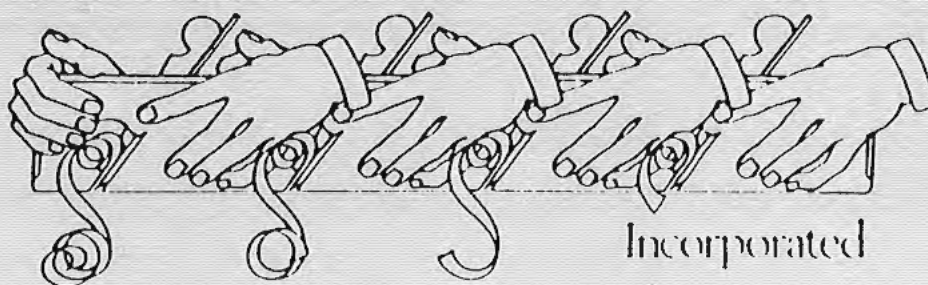


# WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION OF N.S.W.



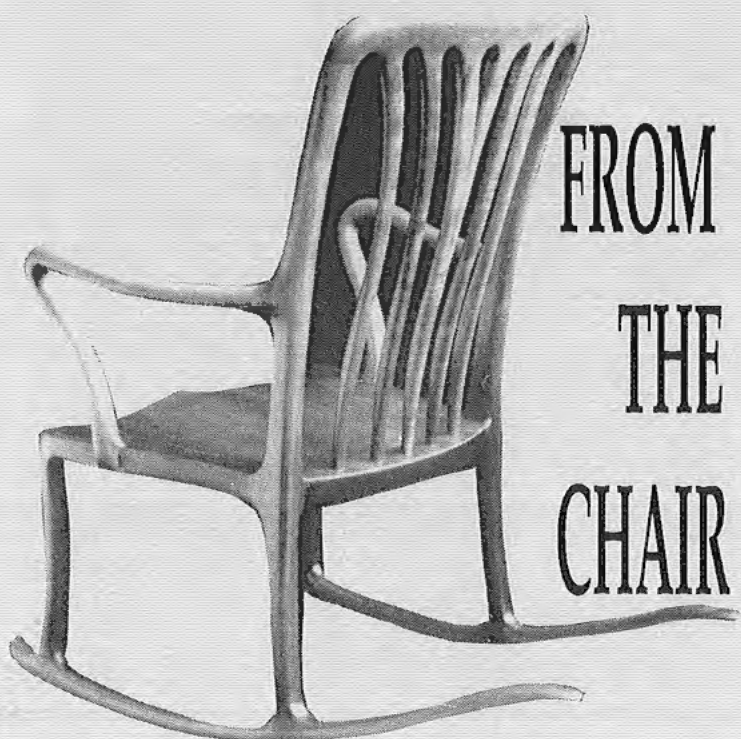
June '89

## WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION OF N.S.W.

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Opinions expressed in articles in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or the Committee.

*Rocker by Tony Kenway, 1989*



We had talked about the merits of the high tech exhibition space for quite a while, knowing that the cost was beyond our reach. Dare we hope that the once in a lifetime offer would come along?

Low and behold, sixty odd square metres of space was offered free of charge. Too good to miss, thirteen of our members tried and true turned up on 12 May with some old chestnuts, drawernuts, chair and table nuts, etc. and some new pieces for the great metropolis to pay \$6 a head to feast their eyes - and hopefully spend money on.

It all worked very well on the first day except for yours truly forgetting completely that a new concrete slab is not quite the right setting for the delights we had to offer. Carpet squares were hastily rustled up (at great expense) but were essential and eventually showed our wares to good effect. Spotlights hastily erected, fused with loud reports and flashes regularly every few minutes until a 7 foot Yankee electrician solved the problem. After a long session with a monied benefactor, Tony Kenway emerged with the first major sale - of his dining table and chairs. Congratulations Tony.

Nick Hill got an order for two chairs and other sundry furnishings sold, getting the show off to a good start.

As can be expected at an exhibition of general interest such as this, interest in our work was mostly superficial with the uninformed reaction of very expensive. We can only hope that additional regular expensive which your committee is striving for will add something to public education with the added advantage on this occasion of comparison between mass production and the crafted article.

As I write this, the exhibition is only two days old so anything can happen. Those of us who exhibit small items (turnings etc) could well take note of Don Fortescue's superb display stands seen at the Opera House in 1987. Display of a superb item on a poorly designed and constructed pedestal or stand is inexcusable, especially as we are trading on excellence. In choosing one of the new pieces displayed I would have to go for Tony Kenway's rocker.

Some borrowed ideas, maybe, but nicely balanced on the eye and the bum. TK has done it again.

Laurie Oliver.

**BUMPER BASTILLE ISSUE**

## FROM THE SECRETARY

### Woodworkers Association of NSW

#### Minutes from the General Meeting of 12 May 1989

These minutes will be reported as an easily readable column in our newsletter. To speed up the meeting procedures we will, I hope, be able to have the minutes approved as read in the newsletter.

Apologies were given for the absence of Alan Wale and Treasurer Gail Leake.

Incorporation has been approved as of the 13 April so our risks and liabilities as committee and members are lessened. Our logo and letterhead have been changed so the Association name will now appear on our publications.

