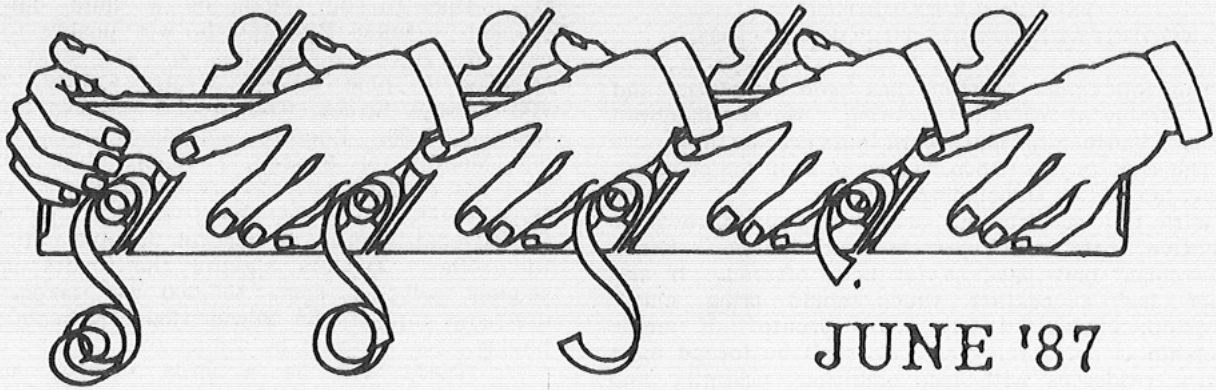


WOODWORKERS' GROUP OF N.S.W.



WOODWORKERS' GROUP OF N.S.W.

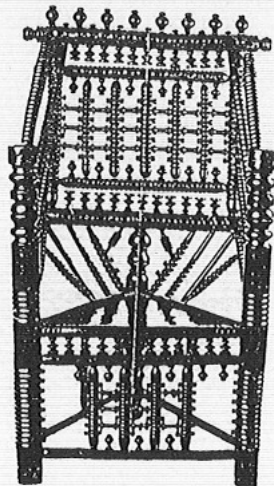
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Assistance:	66 Narrabeen Park Road	
	Warriewood, 2102	

On a more technical level, I'd like to give an interim comment on Feast Watson's new "Fine Buffing Oil". Colin Watson was kind enough to call on me with a sample. I've used it on three items, the best example being my own dining table, which my wife justly complained was looking somewhat dirty and scruffy. It was washed with detergent and dried thoroughly, then scrubbed with 000 steel wool, using mineral turps (pet. naphtha) as a lubricant, to remove the ingrained dirt and glass rings. After being swabbed dry and waiting a few hours for the turps to evaporate, it was coated with oil and the loose surface oil rubbed off with a clean cloth. Next day, it was buffed with another clean soft cloth. The result is good. It does need a second coat, and the results of this with the other two items indicate that this will give an excellent mid-gloss surface, very silky and kindly to the touch. The interesting point is that even at this stage, after some hard use it does not show glass rings or heat marks. In this respect it seems better than any other oil or waxed finish I know. Colin did tell me some of the ingredients, and I think I see why it works so well. I think also that it will be a long lasting finish, able to be renewed (unlike the plastic film finishes) and suggest all you oilers give it a try.

DAVID LOCKWOOD

FROM THE CHAIR

The tool sale which Henry Black organised was a great success, although I was dismayed to find that my arriving ¼ hour early was too late to snare the more desirable items. It's not easy to see how this problem could be dealt with - a "Le Mans" start perhaps? I suppose it's best to keep it as informal as possible, so the introduction of a series of repressive rules is probably not a good idea - THAT garden path leads to a cesspit.



Bizarre Virtuosity - June Chair:

This overwhelmingly elaborate chair in ash and oak represents the final evolution of the triangular stool. Less ornate bobbin-chairs (the spindles are bobbin-shaped) were made in the West Country throughout the 17th Century.

