

PO Box 1016 Bondi Junction NSW 1355  
ABN 51 544 262 364

November December 2012 newsletter

Woodworkers Association of NSW

# From the Chair special



*Phil Greenwood is back by popular demand, on the special occasion of the Christmas edition of this newsletter*

## Inside this issue

### **Chifley exhibition**

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### **Ricketts and Thorp final**

Part 4 ... Page 9

**In the Decorative Arts Museum in Paris - a part of the Louvre collection - there is an engaging, wonderful display showing the evolution of chairs in the 18th century during the reign of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI.**

It was a glorious period in French history. The long reign of "the Sun King" and "the Beloved" was followed by the tumultuous times

of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, leading to the French Revolution in 1793. Louis XVI got the chop and a lot of very fine furniture got torched. One caption for the display reads: *"Although comfort has always been one of the main criteria in the evolution of the chair, the history of its morphological and ornamental variations also reflects changing lifestyles. The introduc-*

*tion of etiquette during Henry III's reign and the metamorphoses in female fashion influenced the form of the back, leg and armrests."*

Just pausing for a moment: isn't it interesting that female fashions could have had such an impact? Is that still happening today? Is it possible to identify the cultural

... more next page

## Next meeting of the association

**7 for 7.30pm, Monday 3 December 2012, at the Abbotsford workshop**

The workshop is in the park at the western end of Spring Street, Abbotsford, NSW

This final 2012 meeting will be our Christmas party. It will be a festive and enjoyable occasion. You are encouraged to bring something to show to other members. If it is a partially completed item or a new jig/tool it is often more interesting than a finished item.

# From the chair ... cont

aspects that are influencing our designs today? Or are we too close and not able to see what is happening around us? Or do we not care? It seems perfectly reasonable not to care when we can't personally have any influence on an outcome. But perhaps we underestimate the positive effect we can each have.

Every time we make a comment or do something, it has some impact on others around us.

## Making choices

We can encourage or support someone so easily - just with a word or a look. And it works the other way - the effect of not car-

ing can be huge. So, we each have a choice.

Going back to the caption for the chair display, the other influence on design was said to be Henry III's introduction of etiquette. What a curious notion. The king "introducing" etiquette.

How would that happen today? ... Earlier in the year, the Premier encouraged drivers to "bring back the wave" when merging, and pedestrians to acknowledge drivers who have stopped at crossings.

A small thing perhaps, but maybe enough to reinforce those already doing those things and to encourage others to give it a try.

Within the WWA of NSW, we have a number of members who give generously of their time to assist other members. The workshop in Abbotsford has become a focus for many of these activities.

Experienced woodworkers share their learning and experience with others keen to learn. Others quietly go about setting up the equipment and maintaining it for others to use.

## Recognition

No-one looks for recognition. That's not the motivation. But it is important that the rest of us notice what they do, recognise it for what it is, express appreciation and, in due course, do likewise for them. After all, that's what being a member of a community is all about: getting benefits and giving back, in balance.

... ends on page 12



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# Chifley exhibition



**Cabinet and wine rack - Craig Sargent 2012**  
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A biography of an exceptional craftsman from the elite trade of carving, who rendered in wood and stone with grace and perfection, from tiny wooden carvings to the ornate facades of public buildings and churches, all executed with perfect precision.

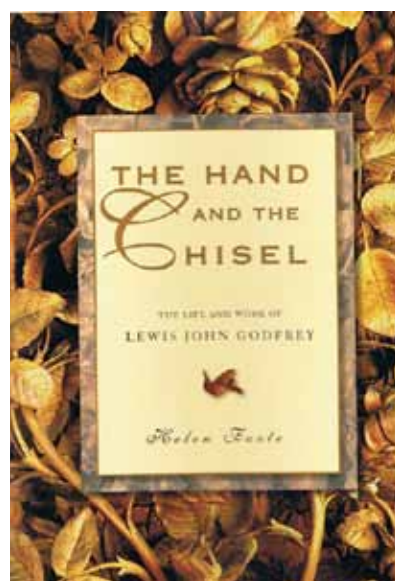
This colour illustrated record of Godfrey's known (Australian and New Zealand) work is a revealing and long-overdue tribute to his incredible talent.