As usual, a plea for subscriptions was made as they are overdue and very necessary to maintain our newsletter and other activities. Our Darling Harbour Home Show exhibition was finalised with 13 members exhibiting on 50 m<sup>2</sup>+. Old and new work to be exhibited and details of display were sounded out to remind ourselves of the last minute jobs necessary. We reported the committee decision to take on Bankcard and Mastercard facilities to improve our selling capacity at our exhibitions. Five per cent commission at our exhibitions will be the ongoing fee to all exhibitions on sales whether cash, cheque or bankcard. This commission is to be signed to cover the on-going bankcard fees and provide an exhibition fund for sundry items such as tape, printing lighting, etc.

The Darling Harbour show should have a projector showing a selection of slides as an addition to the display as suggested by Henry Black. Associates Simon Bannantyne, Bob Howard and Bob Dixon offered their help to man the exhibition and to be added to the the proposed roster.

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The Blaxland Gallery show needs photos for publicity so those involved please send to me (Nick) as soon as possible.

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The Australian Craft Show is underway for November with approximately 15 members offering work. Please let me have your conformation of participation for this show.

---

Plus welcome to Paul Tiernan and Bob Harris who have been accepted as new members.

We are hopeful to be involved in a major show with Craft expo in 1990. Negotiations are underway to involve us as a major force.

Suggestions were made to invite Alan Wale to do another workshop but using a venue in Sydney.

A patternmaking workshop was mooted with Henry Black as the proposed tutor.

Lectures for 1989 are sparse but suggestions were made to invite Robert Dunlop and a suggestion which is being followed up was to use the concord Sea Scout venue as a regular venue for general meetings. This venue appeals as it is relatively central to Sydney and has good parking and is less than half the price of the Powerhouse fee : \$30 per hour to \$15 per hour !!!

Tom Darby, who has been a long term receiver of the newsletter, was present and wants stories as he has been asked to write a regular 1000 words for *Woodworking International* which seems a very stylish magazine from the UK. He asks members for information to excite the world about Australian woodworkers.

The last item was my annoyance at the fact that members and associates when written about or quoted usually forget to tell the interviewer that they are members of this fine Institution : **The Woodworkers Association of NSW**. The item I cited which reminded me of the necessity to report your membership of the Association was the article in *The Australian Woodworker* about Michael Retter and the honours bestowed on him for his fine work on Parliament House. The idea is that this association requires the ultimate in workmanship and the public and other woodworkers need to know who are approved as members. Our criteria for membership are far above those of the other institutions such as the Royal Institute of Architects, Institute of Engineers, Association of Interior designers, etc.

Yours, Nick Hill  
ex RINA (Assoc)  
sec. W.A.N.S.W.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

This will be the last newsletter sent to unfinancial members this year.

## NEW MEETING DATES 1989

Please note the change of meeting dates from those previously published. And note the new meeting venue:  
**Concord Sea Scout Hall, Concord Road.**

7 June  
9 August  
11 October  
6 December

### Newsletter deadlines in 1989 :

9 July  
9 September  
9 November

**Photos supplied with articles :** to be preferably black and white or, if colour, only high contrast shots are suitable for screening for printing purposes. Line drawings in black pen.  
**The Editor Requests...** Once again I ask for a little help from members and other readers. If this newsletter seems a little Sydney-centric it is so because the majority of those who contribute are from Sydney. But we want to learn more of what's occurring in the rest of the state.

I learned recently of an exhibition held by association member Don Fortescue, too late unfortunately to publicise. Other shows regularly occur around the state, which we hear of after the event.

Please, if there is anything coming up, let us know so that we can publicise events in this newsletter. Equally important and looked for are reviews, comments and photos after the event.

### Exhibition:

at the Old Bakery  
of Terry Baker's work  
2 to 24 June



# WOODIES AT WORK : GLENAEON AND THE HOME SHOW

by Leon Sadubin

Two exhibitions in which members of our Association participated were held in May at venues close to our beautiful harbour. Neither exhibition offered harbour views nor did they offer our members and exhibition experience to rival 'Woodies Go to the Opera'.

Glenaeon School, sited in bush land at Middlecove on Sydney's northside, invited Terry Baker, Nick Hill, Peter Dorman, Ginny and myself to participate in a 'CraftShow', together with other diverse craftspeople. Lured by the information that Glenaeon had a 'proven track record' of quality craft shows I filled my van with diverse domestic wares and rattled down to MiddleCove to find, much to my disappointment, a bazaar thrown together at random in an upmarket school hall. Now I'm not too shy or too delicate to mix in these affairs. Bitter experience, however, taught me that a bazaar is ideal for selling hand tools, car parts and comestibles but it is not the venue for the furniture I had planned to sell.

So with minimum enthusiasm I placed eight items of furniture and a selective display of Ginny's woodware into our allotment.

Well, I might as well have left my furniture at work. Ginny, of course, sold out her souvenir trees, animals, trays and boxes. Me? Not a sale nor any follow up enquiries three weeks after the event.

The other woodies have boasted (heartless rogues) of orders and followup by clients and no doubt all of us will benefit long term from the exposure. Nevertheless I found the experience less than satisfactory given the energy devoted to the event.

So its off to Darling Harbour ! Always wanted to exhibit there: this time I will get orders for ten dining settings and ten hall tables and twenty coffee tables. After all the promoters are promising 150,000 visitors, \$450,000 in publicity and a free space (next to the child minding centre and behind a 16 ton, leaking, above ground rubber tube swimming pool full of anti-freeze solution) yes, a free space for the woodies !

