

**THE TRADE MANUFACTURE AND DESIGN OF ENGLISH
BLACKSMITHING IN THE POST WAR PERIOD**

By

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Abstract

Blacksmithing has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last twenty five years. This study examines the changes and the context within which they have taken place. The effects upon the products of the blacksmith are considered through empirical research and practical work. The working methods and philosophies of blacksmiths representative of a continuity of traditions and innovatory practice are investigated through interviews and other approaches.

From its origins as a rural and industrial craft, blacksmithing has emerged in the form of art-blacksmithing. Institutional and government intervention, new technologies and markets provide the context in which the ideologies and practices are examined.

It is argued that these new blacksmiths are selfconscious designer-makers who are technically innovative, and commercially aware, operating successfully between and within the cultural and commercial arenas. In combining practical and decorative functionalism, and producing site-specific art work at a competitive price, artist blacksmiths successfully inhabit the worlds of art, industry, trade and craft, often simultaneously.

Contents

	page
Abstract.	(iii)
Contents.	(iv)
Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms.	(vi)
List of Illustrations.	(ix)
Acknowledgement.	(xi)
Author's Declaration.	(xiii)
1. Introduction.	1
2. Rural Industries, Organisations and Influence.	11
3. Institutional Influences.	
3.1 Associations and Guilds.	65
3.2. The Crafts Council.	99
3.3. The Victoria and Albert Museum.	117
4. Crafts Culture and the Artist Blacksmith.	148
4.1. Rural identity.	149
4.2 Hand-made.	150
4.3 A new aesthetic.	152
4.4. The exhibition piece.	152
4.5. Making.	154
4.6. Design.	155
4.7. Materials and skill.	159
4.8. Criticism and categories of practice.	167
5. Blacksmiths in Practice.	
5.1. Jim Horrobin.	175
5.2. Adrian Legge.	200
5.3. Alan Evans.	206
5.4. Giuseppe Lund.	223
5.5. Neil Hawkins.	235
5.6. Phil Johnson.	244
5.7. Bob Oakes.	248
6. Towards the Future Agenda.	
6.1. Traditions, Traditionalists and New Practices.	253
6.2. Contemporary Site Specific work.	284
6.3. Texture and Precision.	293
7. Conclusions.	313
Bibliography.	316

Appendices.

Appendix one. Notes on exhibition of practical work and additional material.

Appendix two. Examples of RDC Catalogue drawings.

Appendix three. Transcript of an interview with Richard Quinnell.

Appendix four. Victoria and Albert Museum, metalwork Collecting Plan.

Appendix five. Interview transcripts.

Appendix six. Alan Evans computer drawings.

Appendix seven. Paper given at Rome conference, Designing in Public.

Appendix eight. Paper given at the Aberystwyth conference, Telling Tales with Technology.

Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

ABANA - the Artist Blacksmiths Association of North America.

The Anvil's Ring - magazine of ABANA.

BABA - the British Artist Blacksmiths Association.

Blacksmith - worker in black metal (iron and steel) specialising in hot working, especially forging and bending, which exploit its plastic nature at higher temperatures.

British Blacksmith - magazine of BABA.

CAC - Crafts Advisory Committee (precursor to the CC).

CAC - Commercially Acceptable Craft - a phrase coined by Alan Dawson after the name of the CAC had changed to the CC.

CoSIRA - the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas.

CC - the Crafts Council of England and Wales.

COTAC - Conference on Training in Architectural Conservation.

Crafts - magazine of the Crafts Council.

DES - the Department of Education and Science.

DoE - Department of the Environment.

DTI - the Department of Trade and Industry.

Farrier - one who shoes horses. As many rural blacksmiths in the past were General Smiths and shod horses, there has been some confusion over this name.

FIFI - First International Festival of Iron.

Forge-in - periodic meeting of BABA with a high practical content.

Forge-Welding - technique requiring some skill and judgment, where two or more pieces of iron or steel are hammered together at close to their melting point causing them to fuse permanently.

Fuller - production of concave shape or groove on the outside of stock, usually with a fullering tool and striker, but sometimes with an anvil-mounted bottom fuller tool.

ICA - Institute for Contemporary Arts, London.

Jumping - similar in effect to upsetting, except the stock is brought down forcibly on the face of the anvil.

LEA - Local Education Authority.

MIG - Metal Inert Gas electric welding.

MMA - Manual Metal Arc (stick) electric welding.

NAFBAE - the National Association of Farriers, Blacksmiths and Agricultural Engineers.

NBCC - National Blacksmiths Competition Committee.

