Durham City Freemen

The Joiners' Guild

Foreword

Durham City Freemen
A Brief History of the Guild of Joiners

In 2016 the 'Freemen' established a History Group and embarked on a project to explore the history and heritage of their 8 remaining Guilds/Companies, using a wide range of archive material, together with artefacts discovered and recovered from the bed of the River Wear beneath Elvet Bridge by Gary Bankhead.

The group comprised of both 'Freemen'and local people who had an interest and passion for the heritage of their city.

Their work does not purport to be an academic study, but has been created for the general public, with its aim to shed light on the history of the Guilds/Companies and the Freemen.

The trade Guilds/Companies and Freemen held power and influence and did much to shape the city and its heritage for over 300 years.

I hope you find the work of the history group both interesting and informative.

Eric Bulmer
Chairman of the History Group

Acknowledgements

With grateful thanks to the members of the History Group and in particular, to Rosemary Zakrzewski and David Parkinson for their major contribution in researching the Joiners Guild.

The creation and production of this booklet could not have been achieved without the support of the County Records Office, Durham University and Gary Bankhead, for his guidance and access to artefacts he discovered and recovered from the bed of the River Wear beneath Elvet Bridge.

Finally, special thanks must go to Geoff Kitson the official photographer of the Freemen for providing images and John Booth, the Freemen website manager, who assembled the research material for the production of this booklet.

Introduction

The Guilds or Companies of Durham City stretch back over 500 years. There were historically 3 main types of Guilds in the Middle Ages, merchant guilds, craft guilds and religious guilds, but only the craft guilds have survived.

The first Charter (granted to the citizens in 1179 by Bishop Hugh Pudsey) granting the citizens to be 'free from' in-tolls and out-tolls for their merchandise, hence the term Freemen. The first recorded Charter granted to a guild was the Weavers and Websters in 1450 and by the late 15th century there were 16 Guilds in Durham.

The two primary concerns for the guilds were with the trades, where they endeavoured to maintain standards of workmanship (now known as quality control) and keep a local monopoly of the trade for their own members, by control of the admission of apprentices and their ultimate certification as a Master of their craft on production of a 'masterpiece' at the end of a 7 years apprenticeship.

All Charters stipulated certain rules known as 'Ordinaries'. Common to all guilds, was that they must take part in the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi (the 1st Thursday after Trinity Sunday). The guilds with their banners displayed, went in procession from the Marketplace to the Palace Green where they enacted religious plays. Another ordinary stated that no guild would permit a Scotsman to be an apprentice, no doubt reaction to the continuing conflict with our northern neighbour. I am pleased to say that this rule no longer applies.

Original 16 Guilds

The object of Guilds was to maintain high standards of workmanship by apprenticeships and to engender good fellowship in society and religion. The following 16 Guilds were established in Durham:

Weavers & Websters (1450)

Cordwainers (1458)

Barber Surgeons,Waxmakers, Ropers and Stringers (1468)

Skinners and Glovers (1507)

Butchers (1520)

Goldsmiths, Plumbers, Pewterers, Potters, Painters, Glaziers and Tin Plate Workers (1532)

Barkers and Tanners (1547)

Drapers and Tailors (1549)

Merchants incorporating Grocers (1345), Mercers (1393),

Salters (1394), Ironmongers (1464) and Haberdashers (1467) (1561)

Fullers and Feltmakers (1565)

Curriers and Tallow Chandlers (1570)

Free Masons, Rough Masons,Wallers, Slaters, Paviours, Plasterers and Bricklayers (1594)

Blacksmiths, Lorimers, Locksmiths, Cutlers, Bladesmiths and Girdlers (1610)

Saddlers and Upholsterers (1659)

Carpenters, Joiners,Wheelwrights, Sawyers and Coopers (1661)
Dyers and Listers (1667)

Of these only the Barbers, Butchers, Cordwainers, Curriers, Drapers, Joiners, Masons and Plumbers survive.

Initially, freedom (to become a Freeman could only be obtained in two ways either by Servitude or Patrimony.

Servitude

Serving a 7 year apprenticeship (now only 3 years).

Patrimony

Conferred on the eldest son of a Freeman (today all sons and since 2010, daughters can also be admitted).

