

Salesman Samples & Giveaways

Graeme Plaw

Member HTPAA

At a recent local Rotary Club meeting I was giving a presentation on the HTPAA activities, members had been asked to bring items of interest and one such item captured my imagination. The owner, a gentleman whose age exceeded mine by a considerable distance, had with him a rule/level that his father used during his working life as a stair builder in Melbourne.

It was a J Rabone & Sons Birmingham Masons level No 1370 Patent No 22017, not unusual except for the fact that the patent number was clearly shown, indicating it was an early model, and along the top face a series of length and prices were shown.



Sample Rabone masons level No 1370

Frank Ham and I consulted the 1892 Rabone catalogue and concluded that this was a salesman's sample showing the range and price available from this "New" release. It was being produced in seven sizes. The salesman would have shown this sample to a storekeeper, possibly leaving it with him as it showed the price of each length available for purchase.

How did this come into the possession of the stair builder? Certainly the current owner has no idea so we will never know but it did start me thinking about tool sales samples and giveaways.



Close up of J Rabone brand on No 1370 level



Close up of Pricing shown on No 1370 level.

My working life at Stanley Tools in Research and Development over many years provided me with a unique opportunity to understand the sales and marketing aspects in the life of a hand tool and the following are a few examples to demonstrate the salesman's tool kit!

Possibly one of the best examples of a sales kit from times past is the J Rabone and Sons case displayed at a recent general meeting where I addressed the assembly on the subject of sales samples and giveaways. Brimming with rules of all kinds complete with descriptions and prices the Rabone Tool Case was a joy to view. One can only guess at the journey the sales representative for J Rabone must have taken to show this range to potential buyers and obtain his sales figures.