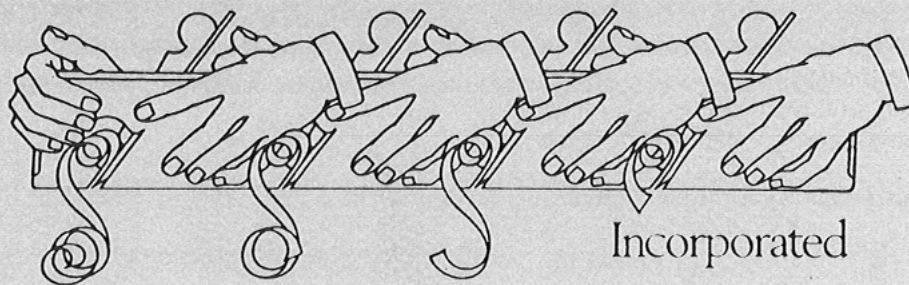


WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION OF N.S.W.



Cuppacumbalong Revisited

As previously advertised David Upfill Brown will speak to us on Monday 4 December at the Power House Museum (7.30 pm).

David will be showing slides of his recent exhibition at Cuppacumbalong which will be the next best thing to actually being there. I was fortunate enough to be there and could not resist a short comment to whet everyone's appetite.

David's work both in quality and quantity is truly amazing. Some twenty items were exhibited (some of them duplicated) from small bowls and trays to a large chaise longue.

This amount of work (although David does have some assistance in his workshop) would by current output of our Group suffice for about five or six members. Add to this the superb overall quality of craftsmanship and excellence in design and this puts forward a challenge to us all.

I will not attempt to go into detail on the particular items as David will no doubt do this for us at his talk to which we all look forward with great anticipation.

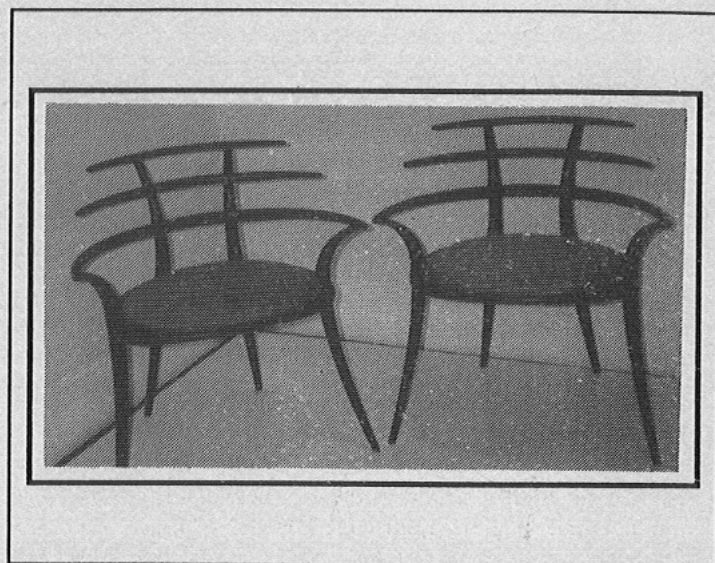
A topic I wish to raise at December's meeting is that of subscriptions. Quite a large number of members are very tardy in subscription renewals, necessitating the ring-around to literally prise the amounts due from seemingly unwilling members.

Surely your committee are entitled to better support than this. At the risk of stating the obvious, we cannot continue to run the outfit without funds. Those who do not pay up will force an increased subscription from renewing members to meet our outgoings. Please renew your 1989 subscriptions now and pay your 1990 dues in January next year.

There is a possibility that our next major exhibition will be at the State Library in June of next year. Nothing definite yet but sounds are encouraging. In the meantime would all you regular exhibitors (and some new ones we hope) let me know if you will support such an exhibition? The State Library in Macquarie Street is a superb venue (possibly better than the Opera House) and the staff concerned are most supportive and cooperative.

Laurie Oliver.

FROM THE CHAIR



Chairs by David Upfill-Brown.

WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION OF N.S.W.

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	14 Fred Lane, Lilyfield 2040	

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

NEXT MEETING

7.30 pm Monday 4 December

Power House Museum
seminar Room, lower level

Guest speaker: David Upfill-Brown

Watch this space for notification of meeting dates for 1990.

Remember: our February meeting will be our A.G.M.