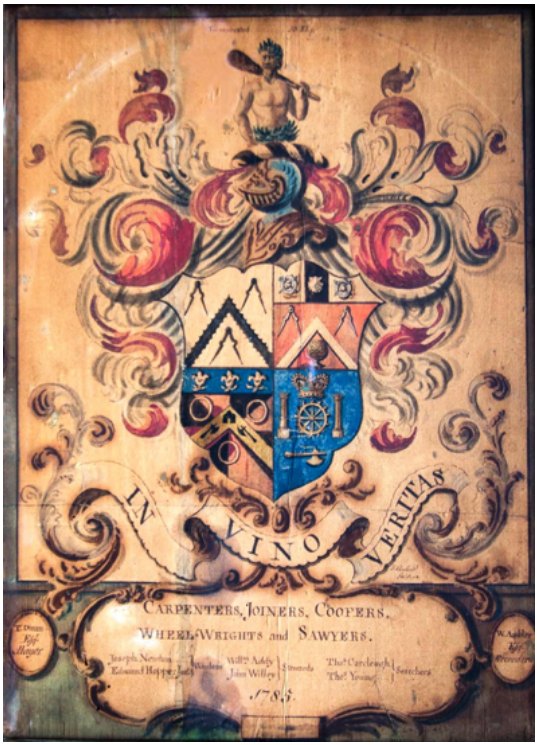
During mediaeval times and until 1835 the Freemen had authority and power. Ihey were the only citizens that could vote for or be elected as Mayor. With the Great Reform Act (1832) and the Municipal Corporation Act (1835) that extended electoral franchise and removed the power of the Freemen overnight.

Although stripped of their authority the Freemen have retained three historical privileges;

- To erect a stall in the marketplace free of charge.
- To graze their sheep on the Sands.
- The use of the Guildhall free of charge.

The function of the Freemen and guilds today are largely ceremonial, notwithstanding their continuing support for community and charitable causes.

THE JOINERS GUILD



Joiners Crest

Evidence of the history and heritage of the guilds can be found in the Durham Town Hall.In the Guildhall, (the historical home of the guilds and Freemen) is housed a collection of silverware and 18th century watercolour interpretations of crests of a number of Guilds.

In the Main Hall high in the roofs hammer head beams are the painted coats of arms of the 16 original guilds.

Joiners Coat of Arms

The Joiners Guild

In early times Joiners formed part of the Company of Carpenters and Joiners, Wheelwrights, Sawyers and Coopers. The Joiners' crest is on the left side of the shield, a series of chevrons. It is thought that Bishop Tunstall in the 16th century approved the original charter, but no documents survive from before the appearance in 1712 of an Apprentice Book.

Carpenters made and installed building materials including roofs, floors and house frames, while Joiners constructed furniture and house and shop fittings, such as stairs, doors and window frames. Wheelwrights, Sawyers and Coopers made goods not directly connected to house-building. Cabinet-makers, who made delicate, intricate furniture, were absorbed into the Company in the 19th century.

The Apprentice Book included the Guild Ordinaries (rules) dating back to 1661. In 1712 every member had to obey 25 rules, or pay a fine even for the slightest infringement. Most dealt with behaviour at meetings, admission to the Company and apprenticeships.

These include:

- Sitting in the wrong place.
- Speaking out of turn – fine of 6d to the bishop (later the mayor) and 6d to the guild warden;
- Absence – fine 3s; for the stewards, not carrying the box containing the Deed of Covenant from their house to the warden's house before the meeting – fine 3s 4d.

Admission to the Company

An applicant must be known to the warden as an able workman, must produce his apprentice indentures proving the completion of his 7-year apprenticeship proving the completion of his 7-year apprenticeship: charge - £4 to the bishop, £4 to the trade and £2 for the "decayed brethren" (probably those who had become impoverished); payment of a freelidge (for the privilege of becoming a burgess of Durham City) of 5s for a Freeman's son, for the apprenticed stranger 10s to the trade and 3s 4d to the mayor.

Apprenticeship

These rules all included fines of 6s 8d. Only married master craftsmen could take on apprentices, and so could provide accommodation, food and clothing. The master-apprentice contract required an indenture. A second apprentice could only be taken on if the first had completed 6 years of his apprenticeship, unless the former was the master's son. A lazy or badly behaved apprentice was taken to the mayor by the guild's wardens and his master was fined. An apprentice had to be 24 years old for it to be declared he had "served his years"; only then could he become a journeyman, and no master might permit his apprentice to marry until he had completed his 7 years – apparently apprentices would often marry their master's daughter.

