



a reflective craftsman



SUMMER 2011 ISSUE 6 NEWSLETTER FOR DR. THOMAS HAWSON DESIGNER/MAKER/ARTIST

Tom is now willingly and openly seeking commissions and orders in design, cabinet-making and woodwork related activities. After refusing almost all commissions since 2003, having been occupied with academic research and building his dream workshop, Tom is finally back to 'business as usual'.

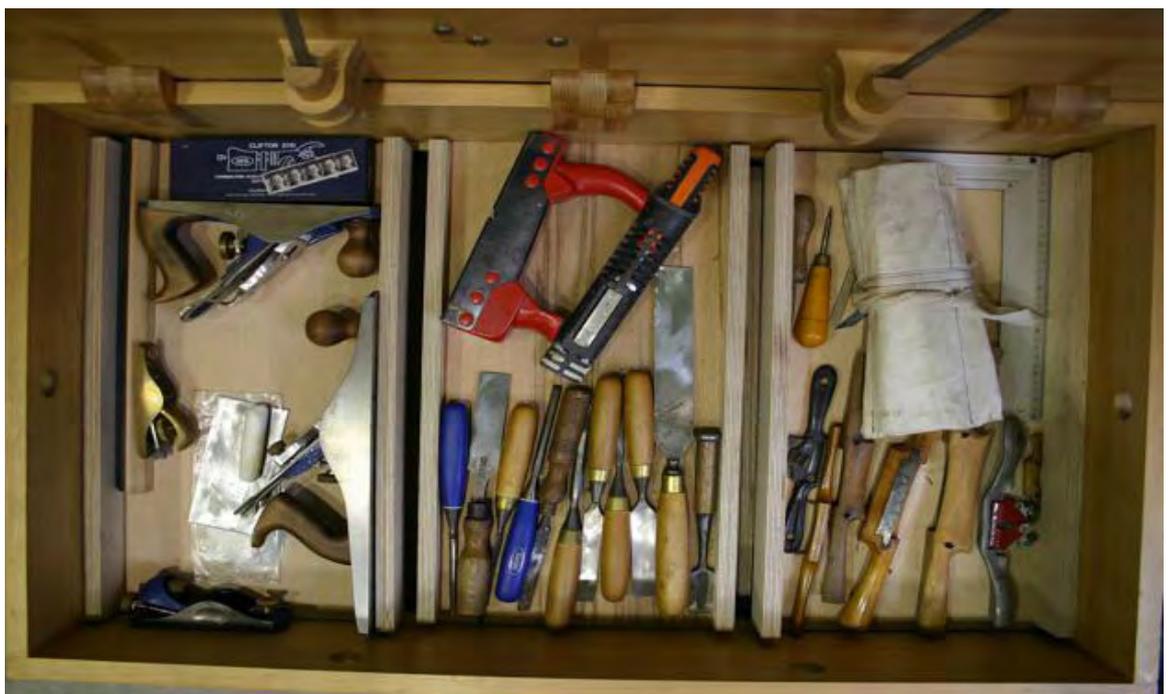
In his new workshop he now has year round control over the temperature and humidity of his working environment, essential for the production of fine cabinet-making. After so much introspective activity, first his Ph.D. and then building his own workshop, Tom is "really looking forward to putting fine craftsmanship out the door once again and seeing the appreciative smiles on customers' faces".



Drawing studio ready for design time.

TOM IS NOW READY FOR

RECEIVING COMMISSIONS



Tom's tool chest honed for work.

'A FINISHED HOME IS DEAD'

AN OLD PROVERB FROM INDIA.

The Mill Studio and Workshop is finally operational but will it ever be completed?

The design studio, you could say, is complete but it is without its fitted kitchen and the workshop has yet to have its final cladding of larch on the walls. However, it is insulated, heated and fully operational, with automated dust extraction and all machines installed. The remaining wall cladding is to be done between jobs, just as long as the jobs don't come in too quickly. Future clients can be assured that paying jobs will now take all priority over remaining workshop cosmetics, as the renovation funding coffers are now empty.



Mill studio.



Tom at his new studio desk.



The Mill.



Axe rack.



Mill laid recently dug out and now a nature pond.

FIRST COMMISSIONS COMPLETED



Iceland Parliament chair.

This year so far has seen two commissions completed for a private client who has been waiting 6 years since his first enquiry into acquiring 8 dining chairs. The chairs are of unique provenance being copies of a chair, made by Tom, that resides at the Icelandic Parliament. These chairs cannot easily be made by machine as they involve steam bending, hand shaping and are complicated to assemble. Despite not having been at his cabinet-making bench for 8 years and the chairs being one of the most demanding hand-work commissions Tom has ever undertaken, his time sheet reported he was only 19 hours over his predicted 224 hours for the job. His mind is keener than his hand it appears. Over time it is hoped these misjudgments will be less severe.

On delivering these chairs, not only was Tom's work enthusiastically received by his patient client but he was additionally requested to accept another commission to design and make a chandelier and candelabras for their banqueting barn. This commission has been completed and just delivered, again enthusiastically received and two geese thrown in for good measure. Whatever next!



Candelabra (above) and chandelier in ash and copper.



Goose and Gander, Greta and Humphrey.