Newsletter Deadlines for February 1990 newsletter:

8 January 1990

OUR LAST MEETING :



I'm a bit dotty about wood-carving and old books, so the visit to the State Library was right up my street. I must admit to feeling guilty about not knowing of the marvellous work of Charles Sherline in the William Shakespeare Tercentenary Memorial Library. I earn most of my living from woodcarving but somehow I never seem to find the time to ferret out the many treasures that must exist around the city.

So I'm extremely grateful to John Wright of the State Library for making the opportunity for all those interested to go along and see the library and the collection of old books he put together for us.

I won't go over the details of the carving in the Shakespeare Library as John's article in the last newsletter described it much better than I could. All I'll say is that I was not disappointed by it after having my interest excited by his words. One of the frustrations of learning carving in Australia is that it is difficult to find sufficient good work to study, to learn from and to measure one self by. The work in a lot of the commonly available books is of an appallingly low standard, so it's vitally important to be able to see truly professional quality, traditional work.

The book display was equally impressive and equally important. I'm sure the State Library is a much neglected resource. The books John assembled for us were just from a quick run around the shelves, so I can only wonder at what other treasures lie gathering dust in neglected corners. We saw large format books of measured drawings of French and English furniture, books on carving, bound volumes of old woodworking magazines and many more I can't remember. As so much knowledge of so many trades has disappeared in recent years, collections of old books such as those in the State Library grow in importance.

I have had occasion over almost 20 years to phone the library and ask for help with different references and the staff have always been extremely helpful. I mentioned this because I suspect many people won't know the service exists.

Unfortunately, after we dallied over the books and then had our meeting, there wasn't enough time left for John to show us over the Stack Building where the majority of the books are shelved. He did, however, take us over to the new library building and briefly explain how the library reference system worked.

It was an evening I enjoyed very much and I thank John for the effort he made to make it all possible.

- Bob Howard.



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FROM THE SECRETARY

Minutes of the meeting Monday 9 October 1989 at the NSW State Library.

26 members attended. Apologies from Laurie Oliver. Nick Hill held the chair. Richard Vaughan held the pen. Acceptance of the minutes of the last meeting was proposed by Jim Littlefield, seconded by Mike Retter.

The treasurer reported \$406 in the bank and \$60 in the investment account with accounts from the October Newsletter yet to be paid. It was hoped that commissions from sales at the craft show would fund the next (this) newsletter although that exhibition is being funded by the exhibitors and not the Association.

Full and punctual payment of subscriptions in January should finance the newsletter for next year.

David Upfill-Brown will be giving us an illustrated talk at the next meeting. His exhibition at Cuppacumalong was well worth the drive.

There was a call for ideas for interesting meetings such as this one. If anyone has any ideas at all for a guest speaker or interesting venue please get in touch with a member of the committee. Henry suggested renowned American tool collector Ken Roberts who will be in Australia in February.

There was also a call for ideas for workshops, encouraged by the success of Tony Hansen's one day workshop.

Advertising is the best method of financing the newsletter. Some 200 are printed at a cost of around \$500 per issue. A quarter page will cost a relevant supplier a miserly \$45 - members can help by suggesting this to suppliers and passing on expressions of interest to the editor.

Henry suggested the writing of an article on a supplier in exchange for their buying advertising. Any offers?

Mike Retter offered the mailing list from the Interior Designer's exhibition. Richard Moxham is in the process of setting up 'Cognito' for the marketing of woodwork and other crafts. He spoke of this process and the need for marketing, having just returned from 6 weeks in Tasmania categorising the work available.

The meeting expressed sincere thanks to John Wright for his interesting and very informative talk, for showing us around the Library and for his hospitality.

- Richard Vaughan.

The Editor,

It was pleasing to see the reference by Michael Gill to the service that Colin Raymond gave to the trade over the years. Bearing in mind that Raymond Veneers did [sic] panel work since 1939 - it did not deter Colin paying attention to the craftsman, professional or the amateur. He sold veneers by single sheets or by the bundle and he trusted everyone. I have seen bundles prepared for some character in the bush who had sent \$25 for some samples and finished up with enough to be wasted for years and years. Anyway I would firstly like to reinforce Michael's sentiments.