So, once a gain I fill my van with 'diverse domestic wares' and rattle down this time to the Darling Harbour exhibition centre, all set about with fevered security officers and acres and acres of space. It is good fun to meet fellow enthusiasts (all twelve times bitten, thirteen times shy). We all throw together a bloody marvellous display and sit back and wait for any unsuspecting customers or feral woodworkers to stumble across our display. Well they do !. One corners Tony Kenway and presto ! One dining setting is accounted for. The woodturners also make some sales. The rest of us ? Well, some interest here, some interest there but nothing conclusive. Nick scores two chair sales, Mike Darlow shifts some lamps (he alludes to large orders) but, overall, the sales would have to be described as lacklustre. I must say that almost 800 of my book shop posters were pinched by the public and some

enquiries for dining settings look promising. Also Henry Black got some good leads on tools.

There is no doubt that, again, exposure is likely to do us all good in the long term. One wonders however that, had we been selling Albanian wines or Mongolian feather dusters, had we been demonstrating how to wipe mould off furniture with a special green solution we would have been financially much much better off. Cést la guerre woodies.

## Woodworking books and fine hand tools



- Books on furniture making and wood turning, machining and carving, on making toys and musical instruments, sculpture, boat building and design.
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- Genuine articles for the woodworker.

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# DESIGN : AN

by Geoff Hague

Very shortly the French nation will celebrate an event that signalled the start of the French revolution two hundred years ago. The history of French cabinetmaking is worth a brief look in the context of today's debate about design.

This interest was sparked by last year's visit of Gary Knox Bennett and his reported remarks that his style of work was *'the antithesis of the organic style of other Californian woodworkers epitomised by Sam Maloof'*.

In a general sense French art for the first half of the seventeenth century, until Louis XIV assumed the reigns of government in 1661, had little national character. The crowning of Louis and the building of Versailles marked the beginning of the great period of French cabinetmaking. The king once boasted *'l'état c'est moi'*: 'I am the State' and it succinctly expressed the spirit of his reign. When he came into power he decided that the development of a national art should be one of his great achievements and his long reign was marked by a continuous effort to develop a French style of art in architecture, painting, sculpture and the decorative arts.

From around 1660, the French artists, instead of copying Italian Baroque ornament, began to eliminate those elements not in accord with the essence of French art and, by removing excessive ornament they clarified the forms and gave them more definite outlines and so created a Baroque style in French simply called 'Louis XIV'.

Because of sheer cost, the sumptuous interiors and the elegant cabinetwork so characteristic of this style were confined to the royal palaces and to the splendid mansions of the aristocracy located in and around Paris. Louis XIV realised that the furniture and furnishings had to display a magnificence unknown until that time to harmonise with such a setting as Versailles. He understood that the cabinetmaking and other furnishings could be entrusted only to great craftsmen. In order to surround himself with the most skilful of artists he granted apartments and workshops in the gallery at the Louvre to such artists who had already made their reputations. To acquire lodgings in these galleries was not only a singular mark of royal favour but it also gave the workers certain important privileges of freedom from the trade guilds. This great gallery was divided into small lodgings and was filled with every kind of artists such as painters, sculptors, enamellers and cabinetmakers and these privileged artists lived there with their families.

This practice was continued throughout the eighteenth century and as a result cabinetmaking developed into an art form in France and was unique in its perfection of workmanship. Many foreign workers were encouraged to live in France - such as Venetian glass makers and Flemish weavers, while French workmen were not permitted to emigrate.

The French statesman, Colbert, purchased the Gobelins in 1662 for the Crown that was converted into a

series of workshops and ateliers which was organised in 1667 under the title of 'Manufacture Royale des Merbles de la Couronne' (Royal Manufactory of Court Furniture) and the majority of the magnificent furniture and furnishings required by Louis XIV for his Royal palaces were produced here. The letters patent that explained the entire plan of the establishment of these factories are considered to be an almost perfect plan for the administration of the arts and they were to be filled with 'good painters, master weavers, goldsmiths, metal workers, engravers, joiners in ebony and other woods, dyers and other good workers in every kind of art of craft'.

The decorative designs were the product of a few talented individuals such as Lebrun and Berain who exerted an important influence on the Louis XIV style. Although Bersin wasn't particularly original he was gifted in assimilating the work of those who had preceded him and in adapting that work to the prevailing French taste. He took inspiration from the Renaissance painter Raphael and the delicate arabesques and playful grotesques and other fanciful forms and devices were very fine. Scroll work, festoons, and slender architectural motifs forming a delicate web and enclosing figures, classical busts, vases, coats-of-arms, and birds were all included in the repertory of ornament.

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**'... French artists ... began to eliminate those elements not in accord with the essence of French art and, by removing excessive ornament they clarified the forms ...'**

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Daniel Marot and Jean Le Partre greatly influenced the style of art work of this era and among innumerable designs for all kinds of architectural details provided many designs for tables, consoles, cabinets, tiered shelves and mirrors and seemed to provide an almost endless supply of ideas from which the cabinetmakers could select those compositions most appropriate to their work. It seems it became a rather common practice for some of the larger cabinet shops to keep a stock of engravings for reference which assured a high standard of design as well as a certain consistency.

So the cabinetwork designed to harmonise with the fabulous Baroque interiors was in turn majestic, magnificent and massive and the Louis XIV style of furniture was distinctive for its stately and imposing grandeur and elegant formality. Carving was one of the favourite methods for decorating the surface of furniture and the marquetry of brass and tortoise shell combined with magnificent bronze appliqué was regarded as the supreme artistic expression of this period. So the classic Baroque ornament of the Louis XIV

# ESSAY

style was noted for its symmetry of composition and finished elegance. Included among the fashionable motifs were arabesques, rinceau, lambregins, cartorches, rosettes, strapwork and C&S scrolls.