NCVQ - National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

NETS - the New Entrants Training Scheme of the RDC.

NVQ - National Vocational Qualification.

Power Hammer - powered heavy duty forging equipment. It may be spring or pneumatically assisted; or more rarely, steam powered or based upon a waterwheel driven cam (now virtually obsolete).

Modern pneumatic hammers tend to be smaller and more convenient to install than their predecessors and allow blacksmiths working alone to multiply the amount and scale of work undertaken, when compared to hand or striker assisted approaches.

RAA - Regional Arts Association.

RCA - Royal College of Art, London.

RDA - Rural Development Area.

RDC - the Rural Development Commission.

RIB - the Rural Industries Bureau.

RILF - the Rural Industries Loan Fund.

Sledge Hammer - a heavy, two-handed hammer normally wielded by a striker.

Striker - one who works with and under the direction of the blacksmith and 'strikes' with a sledge hammer.

Swage - to produce convex shape or ridge in the outside of stock which could be reduced in section by forging - normally stock is placed between a floor mounted swage block and a swage tool and shaped with the aid of a sledge hammer.

TEC - local Training and Enterprise Council.

TIG - Tungsten Inert Gas electric welding.

Upsetting - to increase the section of stock by heating and applying blows to the end of the bar until the desired dimension is achieved.

V&A - the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Wessex Guild - the Guild of Wrought Ironwork Craftsmen of Wessex.

WCB - the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths of London.

WW2- the Second World War.

Illustrations	page
Figure 1. 1928 show of ironwork in Kent.	18
Figure 2. Julian Coodes' CoSIRA NETS piece.	40
Figure 3. CoSIRA NETS course work.	41
Figure 4. RDC wrought ironwork drawing No. 311.	52
Figure 5. Wing and Staples, lamp made to RDC drawing 311.	53
Figure 6. The Frank Day Trophy of the Wessex Guild.	71
Figure 7. Antony Robinson, resurrection sculpture.	79
Figure 8. Jan Dudesek, fire iron set.	83
Figure 9. Alan Dawson, gate.	87
Figure 10. Melvin Pinnock, gate.	88
Figure 11. Paul Gulati, vessels.	89
Figure 12. Gressenhall Museum of Rural Life, gates.	90
Figure 13. Thorpe Park, Sunderland, gates.	93
Figure 14. Simon Benetton, window grille.	103
Figure 15. Simon and Toni Benetton, sculpture.	104
Figure 16. Antony Robinson, stainless steel flower.	105
Figure 17. James Horrobin, V&A Ironwork Gallery gates.	124
Figure 18. Albert Paley, detail, V&A bench.	127
Figure 19. Stuart Hill, fire grate.	140
Figure 20. James Horrobin, church chandelier.	181
Figure 21. James Horrobin, Crown Reach gate.	185
Figure 22. James Horrobin, Oriel House Ironwork.	187
Figure 23. James Horrobin, Oriel House Ironwork.	188
Figure 24. James Horrobin, Oriel House Ironwork.	189
Figure 25. James Horrobin, Doverhay Forge and Whitehall.	192
Figure 26. James Horrobin, work for Yamamoto shop.	194
Figure 27. Alan Evans, door latch, St. Paul's, St. George's.	210
Figure 28. Albert Paley, Smithsonian Institute gate.	211
Figure 29. Albert Paley, table.	212
Figure 30. Alan Evans, Public Record Office gates.	214
Figure 31. Alan Evans, screen for Broadgate Development.	220

Figure 32. Giuseppe Lund, gate for Westferry Circus.	227
Figure 33. Giuseppe Lund, railing for Dorset Rise, Blackfriars.	228
Figure 34. Giuseppe Lund, railing for Dorset Rise, Blackfriars.	229
Figure 35. Giuseppe Lund, Queen Elizabeth gates.	231
Figure 36. Giuseppe Lund, Queen Elizabeth gates.	232
Figure 37. Neil Hawkins, garden gate and fanlight.	241
Figure 38. Neil Hawkins, garden gate.	242
Figure 39. P. Walker and R. Hobbs, St. Columb's gates.	257
Figure 40. Alan Evans, drawing for Kew bridge railing.	262
Figure 41. Finch Foundry, trip hammer and shear.	266
Figure 42. David Petersen, interior of studio/workshop.	268
Figure 43. Antony Robinson, Winchester Great Hall gates.	270
Figure 44. Avril Wilson, Spandrels, Banbury.	287
Figure 45. Avril Wilson, wildlife park gates, Southampton.	288
Figure 46. Keith Thomas, coat rack.	298
Figure 47. Manfred Bredohl, sculpture.	299
Figure 48. Giuseppe Lund, Victoria Plaza gates.	301
Figure 49. Charles Normandale, gate.	304
Figure 50. Terrence Clark, Dalham Hall Stud gates.	307
Figure 51. Terrence Clark, Dalham Hall Stud ironwork.	308
Figure 52. Mike Crummy, screen, Saraj Guha, mirrors.	311

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

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A programme of advanced study was undertaken which included attendance at research seminars and presentations within the Faculty of Arts and Education, and at the Plymouth Campus.