Richard Vaughan brought to the meeting afterwards the forthcoming exhibition portfolio he has compiled for us to introduce the Group to potential sponsors. It is a first-class job, done in the face of tardiness among members in submitting their material. I am one of them, to my shame. Nick Hill also suffers constantly from this sort of thing (he speaks of it in this issue). I agree that we should all really pull up our socks.

To give you some idea of the magnitude of the effort, I cross-questioned Richard about the amount of time he had spent. He was not very inclined to blow his own trumpet, so let me blow it for him. I think that a fair price for the time he has spent on behalf of the Group would have been about \$5,000, if it had been done at reasonable commercial rates. A similar tale could be told of our editors (present and past) and of others.

FUTURE MEETING DATES FOR '87

The year of the Exhibition

<u>Group Meetings</u>	<u>Committee Meetings</u>	<u>Newsletter Deadlines</u>
June 8	June 4	May 1
August 9	August 6	July 3
October 11	October 8	September 4
December 6	December 3	November 2

Any changes will be notified in this spot.

OUR LAST MEETING

SEPTEMBER EXHIBITION WOODCRAFT REVISITS THE OPERA - 1987

The full colour portfolio has been completed and was on display at our April meeting. We are indebted to Richard Vaughan for much work in its preparation.

The cost to the Group was some \$360 for printing, artwork, laminating and binding.

With this portfolio we are in a position to show prospective exhibition sponsors our wares. Minor "Sponsorships" only have so far been offered. If any member has a contact which could bring major sponsorship, please let R.V. know pronto. If major sponsorship is not forthcoming, we shall be forced upon our own resources with less ambitious publicity and brochures. Exhibition expenses in 1985 were the order of \$16,000. Depending on commission on sales and sale of brochures, we may have some difficulty in meeting a similar budget this time. Transfer of funds from general reserve to exhibition expenses will probably be necessary.

Some 30 members have given intention to exhibit so far. A few stalwart names are as yet absent from the list. If any of our old masters are teetering on the brink, take the plunge and help to make 1987 the best ever.

To minimise any one of the organising committee's financial responsibility and for other more long term benefits - David Lockwood is ensuring that the Group becomes a corporate body before the signing of any contracts. LAURIE OLIVER

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DEMOLITION DREAMS

'In April and May a few thousand metres of 400 mm square Iron Bark columns will be removed from wool stores in Pymont. I will liaise with the demolishers closer to the time of removal so if you require a little 100 year old Iron Bark, let me know and we can organise a group collection day. Phone me if you are interested.'

Unfortunately my liaison was rather non-eventful. Due to the site rules we are unable to pick up this timber unless we've got a couple of semi-trailer loads to take. I was told Brighton-le-Sands Second-hand Building Centre has purchased a lot so give them a call on 599 7317 and good luck!

OUR NEXT MEETING

Due to the birth of a child our February speaker - Julian Bickersteth, was unable to entertain us. We have booked him for the next meeting - Monday, 8 June at the Crafts Council Theatre, 100 George Street, The Rocks. Arrive at 7.00 pm. Meeting, 7.30. Lecture and Slides starts at 8.00 pm. (No Meeting on Sunday, 7 June). Julian Bickersteth who has recently restored two chairs from the Thomas Hope collection. The chairs surfaced at an auction, in disrepair, with a hopeful handful of bucks for the seller. Dealers sighted the chairs and a subsequent price of some \$55,000 was taken. The pair are now part of the Power House Museum collection, having been restored by Julian.

There will be a slide showing and lecture about the history of design and restoration of these famous pieces.

Subsequent meetings will be advertised with as much prior notice as possible, so take the dates given as a guide only as evenings will be used if slides or films are available. Please let's see a good turnout as the promise of good numbers is a necessary encouragement to the guest speakers we are approaching to entertain at our meetings. See you there.

