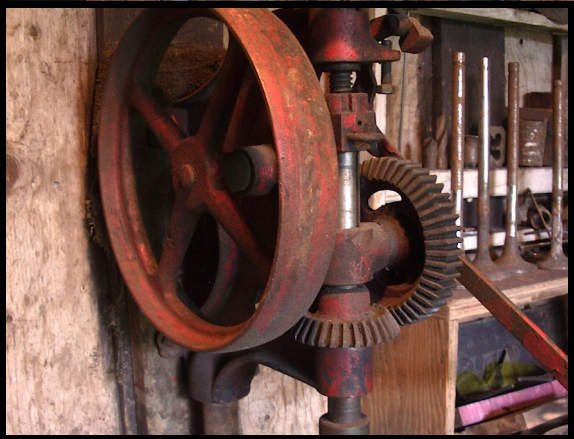
Errington, BC

"Materials are the most perfect medium for the experience which shall illuminate the soul and ripen the mind; for they oppose your effort, and against ***that beneficent and lovely resistance*** *you work out your ideas, with patience, with forethought, with skill, with pride, with self-revelation."*

–Edward Yeomans, Shackled Youth, 1921




CWT SP
JD
ENGLAND












BLACKSMITH
HAND FORGED
IRON WORK
FARMALL

With ancestral roots in Japan, Tamaki's art and outlook are informed by the rich culture and aesthetic of thousands of years of creative history.

Since her move to Vancouver Island, one of the themes of Tamaki's work has been the embrace of the soft organic flow introduced by the human touch in hand work, contrasted sharply by the cold geometry and mechanized symmetry that our industrialized eyes grow weary of.

The style of her work is often reminiscent of Japanese Edo era currency and creative applications of her works have ranged from oversized buttons for fashion and fibre arts to netsuke, jewellery, and accent pieces.

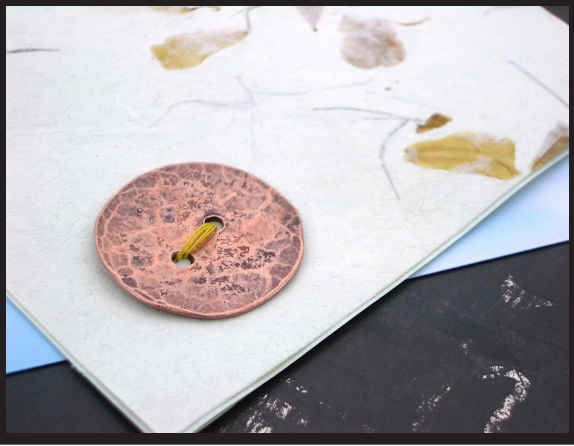
Warm and weighty, her unique metal buttons are as much tactile as visual with their hand hammered textures. Created individually in limited numbers, polish and patina play off one another in reclaimed brass, copper, and aluminum. Each work of art begins as a piece of scrap metal and is annealed, cut, filed, sanded, forged, and polished to reveal beautiful subtleties of pattern and colour. *info@islandblacksmith.ca*