Apprenticeship and the Tools, Work and Skills of a Joiner

The system was first developed in the late middle ages as a means of training boys in crafts to enable them to become independent in later life. A master craftsman was entitled to employ apprentices, quite often family members, as an inexpensive source of labour.

Apprenticeships could last between 7-10 years. By the 1750s every fully trained apprentice was expected to "take his freelidge within 14 days (later 28 days) from the expiration of his apprenticeship, or to be fined every meeting after, and until his absences be paid he is not to be admitted".

The Training of Joiner Apprentices

His development would be structured from the knowledge of the raw materials, the processes of splitting and drying, and the composition and grain structure of different woods. His training would progress to the use of hand tools, measuring devices and other equipment needed to shape and join pieces of wood together. He would progress to understand the strength and weakness of the different wood joints and their application.

Hand Tools

Hand tools have been developed over hundreds of years from stone, bronze, iron and gradually on to the high grade carbon steels we use today. The apprentice would understand the 6 main functions which require hand tools to produce something from wood: 1. Chopping & Splitting - Axes, hammer, auger, hatchet adze, wedges and saws. 2. Boring Holes - Auger, Brace & Bits, Bradawls and Gimlets. 3. Sawing - Ripping, Half Ripping, Panel, Tenor, Sash , Compass and Keyhole. 4. Hammering - Wooden Mallets, Chisels, Hammers. 5. Measuring - Dividers, Bevels, Chalk String, Rulers. 6. Shaping & Finishing - Planes , Fore, Smoothing, Rabbit, Jack, Long, Jointer, Files and Rasps. Edged tools would be sharpened by;- Grindstones, Rub Stones, Oil and Whet stones.

Early 19th Century Toolbox

CONTENTS:- *Hammer, Mallet, Rule, Gimlet, Augers, Hand saw, Hatchet, Smoothing plane, Fore plane, Dividers, Chisels, Pincers, Files, Spoke shave, Whet Stone, Square, Bevel gauge, Marking Scribe and Canvas bag.*

Early 20th Century Toolbox

CONTENTS:- *Hammer, Mallet, Rule, Gimlet, Augers, Dividers, Chisels, Pincers, Files, Spoke shave, Whet Stone, Square ,Bevel gauge, Marking Hand saw, Hatchet, Smoothing plane, Fore plane, scribe and Canvas bag.*

THE JOINERS GUILD

Many traditional joinery techniques would rely on close fitting dry joints, so training would involve identifying the 8 main joints. In order to join two pieces of wood together (the definition of a Joiner) the apprentice would have to learn how to use the following popular, traditional forms of joint: 1. Butt, 2. Mitre, 3. Half Lap, 4. Mortice & Tenon, 5. Dovetail, 6. Dado, 7. Rabbot, 8. Tongue & Groove. Once proficient at using hand tools and mastering wood joints to a high standard, the apprentice would be a valuable asset to his employer.

Being an apprentice in the 1700-1800s would have been a worthwhile occupation and a possible career path to Master Craftsman and Guild status.

Apprenticeships are still a successful and an important means of training young people in trades and industry in general.

Peter Bennett - Durham Cathedral Apprentice Joiner

Sponsored by Durham City Freemen

The Company in the 18th Century

In the early 17th century the guild grew in wealth. In 1749 – 50 The Company spent £2.13.4d but received £3.3.0d. However, very soon debts became a problem, partly due to projects involving several companies, and in 1758 some silver plate was sold to pay for a law suit. The following year more silver was sold because of "the expenses incurred over the Wear navigation scheme" – a ambitious plan (which failed) to reroute the river and make navigation possible right up to Durham. In 1764 another law suit led to more silver being sold – a Mr John Bell (a freeman) and a foreign journeyman had worked "within the liberties of the city". The identity of the foreigner is not clear, but the guilds did not allow Scots to be employed.

In contrast, in 1763 the Company paid £15.18.2d for a quart tankard, a pint can and a gill can, all engraved with the Company's coat of arms. Subscriptions were asked for a new banner and by 1765 £6.15s had been raised. In 1785, 12s was spent on a company coat of arms "to be hung in the Common Hall of the Tolbooth" and another 12s on its frame, glass and gilding. Another banner was needed in 1803, but the apprentices were not to touch it: possibly they had caused the accounts frequently to state "to mending the banner". The banner was completed in 1804 after spending 10s 6d on "making up the banner and putting on the fringe". Company meetings, originally held quarterly, were reduced to twice a year, but with two dinner occasions.