NICK HILL

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Sir,

I am a student at Rycotewood College, studying in a BTEC Fine Craftsmanship and Design course which finishes in July. I am also taking City and Guilds and A-Level exams in Furniture Construction. Whilst talking to a lecturer, Mr Jeremy Broun, he spoke of his experiences in Australia and indicated that there are opportunities available for craftsmen. I am writing to ask if you have any vacancies or positions where you could offer me employment, or alternatively if you know any craftsmen in the region with a vacancy you might like to mention my interest.

I am 28 and single and coming to college was a change in career for me and therefore I do not have a vast amount of experience as carpentry was only a hobby for me before; but I would really welcome the opportunity and challenge of working in Australia and would very much appreciate a prompt reply, thank you.

ANTONY GRIFFITHS
16 Goodger Hostel, Rycotewood College,
Thame. Oxon OX9 2AF. UK

WOODWORKERS GROUP OF NSW

Directory of Members

(Closing date for entries - 31 May)

The members who sent in their biographies in 1986 will be glad to hear the Directory is finally coming into some sort of shape and should be out by the end of July, providing no other problems crop up.

Basically it will be divided into two sections; the first being 'quick reference' with the 'Woodskills' being listed in alphabetical order with the respective names under followed by 'district' and 'telephone number'. There is no restriction on the number of woodskills provided they are recognised. This, of course follows that some members will appear five or six times.

The second section will contain the biographies in alphabetical order and possibly the last two pages will contain an index; names followed by 'woodskills'!

Mail has been known to go astray so below is a list of biographies I have received up to 29 April. If any member has posted his/hers and is not

Kenneth Joynes	Mike Jeffreys
Michael Retter	Henry Black
Richard Vaughan	Jim Littlefield
Michael Gill	Hans Westermann
Alan Wale	Neil Scobie
Nick Hill	Stefan J Bruggisser
Bernard Gay	Nick Masterman
Peter Dorman	Don Fortescue
Peter Kolasinski	Gerard Gilet
Richard Crossland	Geoffrey S Hannah
Mike Darlow	Barry McQuinn
Otto & Son	Leon Sadubin
Paul Gregson	Lindsay Skinner
Les Miller	Grant Vaughan
Geoff Hague	Richard Walker
Alan Schoultz	Robert Parker
Anthony Hansen	Lex McWhirter

Many thanks to the members who provided some helpful suggestions at the last meeting.

DAVID HERD

St Paul's College, Sydney University 2006

LUCINDA LEECH

of King Street, Jericho, Oxford, UK

About 35 members of the Woodworkers Group of NSW gathered at Richard Crossland's workshop to hear an informal talk and see slides by Lucinda Leech on Wednesday evening, 22 April.

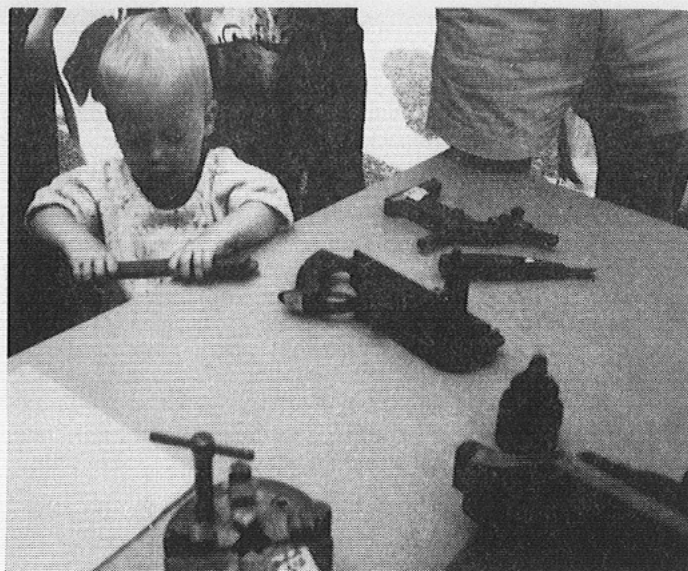
A very outgoing and vivacious Lady, Lucinda spoke about her 10 years as a furniture designer and maker at Oxford in England. An admirer of Alan Peters's work, she is nevertheless very much her own person and showed slides of her earlier and more recent work, together with some examples of other contemporary UK woodworkers' work, some of whose names are already familiar to other group members.