Handmade Metal Buttons

How A Button Is Made

~from reclaimed copper water pipe~

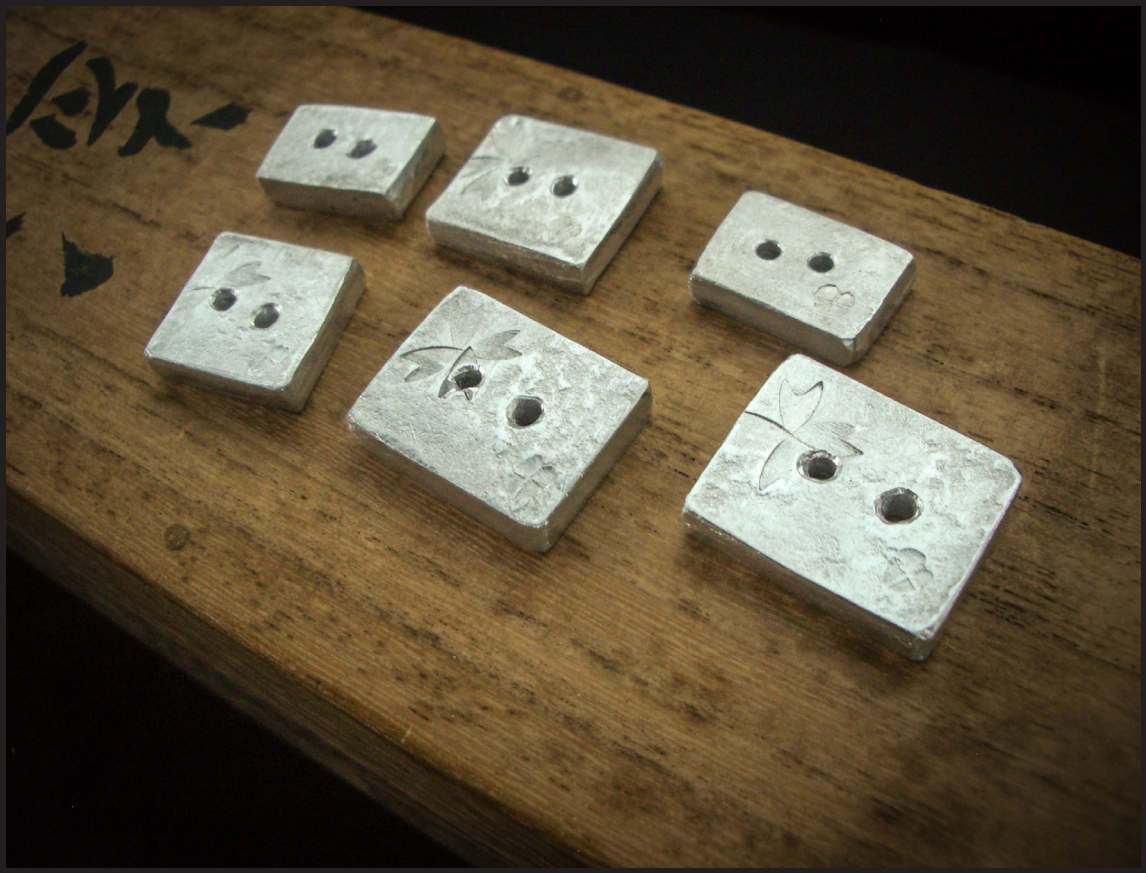
(in six easy steps.)



How A Button Is Made

~from reclaimed scrap aluminum~

(in five easy steps.)



Trained as a blacksmith in Amish country, Dave has been making knives since 1990. His work brings together a fusion of cultural and artistic styles from his experiences in Africa, North America, and Asia.

While the style of his ornamental ironwork is rooted in the western blacksmithing tradition, his bladesmithing methods and designs draw heavily on the Japanese tradition. Clean, simple lines, natural materials, and beauty found from within function are characteristics of his work.

Highlighting the potential for transformation in discarded objects, most of his raw material is reclaimed from sources such as worn out tools, farm machinery, and sawmill equipment. Even the softwood charcoal that fuels the forge is hand made in small batches from scrap wood.

Working from his studio in central Vancouver Island, Dave hand forges high carbon steel into blades, clay tempering them with the Japanese process. Mounting the finished blades using time tested methods, he collaborates with local woodworkers to create art knives that are often spoken for before they are even finished. *dave@islandblacksmith.ca*