Secondly, if there is a member who knows anything about bundles of miscellaneous veneers stowed away on the top floor (behind some sheet iron) and prepaid prior to cataloguing could they let me know. Some had my name on them in chalk - you see they were mine and they have been stolen and I have lost a deal of money. Colin feels bad about it as well because he trusted those who borrowed his key while he was unwell. Any clues can be conveyed to the undersigned.

Paul Gregson

Gregson's Conservation of Antique Furniture (02) 875 4790

SALES TAX AND THE WOODWORKER

If you were paying attention to what Paul Keating announced in the last budget speech or if you carefully perused the papers the next day, then you may be aware of changes to the threshold of sales tax liability. If you didn't, then you probably are blissfully unaware of this change.

It was announced that the threshold was to be raised from the previous level of \$12 000 to a much increased \$50 000. Small manufacturers and wholesalers who are below the threshold are not required to charge or collect sales tax on their products and cannot claim sales tax exemption on their inputs: i.e. materials and machinery etc. The catch was that this would not take effect until the appropriate legislation was passed by the parliament.

As I have to charge tax at 20% on my toys and as my production is below the threshold, this change interested me greatly. I was finally advised at the end of October by my local federal member that the legislation was passed and effective from 5 October. But did Treasury bother to let the taxation department know? What's more, did the taxation department, who were aware of the budget announcement, bother to set in motion any plans to accomplish the changeover? It appears not. I have made several enquiries to the tax man and have been told that the legislation is awaiting royal assent (perhaps someone is keeping this a secret too) and that in any case I am still liable for tax until I have my certificate cancelled. To do this I have to request in writing for this to happen (which I have now done) and then wait for their official notification. The last time I wrote to the taxation department for a ruling on sales tax rates, they took 18 months to reply.

So it appears that I and many others will still be forking out while the bureaucracy take their own good time. Even though the legislation was passed on 4 October, it appears that we must continue paying until someone gets their act together.

I imagine there could be other members of the WWA of NSW who currently hold a sales tax certificate and who will be affected by the changes to the threshold. A bit more noise might get the cogs moving a little bit faster. Perhaps a whisper in you local member's ear? - Bob Scott.

hints on bleaching

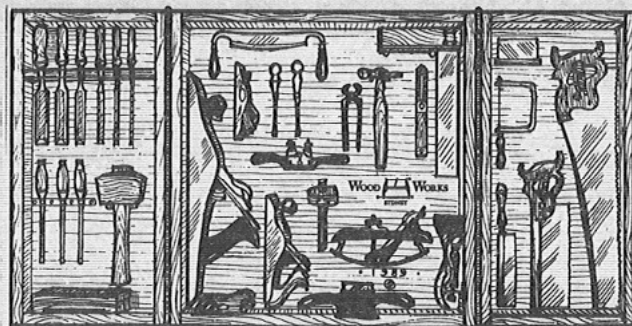
I am often asked questions on bleaching my bowls and tables, as if there is some mystery.

The answer is very simple: Watty1 bleaching solution parts A and B available in 1 litre or 5 litre containers (ammonia and hydrogen peroxide).

Application: saturate finished piece with ammonia solution then immediately apply hydrogen peroxide. Wear protective clothing: gloves, mask etc as ammonia solution is very strong. Wipe off excess and allow to dry. Lightly sand and repeat process. After the piece dries the second time wash down with water using a sponge and soft brush. If the piece is not sufficiently bleached after two or three applications then the timber is not suitable for this process. Experiment with offcuts to see what will and won't work. I usually bleach outside, preferably in a breeze. The ammonia will sting your eyes. Be very careful.

- Grant Vaughan.

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T U R N

by Mike Darlow

The most important exhibit in the 1988 International Turned Objects Show was, I believe, that by Gail Redman. It was a newell post and six balusters, much like those many of us have in our homes. Was Redman's exhibit a revolt against the implicit demand by those who stage woodturning exhibitions and contests that we should all be striving for and must continually achieve design originality? I don't know but I am certainly getting jack of trying to force out something new to other's deadlines. My annoyance may of course be due to my own inadequacy, to my being unable to, on demand, generate radical new works which to me have integrity and are not merely plagiaristic or bizarre. Yet from looking at the work of other long time turners, I can take comfort that they too seem to be burnt out, even apparently content to rest on their laurels.