Lucinda's work displays clean, uncluttered lines, with carefully thought out details, some of which were functional, others purely decorative. In the writer's humble opinion, her cabinets seemed a trifle "slab-sided" (an occasional plinth might have given a more "complete" appearance) but her William Morris Society bookcase was a fine piece of cabinet-making, and her drop-leaf tables were innovative and attractive.

Lucinda expressed concern at the rate at which forests are being felled in Brazil and showed slides she took during a trip there this year.

It was gratifying to see so much interest shown by members of the Woodworkers Group of NSW in Lucinda's visit and talk, particularly as there was very little in the way of pre-publicity. Alan Wale and his students made a special trip from Mittagong and it was good to be able to welcome Rob and Marie Parker from Dundurrabin to the "Big Smoke". Altogether a good evening and Lucinda concluded by inviting any members to visit her should they find themselves in UK.

RICHARD CROSSLAND



APRIL TOOL SALE

The tool sale was held as planned in the car-park of Metropolis Design Workshops at Botany. The weather was excellent and attendance likewise.

Many interstate people including a woodworker who drove from Adelaide, several from Victoria, including Frank Han, who woke up on Sunday morning, undecided about coming, a half hour later he was on the plane to Sydney. Ray Ingold from Brisbane had tools and books as last year. But for the keen do-it-yourself types he had a new marking gauge kit on offer.

A large variety of used tools was on offer and amongst the new ones turning tools were available. People seemed keener to buy more obscure types of tools; I sold quite a few irons for Stanley No 1 and No 2 planes. I think people just wanted a new iron for when they found such an item. Moulding planes were also a saleable item this year, provided the price was reasonable. Most other collectable items sold well even though there were no fancy Norris type planes or ultimatum braces.

I did, however, get stuck with a stack of 4" G cramps even though they were \$5 each or \$50 for a dozen. Power tools were about and could be tested inside (some cheap ones to be had). There were even a couple of pedal powered items, a fretsaw and a lathe.

Fortunately I was too busy to do much buying; I did swap a few tools for some accessories for my Wadkin lathe, about which I was most pleased. In all it was a fairly successful day.

HENRY BLACK



WOODCRAFT GOES TO THE MUSEUM!

Way back in 1980 the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences acquired its first piece of contemporary Australian woodcraft (from the Woodworkers' Group show, in fact).

What an agonising decision the purchase of this simple turned bowl seemed to the fledgling curator of furniture and woodwork! Was it well designed and made? Representative? Too expensive (!)? Was there something characteristically Australian about it? Was it a good start to a woodcraft collection? Were, indeed, these the right questions to be asking?

Seven years on the jacaranda bowl still looks good and, happily, they do seem to have been the right questions for the same criteria are still relevant. Today, however, they apply to a much wider, more sophisticated and higher quality range of objects: like the Museum's collection, Australian woodcraft has matured considerably during the 1980's.

Why so comparatively late in starting a woodcraft collection? Funding, expertise, storage, exhibition space and the infant state of the woodcraft "movement" itself were all contributing factors. Interestingly, however, collecting woodcraft was not a totally new concept for the Museum.

As the old Technological and Sanitary Museum one of its most important early achievements was its research and collection of Australian timbers and objects made from them. In the heady years of nationalism following Federation in 1901 R.T. Baker, Curator at the Museum (1896 - 1920), was responsible for developing a unique collection of Australian woodcraft and timber samples. (Many of you will be familiar with Baker's still-cherished books on Australian timbers.) Much of the Australian arts and crafts style furniture acquired during Baker's "reign" is currently on exhibition at the Mint, while it is intended to display a representative range of the timber sample collection as a study resource in the Power House Museum after 1988.

