

W. L. GOODMAN

'BRITISH PLANEMAKERS' FROM 1700.

Revised by Jane and Mark Rees

3rd edition published November 1993 (original edition 1968). Publisher: Roy Arnold, 77 High Street, Needham Market, Ipswich IP6 8AN. ISBN 0 904638 09 X, xiv+514 pages, 253x180mm, 1850 marks, 49 b/w plates, 1650 stamps, 77 trade marks + line drawings £25.00 net

W. L. Goodman, founder President of the Tool and Trades History Society, sadly died in 1993, shortly before this 3rd Edition of his *British Planemakers* was published. His First Edition, published in 1968 was a slender volume, originally intended to be the first step in compiling a complete volume of British Toolmakers, though it quickly became apparent that planemakers and plane irons would be as much as one man could handle. This First Edition kindled so much interest together with advice and offers of help, that a larger 2nd Edition was to follow ten years later with a checklist of 880 names of makers and dealers.

Jane and Mark Rees have now doubled the size of this work, which contains details of some 1,650 planemakers and dealers. The Rees' experience in the restoration of historic buildings, whilst running their own architectural practice, created a long term interest in the history of technology, and as founder members of the Tools and Trades History Society, they are uniquely suited to undertake the revision of Goodman's pioneering work.

The book is divided into five sections: The Development of Planemaking, The Planes (the different types), Making and Marking of Planes, List of Planemakers and Dealers together with their marks and finally the Appendixes, including Insurance Policies, Shop Signs, Apprentice Records, and York Poll Books. The book discusses the earliest beginnings of planemaking and includes descriptions and hitherto unpublished drawings of planes recovered from the Mary Rose, which sank in 1545, providing the earliest datable examples of English planes. The various types of planes used by cabinet makers, carpenters and joiners are very fully described in the second section. 'Hollers 'n Rounds' (sic), Fillisters, Ploughs, together with bench and moulding planes each have a chapter.

The section on planemaking not only gives a thorough and very practical description of the making process (supported by photographs illustrating the various stages together with the jigs and tools employed) but also reveals the perhaps surprising fact that plane manufacture was almost entirely carried out by hand at the bench right up until the 1960s.

Throughout the narrative part of the book the reader is given insights into the development of planes to suit particular purposes. The need of the tradesman to find more efficient and faster working methods ensured constant improvements and refinements. One such refinement of moulding planes of the English speaking world is the 'spring' or angle to the vertical at which the plane is held when 'sticking' the moulding. It is never found on continental planes, which are used straight down. The practice of 'boxing' i.e. inserting a much harder strip of boxwood into a wearing surface

or vulnerable member of a moulding plane, is one of the glories of English planemaking and demonstrates the high level of craftsmanship involved. The greatest skill in the making of such planes was sinking the mortice for the iron and wedge. French makers appear to have thought this too difficult, and overcome the problem by sawing in the 'mortice' from the side and glueing a section over it.

The List of Planemakers and Dealers forms the greater part of the book, providing a wealth of information on the men who made and sold planes. Their marks are reproduced full size together with illustrations of bill heads. The appendices reflect the enormous amount of research that has gone into this edition and should the reader feel inspired to conduct his own research, instructions for making smoke prints to record marks are included.

The authors have not simply expanded Bill Goodman's original list of planemakers. With their access to much original evidence, they have produced an immensely readable book that should appeal to all students of architectural woodwork and furniture. One cannot help feel that Bill Goodman would have greatly approved.

Colin Piper