The author, Helen Foote, is Lewis John Godfrey's great-grand-daughter. Before Helen began the book, the little she knew about him was that, in his day, he was a carver of some repute. What began as a casual enquiry became a quest, as Helen discovered more and more impressive works by Godfrey in Australia and New Zealand.

*Published by Melbourne Publishing Group Pty Ltd  
(A4 paperback with French flaps, 76 pp)*

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# Chifley exhibition . . . cont

Geoff started woodworking at 15 as an apprentice cabinet-maker with the Lismore furniture company Brown & Jolly, where he learnt the foundations of his craft. In 1973 he set up his own business, doing restoration work and making small items of furniture. In 1980 Geoff's talents were encouraged when he was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study fine furniture in Europe. More recently, Geoff's contribution to craftsmanship in Australia and as an ambassador for Lismore and Australia was recognised with an Honourary Fellowship from Southern Cross University



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# Chifley exhibition . . . cont



**Frank Lloyd Wright Lamp  
Takashi Nishiura 2012**

## Japanwoodworking

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P: 02 9907 0924 or 02 9453 1836  
takashi@japanwoodworking.com  
japanwoodworking.com

*"I had a commission to make this  
Frank Lloyd Wright Floor Lamp . .*

*more next page*

## Sturt Wood Courses 2012

### Weekly Classes:

Mondays & Tuesdays 6-9pm, Tues 10-3pm

### Short Courses:

Tuning & sharpening with Daryl Ingate  
10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> March

Intro to wood with David Upfill-Brown 22<sup>nd</sup> March

Joints for woodworking with David Upfill-Brown 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> May

4week cabinetmaking with Roy Schack 20<sup>th</sup> Aug-14<sup>th</sup> Sept

Shaker boxes with Phoebe Everill 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> August

Woodwork for women with Phoebe Everill 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> September

Intro to woodwork for kids with Phoebe Everill 30<sup>th</sup> September

Hand finishes with Tim Foster 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> October

### 10 Week courses:

30<sup>th</sup> January - 5<sup>th</sup> April 2012 with David Upfill-Brown

23<sup>rd</sup> April - 29<sup>th</sup> June 2012 with James Carr

### Winter School: 2<sup>nd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> July 2012

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## forming infinity

*Association member  
**John Greenland** saw  
this "Infinity chair" on  
a site devoted to the  
quirky and mind  
testing, and thought  
someone might like  
to make it real*

...

**if you take up the  
challenge, tell us  
your 'made it' story**



## Frank Lloyd Wright Lamp

*... early this year. The original plan  
and light fittings were supplied  
by the client.*

*When I finished the first one, I really  
liked it, and decided to make another  
one for myself. I'm fascinated by  
lighting magic: the lamps look really  
nice when lit up in the dark."*

**The Hannah Cabinet - Geoff Hannah, 2009** is the result  
of over 5000 hours of labour and contains 34 fine timbers  
and veneers, 17 types of stone, 4 types of shell, and  
23CT gold leaf. It has 18 doors and 140 draws.



# ***“Off the back of a truck”*** ***in situ***



***Huon pine dining table - John Gallagher, 2012***

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**Earlier in the year, I was commissioned to make a Huon Pine dining table: a referral from the NSW Woodworkers Association.**

The clients had been holidaying in Tasmania. And, falling in love with the beautiful woodwork, and already owning some Huon pine furniture, they decided to buy some, have it shipped to Sydney and crafted into a table.

After meeting with them, it was agreed I put forward a design for their consideration.

The day their Huon pine arrived on the back of a truck, my eyes lit up: two stunning book-matched slabs, with strong figuring of a kind I have never seen.

The slabs were about three metres long and 600mm wide, and included was some sectioned

timber and a smaller slab, for a coffee table. After taking stock of this parcel of timber, I designed a dining table around what I had to work with.

The client wanted to use the natural edge, which I too was keen to work with.

I suggested the traditional skirt be pushed further beneath the top, so as not to interfere visually with the natural, wavy edge. I made a model for the client and got their go-ahead.

One obstacle I faced was that the slabs were only 25mm thick: I couldn't afford to dress them for fear they would end up too thin.

The inner edges for joining were initially cut straight on the saw, and hand planned before the two slabs were joined together. Then,

the long process of getting the top surface as flat as visually possible: planning, scraping, sanding and more sanding.

