

On the MEND

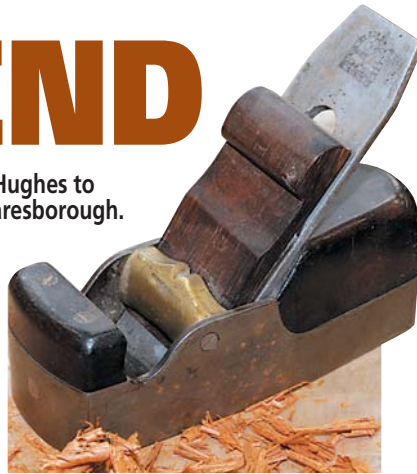
An advert in the Harrogate Antique Fair catalogue drew Ivor Hughes to Tim Phelps' fine furniture restoration workshop in nearby Knaresborough.

Each autumn, the BADA supported Harrogate Antique Fair is a showcase for sixty of the country's top dealers, the majority of whom are members of BADA or LAPADA – some both. Less obviously, it is also a showcase for the craftsmen responsible for bringing some of the exhibits back to their best. Tim Phelps is one of them.

Making of a cabinetmaker

As a schoolboy, Tim Phelps got a privileged insight into traditional cabinet-making. His Saturday job was in the workshops of Edward Barnsley (1900-1987). Edward was the son of Sidney Barnsley who co-founded *The Cotswolds School* of arts and crafts fur-

Traditional methods, traditional tools – cabinetmaker and lecturer Andrew Cox-Whittaker uses this early C20th Isaac Green smoothing plane



niture. In the Seventies, Edward helped restore the profile of Arts and Crafts furniture and, today, his workshops are an educational and charitable trust and offering apprenticeships to seven talented students. Quite an act to follow ...

After his A levels, Tim Phelps decided to study cabinetmaking rather than go down the line of pure academia. He studied at Rycotewood

College in Thame – now the wood skills department of the immense Oxford and Cherwell Valley College of Further Education. Then, after four years in a workshop in East Anglia, opening his own in 1984. Today, it is a modern unit on two floors and employing four other cabinetmakers – one also a lecturer at Leeds Metropolitan University's College of Art and Design.

Since opening his own workshop, Tim has become an accredited member of The Institute of Conservation and member of BAFRA (British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association). He is also on the Conservation Register of UK and Ireland. BADA itself has awarded him a Distinction in Furniture Restoration. Not bad going for someone with a childhood interest kindled by a Saturday job ...

Client list

With these credentials, T L Phelps Fine Furniture Restoration has worked for and in numerous National Trust and English Heritage properties, museums, civic buildings and other stately homes. Right now, work at the Trust's Nostell Priory (Wakefield) includes on-site restoration of the butler's pantry. Commercial clients inevitably include the antiques trade. His list of private clients – and their insurers – has recently been extended by the flooding in the North.

Tim Phelps consulting Susan Stuart's new two-volume study of Gillows of Lancaster – to which he contributed. His own chair is one of a pair by Frederick Walker of Rockley (inset)



"Remove the dirt but not the age." Detail from a window seat from Leeds Girls' High School, believed to be the work of Robert Thompson himself



When I visited there were maybe twenty-five items with work in progress. Going out the next morning was a window seat believed to be the very hand of Robert "Mouseman" Thompson of nearby Kilburn. Leeds



Martin Kitching attending to a demi-lune satinwood inlaid commode, a late C19th reproduction in a Sheraton style



ABOVE: "Veneers and intricate inlays and marquetry can be the most time consuming. This c1700 clock case is a prime example – the door became badly warped due to shrinkage and incorrect siting of the hinges"

LEFT: "It's not so much the water that does the real damage, it's the dehumidifiers they put in after." Mid C18th walnut veneer bureau, a flood casualty from Morpeth

Girls' High School had recently merged and much of their furniture placed in a local auction. The

winning bidder, from East Sussex, had decided that the job of restoration belonged in Yorkshire.

T L Phelps Fine Furniture Restoration, 15A Nidd Valley Business Park, Knaresborough HG5 9JA - furnitureconservation.org and 01423 862752.