Let us look at the work of the new breed. It is surely more original, more vibrant. Alas, my major conclusion is that the apparent originality of their work is inversely proportional to its woodturning content. Any originality has little to do with woodturning and much to do with painting, laminating, carving or mixed media. The work of this new breed is surely a sort of sculpture which happens to have some woodturning content, sometimes less than 5% of total production time. Restrict these young turks to a fully-turned piece from integral chunks of wood and a tin of clear polish and almost all will be as bereft as I am. Even to them the twin constraints of the circularity inherent in the turning process and the non-plastic nature of the material are massive hurdles on the track to real turning originality.

Woodturning is high speed circular carving. It is efficient at:

1. Smoothing spindles.
2. Producing circular ~~spigots~~ for insertion into drilled holes.
3. Producing circular sockets and hollowing.
4. Decorating turned forms with beads, hollows, V cuts and geometric and complex mouldings.

These attributes have determined woodturning's place as a relatively minor service trade for the past 2500 years. They continue to do so now and will, I believe, in the future. They have determined woodturning's two major roles: to produce domestic woodware and supply turned components to builders and furniture makers. The turnings produced to satisfy these markets were either designed by the turner's clients or were designed by turners who took their stylistic leads from architecture or furniture design, either contemporary or earlier.

The predominant (but not the most practised) design style of this century has been modernism. The desire to utilise and develop new technologies was allied with a philosophical determination to eliminate wasteful and inappropriate ornament. The work of James Prestini, the bowls of Art Carpenter and, no doubt, the turnings of others, especially in Europe, reflect this modernist ethos. Inevitably, alas, modernism was exploited as a way to cheaper unit costs by

merely streamlining away the sculptural precision and visual delight of detail and decoration but without undertaking the fundamental redesign necessary to achieve a coherent modernist piece. This bastardisation also facilitated a switch to automatic wood turning and, with the substitution of other materials for wood, the decimation of professional hand turning.

Inevitably a reaction has set in but the philosophical logic and economic realities of modernism remain and will continue to do so. Much contemporary architecture is therefore modernist but made-over with such supposedly humanising devices as plastic applied lattice or Doric porticos. In company, trade woodturning has experienced a modest revival, for post modernism has spawned a geometric playfulness. The Euclidean basic volumes, the sphere, the cylinder and the cone were mixed and matched and then sometimes mixed again into a watery classicism. But paradoxically this playfulness was not carried over into the woodturners shop. The dusty drudge was now required to work with great precision, like a patternmaker, for a sphere which isn't, ain't. Not only was entasis out but with it the Ruskinian imperfections and playfulness of the happy artisan.

'What I am against is the tyranny of originality whereby work which is not overtly original is decried or ignored and whereby work which is judged to be original is not then further criticised.'

The post World War II economic and sociological changes have enabled and stimulated a desire among those not stupified by the moving wallpaper to utilise leisure time actively. Woodturning has and is proving attractive to many for it utilises a variable and available natural material, uses a technology which is interesting yet not too demanding, requires manual skills which are not overly difficult, and combines these with the individual's design skills to relatively quickly produce supposedly desirable and saleable works combining beauty and utility. Furthermore woodturning flavours all this with the romantic associations of a Morrisian inspired yesteryear and a Nimbinistic escape from the rat race.

By the early 1970s sufficient foundation had been laid. Lift-off. The two Dale Nish books were enormously influential in revealing new possibilities. Initially the craft woodturning movement (a direct descendant of the domestic woodware role) was confined within the bounds of artistic woodturning (so-called). The wood was emphasised, the grains and colours featured, its defects glorified. Existing techniques were developed and refined, notably hollow turning by David Ellsworth. Even the ingrained instinctive

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TALKS

reach for the sandpaper was questioned and overt tooling was rediscovered, notably by Mark Lindquist. These movements seem to have been American led, perhaps because of a more open and more rewarding market (some may say more gullible).

Perhaps some of those who also embrace a craft rather than an art feel that they are most suited to the former or even - and this may be subconscious - consider that they lack the qualities to succeed as an artist. Whatever the reasons, art continues to attract. It may be the stupendous prices. The obvious confirmation that income is unrelated, nay, inversely proportional, to one's work's benefit to a society which glorifies its Gordon Gekkos above all has not only buried the Morrisian ideal of making craft affordable to all, it has mesmerised woodturners with a vision of a turned aboriginal pot of gold into whose lid is carved 'art'. Perhaps and, especially in America, the formal art training of some turners will be vindicated if they can make it and be recognised artists. There has thus been a movement to develop woodturning into art. There was even a major woodturning seminar in England in 1988 entitled 'From Craft into Art'.