Relevant seminars and conferences were attended regularly at which work was often presented or exhibited; external institutions, businesses and individuals were visited for consultation purposes, and several papers prepared for publication.

Publications and exhibitions:

Editor, *British Blacksmith* magazine, 1990-92.

A Well Worn Balaclava Memorial. *British Blacksmith*, Autumn 1991.

Garden Nouveau. *British Blacksmith*, Autumn 1991.

City Steel. *British Blacksmith*, Autumn 1991.

Sculptecture. *British Blacksmith*, Winter 1991.

Bars to Hold Horses. *British Blacksmith*, Winter 1991.

National Arts and Media Strategy. *British Blacksmith*, Summer 1992.

Creative Metal. Forged pieces in steel and bronze for group exhibition.

Dartington Cider Press Centre, 22.10.92 - 15.11.92.

Gressenhall 1992. *British Blacksmith*, Spring 1993.

The Influence of the Avante Garde Upon Contemporary Metalwork Design. Conference paper. Redfield, Berks, Nov. 27 - 29 1993.

Editor and writer, exhibition catalogue. *Design Innovation*.

Campidoglio, Rome, Feb., March 1996. (included section about blacksmithing).

The European Dimension: new blacksmiths work for the public arena.

Conference paper. *Designing in Public* conference, Sala Bianca,

Campidoglio, Rome, 29.2.96 - 1.3.96.

Dialogues With The New Blacksmiths. Conference paper. *Telling Tales With Technology* conference. Aberystwyth, July 13-14, 1996.

(Also, conducted two weekend seminars and courses in Contemporary Blacksmithing Techniques and Influences, and Forge Welding, with Neil Hawkins at Cannington Agricultural College in Association with the Wessex Guild.)

Presentations and conferences attended:

In addition to those below I have attended a number of BABA Forges and meetings, in Belbroughton, Harrogate, Hereford, Alford, and Darlington as a member of the BABA Council and Magazine Editor, and represented BABA at meetings of NAFBAE and at Hereford. Also meetings, and AGM and Exhibition events of the Wessex Guild have been attended regularly between 1990 and 1995.

Improvement of Standards in the Judging of Wrought Ironwork. NBCC Seminar, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, May 5, 1990.

BABA Exhibition and Conference, Fire and Iron Gallery and Rowhurst Forge, Leatherhead, Surrey, August 16-17, 1991.

BABA International Conference and AGM, Gressenhall, Norfolk, July 30-Aug 1, 1992.

BABA International Conference and AGM, Ironbridge, 3-6 Aug 1994.

From Foundry and Forge. Symposium, V&A, 28-29 October 1994.

Designing in Public, conference, Sala Bianca, Campidoglio, Rome, 29.2.96 - 1.3.96.

Telling Tales With Technology, conference. University College, Aberystwyth, July 13-14, 1996.

External Contacts:

Rural Development Commission, Salisbury.

Metalwork Department, Victoria and Albert Museum.

British Artist Blacksmiths Association.

National Association of Farriers, Blacksmiths and Agricultural Engineers.

Guild of Wrought Ironwork Craftsmen of Wessex.

Crafts Council.

Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths.

National Blacksmiths Competition Committee.

National Electronic and Video Archive of the Crafts, University of the West of England, Bristol.

Metalwork Department, Plymouth College of Art and Design.

Blacksmithing Department, Hereford Technical College.

Signed D. J. Hawkins Date 28-2-97

1. Introduction

This research project follows the changes in the work and practices of the blacksmith in the twentieth century, leading to a critical outline of the nature and origins of the artist blacksmith in Britain since the 1970s. The research is about design practice,¹ involving the assembly and review of critical and historical material, information assembled by empirical and practical means, and practice-based inquiry.