THE JOINERS GUILD

Every member (usually known as "brother") and his wife were obliged to attend the Michaelmas dinner (29 Sept), for a charge of 12d each for himself and his wife, unless he was out of County Durham or "visited with the visitation of God". Absence without due cause meant a fine of 3s 4d. At Corpus Christi (Thursday after Trinity Sunday) the warden laid on a dinner, which had to be paid for (6s 8d) by Midsummer's Day. By 1798 there were 4 Guild Days a year, but the accounts show that there were other meetings, when significant decisions were made.

By the end of the 17th century admission to the Company of Joiners was costly, unless you were the son of a Freeman, especially if you were absent for a time. Here is what John Gibson paid in 1796:

	£	s	d		£	s	d
Admittance		10		His threepence (regular meeting charge)		1	
Admission Duty		4	$0\frac{1}{2}$	For or not taking up his freedom in due time		10	
Towards the expense of the banner		2	6	For absences		12	
For the warden		2	6	For the stewards			2
For the clerk			2	To drinks for the whole Trade			5
Mayors Fees			8	Duty			4
Copt of his oath		10	6				
Total £3 13s $6\frac{1}{2}$d							

The 18th century company records focused mainly on behaviour, fines, membership, financial concerns, company traditions, rituals and dinners, while those for the 19th century concentrated on business. The number of members increased fast in the first half of the century.

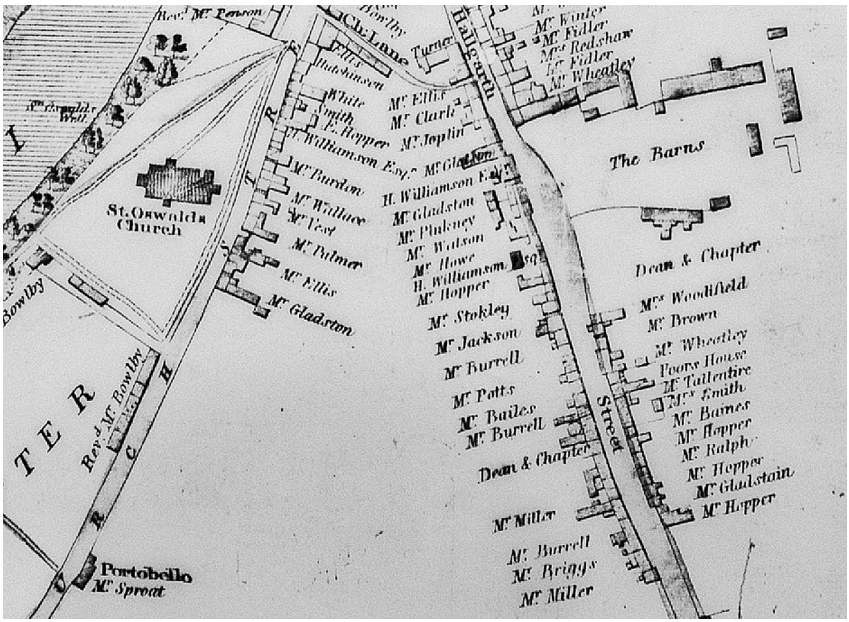
In 1828 40 brethren lived in or near Durham, with many more living not only over the North-East but also as far away as Cumberland, Leeds, Manchester, Staffordshire and even London and Kent. By 1842 there were 80 resident brethren. However, with the increase of industrialisation from the 1850s numbers decreased drastically. The last apprentice was recorded in the 1880s and by the early 1900s one or two admittances a year were recorded. The history of the Company written in the 1930s (Whiting) includes no information about the 1920s or 1930s. There are still professional joiners in Durham in the 21st century, but they are not members of the Company of Joiners.