The prime movers of the movement to force the round peg of woodturning into the whatever shaped hole of art are obviously those who aspire to work in this latter area. Their work represents a minute, nay an infinitesimally small proportion of total woodturning production. For these glitterati the trends that they are pushing are indeed sensible. For their work is not generally accepted as sculpture by the art establishment, by those whom society allows to dictate what is art and what is not. Some of these glitterati are happy to accept the alas now devalued perjorative of master turner but hide behind 'well, he's not really a woodturner' when the narrowness of their abilities is exposed. Yet the profiles and influence of these heroic figures would suggest that they were major producers to those ignorant of woodturning.

From the foregoing some may imply that I am against the efforts being made to use woodturning in the creation of sculpture, am against the striving for originality. I am not. What I am against is the tyranny of originality whereby work which is not overtly original is decried or ignored and whereby work which is judged to be original is not then further criticised. This occurs because of a confusion of criteria.

The majority of woodturnings produced have traditionally been judged on modest criteria: suitability for purpose, appropriateness of wood selected, quality of workmanship or whether the design is pleasing. In sculpture and art most of these modest criteria are still relevant but a further and major criterion is added, that of the quality and originality of the concept. If one attempted to judge quantitatively, then a traditional table leg might be marked out of 100 but a sculptural piece might be marked out of 150. This does not exclude the possibility that a good table leg could rate a higher mark than a poorly executed sculpture of hackneyed concept but, in the main, comparison between these two classes of object is pointless because of the fundamental

difference in aspiration between the craftsman and the artist.

Woodturning exhibitions, often with prizes, are increasing in number. They are tending to be divided into classes so that more prizes can be offered. Yet the inherent, perhaps unconscious assumption by those who organise and those who judge is that originality of concept is the major criterion for success. Turning content is seemingly ignored and may constitute less than 5% of total production time of some pieces. There will be no classes for more modest pieces, pieces purely turned, often in batches or even mass produced, pieces which form the backbone of turning. The high exposure of the few successful sculptural turnings alas lures the mass of lathe owners who not only lack the artistic abilities but see no need to learn the basic turning skills and hence become increasingly frustrated at the growing piles of decorative firewood. The lack of commitment to learning the basic skills and the unrealistic expectation of apotheosis through art turning all too often seem to be encouraged by commercial interests.

In woodturning the tail seems to be wagging the dog. Shouldn't it be the other way round?

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TRAINING, THE FUTURE AND WHERE'S THE CRYSTAL BALL?

'Although most WWA members, professional or amateur, tend to work somewhat out of the mainstream, we are nevertheless affected by the changing nature of our trades in their so called more commercial aspects.

The quality of the workmanship in all the objects with which we come into daily contact is a fair measure of both the spiritual and material attainment of our culture. It therefore behoves us to pay keen attention to the training of those who will be making those objects. Like all trades, cabinet making is in a state of flux at the moment and with this in mind, I asked Alan Perry, TAFE cabinet making teacher for an idea of the changes in train. His comments follow.'

Where do the apprentices come from in the furniture industry? During the last three years I have visited 53 students in 49 furniture factories to ascertain what they are doing for the other four days, whether the course is relevant and what changes can be introduced.

32%	come from firms with	2 - 5 people
22%		6 - 10 people
22%		11 - 15 people
24%		16 or over (min. 25 max 70)

Types of work undertaken at these factories:

domestic furniture, free standing,	stock design	10	factories
"	"	custom built	4
restoration and reproduction		9	"
kitchen		5	"
commercial, office freestanding	stock design	7	"
"	"	custom built	7
others, display, audio visual, yachts, coffins,			
billiard tables, industry component		7	"

It is very encouraging to see the growth in restoration and reproduction with 2 - 3 in each class from that area, with some very nice work being completed by young people. I feel the present course at TAFE covers, as much as possible, the broad training in skills required by a cabinetmaker in the wide range of factory types.

It is of concern that, because of lack of competent tradespeople, some students are receiving very little training other than at a TAFE college. In some cases it is doubtful as to the qualifications of people who control apprentices, with a lot of places only concerned in training for a narrow range of skills, as required by each factory.