The methods used include an active involvement in and investigation of blacksmiths' organisations; practical commissioned and other investigative work; a literature search; the review of archives and data bases; structured and unstructured interviews, taped and via electronic mail; photographic recording and sketching. Documentary material not referred to in detail in the text is presented in the form of appendices,² supported by an exhibition of practical work that explores effects and processes using a variety of materials, that combine decorative and practical functionalism.

The everyday functionalism of blacksmithing³ has been its most obvious contribution to society and it will be necessary to examine the extent to which the demise of traditional practices, and the products resulting from them, has prompted the creative values associated with the Artist Blacksmith. Similarly, the hierarchy of practice will be considered as more bespoke ironwork has been made to mitigate the

effects of the reduction in agricultural and industrial trade.

Consideration will be given to reasons for the slow progress in the development of blacksmithing as a creative practice. In this context questions will be raised on the continued association with farriery and agriculture, and the mass production by fabricators of, usually cold-bent, reproduction ironwork. The Editor of *The Studio*, writing in 1932, noted that the general tendency or direction of the culture of the twentieth century up until that point at least, could be summed up by the phrase, 'From the privilege of the few to the habit of the many.'⁴

The cultural framework is similarly important to the inquiry. Despite evidence from recent exhibitions⁵ of ironwork that there is a growing interest in the work of the blacksmith, there continues to be a strong association between blacksmiths and the competitions and exhibitions held at county agricultural shows and similar local events. Although they may be commercially important, it will be necessary to assess the dangers of misrepresentation of the work of artist blacksmiths.

As Alan Evans has noted:

competitions at County Shows - presenting to the public that all blacksmiths are the same, but some are faster than others are at the level of a game show. I'm not trying to make quicker or better, but different. Blacksmiths ought to promote difference.⁶

Shows remain an integral part of the culture of blacksmithing, reinforced by the NBCC,⁷ who, in conjunction with the Worshipful

Company of Blacksmiths, introduced a competition in 1991, based upon entry to competitions in a number of qualifying agricultural shows, for National Champion Blacksmith of the Year.⁸ The research will consider the implications of this encouragement of agricultural show work, and how these competitions have reinforced views which have tended to undermine⁹ the recent progress of blacksmiths towards a wider acceptance by the art, design and architectural establishments.

Specialist blacksmithing publications are relatively scarce, and often limited in scope, falling within the broad categories: technical instructions,¹⁰ historical surveys,¹¹ general introductory texts,¹² books¹³ of designs and monographs,¹⁴ complemented by journals and general craft publications¹⁵ including in broadcast or electronic formats.¹⁶ What has been missing until recently is significant reference to the process of designing work,¹⁷ something noted by David Pye about the crafts generally.¹⁸

The most comprehensive history of modern blacksmithing to date is Amina Chatwin's *Into the New Iron Age*¹⁹ which includes biographical information and many photographs of work with descriptions.

Chatwin's book is an important resource, but is lacking in effective discussion of context and debate. Books with illustrations or photographs of work are quite common,²⁰ but most deal almost exclusively with work from earlier periods, with a romantic view of the 'good old days' of blacksmithing or the 'golden ages' of smithing.

Most of them were written before the current revival in smithing had taken place and are weak in analysis of the cultural value and position²¹ of blacksmiths and their work, and pay little or no attention to contemporary or possible future practice. Until the mid 1970s these historical surveys were almost all that smiths had to inform their work, and both experienced and aspiring blacksmiths emulated or copied work from them regularly. The smith was presented, therefore, with an accepted and constantly reinforced canon²² of 'good work' without a critical framework.²³ An essential part of this research project is to redress this neglect.

Biographies and autobiographies of smiths and their work are less common, but they are useful in providing information about the social and business circumstances surrounding the work. *The Din of the Smithy* by J. A. R. Stevenson (1936), and Fritz Kühn's semi-autobiographical *Wrought Iron*, are noted by many blacksmiths as early influences upon the development of contemporary practice.

In writing a review in April 1893, of J. Starkie Gardner's, then new publication, *Ironwork Part 1. From the Earliest Times to the End of the Mediaeval Period*, R. Ll. B. Rathbone made a point echoed in much later writing and theory:

It is a pity that Mr. Gardner's plates do not savour a little more of the workman and less of the archaeologist. It is, after all, a more useful thing to know exactly *how* a thing was made than precisely *where* and *when*.²⁴

This comment predates much later criticism of writing about craft.