The Hopper Family

There were joiners aplenty in and around Durham in the 18th and 19th Centuries. They were spread around the city with a concentration in the area from Elvet Bridge eastwards and south-eastwards. Among them was the Hopper clan - so many of them, some with the same first name, but different parentage, listed among births, marriages and deaths, joiner apprentices, and guild membership, that it is difficult to distinguish one family from another. For example there were clearly 2 Marks, 2 Ralphs and 3 Edmunds among the Hoppers between 1780 and 1830: among the Edmunds the first was labelled "senior", the second was "junior" but after the death of his father he became "senior", but who was the third Edmund, labelled "junior"? However, the records of our family's births, marriages and deaths listed in St Oswald's Parish record helped to identify and locate them. Two other documents, one in particular, solved the problem: Edward Hopper's will refers to each of his brothers and his sister by name, and the

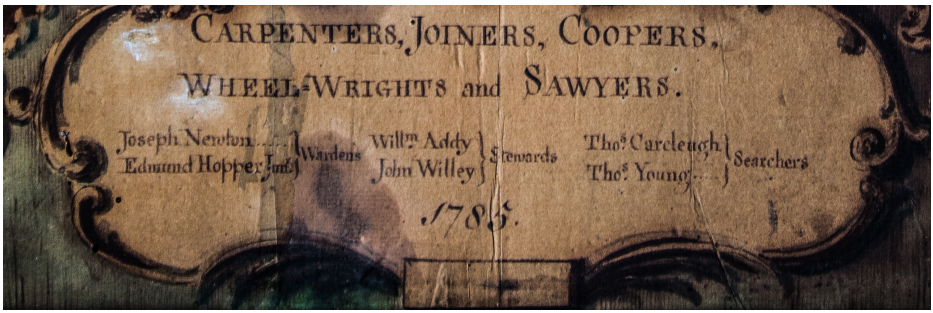
probate of Edmund Hopper, who was thus found to be his brother, not his father, written nearly 10 years earlier, also gives the appropriate locality, so a jigsaw puzzle has been nearly completed, though we can never be absolutely sure of all the facts.

Our story starts in 1721, when Edmund senior was born and baptised in St Oswald's church. He had 5 sons and a daughter. He died in 1813 at the age of 92, in Hallgarth Street. According to the Dean and Chapter records, in 1779 a certain Edmund Hopper became tenant of a property in Hallgarth Street, which was finally sold (we think to the same family) in 1806. The property had a large yard and garden, useful for a joiner, four of whose sons were either apprenticed to him or were already fully qualified joiners. The site no longer exists, but was probably just south of The Barns on the map of Hallgarth Street.



The Barnes Hallgarth Street

The family tree shows the five sons. Mark, Edmund junior, Edward and Ralph were all apprenticed to their father, and became Freemen. Two, or possibly three of them, like their father, whose name is on the Guild crest, became wardens of the Company of Joiners; all these facts can be seen in various Guild records.



THE HOPPER FAMILY

from 1721 to 1841

EDMUND

1721 Bi
1743 Fr
1750 M
1754 - 5
1779 - 8
1813 D

MARK HOPPER

1750 Birth
1765 Apprentice to father
1777 Freeman
1781 - 83 Warden
1802 - 03 Warden
1824? Death

son - Francis Hopper

EDMUND HOPPER

1752 Birth
1767 Apprentice to father
1779 Freeman
1785 - 86 Warden
1790 Married Eleanor Laycourt
1827 Death

son - Thomas Hopper

FRANCIS

1755 Bi
1800 In

son - Edm

Edward does not appear to have become a warden, but he became a landlord, owning 3 cottages in the village of Pittington, just outside Durham. His will makes clear he was well off, because, although he seems to have had no children, he gave sums of money – and sometimes more - to all his relatives. One brother, Francis, had a very different life story: he became a stone mason, and lived and worked in London. All the dates of births, marriages and deaths are in the records of the parish of St Oswald. Three of Edmund senior's grandsons are mentioned in Edward's will, but their lives remain unknown. What we do know is that at the end of the 18th century there were at least five Hopper joinery tool boxes in Durham, all from the same family. It was clearly a healthy family, as all appear to have lived to ripe old age.

