

A Cautionary Tale.

I recently came by a discarded woodworker's vice. (*Stop sniggering at the back there!*) When I mounted my old one under the bench two or three years ago, squatting, reaching and screwing upwards proved such a faff that, even though this one is a bit chunkier, I couldn't face repeating the contortions - so I opted to fit this acquisition to the Workmate, instead.

For goodness' sake, how long does it take to drill four holes and pass four bolts through them?

Longer than you'd think. The expression 'mission creep' comes to mind.
(*Now look! I won't warn you a third time.*)

Before starting on the job it seemed sensible to clean off the superincumbent grime. This disclosed that a slot head screw was not fully driven home through the front jaw, so the wood it was supposed to secure was flapping loose. Apply screwdriver, attempt to finish the job (*Nnnngh!* Thank you, Nigel!) and fail. Having swapped the screw and its right hand counterpart I still couldn't get anything more than half way through the hole. Inspection disclosed a burr therein. How long had it awaited two seconds' attention from an appropriate drill? Way now clear, the wood could be securely attached.

My dismantling and wiping revealed that the rear jaw's wood was secured by bolts rather than wood-screws, and one proved to be markedly shorter than the other. I couldn't see daylight, so assumed that the vice's previous owner must have broken that bolt in the tapped hole. In the event a drill I'd hoped would weaken the snapped-off portion of bolt simply, dislodged many years' accumulation of crud. (Is that the correct technical term?) Sherlock Holmes was right: - '*Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth.*' It was just a shorter bolt!

Once the vice looked less neglected and wasn't so disagreeable to handle, I finally set about the mounting holes.

'At this point I must have lost my presence of mind . . .' (Gerard Hoffnung.)

It seemed obvious to use the vice as its own template, align the whole thing inverted on the top of the Workmate, drill one hole and pass a bolt through it before drilling the other three. After that it should be a simple matter to hang the vice below the top plank of the Workmate and fit suitable bolts and washers.

'You silly, twisted boy!' - (Hercules Grytpype-Thynne, by Spike Milligan.)

My cunning plan would have worked, had the vice's mounting holes been arranged in a rectangle. I gave up maths after O level so my geometrical vocabulary runs out at rhombus: if, indeed, there is a name for the asymmetric quadrilateral (there!) of which my nice new holes mark the corners. You're way ahead of me: and I had constructed a mirror image of the disposition I needed, so only two holes at a time would line up when I put the vice in its intended place.

'And write down all the new words.' - (any primary school teacher.)

I now did what I'd hoped to avoid, and balanced an inverted Workmate on a stool before putting the vice where I thought it should go, (*Watch it!*) and marking some more holes on the underside of the top plank.

'I can drill holes!' - (Major Dennis Bloodnok, by Spike Milligan again.)

This time my scheme was successful, but because the holes in the vice's under-side are not centred in their respective lugs the fun wasn't over. Fortunately the little tin - we all have one - at the back of the bench yielded suitable washers of appropriate-but-different sizes.

'You couldn't make it up!' - And I didn't

Ian Macdonald