



<http://www.hectorturner.com/halloween/celtic.html>

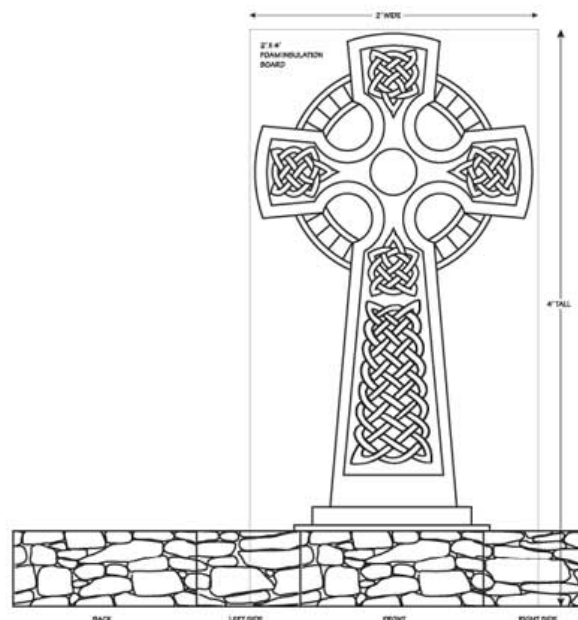
Projects: Celtic Cross Tombstone

The one big tombstone I'll tackle this year will be a large celtic cross. I've wanted to do one of these for a while and got a better foam cutting tool to be able to cut out the intricate designs but in the end mostly stuck with the wood-burning tool I'm familiar with.

I've been told many times how detailed my tombstones are but I have to respond that I really don't think my tombstones are all that detailed (with the exception of some of the newer ones like the celtic cross) but I guess what I try and do differently from most is to really make them look old and weathered. I don't really worry about filling all the cracks and getting it perfectly smooth, I have several foam cutters but use a wood burning tool for 90% of all my carving. I roughen the edges and add lots of cracks and gouges. The mottled paint job I do with the sponge also helps to make them look more detailed than they really are. A lot of the home made tombstones are too perfect looking and to my eye that's what makes them look fake. Some people favour the fleck stone spray paint but the texture and the paint splatters are too small to be seen at a distance during the day and a night under haunt lighting become invisible.

Design

The Celtic Crosses made by Merlin at [Haunters Hangout](#) and [Casa de Sade](#) were of great inspiration and helped a lot in planning it out. I found several images and designs for celtic crosses on the internet and came up with a design that incorporated several that I liked. Here is my final design...



If you like the design and would like to make one for yourself here is a PDF for download. You will have to tile it to print and then tape the sheets together to get a full size printout. (I've since been told that getting the file to print properly on a PC is an issue - I'll see if I can't re-save the file as many separate sheets that when taped together gives the complete design.)

Template & Cutting

The tombstone is designed as 5 layers of foam 2' x 4' in size. I use the 1" thick boards laminated together as I can get them with a butt edge, meaning there is no indent to cut off. With the boards that are ship-lapped you end up losing at least 1" in width. I would recommend using the denser blue or pink insulation boards over the white bead board as I think you will need the structural strength with all the intricate cut outs. Here is the parts list if you will:

- 3 - 2' x 8' 1" thick foam insulation boards
- 1 - 2' x 8' .5" thick foam insulation boards
- 1 - 4" Styrofoam craft ball
- 1 - Decorative drawer pull
- Foam-safe contact cement such as LePage's Pres-tite Green Contact Cement
- Construction adhesive such as LePage's No More Nails or Loctight PowerGrab
- Scrap Plywood
- 2 - 12" nails

In order to make it easier to lay out the design on multiple foam boards without having to draw it out by hand each time I took the time to make a full size printout and a cardboard template. I used the template to trace the various outlines and then when cut out they should match up better with less filling/sanding necessary. Here are some shots as I lay out the first couple boards with the template. To make the cross there will be 2 boards with the full design to make the inner circle and 2 boards with just the cross cut out. The .5" board is cut for the cross and then the centre is cut out to make a raised border.



I traced the pattern using a wood-burning tool to just melt the surface of the foam without burning through the paper too much. One thing of note, I found it works better if you print out your pattern on slightly thicker paper than your average bond paper. Also, if you can use an ink-jet printer rather than a laser printer as the laser toner is meant to react to heat and tracing it with the wood-burner is more difficult as the toner tends to stick and drag.

