

West Riding Woodcarvers' Association



January 2013
Newsletter Issue 214

Patron
Dr Ingrid M Roscoe
Lord Lieutenant of
West Yorkshire

Life members
Anne Hobson
Albert Hobson

Trevor and Colin - Life and times in Pattern Making - 9th January 2013

A pattern for life

Two men in pinnies and not a Victoria sponge to show for it. Because it wasn't the Hairy Bikers, nor the Fabulous Baker Brothers.

Just Colin and Trevor in their woodworking aprons, ready and willing to serve up an entertaining talk for the monthly meeting at Shepley.

And their recipes were a little adrift of the usual egg, sugar, butter, flour. One in particular featured urine, horse muck, sand and a dash of oil – a mixture used many years ago to fashion a mould for a pattern.

Colin Pratley and Trevor Stanley, both trusty members of the West Riding Woodcarvers' Association, told the assembled throng about their working life as pattern makers; lots of cheerful stuff about 'when I were a lad', wanders down memory lane and the good old days.

Colin talked about school towards the end of the war when woodwork teachers were allowed back to the classroom from the front. For a schoolboy who 'could do better' in the three Rs, this was a stroke of luck as he was soon to discover an ability to work with wood and metal. Within a short time he was out of the school gates and working as an apprentice pattern maker, serving seven years, mostly standing on a box because he wasn't exactly tall.

Trevor, who served six years as an apprentice at William Asquith's in Halifax, painted a vivid picture of a foundry not unlike the jaws of hell, with horrendous noise, vast ladles of molten metal, sparks – a landscape a million miles away from today's health and safety.

Pattern makers were the middle men, Trevor explained. They had to be able to read engineering drawings, know what the material was for casting and then calculate within a fraction of an inch to make the pattern for the mould, using a three contraction and standard rule. A pattern, they both said, was about absolute accuracy.

And of course this is where their woodworking skills came to the fore using yellow pine – because it was stable and didn't block the sanders – and occasionally gelatong.

And although a great deal of the work has now disappeared abroad – much of it to China – Trevor maintained that it wasn't up to the standard of castings still made traditionally in the UK today.

So next time you look at a tap, a bathroom suite, a boiler, valves, a car with engine and gear box, bollards, grates and even weapons of war – think of Colin standing tall on his box and Trevor sweating at the jaws of hell.

Pattern making was, after all, a recipe for a successful working life for both of them.

Janet Smith Asst/ Sec.



I'm sure we've seen one of these before!



Going,
Going,
Gone!

Speaker: February 9th Shepley Meeting. This month we shall learn, through photos, plans and Derek drawing on the white board how to build a big, big cabin cruiser, not a yacht as I described in the last newsletter.

Stepping forward once again this month is another of our members in the form of **Derek Adams**.

Derek will take us through the 12 years he spent building his baby from a lump of timber to a 26' 0" long x 9' 6" beam x 2 1/2 ton ocean going cruiser.

We have a number of ex-seamen in the club that this subject should interest and just to make the day more authentic we shall make the flourecent lights sway from side to side, throw buckets of water over everybody and issue a rum ration instead of the standard cup of tea.

Speaker: March 9th Shepley Meeting: We try to stay topical in the club and following on from the excellent BBC4 series on woodworking this month we have booked a gentleman called A Powell (I don't know what the A stands for) who is a specialist on the work and life of **Grinling Gibbons**.

John Farrar kindly put us onto this gentleman and Adrian has done the booking, seeing as I shall be paddling in the Laccadive Sea off Sri Lanka on the 9th March and won't really be giving much of a thought to you all in rainy Shepley.

Visits To Ashley Iles factory:

The carvers at the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School Monday night class are intending to organise a trip down to Ashley Iles towards the end of April and are inviting anybody interested to join the party.

The price should be between £10 to £15 which should cover the cost of a mini coach.

The company is a family run business on the edge of the Lincolnshire fens and welcomes visitors in groups of about 10 to 15. There is a nice pub half a mile away that does decent meals and a good pint.

Quite a number of our members, including Frank Greenwood and I, have already been round the factory for a visit and a lesson on tool sharpening not, in our case, that it did much good.

A visit is certainly very interesting. It's like going back into the 1950s when health and safety was just reserved for Nitty Norah coming into schools to look in kids' hair.

The sight of a man sitting straddled over a three foot diameter grind stone that is whirling at very high speed between his legs, and inches from his wedding tackle, brings tears to the eyes.

Besançon Panel:

Jim Wrathall has just sent me the photo below of the Besançon panel that the club produced in 2005 to help celebrate 50 years of friendship between Kirklees and Besançon.

Jim, or his daughter or both not sure which, have recently visited the panel and he reports that it is in a very accessible place for viewing and is well lit and appreciated by the public.

It must be an age thing but it only seems like yesterday that we were all working merrily away in Mike Hadfield's and Malcolm Till's classes at All Saints School to produce the panel.

Seven years ago now and a number of the carvers sadly no longer with us.

Talk to the Mirfield Local History Group:

On the 16th January David Holt, David Hey and I gave a talk on the Royal Armouries' Panels to about 80 people from the Mirfield History Group at the Community Hall in Mirfield.

We raised **£163** that has been handed over to Margaret and will, eventually, find its way to the Forget-Me-Not Children's Hospice.

We have done quite a number of these talks now and, although we say it ourselves, we are getting quite good at them and must be doing something right as we get some great comments afterwards.

The formula we follow is that I introduce us and talk briefly about the WRWA and the reasons why we took on the project of the Armouries' panels. Then David (Hey) takes over while the other David and I hold up the full size plan of the panels so that David can explain about the Theme Areas and the construction of the panels.

Then through a series of slides of the original picture, the line drawing of the picture and finally the finished carving David explains the background history of the majority of the individual carvings.

We finish off by showing the seven minute video made by the Huddersfield Cine and Video Club and the excellent video Graham Lockwood put together of the 1st WW panel set to the music of the Dubliners.

The booklets are pushed with the emphasis that all the collective £4s go to the children's hospice.

Our thanks to the individuals who we keep borrowing carvings from. The display we put on usually totals about 30 to 40 carvings and is very well received with the usual questions being asked time after time. 'How long does it take' and 'What type of wood is it carved from'.

The biggest problem comes when we have to pack all the carvings away in their respective boxes and distribute them back to their owners.

But overall worth while if we can raise some funds for the children's hospice, publicise the club and move a few of the booklets we still have in stock.



You will have gathered from the above article that I am struggling to fill this page. If anybody has anything to put in the newsletter please let me have your thoughts.

The recent progress meeting at Lindley Bowling Club for the Forget-Me-Not panel made a profit of about £36.

I recently got an email from our contact at the National Memorial Arboretum informing us that the building contractors have now been appointed and will soon start the construction of the new building.. They have yet to start planning the content of the new building but have promised to keep us informed when they have any news regarding the display of our panels.