D HOPPER
rth
eeman
arried Jane Lyddle
5 Warden
0 Warden
eath

HOPPER
rth
London Mason

EDWARD HOPPER
1759 Birth
1767 Apprentice to father
1780 Freeman
1834 Death

RALPH HOPPER
1764 Birth
1778 Apprentice to father
1784 Married Thomasine Anderson
1789 Freeman
1811 Warden?
1841 Death

und Hopper

The Rise and Fall of the Guild in the 19th Century

At the end of the 18th century the guild was usually named in records, which can be studied in Palace Green Library, as the Company of Carpenters, Joiners etc – or "and so forth", but in the early 1800s the title was usually the Company of Joiners and Carpenters, suggesting the Joiners dominated the guild. This was also the period when Hoppers, who were all joiners, were frequently the Warden of the Guild: between 1779 and 1831 there were 15 Wardens named Hopper, though not all were from the family just described. During the first half of the century the numbers of members increased fast. In 1828 forty brethren lived in or near Durham, with many more living not only over the North-East but also as far away as Cumberland, Leeds, Manchester, Staffordshire and even London and Kent. By 1842 there were 80 resident brethren, but by then the Hoppers had mostly disappeared, although there was a George Hopper, joiner, who lived on Old Elvet in the 1840s.

Annual Durham Directories were printed from the 1840s onwards, and Joiners were listed as working tradesmen, as were Cabinet makers. Some of the same joiners also figured on the list of Builders, but there was no list of Carpenters. This continued until the 1860s, but then the Joiners gradually faded out as an independent list, and towards the end of the century there was only one list of Builders, Joiners etc.

The guild structure changed in the 1850s – no more changes of Warden every year, as the numbers of members decreased

drastically, probably as a result of industrialisation. The last apprentice was recorded in the 1880s and by the early 1900s only one or two admittances a year were recorded. In 1855 Edward Hopper, joiner, came to live in Hallgarth Street, and from 1857 to 1897 he remained Warden of the Company of Joiners. No other craftsmen were included in the title, which was sometimes recorded as the Joiners Company. This is not so surprising when the finances are studied, which indicate clearly how the guild shrank. Whereas in 1769 accounts, about the time when silver tankards were bought and banners made, the balance was £9.15.5d, by 1889 there was only 13/2d and by 1912 the accounts show that the balance was down to 1/10d. Then came the First World War. The history of the Company written in the 1930s (Whiting) includes no information about the 1920s or 1930s.

Time served tradesmen within Durham in the field of Carpentry and Joinery are entitled to apply to become a Freeman of Durham City. There are currently 40 Freemen in the Joiners Company.

Appendix 1

Hand wood-working chisel Artefact No: 1862

Dimensions: Consists of the part blade, shank, shoulder and tang with an overall length of 9.5cms, the tang 4.5cms from the shoulder.

History: Woodworking chisels are one of the 5 types of tool dating back to the stone-age, developing from stone, flint, copper, bronze, iron and through to the present day steel tool. Chisels come in many forms and are defined as hand tools. They are designed to be driven by mallet/hammer or by hand for paring, scraping, cutting and chopping to make changes and shapes from wood.

Description and condition: Artefact 1862 is a part section of a bevelled-edge chisel, so called as the edges have been ground away to allow maximum access into acute angles as in making dovetail joints. The cross section of the chisel blade is trapezoidal. The remaining blade section, which is 2cms wide, has broken off 1cm from the shoulder and has not been re-sharpened. The tang shows

no evidence of a wooden handle. The metal wood chisel has the same level of oxidisation over its total length, indicating equal metal composition. The higher the carbon content of steel, the better the chisel could be sharpened and hold its edge, the disadvantage being the metal becomes brittle and easily fractured, as in this example.

Conclusion: The chances of the chisel being damaged during normal safe working practices are unlikely.

Appendix 2

Metal Dividers: Artefact Number:- 2013

Dimensions: Overall length: 130mm, width at fulcrum: 18mm, width between points: 70mm.

History: Dividers predate Roman times and have been used over the years on any operation requiring accurate measurements. They were essential as navigational aids, used to transcribe distances from nautical charts or to compare distances taken from a known standard and measured.

It was also a metal measuring instrument used by joiners, carpenters, blacksmiths, armourers and anyone wanting to draw an arc or circle on a hard surface. In the 18th century, when a pen/pencil was added to one leg, it became a compass.

Description:

This river find is completely covered with iron oxide making a metal analysis (ED-XRF) unreliable as to its metal constitution. It consists of two legs, joined together at a fulcrum with the two legs sharpened to a point at the opposite end. The legs are locked by corrosion at a angle of 30 degrees making it non-operational.

