Tooling a Celtic Knot Coaster

Richard Harber

You're starting with a 4"x4" piece of vegtan leather that already has a celtic knot marked in the leather, and your tools.

(1) Wet (case) your leather. Use your sponge to wet the leather. Watch as the water absorbs into the leather and as it is absorbed add more. Your goal is to get the fibers wet through about half the depth of the leather. Don't soak the leather. Once the absorption rate slows, set your leather aside so the water can spread through the fibers.

(2) Take a good look at the pattern, paying attention to the pattern of the large lines going over and under each other forming a knot.

(3) Once your leather has starting returning to its original color, but still feels cool to the touch, use your swivel knife to cut the pattern into the leather. When one of the knot's strands is passing under another strand, start your cuts near where the strand goes under the other stand and pull away from the intersection. Photo 1 shows the cut pattern.

(4) Use your beveler to bevel the outside of each strand. For each "intersection," be sure to bevel the top strand first. When beveling, always strive for a smooth bevel line without tool marks. Also, remember to keep your beveler vertical (perpendicular) to the leather. (Note: In a different style called Inverted Carving, you would bevel the inside of the strands, except where the top strands cross over the lower strands.) Photo 2 shows the coaster after it has been beveled.

(5) Once you've completed your beveling, use your beveler in your hand (no mallet) to rub your bevel lines smooth and reduce the halo left by the beveler. You can also use your beveler to round over the edges of the strands. You will notice small areas between the strands.

(6) Use your background tool to lower and texture these areas to help define the strands and give the illusion of more depth in the strands.

(7) Photo 3 shows the coaster once it is finished.

Photo 1--After cutting the pattern

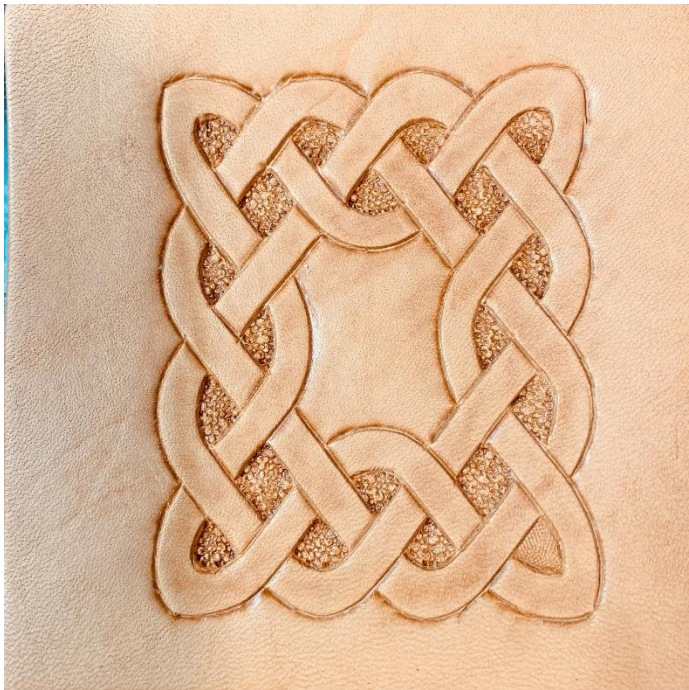*Photo 2 -- After initial bveling, but before eliminating the "halo"*

Photo 3 -- Completed coaster after smoothing and backgrounding