The under-structure was more approachable as I was working with boards that could be handled by my machinery.

I manipulated the timber to put the best faces to the most visible places and cut finger joints and mortise and tenons before gluing up, in several stages. The table was finished with Organ Oil, and has a wonderful glow.

I was truly honoured to be given the opportunity to work with such special, unique timber—something I doubt will roll up on the back of a truck any time soon.

***John Gallagher***

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#### A3 41 A Jointer-planer

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- Allows for rapid retooling
- Solid cast iron planer tables
- 3 knife quick-change self-setting cutterblock system
- Very solid fence
- 4 hp motor

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# Taking stock before the closing

In the 1960s another showroom, especially targeting office furniture, was opened in North Sydney and when Reg Adams joined the firm (from H Adams & Sons, Cabinetmakers of Leichhardt) the company saw an increase in orders for church and school projects - science laboratory benches and furniture, church pews . . .

*by Alan Perry*

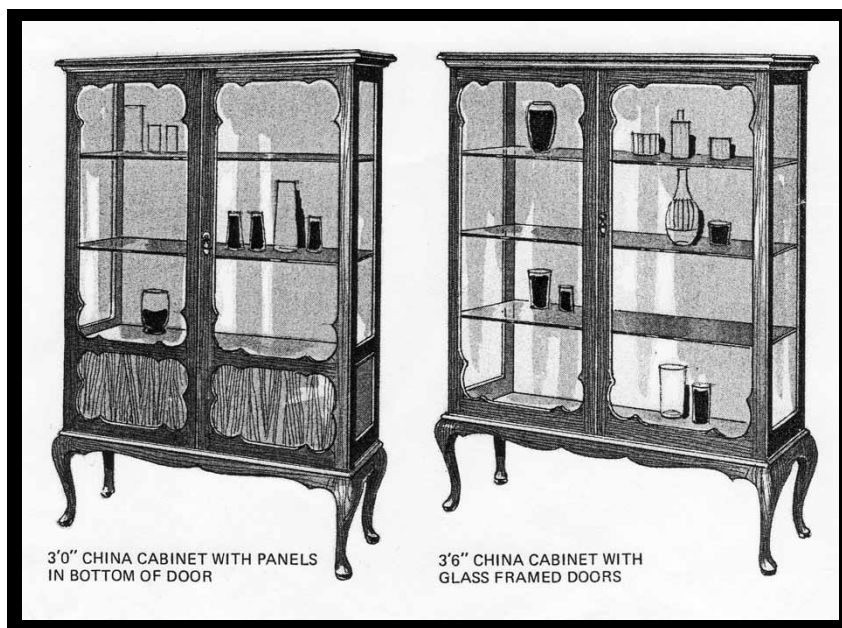
*Ricketts & Thorp P4*

Clients and projects listed below demonstrate the high regard in which Ricketts & Thorp was held by the community: Commonwealth, Rural and Commercial Bank and Reserve Bank offices in Sydney, Canberra and Darwin. The National Library, the High Court in Canberra, the Prime Minister's residences in Canberra and Sydney, Government House, the State Library in Sydney and the Commonwealth and State departments of Public Works and State railways.

AMP, Mercantile Mutual, CSR, the Law Society, NRMA, Ord & Minnett, Norwich Union, Unilever, Custom Credit, the Australian Club, Sydney University, Knox Grammar School, Sydney Town Hall, Metropole Hotel, the Cahill restaurants, Norton Smith, Pechiney, Burns Philp.

Wollongong Town Hall, Many Shire Council Chambers, St Andrew's and St Mary's Cathedral as well as many churches in NSW.

Ricketts & Thorp designers included Marion Hall Best, Artes



Studios, Stuart Lowe Furniture Studios; Bill Greenwood, Frederick Ward, Edmund Dykes and Bill Johnstone. Architects included Peddle Thorp & Walker, Fowell McConnell, Hirst & Kennedy, Maclurcan & Brown, Kevin Curtin & Mansfield and government architects.

Furniture manufactured at Ricketts & Thorp since 1912 is still

attracting high prices in the antique trade: at a recent auction of a Ricketts & Thorp (1954) Hepplewhite Extension table and carver with five dining chairs in Sapele Mahogany sold for \$30,000.