Included among the popular animal motifs were the lion's head and paws, the ram's head and horns and the cloven hoof of the staff. Various kinds of fanciful conceptions and monstrous beings such as satyrs, winged genii, dolphins, sphinxes, griffons and chimera were found in the repertory of ornament. Groups of children, cupids and winged heads of cherubs were all used. The acanthus leaf was the favourite form of foliage and was worked into many compositions. Water lily leaves, palm leaves, branches of laurel, olive and oak were also used. Garlands and festoons were made of fruit and flowers and others that became popular in the eighteenth century included ancient weapons, thunderbolts and tridents of mythological gods, trophies of musical instruments and the implements of fishing, hunting and agriculture.

The line of demarcation between the Louis XIV style, the Régence and the subsequent Louis XV style is very arbitrary and cannot be treated like an historical event with a specific date. The Régence cabinetwork still possessed the rich elegance and dignity of the Louis XIV style but a graceful suppleness began to appear that reached its fulfilment in the Louis XV period. A completely new principle known as 'le style Rocaille', or Rococco, developed and differs from the Baroque in its lightness and the avoidance of the principles of symmetry. The early harshness yielded to an ample rhythm in line and form. This had begun when Louis XIV had allowed an easing in his court's formality that permitted the introduction of fresh and exuberant forms of ornament.

In decorative design the former mythological themes devoted to the glorification of Louis XIV were superseded by mythological themes of a romantic nature such as the Loves of Psyche. The discovery of the Orient and Chinese art led to the introduction of all kinds of fantastic figures and creatures - dragons, parasols, peacock feathers, pagodas and charming interpretations of foreign peoples.

Attributes of pastoral life, hunting and fishing and music were used more frequently. The superb bronze figure subjects of charming and smiling young women called Espagnolettes were found at the tops of the cabriole, legs of bureau tables. Forms generally lost their stiffness and began to grow softer and lighter.

The prevailing taste in cabinetwork during the Régence featured the use of veneering and the marquetry of brilliantly coloured woods combined with rich chased and gilded bronze appliques. Carving remained important for articles enriched with gilding and provided the groundwork for the succeeding Rococco style.

The Louis XV period, during which an enormous amount of furniture was produced, was disastrous to France and brought discredit to the monarchy. The techniques of the cabinetmaker achieved its highest standard of perfection.

Masterpieces of unrivalled elegance were produced. The essence of Louis XV cabinetwork is graceful suppleness of its lines and in its delicate mouldings rather than in its sumptuous elegance. The aristocracy and rich bourgeoisie were possessed with a mania for fine cabinetwork. Madame de Pompadour, the power behind the throne, became the driving force behind the production of all kinds of 'object d'art'. The general increasing wealth among the lower strata of society created a demand for less elaborate and less expensive furniture that frequently was as satisfying in design and execution as the Royal Court work.

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**'The Louis XV period, during which an enormous amount of furniture was produced, was disastrous to France and brought discredit to the monarchy.'**

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The term Rococco is now given to a particular type of asymmetrical ornament evolved from the Baroque and was used extensively between 1720 to 1760. The Rococco style led to a certain amount of protest against the excessive use of sinuous curves and the principles of asymmetry and the final phase of the Louis XV style marked by a more moderate use of curved lines and by ornamentation of a less fanciful quality.

It was the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum which resulted in a universal enthusiasm for the antique and the Rococco style began to go out of fashion. This evolution from the Rococco to the Neo-Classicism of the Louis XVI style began around 1760 and in fact was established before that king's reign and is often considered that the furniture of this time displaying this compromise is the finest of all French cabinetwork. Neo-Classicism was well established before the French Revolution and it was the architects that made full use of this new fashion. Gradually, by slight changes, the contour of the furniture was modified. The number of curves decreased and the remaining ones were less pronounced such as the commode designed with a straight front but still mounted on cabriole legs. Finally, when the transition was complete the structural lines were chiefly based on the rectilinear and the curves of the circle, oval and ellipse supplanted the sinuous and complicated curves of the Rococco.

So, after the middle of the eighteenth century the inspiration for French art was derived from antiquity. The first phase of the Neo-Classic was the lighter and graceful Louis XIV style, while the last phase was the pompous and more solemn Empire style in which imitation of the antique was observed with uncompromising vigour.

The manners and customs of society were much the same under Louis XVI as they had been under his predecessor,

Royalty, the aristocracy and the wealthy bourgeoisie were all eager for a life of luxury and pleasure. Everything had to be pleasing and convenient for this sophisticated society. All this was swept aside in 1789.

The French Revolution marked a paradox in French life. The destruction of the monarchy and the guillotining of Louis XVI signalled the end of the Ancien Régime and yet it led to the assumption of power by Napoleon that was autocratic as the reign as Louis XIV.

The empire style was established in Paris by the architects Percier and Fontaine at the time of Napoleon's coronation under the direction of Jacques Louis David who completely dominated the art of his time.

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century the art of Greece was gradually becoming better understood as the archaeologists continued to discover fresh material that clarified the study of all the ancient arts and the ideal of Grecian serenity was the predominating factor of the Directoire style. Antique articles made of bronze which had been brought to light at Pompeii were exactly copied - legs of tables and couches, tuolnes and folding seats were carefully studied and it was David who was chiefly responsible for imposing these new forms on furniture design.

