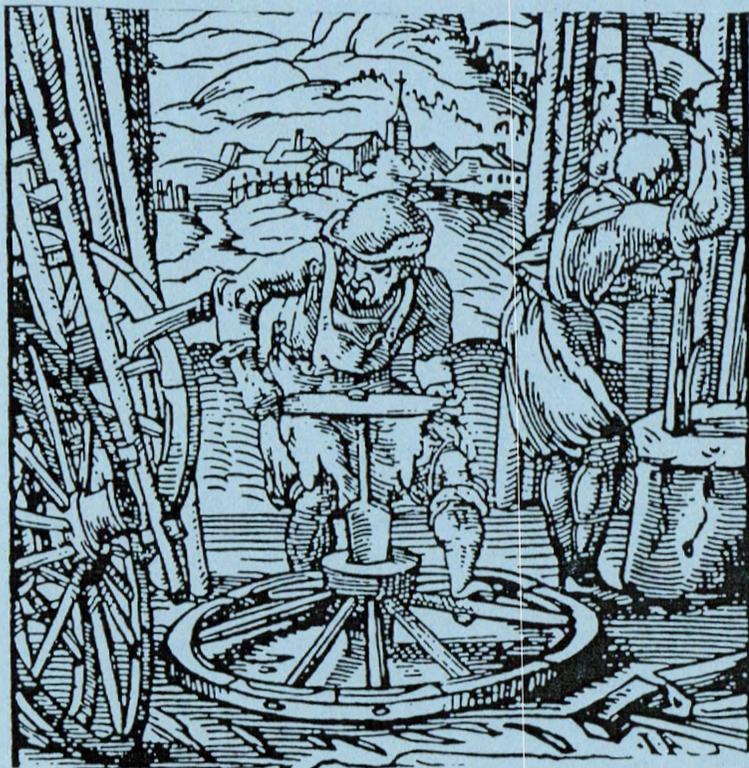


HAND
TOOL
PRESERVATION
ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER



Volume 2, No. 2,

April, 1990.

HTPA

AIMS

Promote the preservation, study and understanding of hand tools.

Encourage interest in, and better understanding of crafts and early industries in which these tools were used.

Discover, identify, classify, document, preserve and exhibit these tools - in particular special efforts are to be made regarding the documentation and preservation of Australian made tools.

Share this knowledge and understanding with others and with museums, pioneer villages, the National Trust and similar institutions.

Accomplish these aims in a spirit of fun and fellowship.

Editor - Nigel Lampert

Secretary Frank Ham,

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Editor's Note

1. Contributions for our next issue are due by 15th May 1990.
2. Articles about interesting finds will be included anonymously so that member's privacy is respected.
3. Please type contributions where possible and include suitable illustrations.
4. As it is your newsletter suggestions are welcomed, and the Editor will be pleased to assist contributors to prepare items including verbal contributions.

The Editor

OBITUARY

It is with regret that we report the passing of one of our members, Peter Holloway. Peter was a former patternmaker who was most helpful with our club visits to the RMIT Foundry School. Peter passed away on 11th April after a short illness. Our thoughts are with his wife and family.

Secretary's News1. New Member2. Visit of Ken Roberts

The Melbourne lecture given by Ken Roberts was a success with 41 people attending (including two wives). Ken arrived home safely in March, although his luggage was mislaid for a short time. He sends his best wishes to the HTPA and all members.

3. Possible Country Meeting

It has been suggested that a weekend meeting should be considered later in the year. Echuca is a possibility, with a meeting and tool swap/sale on the Saturday, a dinner at a restaurant Saturday evening, and activities Sunday a.m., e.g. river cruise. Any suggestions or support would be welcomed.

4. Sydney Tool Sale and Swap

Sunday 27th May, Burwood Girls High School Gym.
Queen Street, Croydon. Doors open 9.00 a.m.
For information ring Henry Black.

5. May Meeting - 15th May

A meeting will be held at Ship Arts and Relics, rear of 211 Beach Road, Mordialloc where Dolf Slykhius will be host. The meeting will start at 8.00 p.m., and we hope to have a guest speaker to talk on boat building.

6. July Meeting - 17th July

A meeting will be held at the Meat Market Craft Centre - Wood Access Workshop, Blackwood St, North Melbourne. Richard Davidson will demonstrate the use and restoration of wooden moulding planes.

Tools For the Trades and Crafts: The Ken Roberts Lecture

On Friday 23rd February, noted visiting American collector and publisher Ken Roberts spoke to members and friends of HTPA at the Meat Market Craft Centre in North Melbourne. For two hours he lectured, answered questions and discussed at length, items of interest brought along by members.

The focus of his talk was on tools for the trades and crafts, this being based on slides from an early pattern book. Some of the key points of his lecture were:-

(1) English tools were important in understanding American tools, due to the early settlement by English craftsmen. In fact Great Britain had museums before America was settled.

