

# TOOL AND TRADES HISTORY SOCIETY

**OBJECTS: To further knowledge end understanding of hand tools, of their use, end of the trades end craftsmen that used them.**

# NEWSLETTER

No.1

## CONTENTS

MAY 1983

President's Message  
The Constitution  
Membership  
Future Programmes

The Inaugural Meeting  
The Society's Address  
Woodworker Show, 18th to 23rd October  
Bibliography, & Other Projects

Message from W.L.Goodman, the Society's first President

"It is a great pleasure for me personally to have this opportunity of welcoming the founding of our Society end to learn that so many came together to give it a good start. Although a joiner by trade, I cannot remember ever joining anything myself, apart from the odd cricket or golf club. But it has been obvious for some time that those of us who are interested in tools end their history should have an organisation like this to act as a focus for our activities and to make available a record of our work.

According to '1065 And All That' history is what you remember; the trouble with the history of tools is that so much has been forgotten. This was perhaps inevitable. The men who made and used them all those years ago took them as they found them; what had been good enough for their fathers and grandfathers was good enough for them. But as standards of living and taste improved, more ambitious work had to be attempted and the tools and methods improved accordingly. It was a slow process and in the nature of things completely anonymous. All we have to go on now is the silent witness of the tools in the collections and what remains of the work that was done with them The fact that so much of both has survived is in itself a tribute to the skill and dedication of those long-forgotten craftsmen.

One thing in our favour is that it is now being realised that history is too important to be left to the professional historians. A Society like ours attracts all aorta and conditions of men (and women, as I have been delighted to note), each with their own special backgrounds end experience. There is also the regional aspect; local variations of methods, trade Customs, vocabulary and so on. The theme can be extended far beyond theme islands; Dutch, French, American, even African traditions are distinct yet in some way inter—related. The field is boundless. The currently fashionable word, which must be the key to our own approach, is "interdisciplinary".

I can only wish all my fellow TATHS members the best of hunting, in the certainty that you will find it, if my own experience is anything to go by, immensely worthwhile."

## The INAUGURAL MEETING

TATHS was born, in the basement theatre of the Science Museum, on the 16th of April 1983. That day, a Saturday, was the hottest that London had seen since August and, as if to prove that science can achieve anything, the radiators were raising the inside temperature to unprecedented levels. As a side effect of this experiment in the hothouse propagation of societies, some of the assembled company found their sensitivities unusually heightened.

## TATHS Winston Grange StowmarketSuffolk IP 14 6LE

As a result the meeting witnessed some moments of drama - and who would have wished it otherwise? Without some incident to quicken the blood it would have been a dull affair indeed. As it is, old men, at anniversary meetings many years hence, will show their scars and reminisce —“I was a founder, I was there .....

Moreover, the business was done.

A list of items, designed to form the basis for a Constitution, were read through, subjected to some testing, and finally given provisional approval (see below). It was agreed that the Society should seek “charitable status” for itself, so the Committee will now consult the Charity Commissioners and will submit an eligible draft Constitution to the next General Meeting for ratification.

W.L.Goodman, “Bill Goodman”, author of ‘Woodwork from the Stone Age to Do It Yourself’ (1962), the ‘History of Woodworking Tools’ (1964), ‘British Planemakers from 1700’ (1968 & 1979) and many other lesser known but relevant works, was elected President.

R.A.Salaman, whose ‘Dictionary of Woodworking Tools’ was published in 1975 and whose ‘Dictionary of Leather Working Tools’ is now with the publishers, became a Vice-President together with Kenneth Kilby, author of ‘The Cooper and his Trade’.

Philip Walker was elected Chairman, W.R.Fowle Treasurer, & P.R.West Secretary. The Constitution will require the General Meeting to appoint an Auditor for the ensuing year’s accounts. A Member well experienced in much matters, Eric Baker, has volunteered himself for this duty and, unless the Secretary hears to the contrary before the end of this month, it will be assumed that Members unanimously and gratefully accept Mr Baker’s offer.

In addition to the Officers, the following are members of the Committee:— John Clark, Senior Assistant Keeper (Medieval) at the Museum of London (co opted)

Chris Ellmere, Senior Assistant Keeper (Modern) at the Museum of London.

Ged Gardiner, carpenter & joiner.

Richard Harris, architectural historian.

Kenneth Hawley, past-President of the Sheffield Trades Historical Society.

John Haywood, for many years Librarian of the Shoreditch College.

Albert Keating, teacher.

Richard Maude, specialist dealer in antique tools.

Philip Platt, Curator of Collections at the Museum of East Anglian Life.

Dues were fixed at £10 for an individual Member for 1983. The Committee, has since decided that the same rate shall apply for Institutional Memberships. Additional persons in a family which receives only one copy of the Society’s publications can become members for £2.50 each.

Shire Publications gave a sherry party after the Meeting for those who had been present. Apart from being a very pleasant occasion this provided an opportunity for many first meetings between people with similar interests. We are most grateful to John Rotheroe of Shire, and can only hope that more Shire authors will become TATHS members and that more TATHS members will become Shire authors!