The quiet simplicity of Greek art could not adequately express the spirit of Napoleon and his lofty conception of his power. The era required a more imposing and grandiose form of art as is found in Roman and Egyptian art and it was through Percier and Fontaine that this spirit of national pride and conquest was captured in their style of ornament which became the official style of the French Empire.

In 1812 Percier and Fontaine published a book entitled *Recueil de Decoration Intérieures* that presents in almost the style of a document of law their ideas on the Empire style. They expressed their strong contempt for the earlier styles of French art. They particularly despised eighteenth century French art while they were more lenient toward the art of sixteenth century France. They arrived at the dogmas that true beauty had been realised once and forever by the Greeks and Romans and that no one could improve on it. They preached the exact imitation of antiquity. *'It would be vain to seek for shapes preferable to those handed down to us by the ancients - in them can be seen the reign of the power of reason which more than anyone thinks is the true genius of architecture of ornamentation and furniture'*.

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**'The quiet simplicity of Greek art could not adequately express the spirit of Napoleon and his lofty conception of his power.'**


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This is a very brief analysis of French furniture design over a period of one hundred and fifty years. It leaves out a great deal of French history, the persecution of the protestants, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the ruinous French wars, the widespread poverty in rural France, the brutal episode of the French Revolution with the ascendancy of Robespierre, Danton and Marat but the historical inevitability of French design from Louis XIV to the Empire provides us with a context for perceiving our own times more clearly.

In comparison with the Rococco and Régence furniture the organic Californian woodwork exemplified by Sam Maloof is very low key and almost puritanical in its simplicity and yet Gary Knox Bennett would have us believe that he finds it necessary to repudiate such work. If California had experienced the kind of political, social and creatively dynamic episode that French cabinetmaking went through then I could find such rejection credible. But too often they seem techniques in marketing rather than a sound perception of history and the historical place that design has in its evolution. Marketing can be defined as *'recognising the demand or creating the demand for services and goods'*. An innocent enough definition in the abstract but in real life is quite amoral. The phrase *'creating the demand'* implies the repudiation of what has gone before, the repudiation of that which is so necessary and important.


Rather than go through the French experience perhaps it would be more humanising to allow that one's own personal design career should encompass both the organic and the mathematical, the contrast of robustness and delicacy, masculine and feminine shapes, yin and yang, the noble and the humble, the majestic and the modest, ravishing beauty and serene simplicity than get stuck in a fashion that simply doesn't say everything that can be said.

P.S. I would have liked to do some drawings showing the contrast between Rococco and Empire styles but a visit and purchase at the Sadubin bookshop would be more satisfying in the long term so you can remind yourself from the beautiful colour photographs just how good French cabinetmaking had been.

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# T • O • O • L S • A • L • E

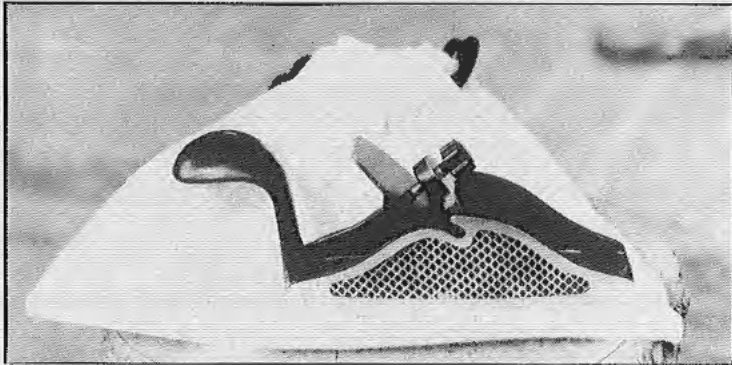
Prices were generally higher with no garage sale bargains. Most buyers I spoke to commented on this but all had found at least one item they couldn't live without and of course it was priced right.

The sellers were generally happy with the results, some making plans for next year. I'll see how I go for time in '90, have a feeling it'll be in short supply.

Lots of user tools were unsold at good prices, including marking gauges, bench planes, etc. To my knowledge no students attended even though posters were sent to Alan and George well beforehand and the sale postponed from February to enable them to be more aware of their needs.

Ray from Brisbane still has a supply of the toolchest poster from the back cover of *Fine Woodworking*, one was on the wall behind his spot but most people didn't look up at it. Ray's Bowsaw Tool Co also supplied the Squirreltail plane which was the door prize. This was not claimed so if you have ticket # 282 please claim it by October or it will be given to a deserving woodworker.

Many thanks to the owners of the Stanley tools in the display case, it was a rare treat for me to assemble so many desirable items in one location. Thanks also to everyone who attended for their good humour under the crowded conditions. If there is one next year it will definitely be bigger in every way. Henry.



*Unclaimed door prize seeks home.*

## CLASSIFIED ADZE

### Timber for sale

- Brushbox decking 19 mm random width.
- Water Gum 1" boards.
- Ivory wood 1" boards.
- Brush box good figure and colour 5 years dry.
- Water gum 15 years dry like coachwood in figure and colour.

Ring Henry 744 2822 a.h. or Gerard 92 3638.

**Wadkin RS lathe** : 8 1/4" x 66" gap bed, outside rest, 3 phase. Wt 1485 lbs. \$5,000. Will deliver Tilba to Brisbane and inland to ACT.

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all offers and tools/trades. Phone Henry: 744 2822.

**Free for the taking!** Two silky oak stems about 300 mm diam. and 3 metres long. Phone Sid Brooksey between 8.30 pm and 11 pm on 576 884.