MASTER POTTER HANDS ON ALMOST FORGOTTEN SKILLS

Jenny Ozwell has been the grateful recipient of master potter, Pauline Baskcomb's experienced guidance in the Mill's Wheelhouse Pottery. Pauline, a family friend of Tom and Jenny's, has been retired from her pottery business 'Jackpots', of Louth, Lincolnshire for some 10 years. Having had more than 25 years experience as a potter, Pauline has thoroughly enjoyed handing on skills to Jenny and revisiting her vocation. This visit in August, being Pauline's third in assisting Jenny's development, has focused on larger bowl throwing, slip decoration, glazing and lid handles. Pauline reports that Jenny's throwing technique has greatly improved along with her confidence at the wheel. As yet Jenny's pottery interest remains a hobby but represents a valuable asset to the Mill's facility and accounts for most of the household's tableware needs. Tom is very satisfied with a range of rustic tableware for the Mill kitchen.

Next year it is proposed that Pauline, with Jenny's assistance, will provide a short introductory throwing course for beginners.



Experimental glazing.



Mill studio's rustic tableware.

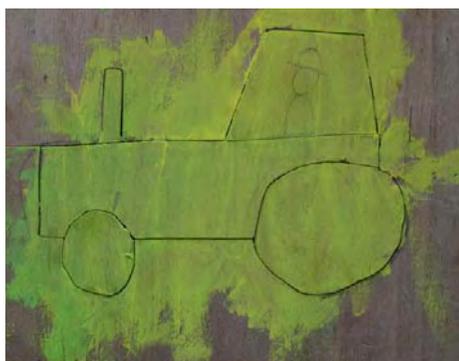
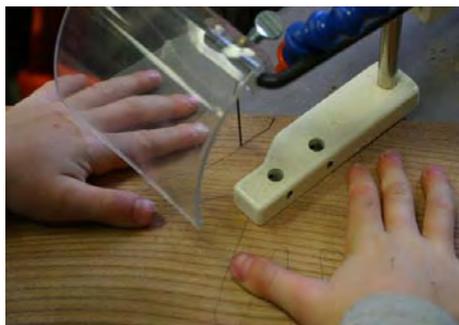


Pauline and Jenny in the Wheelhouse Pottery.

FERGUS

THE SCROLL SAW OPERATOR

After some hesitation regarding Fergus' safety awareness he has recently been given the use of a powered scroll saw. He has been using his saw to make puzzle toys for his family and friends. His favourite things to make are hand shaped coasters. Father Tom has so far assisted Fergus in making his own designs. Giving Fergus free rein in developing his ideas has produced some surprising and creative outcomes!



Hands at work above and tractor puzzle.



Fergus at his scrollsaw.

SKIN-ON-FRAME-KAYAK MAKING COURSE UPDATE



Kayak made in 2008.

This summer's planned course was cancelled due to a shortage in numbers and this winter's course has yet to gain much interest with only one name down so far. This November's course will go ahead if a minimum of four participants comes forward.

'LUNARTICKS' IN THE MILL

Tom has been hosting a lunar club in the Mill Studio every full moon for the past 6 months. Tom having been inspired by the Lunar Society, as described below, started this regular dining club some time last year.

The Lunar Society of Birmingham was a dinner club and informal learned society of prominent figures in the Midlands Enlightenment, including industrialists, natural philosophers and intellectuals, who met regularly between 1765 and 1813 in Birmingham, England. At first called the Lunar Circle, "Lunar Society" became the formal name by 1775. The name arose because the society would meet during the full moon, as the extra light made the journey home easier and safer in the absence of street lighting. The members cheerfully referred to themselves as "lunarticks", a pun on lunatics. Venues included Erasmus Darwin's home in Lichfield, Matthew Boulton's home, Soho House, and Great Barr Hall.

The Lunar Society evolved through various degrees of organisation over a period of up to fifty years, but was only ever an informal group. No constitution, minutes, publications or membership lists survive from any period, and evidence of its existence and activities is found only in the correspondence and notes of those associated with it.

Wikipedia, 'Lunar Society of Birmingham', <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_Society_of_Birmingham> (accessed August 2011).

Tom has enjoyed very much the informal relaxed atmosphere of the evenings, sharing home-cooked dishes brought along by the guests and the stimulating conversations held. The highlights of these evenings include the test drive of Greg's home built electric car (www.go-ev.co.uk/) and Sebastian's slide show of how he made an Xbox Playstation into a laptop (<http://seb3.yolasite.com/sebs-blog.php>). So far, unfortunately (depending on how you look at it) the club has not attracted the interests and company of women.



The Moon.

GUEST WORKBENCH

Summer 2009 we had young Rory come to stay. He was interested in beginning a career in furniture and wanted to test the water before he made any choices on leaving school. It was a great pleasure to have him here for two weeks as a member of the family. He helped Tom sand and oil the new windows for the mill and he took time to make some small hand carved figures and photograph them at the guest workbench. He has since graduated from the Chippendale School of Furniture and has found employment with a furniture maker in Edinburgh.

Since autumn 2010 Tom has had a great deal of assistance from a recently retired gentleman, Mr. X, who was wanting to keep active and try his hand at woodwork (why he wants to remain anonymous is unknown). A good deal of thanks must be given to the unnamed craftsman, who has assisted in making the large doors of the mill, putting in the insulation and lifting plasterboard onto the ceilings. In return he has had Tom's full assistance at the guest bench restoring his home's sash windows. Tom looks forward to the intermittent return of Mr. X.



Rory's little man.



Mr. X.



DR. THOMAS HAWSON Ph.D
DESIGNER/MAKER/ARTIST
HUNDALEE MILL FARM
JEDBURGH
TD8 6PA
TEL/FAX: 01835 869931
Mobile: 07801 653830
E-mail: tom@thomashawson.com