Once traced, you can begin to carve out the design. I did all the intricate carving before gluing the sheets together. The idea was that one board is lighter and easier to handle and also if I really messed it up I could start over on a new board without wasting everything. Make sure you do this with proper ventilation - the fumes are pretty bad and will give you a headache. I used a small fan to blow fresh air at my face which helped tremendously. Here are some in-progress shots...



Assembly

When everything is carved and ready to assemble I started by applying foam-safe contact cement to both sides of the pieces to be glued. With contact cement you have only one chance to get it in the right position so enlist a helper if you can. The 2 boards with the full design including the inner circle get glued together and then the 2 boards with just the cross get glued front and back to that. The thinner outline board goes on the front. I actually carved it down as I thought the full .5" was too thick and wanted a thinner profile. With all the main boards assembled I cut scrap foam to make up a base for the cross which was carved to look like fieldstone. A Styrofoam craft ball was cut in half and glued to the centre of the cross to give added 3-D relief. Take a look at the pictures below to see how it all went together...



Finishing, Painting and Final Detailing

The wood-burner was used to add cracks and surface detail. I then trimmed all of the edges using a sharp knife and then used indoor/outdoor latex spackling to fill in any ridges/cracks and make it look like one piece of stone as opposed to several layers of foam. I did sand the spackling a bit but didn't really worry about getting a perfectly smooth surface as I want it to look old and chipped. The paint will hide many imperfections as well.

I painted the cross using the same method as my other tombstones which I detailed [here](#). I took it one step further and dry-brushed a light brown all over. I really liked the look of this - it really upped the realism of the tombstone. I plan on doing the same to more of the older stones when they are pulled out of storage in October. Final details included some moss and fake ivy which was glued down as if it was growing up the side of the cross giving it an time-worn and overgrown look. I didn't mention it earlier but I used a decorative kitchen drawer pull I got at Home Depot for accent on the centre ball. Here are a number of pics showing the completed celtic cross...



Projects: Pillar Tombstone

In addition to the Celtic Cross I wanted to do another tombstone that would get away from the standard slab headstone. I had seen a great how-to on using cardboard tubes for pillars on the [Brewster Yard Haunt](#) web-site and wanted to do one of my own. I had gotten the creepy woman bust on sale at Michael's last year and thought it would make the perfect topper. I even went so far as to envision the pillar labeled "LENORE" and have a raven perched next to the bust.

For the base I lucked out and found a wooden plant stand for \$2 at Goodwill. It would make a good and solid base so my pillar shouldn't topple from being top-heavy. I attached a square piece of plywood to the bottom and built up an extended base for it from foam. Scrap baseboard molding was added to give it a bit of architectural flair.

The pillar was a thick cardboard tube I had on hand. Others have used cardboard cement forms with success. I cut a disk out of scrap foam to fit inside the bottom of the tube and glued it flush. I then screwed and glued metal angles braces to the bottom of the tube to strengthen the connection between the pillar and the base. The pillar was then screwed and glued to the top of the base using Gorilla Glue. I had cut a circle out of a square of 1" foam to fit down over the tube to cover the metal angle braces. It didn't quite cover them so I cut down foam balls and glued in place. I had originally thought to permanently attach the top to the pillar but changed my mind to allow for removal during moving & storage space inside. This should minimize damage to the fragile but heavy bust. To do this I cut another disc to fit the inside of the cardboard tube and was glued to the bottom of the topper to create a plug that would allow the topper to sit securely on top of the tube but be removable. To ensure the bust would stay attached to the topper I drilled through the plywood and base of the statue and used a heavy-duty toggle wing wall anchor along with a generous amount of construction adhesive.

A layer of drywall spackling was troweled onto the cardboard tube to offer some protection and make it look more realistic. The whole pillar was then painted and weathered to match the paint job on the store-bought bust and make it look like it is all one piece of stone.



Projects: Other Tombstones

I'm doing up a few other tombstones as well to fill in the gaps and in the case with a few of them to tie in with the backstory now that I've named the haunt Blackstone Cemetery. I'm developing a whole legend of the cursed Blackstone Estate and a few ill-fated family members will be included in the cemetery.

For this first one the size was determined by the scraps of foam I had laying around that I wanted to use up. To make it a bit more interesting and make up for the smaller size I added some architectural elements to it. The fluted columns at the side are pool noodles that were cut flush on one side and glued on and topped with styrofoam balls. The carved ornate flourishes are from Home Depot.

More to come...



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