# H O U S E H O L D H I N T S

## thickening very thin wood

Most people know about using a supporting board of, say, MDF underneath the workpiece when thickening thin boards.

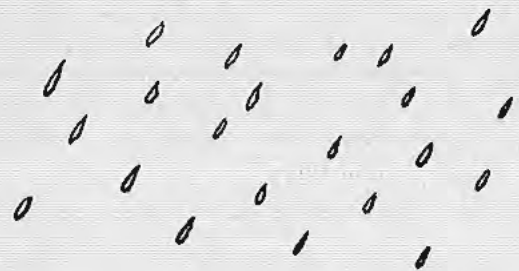
The limitation is that when the desired thickness is below 2 mm, the wood tends to flutter and of course it all goes up the chimney.

If you give the baseboard a light even spray of upholsterers' contact adhesive (such as 3M #76), allow it to dry for 5 to 10 minutes and then proceed, it will hold down the workpiece against fluttering. Its a good idea if you want, say, 1 mm, to thickness normally down to 4 mm, then, using the sprayed baseboard, take it to 2 mm, dust off well, then peel off the workpiece. It will come off with moderate ease if you've allowed enough drying time. A few bits of adhesive might adhere to the workpiece. Invert the workpiece end for end and, taking care not to allow dust in between, put it back on to the baseboard in the same position. Thickness to final dimension. At the second peel-off, you'll find it comes away more easily and little or no adhesive sticks to the workpiece.

Success depends on getting the right amount of adhesive on in the first place, allowing just the right drying time and working clearly.

I've thickened Tas. oak to an accurate 0.9 mm ( $\pm 0.05$ ) with this method without taking especial care.

David Lockwood.



## ACID REIGNS, O.K. ?

As an addendum to the whimsical and ever instructive David's hints for black-handed woodies I want to draw attention to the lemon.

Perhaps your house doesn't stock hydrochloric acid (HCl). Indeed I recall colourful days of my youth being darkened by someone's plaintive cry 'where's the acid now that I need it?'

But that was long ago and since then I've learned to get juiced. This is to say: the juice of a lemon (that's a one n. lemon) removes wood black from your hands.

Richard Vaghan.

by Mike Darlow

Some months before it happened I forecast the demise of *Craft Australia*. I did not have foreknowledge of the event, but the signs were writ large in the magazine's presentation and content. Although its last few covers where a mish-mash, it was the standard of its text which was surely its greatest shortcoming.

I have no objection to writers using long or obscure words if they increase an article's precision or decrease its length. The failing with many of the contributions to *Craft Australia* was that they were written to impress rather than to entertain or inform. Why those who only have ideas enough for a paragraph feel impelled to ramble for several pages I cannot imagine, but that they were allowed to, possibly even encouraged to, is a clear example of the abrogation of editorial responsibility. Editors should be not be passive, should not be mere selectors and assemblers.

*Craft Australia* was also prone to print articles to which only a minute fraction of its readers could relate. It is pointless to write of craft works which are not illustrated or cannot be visualised, or to produce articles which fail to relate their text to their illustrations. Seminar, conference or workshop features are also futile unless written to be meaningful to those who did not attend. Yet articles with these major defects often appeared, further demonstrating an ignorance of their roles by both contributors and editor.

Much *Craft Australia* text was vapid and sycophantic, peppered with coy and meaningless quotes. The inexorable spread of interior decorator prose is a far greater threat to English than the debasement of words by politicians, sports reporters and the advertising fraternity.

*Craft Australia* was printed overseas to minimize production costs. By doing so the magazine surrendered the ability to deal with issues. There were half-hearted attempts to revive such old, harmless and discredited chestnuts as the art/crafts debate, but when a response cannot appear in under six months is it any wonder that the attempts were stillborn?

To its credit *Craft Australia* was not anti-intellectual, but the true spirit of intellectualism, the search for truth and the fearless promulgation of the truths thus found, is too hot a potato for all but the most confident editor. New truths tend to discredit old truths and their adherents. Truth sometimes hurts the careless, the misguided, the mediocre, the incompetent and the fraudulent. The Crafts Council of Australia, a committee drawn from committees, dependent on government and many disparate sources for its funding was, perhaps understandably, unable to bring itself to grab the tiger by the tail. The demise of *Craft Australia* shows that the paying public cannot sustain interest in a big-cat tamer who refuses to do more than poke a long stick through the bars.

*Craft Australia* was similar in form to *Craft* (Britain) and to *American Craft*. Admittedly it lacked some of the bite of the former and the glossier presentation and greater intellectual depth of the latter. However if, like *Craft Australia*, neither of these two magazines have achieved more than a fraction of their potential circulations even amongst committed crafts people, could there be a major reason? Could it be that the objectives and policies laid down by craft

councils for their magazines lack relevance; do not reflect the real concerns of contemporary craftspeople?

*Craft Australia* described craft events, featured craftspeople and their work, reviewed books and exhibitions, published historical research on the crafts: it perhaps saw its major role as recording the progress of craft in Australia. *Craft Australia* rarely transmitted any sense of involvement in the crafts because of its avoidance of truths and issues. Readers may ask, 'What truths and issues? Are there any of significance?' Here are a few.