Some changes that should be addressed are: more machining skills, particularly in exposure to computer aided draughting and manufacture; more emphasis on plan reading and the preparation of manufacturing instructions; hands on experience with computer costing, job and stock control and detailing. But we must not lose sight of the fact that, to operate these hi-technology processes, basic training is essential to use them effectively.

Where do all the trained people go?

In a recent survey conducted by Mr G. Howard, teacher of cabinetmaking, it was found that:

- 60% of students have left the furniture trade after 10 years of completing a trade course
- 40% of students have left the furniture trade after 5 years of completing a trade course

The reasons given are mainly wages, with conditions and lack of career path the other reason. Quite a lot of people are working in the carpentry and building area, where wages are higher. However a large number have left the trade completely, with the police force, fire brigade, truck driving, motel management etc as some of the many new occupations. With all the money spent on training this appears a great waste. However, we may have to accept that it is part of a social pattern to change careers every 5 - 6 years.

What do we need to do?

Get out the crystal ball. In the next few years, the furniture industry will go through, with a lot of other trades, award restructuring. The way people work will be dramatically changed.

The national furniture industry training council will be conducting a 'skill audit' to determine what skills are required and should come up with a possible career structure to encourage young people to take up the trade and continue to study and update their skills for their entire working life.

The industry must become involved in encouraging young people to take up a career in the furniture industry and providing a climate so that they will stay there.

TAFE must be ready to respond to several levels of study and provide short courses to update and refresh a highly motivated work force, as the government moves to impose a training guarantee (levy) on the industry.

A possible career structure for students could contain basic training in the general furniture trade with specialisation in their chosen craft, the TAFE trade certificate being the qualification required. Then a period of 3 - 4 years of consolidation with a higher trades certificate or management training certificate could become the accepted qualification.

This would allow the movement of people to the middle management or technical level, with a further course of study at a CAE or university, culminating in a higher diploma in furniture studies, containing industrial design skills and production and research components, to progress to the next level on the career structure.

- Alan Perry, TAFE cabinetmaking teacher

P.S. Australia came second in cabinetmaking in the world Work Skills finals in Birmingham, England. The contestant came from South Australia.

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A RECYCLED BENCH

The way the economy is at the moment I think it's good to have a second string to my bow. Thus I have begun collecting old dentist's equipment. If the bum falls out of woodworking I'll start pulling teeth. Or perhaps another way of looking at it is that after the years of association with pain, harmony requires that this dentist's gear should spend some time associated with pleasure.

Either way, I have discovered that the need for dentists to always present a good, modern hi-tech image to the public results in a constant surplus of old, unwanted gear, much of which ends up either as scrap metal or on the tip. The dentist's actually pay to have it all carted away.

And this dentist's equipment is magnificently made and just the ticket for various woodworking applications.

My primary interest was to get the hydraulic base of an old chair to use as the base for a woodcarving bench. Woodcarving, unlike cabinetmaking, often calls for a variable height bench (or a very sore back), and one that swivels and locks would be an added bonus.

If it is also tilted that would be close to woodcarving heaven.

The dentist's chair can do all this, as we all know, and it's solid enough to not really need bolting down. The only hard bit is that you have to be able to bring yourself to dismantle the chair that sits on the base if you want to get the tilt mechanism.