What prompted the start of the current as a consequence, inadequate funding for the proper care and development of the collections. We have the Wran government to thank for the recent considerable increase in funding which, by 1988, will have facilitated the opening of Stage I, the Mint and Hyde Park Barracks, the Museum Train and the Power House Museum.

In the late 1970's the prospect of new Museum premises focused fresh attention on the collection - and on its more obvious gaps. As a consequence an ambitious acquisitions programme was initiated with contemporary Australian crafts later receiving additional funding from the Crafts Board and the advertising firm MOJO MDA.

Much of the Australian craft acquired during the 1980's is intended to be shown in the major Australian craft survey exhibition opening in the new Power House during 1988. The exhibition will display a range of material by practising Australian craftspeople as well as a small historical component. Woodcraft will be represented by such names as Alan Wale, Leon Sadubin, Richard Raffan, Craig Watson, Kevin Perkins and John Smith, among others. While the survey will be temporary (approximately one year) plans are already under way for a permanent craft display area within the Power House.

It is worth mentioning, in this context, that the woodcraft collection does not pretend to be totally representative of the best of Australian woodcraft in the 1980's. A finite budget, limited opportunity for travelling interstate, to acquire works and the very "newness" of the woodcraft movement in Australia have necessitated a fairly restrained and cautious purchasing policy. However, with the Museum's intended commitment to developing a

national craft collection we can look forward to the eventual formation of a comprehensive woodcraft collection that reflects the growing strength and professionalism of the woodcraft movement itself.

Not wishing to tout that highly emotive word, "design" around too much I will just briefly mention that the concept of "good design" in both the crafts and industry is one area the Museum is keen to promote in the future. Crossing, as it does, the boundaries between decorative arts and technology it is highly appropriate for a Museum which actively collects and exhibits in both areas.

Those of you curious about design in general, and furniture design in particular, may be interested to know of two other exhibitions opening in the Power House in 1988: "Take a Seat" looks at 20th century chair design and "style", takes on the ambitious task of showing the major stylistic movements in furniture and other decorative arts from the 18th century to today.

Enquiries from members of the Group about the scheduled exhibitions and/or the furniture and woodwork collections will be most welcome.

ANN WATSON

Curator of Furniture and
Architectural Decoration, Museum
of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.

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Total value of Prizes for all sections of exhibition worth \$12,000 including woodcraft.

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There may be minor changes in information, in which case entrants will be kept informed.

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ALBURY, 25th APRIL - 1st MAY, 1988

THE AIRWAYS AND THE WOODWAYS

What do you listen to in your workshop, between the clamour of machines? If you listen to a radio, have you ever thought what influence the programme is having on your turning, joinery, carving or, most importantly, design concepts.

Recent studies in the UK, USA and West Germany have shown that an increasing measure of influence on the workshop output is dictated by the radio input of each particular workshop. For instance, the continual listening to the classics (Brahms, Bach, Beethoven, baroque), etc, tended to give certainly a conservative design direction but more so a definite finesse in work details. Commentary in these programmes is often long winded and it shows in unusual lapses in the attention to detail. An example of this is screws not headed in parts of cabinets.

On another tack, the constant blatter of popular music (Rock & Roll) shows a definite new wave design direction and perhaps innovative jointing techniques. Unfortunately many rejected pieces tend to be found in these workshops due to the fluctuations in rhythm and continual variety put out by these programmes giving rise to continual interruptions to concentration.

These observations make up a tiny amount of the documentation available for those interested in this concept. The idea of altering your cabinet making ability by what you listen to seems far fetched but the information is seemingly well founded.

NICK HILL

BOOK REVIEW

"MACHINE POWER TOOLS FOR WOODWORK".
Gordon Stokes - Published by Bell & Hyman, London.
Our review copy supplied by Allen & Unwin Australia.
Publishing date, 17/4/87. Price \$29.95.