1. Are the livelihoods of craftspeople who live by selling what they make undermined by those who have assured incomes, often from teaching, and can afford to exhibit on terms or sell at prices which are not truly viable? If so are there any solutions?
2. Is craft retailed in a proper way? For most, being a craftsperson results in long term financial sacrifice. Is the problem lack of management and marketing skills or is it that they cannot afford the time to implement them?
3. Are too many being trained for professional craft careers resulting in an oversupply and a vulnerability to the present retailing system? Should the funds being used to train craftspeople be in part diverted to generate more demand for craft?
4. 'Craft should be affordable to everybody' and 'everybody can do it' are still the twin ethos' of craft. The second is the lifeblood of those who derive their incomes by servicing hobby and therapy craft. Should professional craftspeople attempt to distance and separate what they do from these other forms?
5. In *Craft Australia* craft techniques were rarely described - perhaps it was thought that their description would sully the genteel image with the grime of manufacturing or the sweat of manual labour. Interestingly, exposure of the apparently infantile techniques of Jackson Pollock did not decrease the demand for his paintings. Much fine craft is dependent on technique and equipment developments: to fail to explain these developments surely lowers the public's potential for appreciation.
6. Is much of the work pictured in craft magazines bizarre ephemera or overt plagiarism?
7. The book review is under siege. Emasculation, perhaps in deference to advertisers, is widespread. The resultant reader disinterest then becomes an excuse to abolish what is in some craft magazines a lone bastion of thought and criticism.

*Craft Australia* will be missed, but not for long. Competition for the new and more vibrant *Craft Arts* was a factor in the demise, but that demise will not have been in vain if a new, more responsive publication arised from the ashes and if related magazines learn from *Craft Australia*'s mistakes.

Mike Darlow, aged 45, is a professional woodturner in Sydney. He employs five staff. He is the author of *The Practice of Woodturning*.



Paul Tiernan has recently been accepted as a full member of the Association. Here he introduces himself.

Working with wood has always been the thing I like to do. It hasn't always been my way of life. I discovered woodturning by accident. When I was a fitter and turner I had a 'foreign order' making strange pieces for a guy in the drawing office who was retiring. On the day he left he came down to thank me for making him a wood lathe and invited me to come and see the lathe in action. He made me a gift of four turned legs for a coffee table (which I still have - the legs, I mean). I was hooked. I then built my own lathe and bought a book. That was in 1981.

Since then I've completed a trade course in woodturning, left my job as a leading hand fitter and three years ago I started working as a woodturner, setting up a small workshop at home.

Woodturning is still the challenge for me that it was the first time I put a piece of wood in the lathe. When it stops being a challenge I'll stop turning.

At the moment my work is varied. I take on any job the lathe and I can handle, from didgeridoos to summerhouses. I turn for craft shops and galleries, for craft shows and exhibitions and I demonstrate the craft whenever I can. I like it that way, although nothing is ever quite as challenging as the next big bowl I turn. I like turning big pieces because the end result is always a surprise. I can't really explain the fascination of big pieces of timber except to say that I feel challenged by the size of the wood. For me it's a big responsibility to make a large piece - to get a finished bowl from a great lump of wood that can have anything inside it.

I like a lot of things about working with wood. I like the colours and the grains, the many different varieties, the textures and the smells. I like it when I get to the end of the day and there's a piece of me sitting on the shelf. I like it when someone else likes a piece enough to buy it. The only thing I don't like is cutting down the trees. I'd rather use the wood for something lasting and functional. I don't want to waste it.

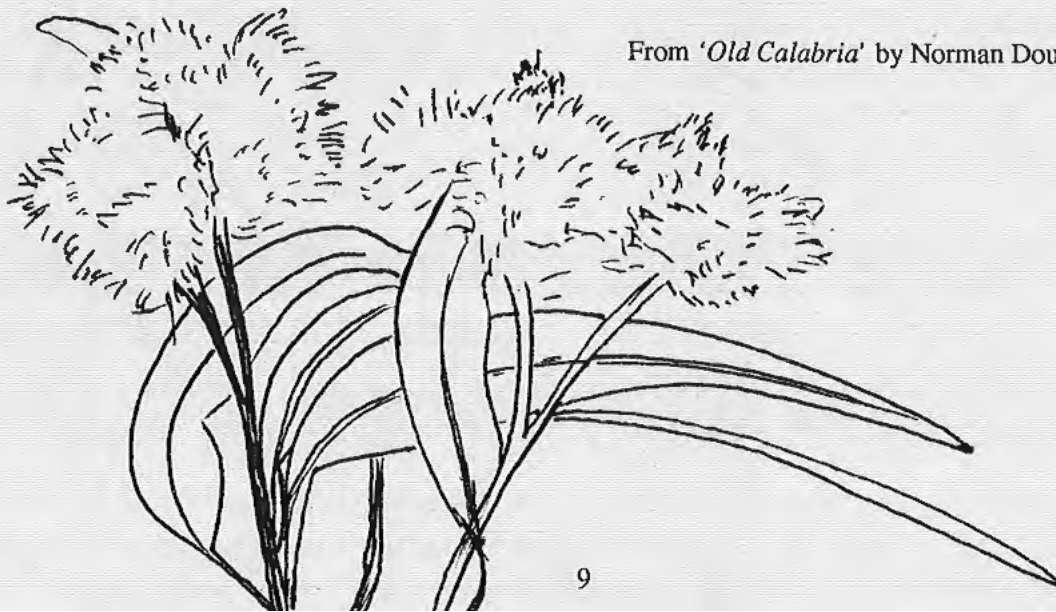
“You walk to this building from the station along an avenue of eucalypti planted some forty years ago. Detesting, as I do, the whole tribe of gum trees, I never lose an opportunity of saying exactly what I think about this particularly odious representative of the brood, this eyesore, this grey-haired scarecrow, this reptile of a growth with which a pack of misguided enthusiasts have disfigured the entire Mediterranean basin. They have now realised that it is useless as a protection against malaria. Soon enough they will learn that instead of preventing the disease, it actually fosters it, by harbouring clouds of mosquitoes under its scraggy so-called foliage. These abominations may look better on their native heath: I sincerely hope they do. Judging by the *'Dead Heart of Australia'* - a book which gave me a nightmare from which I shall never recover - I should say that a varnished hop-pole would be an artistic godsend out there.