### THE CONSTITUTION

Amongst the principles which were approved for the Constitution were:—

1. Membership shall be open to all who accept the Society’s aims, and pay their dues.
2. The General Meeting shall elect the Officers, fix the dues and have the final decision on all other matters, provided only that the Society’s charitable status is not prejudiced.
3. There shall be a time limit on the tenure of the Chair by any one Member.
4. Between General Meetings the Society’s affairs shall be in the hands of the Committee, composed of the Officers and a number of members elected by the previous General Meeting or co-opted until the next G.M.
5. The Society’s principal publication shall be the Journal which, together with any other publications shall be available to non—members at reasonable cost.

- 6. The Society's finances shall be in the hands of the Treasurer who shall present full and audited accounts to the Annual General Meeting.

The SOCIETY'S ADDRESS ----- and HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Several members have expressed the hope that the Society will find itself a permanent home which, among other functions, will provide a library and, possibly, a museum able to receive bequests and to make them available to future generations of students of our subject. The Committee have already given this some consideration. They sympathise fully with the aspiration and they are acutely aware of the importance of the collections of material which might otherwise become dispersed or inaccessible. Therefore this long-term aim must not be lost sight of, and any Members who may have ideas on the subject are particularly encouraged to contact one of the Committee members, or to raise them at a General Meeting.

For the time being the Society will continue to use this address, which is the Chairman's home and which served for the initial launching of the Society.

MEMBERSHIP

A very large proportion of those who attended the Inaugural Meeting signed up and paid their dues to the Treasurer on the spot. An even larger number had written in before the meeting expressing their interest and intention of joining once the Society had been formed. This has been most encouraging and has allowed the Committee to feel justified in thinking boldly about the future

There has been a good deal of press, and even some television, coverage of the Society's formation. Now, while the idea is still fresh in the minds of many people, is therefore the time when we must make the maximum effort to get a membership large enough to support the publications and other projects which we have in view.

Please, therefore, make use of the enclosed leaflet or poster to recruit new members. Why not ask your local tool shop, or bookshop (they get a lot of enquiries from people seeking specialist information) to pin up a notice? If anyone could use more leaflets or posters, or has any other ideas for promoting TATHS, please let us know.

The WOODWORKER SHOW                      October 18th to 23rd

The Woodworker magazine, which has already given TATHS two write-ups (see issues of April & June 1983), is very kindly providing us with a free stand at the Woodworker Show in the Royal Horticultural Hall, Westminster. Our Committee is now planning how best to take advantage of this excellent opportunity for publicising the Society. We intend to mount an interesting exhibition, perhaps including an active demonstration of some historic tools and methods, and we hope to collect a number of new members. Any members who will be in London at that time should try to look in.

-----  
 TATHS Summer Meeting 17/18 September  
 Only 100 places                      Book now (see over)

To: The Secretary, TATHS, Winston Grange, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 6LE, U.K.

Please enrol me (my institution) as a Member  
 I enclose £10, or equivalent (if not £ sterling, be generous to cover exchange loss)

ADDRESS:

Any special interests, qualifications, or remarks:

FUTURE PROGRAMME

The main event in the Society's calendar each year will be the Summer Meeting, lasting over a week—end, at some site of special interest to Members.

The Committee has decided that we should make a start this year, even though it will require hard work by all concerned to complete the arrangements.

TATHS first Summer meeting will therefore be held on 17/18th September. It will be based on the Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket, Suffolk, which contains many features of interest to TATHS members. A full program, of events is now being worked out and it will include a Society dinner in the evening of Saturday 17th, participation this year will have to be limited to the first 100 who apply. The necessary fee, to cover buffet lunches on the two days, the Saturday dinner and all other expenses, has yet to be worked out but will, of course, be kept as low as possible. We have been able to make a bulk reservation of rooms at the hotel where the dinner will be held, for those who require overnight accommodation. Stowmarket is 90 miles from London and 12 from Ipswich.

If you are interested in the Summer Meeting please let the Secretary know as soon as possible. Your name will then be on the list and you will receive full details, with costs, for you to confirm acceptance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY, and OTHER PROJECTS

Future issues of the Newsletter will include brief, descriptive, notices of books relevant to our interests. These will be distinct from the reviews of important new works which will appear in the Journal. They will cover any publications, old or new, which come to the Editor's notice.

Apart from drawing Members' attention to such publications and helping them to decide whether they wish to read them, these notices will contribute to a larger bibliographic exercise which, we hope, will eventually lead to the, publication of comprehensive reading list on various aspects of our subject.

With this end in view it would be very helpful if any Member who has, or knows of, collections of books, catalogues, or other relevant documents would give the Editor broad details. This would be purely for the record at this stage, end, of course, nothing would be published without permission.

With the Society barely weaned it is early to talk of other important projects on the horizon. Nevertheless our help end advice has already been sought, for example in connection with a gigantic project to produce a standardised description of objects so that museum records can be computerised. A pilot scheme has been started on tools, and the first subject division relates to files

There is certainly an enormous amount of work which can, and should, be done if tools and techniques are to get anything like the attention which their importance merits, and which is already lavished on many lesser subjects. The work will range from physical conservation to documentary research. It would therefore be useful to know what talents and interests our Members may have. So, for the record, you are invited to tell us something about yourself when sending in your membership form.

-----  
Are you a Member?

Have you paid your dues?

With the next Newsletter Members will receive a copy of an exceptionally interesting and relevant publication which includes, amongst many other things, evidence from the 17th century about a professional British planemaker. The Society cannot afford to provide this free to non-members so do make sure that you have joined. (See form overleaf)

The Newsletter will also include a complete and final list of Founder Members., i.e. those who have joined by the end of June 1983.