The area of significance in Britain as regards toolmaking, is about the size of Victoria. Significant trade posts included Bristol, Liverpool, London, Newcastle, and Hull. The manufacturing centres for tools were Birmingham and Sheffield, which were linked to the trade posts by canal. Sheffield became the steel centre very early on. Birmingham was a leading centre for tools from 1750 but was surpassed by Sheffield in joiner's tools in about 1840. London was a commercial centre only. Tools were brought down to London from the other centres, and were finished in London. London traders also put their own names on these tools.

(ii) A tool is considered as an extension of the hand, to perform some operation that the hand hasn't strength to do. Each craft had its own specialist tools but did share many in common with other trades.

Manufacturers might display a very wide range of tools on their trade cards, such as did Thomas Ross of Litchfield Street, Birmingham. However, each of the tools was at that time made in little cottage shops where skills were handed down over generations. It was thus impossible for any one man to make such a wide range of tools. Each actually specialized in an item such as braces and then traded with other makers to widen his selling range.

(iii) The use of pattern books was common. Dealers chose and ordered directly from these and items would be included in a range of sizes so that ordering was easier. These pattern books are of course very rare, and were made using copper plates for the engravings. As the tool style stayed the same for periods of up to 100 years, it is difficult to date some tools and books. Also, it was easy to alter the copper plates, and new items could readily be added to these pattern books. In addition to

these pattern books, all manufacturers agreed to make tools to a given design and then to all sell them at an agreed price. As noted before, one manufacturer would make a particular item and then swap them with other manufacturers. By as early as 1800 all manufacturers in a guild might work co-operatively in this way. The Sheffield Illustrated List of 1807 is an example of an early guild pattern book.

iv) Many tools were in these early pattern books, including:-

Pincers	Sugar Tongs
Saddlers tools	Hammers
Shoe pincers	Wrenches
Bed spanners	Pan handles
Screw plates	Cork screws
Can openers	Sawsels
Caulking irons	Cheesetasters
Timber scribes	Nutcrackers
Cooking implements	Braces
Plane irons	Sheep markers

The tendency was for the earlier tools to be more artistically finished. Clearly this was a matter of time and cost. Saw handles are an example of how later handles progressively became more basic and purely functional and were not as aesthetically pleasing as the earlier ones.

(v) Braces were discussed at length, with many slides illustrating the various types and styles. The scotch or wooden brace dates from mid 1800's. Although the origin of the name is unknown, an archaic meaning of the word scotch is 'to incise'. The construction of wooden braces, including the ultimatum types, was shown. Some interesting types illustrated braces. One especially interesting item was the 1855 Horton brace which was made of metal, but was functionally superior due to its rotating handle. It seems that Marples had an investment at that time in the Ultimatum brace, and brought the Horton's patent. The Marples from then surpressed it's manufacture.

(vi) Planes and steel production were also discussed. Cutters were originally made from wrought iron rather than steel and carbon was then impregnated into the wrought iron. Benjamin Huntsman later developed better draught systems and crucibles, thus allowing use of steel for plane iron. These changes were reflected in the typical factory, which had a high chimney in the factory section and usually the offices at the front. After extensive questions and comments by Ken on tools brought by members, Watson Cutter thanked Ken and presented him with a gift on behalf of the club.

The Craft of the Wheelwright

The Wheelwright's skills were essential over generations, providing the wheels used in carts, coaches and wagons. In the life of the village the wheelwright was linked with the blacksmith who would provide all the iron work for the cart or carriage. During the nineteenth century the trade of the wheelwright suffered, as did other trades, the changes brought about by mechanisation. By the end of that century there were machines for each of the tasks of the wheelwright's work, such as mortising of the naves, shaping of spokes and cutting the tenons on spokes. Perhaps some few village wheelwrights still persevered with the traditional approach but it was clear that these artisans could not compete in accuracy or speed with the machines that by then could drive spokes, ram and bore hubs, round felloes and indeed bend them to shape.

The emergence of the motor car and the eventual use of metal wheels undoubtedly led to the gradual demise of the wheelwright and his skills. Today the crafter is only kept alive by enthusiasts and craft artisans.

Whilst this is a general picture of wheelwrighting it is important to note that strong regional differences existed between wheelwrights. Hub styles, vehicle styles and even the shaping of spokes were some of the differences.

The local village wheelwright was very much a provincial worker. In England customers would be no more than five miles away and included millers, brewers, the local grocer and builders. The needs of these customers encouraged the differences mentioned above.

'There was nothing for it but practice, and experience of every difficulty. Reasoned science for us did not exist.' Theirs not to reason why! What we had to do was live up to the local wisdom of our kind; to follow the customs, and work to the measurements, which had been tested and corrected long before our time in every village shop all across the country.

A Wheelwright's brain had to fit itself to this by dint of growing into it, just as his back had to fit into the suppleness needed on the saw-pit, or his hands into the movements that would plane a felloe 'true out of wind'!

(The Wheelwright's Shop, George Sturt, The Cambridge University Press)