The book is a paper back with approximately 140 pages with plenty of photos and illustrations, most adjacent to the relevant text but some a few pages away. Some photos also appear to have been trimmed short of the material they are supposed to show. All photos - black and white. Sketches very clear and informative.

The book covers most hand-held power tools and some wood machinery and is mainly aimed at the more inexperienced woodworker, although from the choice of makers one with a well-lined pocket. Safety is stressed throughout and plenty of worthwhile tips and hints for the safe usage of equipment are included. The index appears quite comprehensive and a glossary of terminology is included.

The information on machinery is well written and would be of use when deciding on a potential purchase. Faults commonly found in various machines are mentioned but the exact cure for these is not always spelt out. In keeping with the market the book is aimed at, this should be clearer.

The information is in general terms only and does not pinpoint faults on particular products. Australian machinery and lathes in particular are not mentioned - a major omission for a book out here.

Similarly, the power tools are of European or American origin. Whilst relevant to the top end of the market here, the Japanese and other Asian/South American alternatives are what most people starting off are interested in.

This underlines the good and bad points about the book. It will help you decide what type of machinery and power tools you require to safely do the job. It also tells you how to safely and efficiently proceed with various woodworking operations. It doesn't, however, provide much assistance in making any sense of the large array of products available in Australia.

For this task a local publication is needed, "Australian Woodworker" does have tests and whilst not perfect, they do list most locally available products. Asking other woodworkers' advice is also one reason for the existence of this and similar groups.

HENRY BLACK

PLANS WANTED

Gerritt Rietveld Red and Blue Armchair:

Anthony Thompson, a full-time H.S.C. student, would like to obtain these plans for an art assignment reproduction. Phone Anthony on 84.5508.

PROFESSIONALISM - WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Our last Group meeting left me very impressed by the work put into our portfolio by Richard Vaughan. This work is designed to promote our cause as striving woodworkers. Our exhibition is the medium for the "professionals" in the group to gain great recognition and major commissions. I exhibited for the first time in 1985 and my biggest single commission has stemmed directly from it, being in the realm of \$10,000.

I put our status of "professionals" in parenthesis because I feel it is far from the truth with the way the majority of members in this realm react to the need for information and photos to a deadline. I'm not guilty of being late with information for the portfolio but many are. I arranged for professionally taken photos to be processed into prints. Due to delays the prints were to be some weeks late so I compromised and had home taken shots blown up overnight for the portfolio to meet the deadline. I spent triple or more dollars on these lesser shots to be punctual.

My disgust and disappointment towards my colleagues came out when I was informed that the portfolio was only finalised a couple of months ago some four or five months after my lesser photos were received on the deadline!

Who can be classed as professional when promotional and exhibition work cannot be supplied on time? No wonder corporate clients allow contracts with no lead in time for craft products to be produced.

This exhibition is a chance for major work to be sold and commissioned but by the way many react it seems as though you couldn't care less about your chosen craft profession. The so-called "professional" image you all aspire to - with a top class newsletter and "a high class exhibition" seems more like a mirage than reality. Too many of the members are happy to sit back and watch what we committee work our guts out to produce for your exploitation!

So!! - kick off the cobwebs and sawdust, get off your bums and pull your fingers out and get to our Woodworkers Group of NSW deadlines on time. It's your livelihood and it's promotion I'm talking about. Advertising, promotion, sales recognition, etc!!! Help when it's called for or jump now before you go bust.

NICK HILL

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Since last meeting we have assessed three new members' work and accepted them happily into the Group. The work covered cabinet work, carving, turning, chairs and a very interesting Japanese music stand.

The new members are Terry Baker, Lex McWhirter and Don Fortescue. Except for Don they introduce themselves here. (We'll catch up with Don next issue, no doubt.)

Terry Baker: As a brief introduction, I was originally trained as an industrial science teacher at Sydney Teachers' College, after five years of teaching Industrial Arts - I moved over to teach Art and Design, more especially pottery, which has helped tremendously in the forms of my turned work. I taught at both secondary school and tertiary level and although these days I work full time at my craft I still teach one day at a Sydney art school.

