

Fig 1. Woodcarving tools from the Illustrated Trade List of Prices of Sheffield Goods (1889).

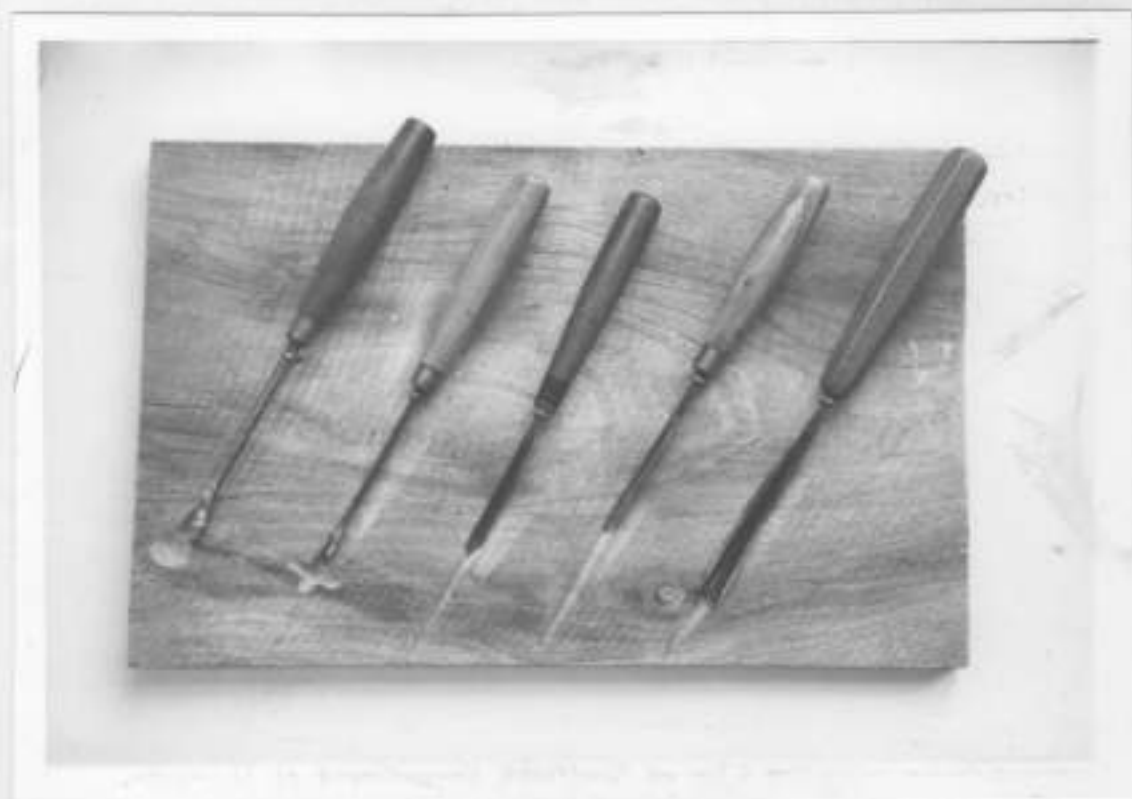


Fig. 2. The sample board shows examples of 5 cuts using (left to right):

back-bent gouge, front-bent gouge, curved parting tool, fluter and another curved parting tool.

3. The Woodcarving Tools.

The 74 woodcarving tools were identified from R.A. Salaman's Dictionary of tools, and were found to include:

- Straight Chisels (2)
- Skew Chisels (2)
- Bent Chisels (5)
- Entering Chisels (2)
- Curved Chisels (2)
- Veiners (2)
- Curved parting tools (2)
- Fluters (3)
- Straight edged parting tools (1)
- Double-bent gouges (2)
- Bent gouges (10)
- Straight gouges (20)
- Gouges (3)
- Front-bent spoon gouges (1)
- Back-bent gouges (7)
- Skew gouges (1)
- Front-bent gouges (7)

Examination of the tools revealed the names of a number of different tool manufacturers on the metal pieces:

- S.J. Addis (1879)
- J.B. Addis & Sons (c1870-1960)
- C. Hill (1869-1909)
- W. Marples & Sons (c.1845)
- J. Herring & Son (c.1835)
- Isaac Greaves (c.1833-1902)
- J. Howarth (c.1845-)

Most of these specialist tool makers were based in the Sheffield area. Information concerning the dates that the firms were in operation was obtained from Sheffield Trade Directories, in correspondence with the City of Sheffield, Department of Museums.