Solid timber was carefully selected at Ricketts & Thorp. On either side of the main factory, huge stacks of timber were air-

*. . . more next page*

## Alan Perry, Committee member, Furniture History Society . . .

. . . started at Ricketts & Thorp in 1954, at 15 and a half, as a floor boy on three months probation, sweeping the floor, cleaning the animal glue pots and being gofer and assistant to the tradesmen. He then became an apprenticed cabinetmaker, one of 180 employees in the factory at Rockdale, earning £1.10.6 a week. Alan worked in the sewing machine cabinet section, graduating to the cabinet section. He became a draughtsman and then Furniture Designer, Estimator and Site Supervisor, until he joined TAFE in 1973, teaching cabinetmaking to all ages of apprentices and tradesman in colleges in Sydney. He also spent a year at the London College of Furniture.

He was Head Teacher of Cabinetmaking at Lidcombe TAFE, retiring in 1998.

dried over several years and then dried to correct moisture content in a kiln. The timber was only used when any chance of shrinking and cupping was at a minimum. Mahogany, Queensland maple and walnut, black bean,

silver ash, Tasmanian, English and American oak, sycamore, beech, elm, coachwood and blackwood were just some of the timbers. Wood veneers such as walnut, birch, maple, teak, flame mahogany, European burr, butt walnuts

and sycamore, were a feature of many pieces of furniture. The veneers were carefully matched and laid into panels.

Some processes and high-class trade practices are very evident in Ricketts & Thorp furniture: drawers were machine dovetailed front and back. If the backs of the drawers were housed in, triangular glue blocks were added to strengthen the joint. Blocks were also used below the drawer bottom, glued to the sides to hold the bottom rigid and prevent any joints coming loose.

Hidden or construction rails inside cabinets were made of a generous size, out of good quality cabinet timber, usually coachwood. Drawer bottoms and cabinet backs of plywood were securely fixed. Techniques such as rebating and tongue and grooves maintained cabinet strength.

Chairs always had neatly cut, sanded and fitted brackets in the joints between legs and rails, and the underside of chair seats were neatly finished with white or brown calico.

Quality control was evident at every stage of the process. One only has to look at the inside or underside of a piece of furniture to see it has been given the same care as the outside.

Nitrocellulose lacquer finishes on carefully sanded surfaces provided quality of surface that lasted for years.

Only the best hardware, carefully considered for style and finish, and quality brass butt hinges and brass double ball catches were used.

*... more next page*



*Gilbert Ricketts*



Ricketts and Thorpe factory in 1975

## End of an era

Rising labour costs made maintaining the firm's high standards increasingly difficult, and the two family shareholding groups reluctantly made the decision to close down.

With outstanding orders in completion, a well attended three-day auction sale was held in September 1977, to dispose of furniture, plant and equipment.

As news of the imminent close-down spread, so did the number of expressions of regret and

gratitude from customers, ex-employees and friends. As one client said: "It's the end of an era".

A Ricketts & Thorpe re-union was held on 2 February 1996, that 180 ex-employees and partners attended, to relive the days of R&T at Rockdale . . .

In 1978, post and rail furniture moved into part of the premises, with a phone company using the Princes Highway frontage.

... ends

***My thanks to Brian Ricketts for his time and help with information, photographs and articles. — Alan Perry***

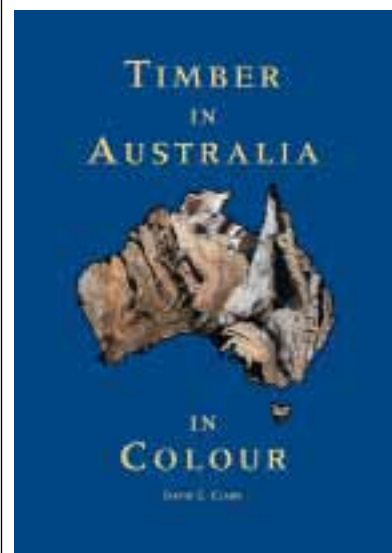
### References and resources

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*The Times* (Metro Newspaper Rockdale, Bexley & Kogarah) 13 February 1936  
*The St George Call* (St George Area Metropolitan Newspaper) 1 September 1977  
*Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936 (State Library of NSW)  
*Australian Furniture, Pictorial History & Dictionary 1788-1938*  
 - Kevin Fahey & Andrew Simpson, Casuarine Press.