My workshop is on the waterfront at Pretty Beach (near Kilcare), my wife and I bought an old general store which was very run down. So we rebuilt it as a workshop and small showroom/sales place. I am lucky to live in a very quiet part of the Central Coast which allows me to work in peace and it only becomes busy during public holidays. This is when we sell most of my work; otherwise it goes out to galleries and craft shops.

My workshop contains two lathes, one a 900 series "Woodfast" used mainly for small and general turning and the second lathe was designed by myself and built by a friend, Alan Burnett from "R.S.J's" and 1" plate. It is powered by a 2 HP motor and can turn up to 4 ft diam. plates. The workshop also contains the usual bandsaws and assortment of power tools, plus the very important dust extractor; something I hope to update and improve this year.

The work I turn ranges from small wooden boxes to very large platters and bowls. I work both in seasoned and green timber, kiln and air dried timber but the bowls and boxes I turn green, some are microwaved and re-turned. Others are turned green and allowed to soften and move into their natural form.

I personally cut about 75% of the timber I turn; it may be local Spotted Gum or even Mangrove (generally bulldozed out by the local Council), but we also enjoy travelling away with the chainsaw and other tools and cutting in the bush. In the last year this ranged from a Rosewood log found submerged in a creek near Wyong to a Cedar tree near Grafton. So we enjoy the whole experience of finding, cutting and transporting the timber home as well as producing a useful object from it. We seem to come home from these trips tired but refreshed and always enjoy the new environments and the people we meet and share the time with.

What's the old saying? - "Every picture tells a story" - it's the same with timber. It's great how everyone has a story to tell about "wood", from a local Councillor telling me about his grandfather - the cedar cutter or our Dentist telling me his uncle turned the base of the F.A. (soccer) Cup and this goes on all around the world. I don't see working with wood as a job or occupation but rather a lifestyle and I enjoy it all.

TERRY BAKER
38 Pretty Beach Road, Pretty Beach

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Lex McWhirter: Firstly, I would like to say that I am thrilled to be accepted into the group. However, to get back to the reason for this letter, my background in woodwork:

It began on obtaining an apprenticeship with a furniture maker here in Kempsey in 1973, where I worked for five years. During this time I also attended Sydney Technical College and on completing the three year course, obtained a Craftsman's Certificate in Cabinet-making. Nine years on I am well established in my own workshop designing and constructing a wide range of furniture and small decorative pieces. In my design I try to create my own distinctive style, at times getting inspiration from those odd pieces of wood one finds and from my knowledge of the unlimited forms of woodwork and furniture.

I have at my disposal a wide range of North Coast timbers, ready for use. This range includes Australian Red Cedar, Rosewood, Silky Oak and Flooded Gum.

In previous years I have been involved with the local Adult Education Group teaching a course in Furniture Restoration. However, as I am self-employed I do not encourage this course for it takes me away from my work and seems to encourage others' views of me as a furniture restorer, which I will do on occasions, but furniture-making is my love and the field I want to be known in.

LEX McWHIRTER
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MOISTURE METERS EXPOSED!

I refer to Mike Jeffreys's request in the April 1987 Newsletter (back page) for information on moisture meters, in the understanding that Ron Barlow of Barlow Associates Aust Pty Ltd will also be responding. My understanding of the matter is as follows:

Most meters, wherever designed and made (and this includes probably all the meters we'll ever come into contact with in Australia) are calibrated for correct readings when used on North American Douglas Fir. The circuitry is designed to "assume" that, and this has become almost a "world design standard". Therefore, when the device is used on some other types of timber, what you get from the dial face is a "raw reading" which must then be adjusted with the aid of Correction Figure Tables to give a TRUE moisture content for the type of timber you are actually testing. If the temperature of this timber is significantly different from 21 degrees Celsius, further adjustment of the "raw reading" must be made to arrive at the true moisture content, and the Correction Figure Tables you are using should also allow you to do that quite satisfactorily. More on the above later on.