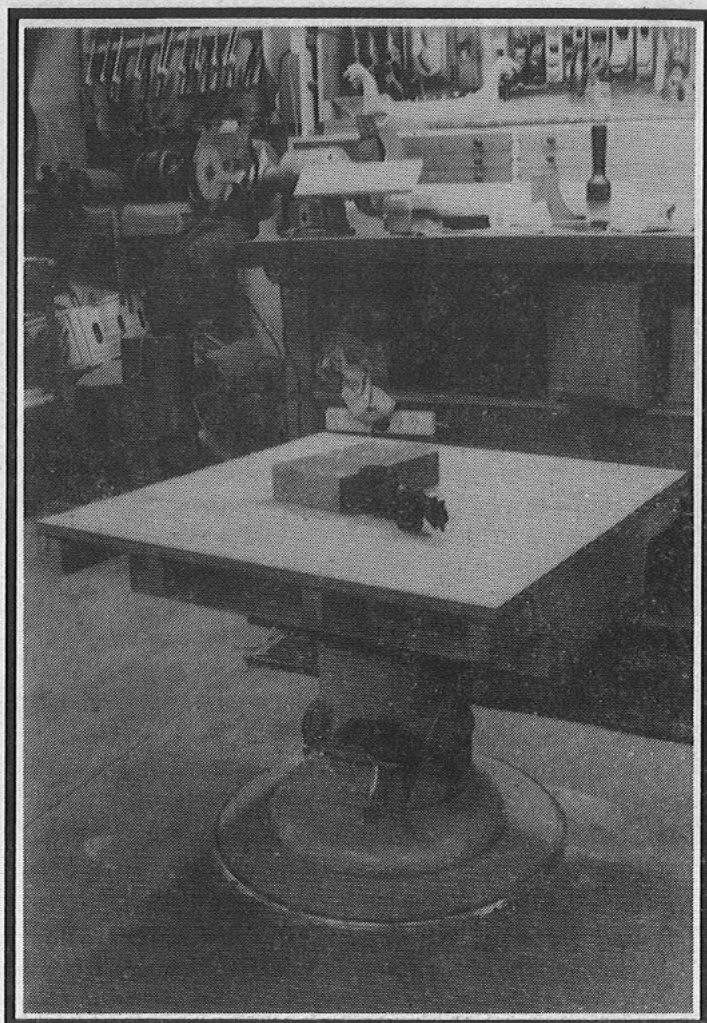
Mine is a twin ram hydraulic system that goes low enough for me to kneel on and saw or to chest height for standing up while carving. Similar chairs can be obtained from Jack Rode at William Green Dental Supplies (phone 638 6222) for about \$250 to \$260. Or you could try other companies in the yellow pages. I phoned all the larger ones and William Green was the only one that I found that regularly sold them. I built my top up quite a bit to extend the upper range of the table as that is more important for my work than the lower. As pictured, it does not have the tilt mechanism on it as I still haven't been able to bring myself to destroy the chair. It really is that beautiful.

I also have a pair of dentist's lights mounted on the heavy wheeled x-ray bases. The lights are on articulated arms and so can be moved and tilted every which way. But they are big and clunky and the lights need to be replaced. Dental lights are focussed down to mouth size and are very complicated as they have to provide light but no heat. I intend to rip the innards out of the lights and wire them up to take a regular bulb. The lights costs me \$30 for the pair and the bases about \$80 each (which includes having the lights fitted to them).

I have had no need to explore the possibilities of other dental gear - all the cabinets, the drills, the tools and so on - but I daresay there are bargains to be had there too.

The thing is that there is absolutely no demand for most of it and so it just gets trashed. Only the chairs are in demand so they command a price. But they sure are worth every penny.

- Bob Howard.



CRAFT SHOW '89 STOP PRESS

Superb work once again.

Good to see Grant Vaughan with absolutely stunning work, much admired by James and Margaret Chiswell from Chiswell Furniture who said 'I must have a piece of this guy's work'.

Space this year seems a bit tight and my favourite piece is 'a cabinet made by Gayl Leake'. The only way I can describe this piece is love at first sight and it makes one take a very hard look at the cheque book balance.

Today is day one and sales are looking very encouraging. Already Geoff Hague has a commission for two \$500+ stools and Bob Scott is madly wrapping superb Toys which are fast disappearing. Tony Kenway is as impressive as ever with a cabinet made out of 'Kwilla', a timber I thought was used mainly for kitchen bench tops. This timber is absolutely majestic in the hands of such a master craftsman.

Many many thanks to Nick Hill for hours of organisation which always pays off for everyone concerned.

- Anthony Hansen.

Books have always been my boon companions, friends in need, educators, entertainers. The thrill of being spoken to by those I've never met, perhaps from other cultures or other centuries, is not dulled by time or re-reading. Familiarity has bred respect. The material luxury, too, of opening a cover for the first time, perhaps lingering over the frontispiece, then delving among the pages (ah, scent of ink on paper!), to become lost among word pictures and ideas barely caged by tightly but lightly constructed sentences ...

I ramble. But what I speak of here is akin to the thrill I feel when picking up a favourite plane when the magic of that cast and machined and finally well-loved object begins to impart some of its mystery to me.

Thence to the point of this piece. I expect that many woodworkers, like me, have learned a deal of their trade from that most useful tool, the book.