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The end of the year provides another moment to pause and reflect on how and whether we have given as much as we have taken.

### ***Diversity***

The WWA has a diverse membership, ranging from super-experts to complete novices. This is one of the association's biggest strengths. The diversity means constant opportunity to gain ideas and inspiration from one another. Everyone benefits when we open our minds to new approaches and possibilities.

This year we have had a number of workshop classes, an exhibition for professional members

and our bi-monthly meetings and monthly workshop get-together. More is planned for next year and I encourage all members to contribute in some way.

On a related note, when the association has public displays, such as at the Royal Easter Show, the Timber and Working with Wood Show and other shows during the year, it would be good if members of the public could purchase something useful, natural and a reminder of the value of wood (and the WWA).

One suggestion is making cutting boards shaped as a tree (the trunk being a handle) bearing the WWA logo. A simple idea that could be a fun joint activity for

a group of members. If you are interested, or have some other suggestions of a similar kind, please let us know.

### ***Last 2012 meeting***

Our last meeting for the year will be at the Workshop on 3 December and will be a relaxed and convivial occasion to get together before Christmas. There will be plenty of goodies and maybe even some special Christmas gifts to take home for someone special! Hope to see you then.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

***Phil Greenwood***

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All 3-phase motors and all in great condition (albeit not very pretty). I have instruction manuals for the jointer, thicknesser and bandsaw.

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## • Tormek 1002 SuperGrind tool sharpening system

Early model Tormek without internal motor (a drill drives the wheel). In as-new condition with tool attachment. Wheel is 250mm x50mm SuperGrind stone (RRP around \$300 on its own). Suits all current Tormek accessories and comes with drill as shown for \$250 (or best offer).

Contact Michael McGrath

**02 9949 6683, or**  
[accent@swiftdsl.com.au](mailto:accent@swiftdsl.com.au)



## • Jim Davey's User Bedrocks-fettled Stanleys

Repairs and Service

Academy HSS irons  
G15 Rust Preventative

Trade prices on:  
DMT diamond plates  
and King waterstones

**4447 8822 (bh)**

**4447 8790 (ah)**

[jdavey@bigpond.com](mailto:jdavey@bigpond.com)

**To update a listing and for new listings  
email the editor at [jhn@bigpond.com](mailto:jhn@bigpond.com)**

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# Association Committee contact information

## Committee members

**Chair:** Phil Greenwood • 02 9235 2874 • phgreenwood@optusnet.com.au

**Vice Chair:** Kim Larymore • 02 9858 1578 • klarymore@optusnet.com.au

**Secretary/Public Officer:** Merv Walter • 02 9634 2066 • secretary@woodworkersnsw.org.au

**Treasurer:** Miko Nakamura • 02 9805 1775 • treasurer@woodworkersnsw.org.au

## General committee members

Frank Duff • 02 9896 4017 • fwduff@optusnet.com.au || Peter Dunn • 02 02 4344 7806 • bentneck@bigpond.com

|| Matthew Dwight • 02 9945 0300 • dwightmatt@hotmail.com || Phil Harley • 02 9404 1852 • philipharley@gmail.com

|| Peter Harris • 02 9879 3329 • peterh47@ihug.com.au

## Currently assisting the committee

**Membership Secretary:** Peter Hunt • 0418 867 870 • p\_j\_hunt@msn.com.au

**Newsletter Assistant:** Peter Dunn • 02 02 4344 7806 • bentneck@bigpond.com

**Newsletter/Website:** Jo Healy-North • 0417 667 367 • jhn@bigpond.com

## Life members

Richard Crosland, Phil Lake, Kim Larymore, Leon Sadubin, Richard Vaughan, Alan Wale

## New members update

Loan Myers, Steven Smith, Steve Townsend, Shane Brown, Tony Motbey, Brian Dawson and John Sanders.

**If you'd like to join the committee or be more involved in the association, call Merv Walter**

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*If undelivered please return to PO Box 1016 Bondi Junction NSW 1355*

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