Hand Forged Knives







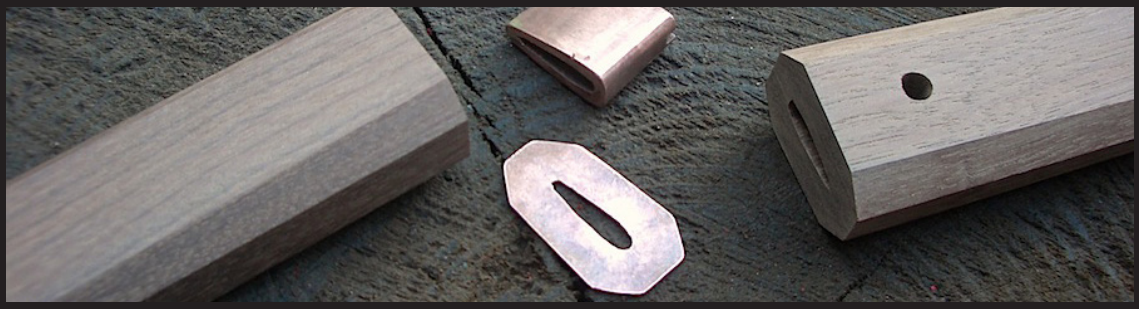




How A Knife Is Made

~from a reclaimed harrow tooth~

(a piece of farm equipment.)



What is Charcoal?

Charcoal is wood that has had almost everything but the carbon removed from it, basically it is wood-shaped carbon. These are the black bits you can find the next morning after a campfire—don't throw them away, they burn very well! Charcoal burns hot and clean because the water, sap, and other substances in the tree have been taken out by heating. The way to remove these impurities without burning up the charcoal is to heat the wood inside a container without oxygen.

Why do we use Charcoal?

For the last couple of hundred years most blacksmith shops in the west were run on mineral coal because it was cheaper, easier to store, and more readily available than charcoal. For thousands of years, though, charcoal was the fuel of choice and to this day in Japan and many other countries blacksmiths and swordsmiths still use softwood charcoal for their work. Pine is the preferred wood for bladesmiths. Charcoal is very clean burning and is healthier for the 'smith and the steel.

Why do we make our own Charcoal?

We like the idea of diverting wood scrap from the waste stream and creating something useful with it. To our knowledge, no one in North America is selling softwood charcoal so making it is the only source for now. Barbeque charcoal is usually made from hardwood and doesn't provide the proper heat for most forge work. Creating a useful fuel source from scrap is a fulfilling task and working with softwood charcoal is a pleasure that every 'smith should experience.

Raw Material

The raw material for our charcoal is short pieces of construction and mill waste wood. These scraps of wood normally end up in the landfill or burn pile unless one of our local construction friends calls us to pick them up. These pieces work perfectly for us because they are softwood, clean, dry, bark-free, nail-free, and short enough to fit in the charoal retort without sawing. Thanks to all who continue to provide scrap wood for this project.

The Retort

The charcoal cooker is called a retort. It is a steel container that closes out as much air as possible while the contents are heated. The one in the photos is made from two sizes of steel drum, some sheet steel, and some steel gas pipe and fittings. Charcoal wood goes in the small drum in the centre of the combustion chamber and a fire is lit underneath in a brick fire pit with an air grate.

Cooking

We feed the fire under the retort with more scrap wood until the wood inside gets hot enough to start producing wood gas. Wood gas looks like white smoke and is the stuff you don't want to get in your eyes around the campfire. The heated wood gas comes out the pipe in the bottom of the retort and becomes part of the fuel for the fire. Oxygen cannot enter the retort to burn up the charcoal because there is a constant flow of wood gas coming out. Unlike smoky traditional charcoal making, this process is very clean burning and smokeless for almost all of the burn cycle.

Cooling

After the charcoal retort has been cooking for an hour or so, the wood gas will start to diminish and the fire will begin to die down. If the retort is opened while the charcoal is still hot, it will burst into flame and all of the charcoal will turn to ash. It is important to keep it sealed as much as possible and let the retort cool completely before opening it up.

Cutting Et Sorting

The next morning we open the retort and check the contents. The wood has turned into shiny black charcoal and is very light and brittle sounding when tapped. It takes about an hour to chop and screen it into one inch cubes and store it in metal containers awaiting use in the forge. One retort load might yield enough charcoal to work for a few days in the blacksmith shop. In Japan there is a saying that it takes three years to learn to properly and efficiently chop charcoal for the forge.

IslandBlacksmith.ca