A selection of woodcarving tools are shown in Fig. 1. & Fig.2.

3. The Woodcarving Tools Cont...

The wooden handles of the tools were made of a variety of different woods including: ash, oak, boxwood, beech, mahogany and walnut. The handles were either circular or octagonal in section, or a combination of both.

The following names were stamped on the wooden handles:

A.J. Hancox

E. Hancox

Wheeler

H. Faulkner

W. Spiers

F. Sturch

J. Hopcraft

F. Spiers

C. Carvell

J. Spiers

Several of the handles bore 2 names, stamped one over the other. Each tool was catalogued using Oxfordshire County Museum record cards and numbered in ink on the wooden handle. Examples of record cards are shown in Fig. 3.

A number of questions arose from detailed examination of the tools:

- (i) Did the names stamped on the wooden handles correlate with woodcarvers known to have worked for Franklin's?
- (ii) Were both parts of the woodcarving tools factory made?
- (iii) Were the tools owned and paid for by Franklin's?
- (iv) How many tools constituted a working set?
- (v) What was the significance of 2 names stamped one over the other?
- (vi) How were the tools stored?

3. The Woodcarving Tools Cont..

Since Franklin's had closed down in 1917, the answers to these questions were sought by interviewing residents in Deddington. Interviews were conducted with:

Mrs. Hopcraft, wife of the Deddington builder; J. Hopcraft.

Mr. J.M. French, an estimator with Franklin's c1907-1914

Mr. Drinkwater, a carpenter and joiner with Hopcraft's.

Miss Stanley, daughter of Alf Stanley, one of the last woodcarvers to have worked for Franklin's.

Mrs. Ray, whose father and uncle were woodcarvers at Franklin's.

Mrs. Elsley, Editor of the Deddington News.

As a result of the interviews it has been possible to piece together an idea of the day to day life of the woodcarvers and the way in which the Firm operated:

- (i) The names stamped on the wooden handles were positively identified as belonging to woodcarvers who worked for Franklin's. Most were Deddington men but it appeared that several families, such as the Spiers came into the area for work. Franklin's were known to have employed outside labour in order to complete specific orders to time. Carvers came from Stratford-upon-Avon and also from Marples in Gloucester. Franklin's woodcarvers sometimes worked for Marples in return. Other woodcarvers were named as Smithin, Canberry, Walters and Alf Stanley.
- (ii) The metal parts of the tools were purchased from Marples & other well known tool manufacturers, by the woodcarvers.
- (iii) No financial assistance was provided by Franklin's towards the cost of the tools. The wooden handles were handmade by individual craftsmen to their own design and were stamped for identification.
- (iv) On average 60-90 pieces constituted a working set of tools, & including planes, saws, chisels, gouges. The tools were kept
(vi) in large handmade wooden toolchests in the workshop. Portable tool boxes were used when working away from home.



Fig. 4. The Blocks (now Featherstone House), Deddington. W. Franklin lived here in the late nineteenth century.



Fig 5. Castle House, Deddington
H. R. Franklin lived
here in the 1890s.

3. The Woodcarving Tools Cont..

- (v) It was common practice for woodcarvers to inherit tools or to buy them second-hand within the workshop. For this reason some tools bore two names.

4. The Woodcarvers and H.R. Franklin's

At it's peak in the 1890's Franklin's employed over 200 men including horsemen, smiths, masons, estimators, pit sawers, carpenters, joiners and woodcarvers. Franklin's was therefore one of the largest employers in the Banbury area in the late nineteenth century.