But from here the intruder should be expelled without mercy. A single eucalypt will ruin the fairest landscape. No plant on earth rustles in such a horribly metallic fashion when the wind blows through those everlastingly withered branches; the noise chills one to the marrow; it is like the sibilant chattering of ghosts. Its oil is called 'medicinal' only because it happens to smell rather nasty; it is worthless as timber, objectionable in form and hue - objectionable, above all things, in its perverse, anti-human habits. What other tree would have the effrontery to turn the sharp edges of its leaves - as if these were not narrow enough already! - toward the sun, so as to be sure of giving at all hours of the day the minimum of shade and maximum of discomfort to mankind?

But I confess that this avenue of Policoro almost reconciled me to the existence of the anaemic Antipodeans. Almost; since for some reason or other (perhaps on account of the insufferable foul nature of the soil) their foliage is here thickly tufted; it glows like burnished bronze in the sunshine, like enamelled scales of green and gold. These eucalypti are unique in Italy.

Gazing upon them, my heart softened and I almost forgave the gums their manifold iniquities, their diabolical thirst, their demoralizing aspect of precocious senility and vice, their peeling bark suggestive of unmentionable skin diseases, and that system of redication which is nothing short of a scandal on this side of the globe ...”

From *'Old Calabria'* by Norman Douglas, 1915



# ON THE ROAD : KARMA AND BUSINESS SUCCESS

A majority of the seminars that I teach at woodworking shows deal with various aspects of the successful operation of a business. My audience is usually about 60 per cent people who are already in some form of woodworking or construction business, 30 per cent people who are woodworking hobbyists, or are in some other field and are thinking of getting into woodworking as a business, 5 per cent who are just curious and another 5 per cent who won't tell me why they came (that's ok, I don't mind).

One thing that impresses me about most of my groups is that they have a real interest in learning how to set up and operate a business so that it actually survives and makes money. In most areas of painful endeavour, this thirst for practical business knowledge would be considered to be quite an ordinary condition and not worthy of special notice. With woodworkers, however, it becomes an admirable attitude because many of them, bless their creative and clever hearts, don't have the faintest idea of how to run a business.

Now, since I'm in woodworking myself, and since I have a keen interest in the general health and advancement of woodworking, I find it very encouraging that so many other people are also interested in the survival and well being of this noble occupation. Woodworkers seem to lose their sense of financial reality at an early age; I think mine vanished at about age four. It seems that we get enthralled by this stuff that comes from a tree and get all caught up in endless design possibilities, notions of joinery and the fabulous world of equipment and gadgetry that turns our fantasies into reality. Sometimes, I even think that we like the machines more than what we're making with them. With machines running and chips flying, the shop almost seems to become a living thing which nourishes our psyche as well as our bank account. Did I say bank account? Yes, well, back to reality.

When I started in woodworking, I did it the way it seemed to be done at the time. You got together a few tools, a few ideas about how things are built and announced to the world via word of mouth or a very inexpensive ad that you were in the business. License? What's that? Business training? Come on, give me a break! This was sort of like free-form business; you just make it up as you go along and see what happens. If you ate all your oatmeal, never kicked your sister and had generally good karma, it would all work out to your advantage and your business would succeed.

Well, I had a sneaking suspicion that one day, all those thousands of peanut butter & jelly sandwiches on white bread that I ate for breakfast as a kid would catch up with me in the form of bad karma and, sure enough, when I merrily waltzed into the business of woodworking, it did. I was always busy with lots of work and my customers were very pleased with the results (even though there were times when I secretly questioned whether I really knew what I was doing), but I had a hard time making ends meet financially. Being an open minded person, however, I began to think after a while that perhaps karma and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches had nothing to do with the difficulties of making a business profitable. Perhaps it was really because I was disorganized and had no systems or plans for anything in the way of running a business successfully.

Many woodworkers are superbly capable and inventive in their craft, and we marvel at their products skills required to survive and prosper as far as the bottom line and the financial future are concerned. This is why I'm glad to see so many woodworkers making an effort to learn these vital things before they're financially forced into some other occupation.

Fortunately, I managed to get a handle on it before my business went under, but it would have been a lot easier had I gotten [sic] some structured training in the operation of a business before or soon after I started out, rather than years later. An uncontrollable addiction to vacations and good food, however, turned me around and I learned that it's perfectly acceptable to be both a woodworker and a businessman. Apparently, a lot of others are discovering that also, judging by the number of people who go to business development seminars and, even more importantly, come up with good questions about how to improve their business.

To ask a good question, you have to almost know the answer, and I find it encouraging to see that so many woodworkers these days are aware of the other skills necessary to ensure that they can build a solid business, live in reasonable comfort, have secure tomorrows and continue to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches without fear of failure.

Peter Good.

Taken from The Bay Area Woodworkers Association Newsletter, February, 1989.