Whether we have been trained by others, formally or informally, or are self-taught woodworkers, (usually a bit of all the above), our trades are so broad in their scope that probably only books can fill the inevitable gaps that even the best training will leave. True, nothing teaches like experience, but how much richer is that learning when experience brings together the many strands of theory we have gleaned from our reading?

Over the years I've collected a large number of books on cabinet making, joinery and boat building. More recently I've begun to concentrate on rather older books, specifically written for the trades and dating mostly from the turn-of-the-century to the second world war.

This seems to have been a particularly prolific period for this sort of book and, it seems to me, the books are notable for their readability, thoroughness and intelligence. By intelligence I mean not only a clear exposition of whatever the subject may be, but an assumption by the authors of a fair degree of ability and wit on the part of the reader that, lacking in many modern books, makes them so tedious.

There may be, in fact, historical lessons to be drawn from this. Probably the level of literacy among the tradesman of this period was as high as it had ever been and, coupled with the desire for self-improvement and 'getting on', a good market was created for this sort of 'treatise'. With the war and subsequent social changes the trades were viewed in a different light. With increased production and lower unit costs, it was probably inevitable that workmanship should decline. It is also arguable that from this period the social status of the trades also declined as better paid positions in the professions and in bureaucracy proliferated. After all, working with one's hands is a dirty occupation, quite literally.

As a consequence, most books on the subject of, say, furniture making or joinery since the war have been written for the amateur woodworker, the spiritual descendant of the tradesman of old who happens to be earning his or her living doing something else.

Fortunately some of these old books are now being re-printed. And no wonder! Look into some of them and realise that, yes, indeed, the wheel was invented some time ago.

One of the best of the reprints is *Modern Practical Joinery* by George Ellis, first printed in 1902 and now published by Stoddart and Son Ltd. in softcover. This book is available from Leon Sadubin's 'Woodworks' in Thornleigh. I have seen the companion volume to this, as far as I know not yet reprinted, called *Modern Practical Carpentry*, with fascinating sections on wooden scaffolding and centring for bridges and tunnels. Anachronistic, but amazing stuff.

Another excellent reprint in softcover is *A Treatise on Stairbuilding and Handrailing* by W & A Mowat. This was an English publication of 1908, now available from the Linden Publishing Company of Fresno, California, and available from the catalogue of Garrett Wade. This book covers everything from the simplest straight staircase to circular stairs for passenger ships, as well as an extensive section on plane and solid geometry.

Incidentally, all the older books on joinery I have come across have extensive chapters on geometry and usually mechanics as well. These often look complicated but are eminently practical, offering elegant and 'simple' solutions to difficult problems.

As for those books not in print, well, keep your eyes peeled. They turn up in second hand bookshops, market stalls, fêtes and so on. I have a set of six small volumes entitled *Joinery and Carpentry*, published by the New Era Publishing Co. of London. No date, but they bear an imprint, 'Book Production War Economy Standard'. They are excellent books and were intended as 'pocket books' for the tradesman. They are hard covered and measure 7 1/2 x 5 inches, with nicely rounded corners to prevent dog-earing. A friend bought these for me in Brisbane for \$90. I have seen another set in a good second hand bookstore in Mt. Victoria for \$15 or \$20 more.

Another fine book found at a market is *Modern Carpentry* by Fred Hodgson, unfortunately only one volume of two. It is an American book published in 1906 and contains such delightful testimonials as '*Your book, Modern Carpentry, second volume, is a dandy. I have got a lot of good things out of it. I would not take \$100 for it if I could not buy another. Good luck to you.*' James E. Weeks, San Francisco, California. Presumably Mr. Weeks would have found the book useful in re-building the city after the 1906 'quake.

I cannot conclude without recommending two books rather different to those just mentioned. They are *The Wheelwright's Shop* by George Sturt (Cambridge University Press) and *From Tree to Sea* by Ted Frost (Terence Dalton Ltd). Both discuss fairly thoroughly technical aspects of their respective trades (wheelwrighting and shipwrighting) but they are much more, being both redolent with social history and the flavour of the workshop. George Sturt's book is of course a classic by now and is probably known to many of you. Ted Frost's book, published in 1985, is an incredibly detailed recollection of the building of a steam 'drifter' in Lowestoft in 1917, when he was an apprentice shipwright with John Chambers Ltd. It is thoroughly illustrated with his own beautiful line drawings which, with the text, truly takes the reader from tree to sea.

• Jim Littlefield.