Franklin's was founded c1850 by Robert Franklin, who was a carpenter and joiner by trade. Census returns for 1841 show that R. Franklin, carpenter aged 50, lived in Chapel Street, Deddington. He established a highly successful builders yard and employed 10 men by 1851. By 1874 his widow employed 84 men and 8 boys. Later the brothers Henry Robert and William Franklin took over the firm which continued in business until 1917.

Little information is known about the Franklin family. It is known H.R. Franklin lived at Castle House, Deddington and bought Yarnton Manor, Oxon in 1895. W. Franklin lived at The Blocks (now Featherstone House) which was situated immediately in front of Franklin's Builders Yard. See Figs. 4 & 5.

In 1912 a financial crisis occurred by William's wife leaving him and taking most of the money. Franklin's became a limited company under two new directors; Frank Gray (M.P. for Oxford city) and Mr. Margete (Manager of Barclay's Bank).

The Firm continued in business until 1917 when it was forced to close due to bankruptcy. It appears that Franklin's received a large order for stretchers during the 1914-18 war, which they turned out approximately 6 inches short of War Office specifications. As a consequence the War Office refused payment and the Official Receiver was called in.



Fig. 6. Woodcarvers at Franklin's photographed about 1895, outside The Blocks (Featherstone House). The woodcarvers wear white linen aprons. Apprentices wore small 'bell boy' hats. Mr Hall the foreman stands on the far right. Alf Stanley stands fifth from left in the top row.

4. The Woodcarvers and H.R. Franklin's Contd.

Very little information has come to light about the day to day operation of Franklin's. It is known that Franklin's specialised in producing woodcarvings as early as 1836 when the screen, pulpit, altar piece and communion rails were made for the parish church of SS Peter and Paul, Deddington.

Through interviews conducted with Miss Stanley, daughter of Alf Stanley, one of the woodcarvers, it was possible to construct the timetable of a typical working day in Summer:

6.00 a.m.	Start Work.
8.00 - 8.30 a.m.	Breakfast.
12.00-12.30 p.m.	Dinner.
4.00 - 4.30 p.m.	Tea.
7.00 p.m.	Finish Work.

Miss Stanley recalled that her father worked extremely long hours and that he was often away from home for long periods. Her mother always kept his bag packed as he sometimes went away on church work at very short notice.

The photograph of the woodcarvers (Fig. 6) taken outside The Blocks was donated to Banbury Museum by Mrs. Ray whose father was a woodcarver. The woodcarvers are shown wearing white linen aprons. The apprentices wore bell-boy style hats distinguishing them from the qualified woodcarvers. Several of the men have been identified including Mr. Hall, the supervisor standing on the far right, Mr. Alf Stanley standing 5th from the left in the top row, Mrs. Ray's father sitting 2nd from the left in the front row. Copies of this photograph were reproduced for employees of the firm.

It appears that woodcarvers served a 5 year apprenticeship, commonly starting on their eighteenth birthday. The 6 day working week was from Monday to Saturday with only Sundays off. Holidays were unpaid. Carvers were paid 6½p per hour (c.1914).



Fig. 7. Chapel of St. John, Hempton near
Deddington. The entire church was
built by R. Franklin and J. Hopcraft
in 1850-1.

4. The Woodcarvers and H.R. Franklin's Cont..

As a result of bibliographical and archival research it has been possible to establish that Franklin's played an important part in the church building and restoration programme which prevailed from the mid to late 19th century throughout the country. Although maintaining a general building practice the Firm developed early links with church architects such as G.E. Street, the Oxford Diocesan architect c.1850 and later with G.F. Bodley (1827-1907), T. Garner (1839-1906) and Cecil Hare a pupil of Bodley's.

The extent of this collaboration, the contribution of woodcarving and examples of work produced are discussed in the next section.

5. Franklin's Churchwork : Examples of Woodcarvings.

Two of the earliest known references to Franklin's churchwork include the construction of new churches, The Chapel of St. John, Hempton, Oxon, 1850-1 and the Church of St. John the Evangelist at Milton, Oxon, 1856, to the design of William Butterfield. Both of these churches were constructed by R. Franklin and J. Hopcraft, another Deddington builder. (See Fig.7.)

