

Tom Caine Carpenter:  
The Caine Tool Collection

It was an absolutely glorious winter's day. I met Jack O'Mara, then aged 78, at his Torquay unit and we spent an interesting couple of hours talking about penguins, other birds, Tom Caine and his beloved Building Worker's Industrial Union (BWIU). Jack was slightly stooped, alert, and had a firm, business-like manner. His passions in life at this stage anyway were the Union and sick birds.

He had an immense interest in and knowledge of the penguins in particular. We stood on the sunny beach whilst he let a recuperating bird free in the water. After forty minutes it returned home as it had done on five other occasions. The record, he said, was fifteen releases before a bird finally claimed its independence.

As a Union organiser he had met "Tom Caine" during the immediate post-war period of about 1947 to 1950. Jack O'Mara would visit sites to support the men and see that conditions were being met. Caine was simply one of the carpenters on site. At this time Jack recalls Tom Caine as being about 5'8", stocky and with brown hair. He wore blue bib and brace overalls and also had glasses. Jack was quick to point out that he didn't know him personally: he was just one of the carpenters on site. Jack considered him to be an ordinary but competent tradesman. A joiner himself by trade, Jack appeared to be a little surprised when I queried him about Caine being a joiner and possibly running a joinery behind his home. Whilst he knew he lived in North Melbourne he had never talked to him about his personal life although Caine had spoken to him about his tools. It was evident that Tom Caine was a quiet person and certainly not forthright or forceful. As Jack O'Mara put it with a twinkle in his eye, "He was not given to oratory".

Caine, it appeared, was at this time working at Hampton on Housing Commission houses. He was either directly employed by the Commission or possibly worked for a contractor. As the houses were of concrete or brick he was not engaged in framing but rather the general work of fitting out such as putting up doors, fixing skirtings and general finishing out of houses. Jack described these jobs as "quite good congenial work" with better conditions than carpenters had had for some time.

There is no doubt that Jack O'Mara was no more than a union acquaintance of Tom Caine. Caine was simply one of many carpenters with whom he came into contact. Probably Caine was a very typical carpenter and union member of his day with nothing exceptional about him. Jack remembers him as being meticulous about his tools, however, and keeping them clean, sharp and well-oiled.

Just as Jack O'Mara was quick to indicate that he, himself, was a militant unionist he was also quick to say that Tom Caine was similarly militant. Caine always supported the union. Caine had apparently spent his life as a carpenter and in fact belonged to the City Branch of the union. This Branch met initially in the Trades Hall but later had its own building at 55 Little Bourke Street.

This has now been sold and the union is currently at 500 Swanston Street. In those days Ernie Buckle was the Secretary and Frank Sturrock the Organiser and Assistant Secretary of the Branch. Both are long deceased. Originally the union was the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners but became the Building Workers Industrial Union in 1943. It is believed the union was founded in 1846 although research into its history may confirm an earlier beginning.

As a militant unionist Tom Caine was certainly involved in the industrial campaign of 1946. During the wars the unions received a 6/- per week loading under the Defence Award. This award also provided a travel allowance and inclement weather conditions. Inclement weather as defined in the award included not just rain but also heat or wind. Jack explained that certain parts of the job such as a roof might be declared inclement due to, say, wind. In these cases they would work on other parts of a job. After the war employers had the Defence Award cancelled. It was even that employers saw this as a way of saving money had, according to Jack, no real regard for the reasonable treatment of their men. As a result, for the first time ever, there was an industry-wide strike of all the building unions. Historically, the union had been weak especially because of the depression when people were clearly afraid of being sacked. In this case there was a go-slow strike which lasted for six months. In the end the union achieved a settlement involving two weeks annual leave and a one day a week inclement weather allowance. Tom Caine was definitely involved in this critical strike.

It was interesting to learn a little about Caine and not least of all to hear him referred to as "Tom Caine". Jack O'Mara's brief memories of Caine did give some substance to the benefactor behind the National Trust's tool collection. It is not disappointing to find he was a quite and ordinary tradesman of unremarkable note who strongly supported the union and thus his fellow workers.

There is clearly more to his life, however, as his collection and interest in history shows. If there was a regret in my talk with Jack O'Mara it was that there was apparently no-one else left who would have known him. We should move quickly, however, to check whether this is so.

Nigel Lampert  
May 1991

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### Australian Tools

Regarding the tools marked "GBM Melb", no-one has yet provided us with the name of the firm involved. The item marked in this way was a small die stock.

Thanks are also due to Trevor Rowe for providing us with the photocopy pages from the Pope catalogue. No-one has yet come forward to provide further information about Pope catalogues. Any information on this and other Australian makers would be gratefully received.

A further Australian plane has been identified and details of the patent are included below. As a hand plane it is a particularly recent patent, and thanks are due to David Gough for obtaining the patent copy. David is also endeavouring to trace the patentee, Robert Henry Pearce of Kingsgrove N.S.W. who may still be available to provide us with additional information. The plane in question is a handled chamfer plane made of aluminium and patented on 15th October, 1970.

As the patent is a rather long document only selected sections are included. The actual planes seen have been marked "ADEPT TOOLS" on one side and "Patent Pending PA 2994/70" on the other. In actual fact the original patent has lapsed and a new number, 34580, has been assigned. All planes seen have been made of aluminium.



The blade 13 is held in place by means of the back iron 14 and adjusting screw 15. The back iron 14 bears against a bar 16 formed integrally with the body 10. A step 17 is formed in the back iron 14 to engage the bar 16 when 17 is formed in the back iron 14 to engage the bar 16 when the back iron 14 is in position in the body of the plane.

