

Making a Graeme Priddle-style high-powered woodburner

Phil Roybal



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When Graeme Priddle visited SVW, he talked about a heavy-duty woodburner he'd built from a car battery charger—something that could keep up with the rapid-fire burning he uses on pieces such as the one above.

I built the burner Graeme described, and used it on this month's President's Challenge. The unit is much more powerful than my Detail Master, at about 1/4 the cost. It takes some getting used to, and can easily burn up woodburning tips if cranked up, but it's got a lot to recommend it. Here's how I made it.

I got a 10A, non-electronic DieHard Manual Battery Charger for

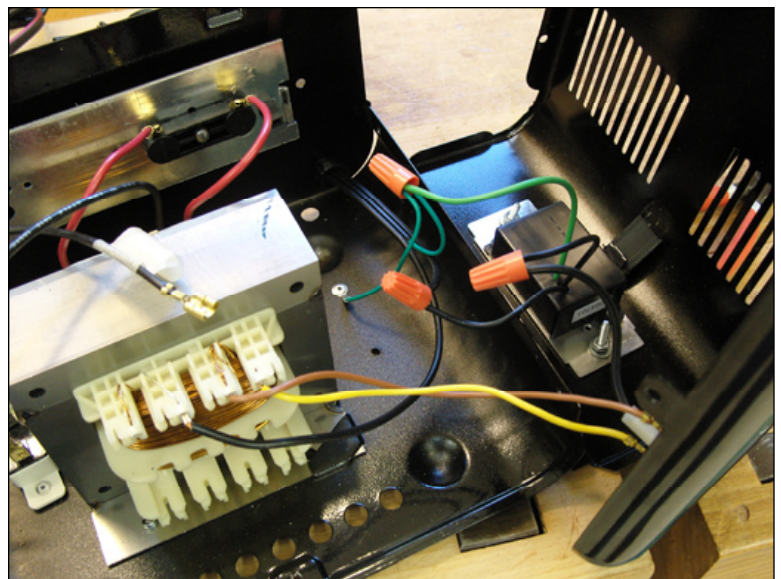


about \$45 at Sears. I also got an electronic light dimmer switch for a few dollars at OSH.

With the charger unplugged, I opened its case (five sheet metal screws) and found where the power cord came in.

One wire of the cord went directly to a transformer (on the left in the picture above). The other wire went to a 2A/10A range switch on the front panel.

I cut that second power cord wire and inserted the lamp dimmer switch. The dimmer has two black wires and a green one. I connected one black wire to the entering power cord wire, and the other to the part of the power cord wire which I cut off—the wire that led to the 2A/10A switch. I connected the dimmer's green wire to a pair of green ground wires running to a terminal on the steel case of the charger. I made



all connections with electrical pig-tails: those orange caps you see in the picture above.

Next I drilled holes in the side of the case to mount the dimmer and allow its control knob stem to stick out. Then I closed up the case.

Finally, I cut off the battery clips and attached their wires to a woodburner handpiece. I was done! Total time—about 15 minutes.

With the front panel switch on 2A, and the dimmer set so four amps show on the ammeter, my woodburning tips light up nice and hot, and they stay hot no matter how fast I burn.