

Early 20th Century Farm Workshop

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For many years I have lived in the Magaliesberg area, initially near the Magaliesburg village and latterly near Hartbeespoort. Inevitably I have become involved with aspects of life in the area, from the preservation of the natural flora and fauna to its rich history where early game hunters and many Voortrekkers settled.

A good friend, Charles Gotthard, the well-known sculptor, has been the driving force behind the Magaliesburg Historical Society, whose aims are to preserve artefacts and records of the old ways of life in the area. Recently, the Society was presented with the contents of a farm workshop which was established by the owners' Grandfather after the end of the Anglo-Boer War. The shop was used to repair and supply products for agricultural equipment and transport, especially ox wagons. The



workshop was closed in the 1930's and remained virtually untouched until the present day. The main pieces of equipment were a forge complete with blacksmith tools, a woodturning lathe and a band saw. Both the lathe and saw were operated by an overhead shaft which initially was run by a steam engine but later by diesel. Both pieces of machinery were manufactured by an unknown carpenter in Monkey Thorn (*Acacia galpinii*), a bushveld tree which is more common north of the Magaliesburg. I have two good specimens in my garden but have never seen it growing wild in the area. The timber is dark brown, coarse grained and according to Coates-Palgrave, heavy and difficult to work. It is an interesting choice, but I believe the carpenter knew that it would be stable enough to maintain the accuracy required from both pieces of equipment. I think that in Europe, such a project would have used beech or perhaps ash. I wonder how the timber would have been seasoned as many of the sections are 80 mm thick and must have taken several years to air dry.

The first picture on the left was taken from the tailstock end and shows the lathe in position, set into the floor. The drive belt can be seen loosely hanging from the pulley. The drive shaft runs along the wall



to the band-saw behind me. The tool-rest height is fixed just below centre suggesting



that gouges rather than hook tools were used although no turning chisels remained. The next picture illustrates the tool-rest and the headstock. The swing is about 380 mm and the bed length 1.8 metres. Unfortunately we could not find a drive spur for the headstock. It was suggested that the owner obtained tools that were used by patternmakers in the Reef foundries. It is interesting to note that the tool-rest is set on

the opposite side to standard lathes. Perhaps the owner was left handed and specified it but it may also have been because the shaft ran in one direction so that was the way the lathe turned.

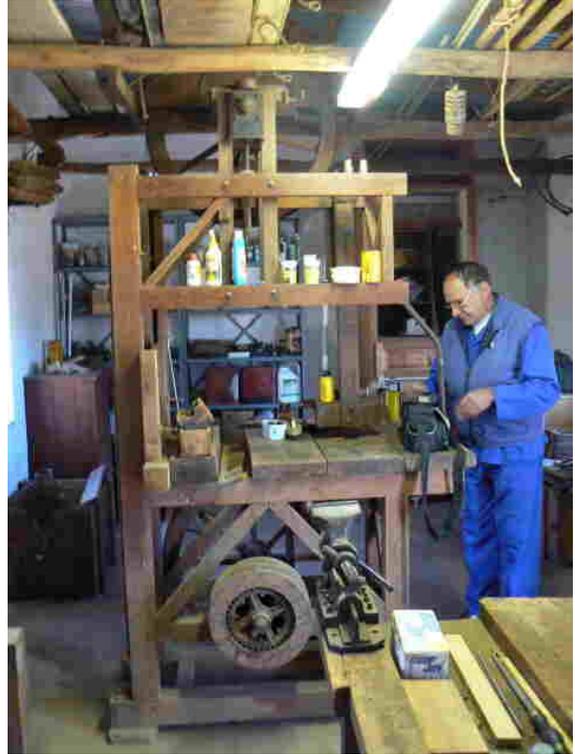
[Note from the editor: To change direction, the belt could have been run in a figure-of-eight, so the left-handed explanation is more likely.]

Note that there is a hand-turned grindstone mounted on the lathe bed and this is seen in the photo on the left.

This picture below shows the band-saw and you can immediately see what a remarkable construction it is. One can only speculate whether the carpenter had plans for this or, as I suspect, access to one in a patternmakers shop which he copied. The throat is 700 mm and the maximum height of cut 500 mm.



This picture gives an



indication of the size as the man is about six feet tall. It also illustrates the drive pulley at the bottom.

The photo on the right shows a close up of the top blade guide, all constructed from monkey thorn. There is no bottom guide. The blade is original.

The last picture illustrates the top wheel which has height adjustment to tension the blade. Both wheels are clad with rubber automobile tyre sections. The wheel cover and blade cover are made from Oregon Pine.



The machines are now on display in The Magaliesburg Historical Society's Museum which is situated in Charles' old house "Out of Africa" a



couple of kilometres out of Magaliesburg towards Rustenburg. The museum is well worth a visit and has some fascinating exhibits on local bushman art. The area is rich in carved rocks and also memorabilia from the Anglo-Boer War. Arrangements can be made at the museum to visit these sites.