From 1884-1917 H.R. Franklin's produced work for the architects Bodley, Garner and Hare. Franklin's became reknown for the production of high quality wood carvings and church furnishings such as rood screens, reredos, pulpits, organ cases and choir stalls. The work was carried out to the designs of Bodley and Garner and after Bodley's death to the designs of Cecil Hare.

Bodley had worked in Gilbert Scott's office with G.E. Street in the 1840s. In 1869 Bodley formed a partnership with Garner which lasted until 1897 when Garner was received into the Roman Catholic Church.



Fig. 8. Rood screen, St. Margaret's church, Oxford. Similar in design to the screen for Hobart Cathedral, Tasmania although not as elaborate, it was designed by G. F. Bodley and made by Franklin's about 1907.



Fig. 9. Aumbry, St. Margaret's church, Oxford, designed by Cecil Hare and made by Franklin's about 1908, with elaborate detailing.

5. Franklin's Churchwork : Examples of Woodcarvings.

A great many of Bodley and Garner's churches were built in the English Late Gothic Styles. Internally churches were often decorated with painted, boarded wooden roofs and fitted with wood sculptures, such as rood screens, reredos and organ cases, which were sometimes heavily gilded and painted in Flemish or Late Gothic Style. Franklin's produced wood carvings, mostly in English Oak to the specifications of Bodley, Garner and Hare at the following:

St. Giles (1850-2) and St. Margaret's Oxford (1883-1893)

See Figs. 8-11. St. John's, Cowley, Oxford 1894-6 See Fig. 12.

Holy Trinity, Stratford-upon-Avon 1889-1891 See Fig. 13

Franklin's production of woodcarvings was prolific. Orders were received from up and down the country. Other examples of work completed include: the pulpit for St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, London; York Minster where Bodley was consulting architect from 1882; rood screen for Powys Cathedral, Welshpool; Church at San Remo, Rome; Leeds Cathedral; Clumber Chapel; St. Mary's, Eccleston, Cheshire 1894-9; and St. Chad, Burton-on-Trent 1903-10.

Perhaps the most prestigious project completed by Franklin's was the chancel screen and pulpit for the Cathedral Church of St. David, Hobart, Tasmania. Bodley and Garner successfully competed for the commission for the Cathedral which was built between 1868-1894. The pulpit designed by Bodley was erected in 1903. The screen designed by Hare was erected in 1916 (see Fig.14).

Residents in Deddington recall that a great stir was caused in Deddington at the time that the chancel screen and pulpit for Hobart were packed. Mrs. Hopcraft, wife of the Deddington builder, recalled that she and her sister Maude were young girls at the time:

(...no one seemed to know where Tasmania was, except that it was a long, long, way away.)



Fig. 10. Pulpit and sounding board, St. Margaret's church, Oxford. Designed by G. F. Bodley and made by Franklin's about 1896.



Fig. 11. Reredos, St. Margaret's Church, Oxford.



Fig. 12. Rood screen, carved roof and organ case at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Cowley, Oxford, made by Franklin's 1894-96. The whole church was designed by G.F. Bodley.



Fig. 13. Organ loft, Holy Trinity church, Stratford-on-Avon, designed by Bodley and Garner and made by Franklin's c.1891. The organ case cost £493 and the oak sides £100.



Fig. 14. The main section of the chancel screen for Hobart Cathedral, Tasmania, photographed in Franklin's yard about 1916 before shipment.

Fig. 22.

Plane, used by F. Hancox
a carver at Franklin's,
and later sold to
Mr F Drinkwater for 25
shillings.



BELOW:

Fig. 23.

Leather case containing woodcarving
tools which belong to Mr F
Drinkwater who was apprenticed
to Alf Stanley when he worked for
Hopcrafts of Deddington. Mr Stanley
was one of Franklin's woodcarvers
who joined Hopcrafts after the firm's
bankruptcy in 1917.

Loaned by Mr F Drinkwater.