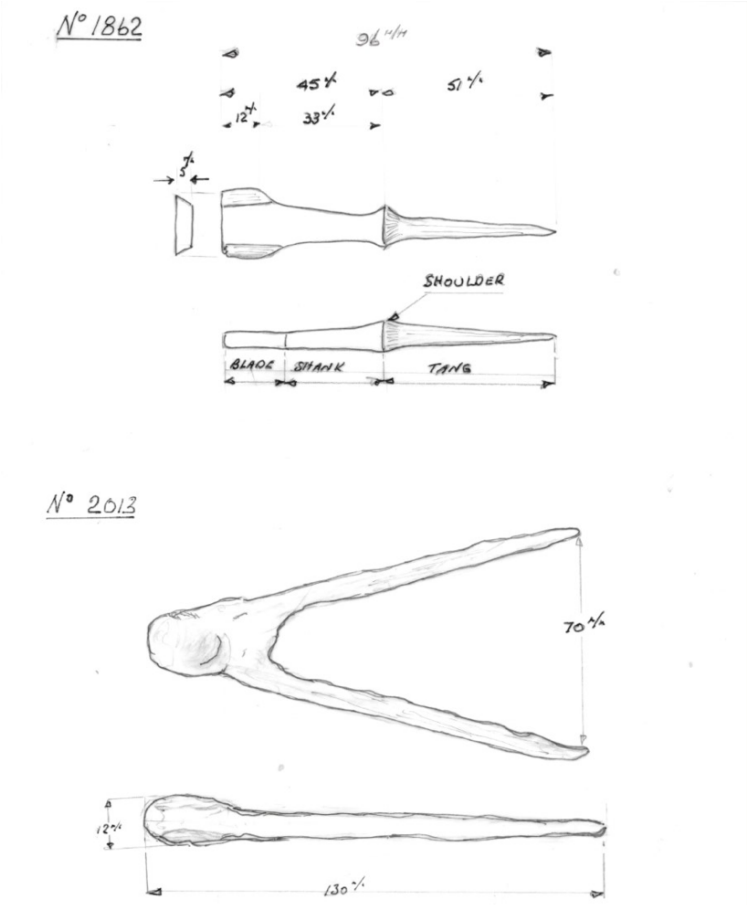
Such callipers are normally made from forged steel and consist of 5 separate pieces: 1. Right and left handed legs 2.Two washers. 3. Approx 1/4" diameter metal pin.

How it was made:

Made from a flat iron bar, the legs were cut to size and heated in a forge by a blacksmith. They were removed at the correct temperature and roughly beaten into shape on the anvil. The legs were formed to interlock at the fulcrum end, shaped so that when in the closed position the legs would be parallel. A hole was punched into the fulcrum end of both legs and into the two iron washers. The pieces were placed together with the washers at either side of the fitted legs and the pin passed through, protruding at either side. The assembly

would then be riveted together at the fulcrum end and filed to a smooth finish. The points would be case hardened to reduce the necessity of re-sharpening.

Appendix 3 Hand-drawn Sketch of Artefacts.



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Woodworking tools: Project Gutenberg E-book Woodworking Tools, A Brief History of Tools,1600 – 1900 by Peter C .Walsh

Use of Tools: DONATE (HTTP://DON8TO/HCTF001)

Early 19th Century Gentleman's Tool Chest: Project Gutenberg E-book of Woodworking; Fig 49, Book 87, by Cutler and Company, Castle Hill Works, Sheffield, courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum

Probate of Edward Hopper, dated 15/1/1835, located in Palace Green Library, number DPR/1/1/1835/H29/1-2

Will of Edward Hopper (registered copy), located in Palace Green Library, DPR/1/2/46 pp 13-14

Dates of Births, Baptisms, marriages, deaths and places of residence: County Durham Record Office - Parish Registers, Durham City: St Oswald's Parish and County Durham 19th Century Census Records

Dates of apprenticeship: Palace Green Library, DCG 9/1 folios 13,

14, 16 & 17

Dates of admittance to the see of Guild of Joiners: Palace Green Library, DCG 9/3 folios 11, 12, 13 & 17

Dates of Wardenship: Palace Green Library, DCG/2 folios 113,140, 143 &163

Sketch of plot on Hallgarth Street: Woodifield Survey: volume 1, pp 29 – 30: located in 5 The College, part of Palace Green Library, Durham

Map of Hallgarth Street: Plan of the City of Durham, surveyed by John Wood 1820: located in Clayport Library, Durham

Chisel Details: Project Gutenberg E-book Handwork in Wood by William Noyes.