As can be seen in Figs. 2 and 3 the blade 13 projects below the apex of the sole to a predetermined extent and it can be readily appreciated that if the plane is worked along the corner between two faces of a piece of timber an arris of a predetermined width will be formed. This may be done very quickly and accurately, the uniformity of the arris being controlled by the fact that once the sides of the sole bear against the faces of the timber no more timber will be removed from the arris.

Instead of having a flat blade as shown in Figs. 2 and 3 of the drawings a concavely curved cutting edge 18 may be provided to the blade 13 so that in use a rounded corner is produced rather than an arris

It will be appreciated that numerous changes may be made to the preferred embodiment of the invention described above. The body may be made of any suitable material such as timber or metal or it may be moulded from a plastic material. If desired the sole of the plane may be surfaced with a material harder than that of the body of the plane e.g. if the body is of aluminium the sole may be hard anodised. The plane could be provided with one of the various known forms of adjusting means for tilting the blade and/or adjusting the amount of its projection from the mouth of the plane.

The claims defining the invention are as follow:-

1. A hand plane having a body, sole and blade together with means for setting the blade to project through a mouth in the sole to a predetermined extent wherein the sole is of substantially right-angled U-shape in cross section, the cutting edge of the blade projecting into the apex of the U in such a manner that the plane may be worked on a corner of a piece of timber to remove the corner, the width of the arris so formed being controlled by the amount of projection of the blade beyond the apex of the sole.
2. A hand plane as claimed in claim 1 in which the body is formed by diecasting aluminium.
3. A hand plane as claimed in claim 2 in which the sole of the plane is hard anodised.

4. A hand plane as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the blade is held in the body of the plane by a back iron, the back iron being provided at its end distal to the cutting edge of the blade with a screw which is adapted to be tightened against the blade to clamp the back iron at its mid point against a bar extending across the width of the body of the planes.

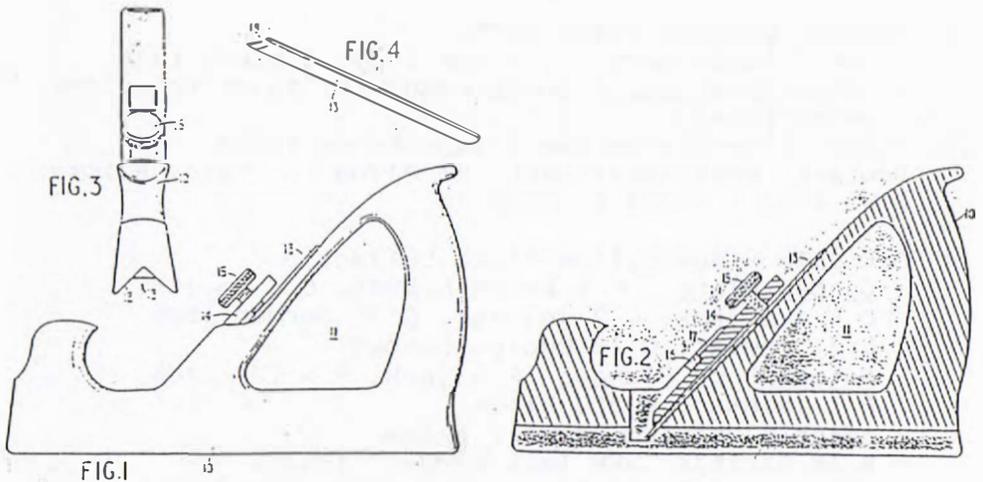
5. A hand plane substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figs. 1 to 3 of the accompanying drawings.

DATED this 12th day of October, 1971

ROBERT HENRY PEARCE

Patent Attorneys for the Applicant:-

F.B. RICE & CO.



**Wanted or for Sale**

- \* Wanted: Books, pre-1930 related to cabinet-making and Joinery. Details of contents and price requested.  
Contact:-  
Bob Crosbie
- \* Wanted: Quirk ogee & ovoloe moulding planes, pre 1900, for use in traditional joinery. Details of condition and price requested.  
Contact:-  
Bob Crosbie

- \* Wanted to buy or swap:
  - Norris or Spiers cutters in usable condition
  - Union No.2 cutter (1 1/2" width)
  - Frog for 602 Bedrock or one to copy
  - Cap, thumbscrew & cutter for japanned Preston spokeshave as illustrated.

Contact: Nigel Lampert



- \* Wanted: Stanley plane parts
  - No.3 lever caps - 1 x pre 1925, 2 x pre 1936
  - No.8 lever cap & chipbreaker (or imperfect plane with same)
  - No.55 centre bottom & adjustable fence

Contact: David Bullivant

- \* For Sale - Australian Plane Collection:
    - Carter Plane: C 1 Bench babbet, C 4 Smooth, C 5 1/2 jack, C 7 jointer, C 10 German jack, C 71 router, C 78 Duplex rabbet
    - Falcon/Pope Planes: F 5 jack, F 5 1/2 jack, F 7 jointer, F 220 block
    - Adept aluminium chamfer plane
    - N 16 Pacific "MEM Tool Sydney" (No.4)  
(Photo available at meetings: See Nigel)
- Contact: Rex Goddard

- \* Wanted: Cutter to suit mitre plane - 2 1/4" uncut iron with snecked end. Ward cutter preferred.
- Contact Jack Richards

- \* Wanted: Old, but usable carving chisels with or without handles.
- Contact Ben Rasalam (03) 499 3519

- \* Wanted: Stanley No.2 in good original condition
- Contact Gil Rogers (03) 885 8684

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