Generally, the types of meters available may be divided into two groups - those which work on the variation in the electrical resistance of timber with changing moisture content (called resistance meters) - and those which take account of the variation in the electrical capacity of timber with changing moisture content (called "capacitance meters"). Of these two types, capacitance meters are liable to errors caused by the commonly occurring variation in density of the particular species of timber being tested.

Now, electrical conductivity (or resistivity) of any given timber can, and usually does, vary significantly between readings taken along the grain

You see, American designed and made meters are designed to take readings with the probes inserted parallel to the timber grain fibres, and this is the underlying assumption of the Correction Figure Tables available over there (which, by the way, wouldn't list too many of the timbers we are used to being, or may be, confronted with here in Australia).

We here have not much choice but to live with a different situation. The most comprehensive data (Correction Figure Tables) available to us on our timbers and commonly imported ones has been produced painstakingly by laboratory experiment over the last 29 (?) years by our various Forestry Commission research people, and RELIES on the sensing probes being inserted ACROSS the grain. Therefore if you want to take advantage of this superior collection of data, you must use a meter designed to be used in accordance with its basic assumption, viz, probes inserted at right angles to, or across, the grain. And I have my doubts that you can simply turn an American-made probe "sideways" because another critical factor is that whichever Tables you use, they also rely on the probes being a precise and fixed distance apart - the greater the distance the greater the resistance. See?

As something of an aside, many will be aware that the July/August 1985 issue of the American magazine, "Fine Woodworking" has in it a design and circuitry for a "make it yourself" moisture meter. I view this article with some suspicion and doubt the design would be reliable even with American timbers, and recommend others here in Australia do the same. Apart from the reasons given above, I notice that the probes recommended (a couple of nails!) are not insulated. Good quality and reliable probes should

be thoroughly insulated except for their tips. The reason is that unless you are attempting to take a moisture content reading at the timber surface (and what use is that to a serious woodworker?) the result that un-insulated probes will give won't be worth much. The moisture readings that make sense in the fine timber context are the moisture content gradient between the surface and the centre of the timber or, if it's not entirely crucial, the moisture content at the centre, which is a pretty good guide. Whichever the case, you've got to drive the probes deep, particularly with say, 4 inch stock. If the probes you use are un-insulated and are driven to any depth, obviously they will give you a reading on an unknown basis (perhaps and perhaps not an average) from somewhere/anywhere along that length of the probe embedded in the wood. If that seems important to you remember that "you gets what you pay for". Buy a decent meter and probe, eh?

For those wishing to know more on this subject I can recommend, "Methods of Determining the Moisture Content of Wood", which is Technical Publication No 13 of the Wood Technology and Forest Research Division of the Forestry Commission of New South Wales. It's available for the asking while there are stocks, is easy to understand, and deals with the matter in much more depth than I assume the space constraints of our newsletter permit. Amongst things it will tell you is why you shouldn't rely on your personal judgement as to moisture content, and discusses case, intermediate, and core moisture gradients.

As an irrelevant and possibly cheeky finale to this letter, I would like you all to know that my business in Canberra, which is called, 'Specialty Timbers' (telephone: (062) 47 7390) has some pretty nice stuff from time to time which you may not have seen before. Apart from the usual, there are burls in jarrah, silver gimlet, salmon gum and river red gum - also e.g. Banksia grandis nuts, WA prickly pear (the timber, not the cactus, is red/brown with a silvery medullary ray and works and polishes well), ivory wood, kiln dried Tas Blackwood in fiddleback, crossfire, and flared figure, and one or two other rather beautiful things. Prices aren't too bad either.

TONY SUMMERVILLE

FEAST WATSON & CO. PTY LIMITED, manufacturers of Watsonia brand of specialised high quality timber finishes, have just introduced two products to compliment their existing range of timber finishes and penetrating oils: **Fine Buffing Oil** and **Prime Shield**

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