Stevenson noted:

Although a critical appreciation of past experiments is necessary if you are to catch the spirit of wrought iron design, yet this will not give you a complete understanding of iron. It may be mighty helpful; but at best it is the method of the scientist who believes that truth can be discovered by the minute examination of a vast amount of detail. It is not enough. You must come in contact with the metal.²⁵

Almost sixty years later, Peter Parkinson, in a review of what also has become an important source-book, Hoffmann's *Kunst aus dem Feuer*, commented:

... having established a format which invites an assessment of individual design approaches, it is a pity that so little supporting information is supplied. ... It would have been interesting to know more about the training and experience of each craftsman and, more particularly, to read from each craftsman something describing the origins, methods and problems involved in each piece of work.²⁶

In general terms it is this model that I have followed in the research project, giving attention to the interviews with practitioners. In this way it has become possible to counter the image and profile of blacksmiths presented by the misleading coverage or presence in non-print, broadcast and digital media.

In 1995 blacksmiths began to be featured on the Internet. The *ArtMetal Project* includes information on materials and processes, commissions, book reviews, translations of articles from the German magazine *Hephaistos*, and features an interactive Gallery section where a folio of work may be displayed.²⁷ The information found on the Web Sites²⁸ supports and demonstrates the character of contemporary international practice.

Important to the analysis of post war developments in Britain is a recognition of commercial restrictions and architectural indifference, and the subsequent interest of the post-modern period.²⁹ It will be necessary to take account of the continuing influence of the Rural Development Commission, and that of museums and galleries. Alan Dawson noted, in an essay for the *Forging Links* project, that the birth of BABA in the late 1970s coincided with the growing pains of a general change of architectural style.³⁰ He commented that in more recent times the establishment of the British Artist Blacksmiths Association, the energy and enthusiasm of its members and help from the Crafts Council had transformed the situation.

Understanding the relationship between hand and machine production is important in an appraisal of the transition from 19th to 20th century values. It is these cultural and aesthetic values against which the contemporary blacksmith continues to work, and which need to be more clearly understood. At the same time it is necessary to understand the differences between rural and urban workshops, the latter, typically headed by an architect and/or designer, had developed the 19th century understanding of art metalwork, and had a major influence through architectural ironwork. There were about twenty major firms in London prior to WW2, and it was the London way of working which was to have a major influence upon the work of rural smiths nationwide.

After WW2, city ironworkers emerged very differently and were

involved in fabricating, engineering³¹ and manufacture. They also were tending to move out to rural areas because of the rising cost of rent and rates on what were becoming desirable city sites.³² In the Midlands and the North, firms were fragmenting in a similar way, and in general what was emerging was a rural-urban movement that did much to merge the previous separation of interests and created the climate in which the transition from industrial to art practice could take place. It is this transition which is outlined and analysed by this enquiry.

In summary, the primary aims of the research are to outline and critically to assess the development of blacksmithing as a creative design practice, the technical and commercial influences upon practice, the ideological developments which have provided the context for the revival since the 1970s, and the work of innovative and representative blacksmiths.

¹ This study does not take a business studies approach, where specific market considerations such as supply, demand, economics, incomes, costing, profits, etc. would be in the forefront. However, the influence of market factors and the way in which techniques, design, cultural factors have interacted with them, is considered.

² Appended material and other sources to be made available at the time of the examination include: a data base giving information about approximately 3000 blacksmithing businesses; an extensive collection of slides and photographs of contemporary and historical work; test pieces and completed items produced as part of the practical work; other relevant archival material, including tapes, transcripts of interviews and other primary material.

³ "It is the cheapest and most ubiquitous of metals, lacking, moreover, many of the intrinsic qualities of the precious metals, it nevertheless immeasurably surpasses the whole of them together in interest and in its value and utility to us." Starkie Gardner, J. *Ironwork Part 1. From the earliest times to the end of the mediaeval period.* (1892) 1927, V&A, London.p.1

⁴ The Editor. From the privilege of the few to the habit of the many. *The Studio*, 104, 475, October 1932, p. 187.

⁵ Notably the BABA touring exhibition *Fe*.

⁶ Evans, Alan. Interview, Stroud 1.2.96

⁷ In an attempt to reconcile differences and promote all kinds of blacksmithing, the National Blacksmiths Competition Committee (NBCC) ran seminars on judging issues at various locations including Cannington College and the Royal Welsh Showground. Peter Walker has commented that towards the end of the 1970s, when work in contemporary styles began to be entered in the county show competitions it caused problems for judges.

"Imagine the impact caused when modern work first started to appear in competitions. Shock, horror, panic! What are we supposed to do with this monstrosity? How are we to judge it? ...Traditional judges were often not competent to judge modern work." Walker, Peter. *Old and New - Are They in Competition?* *British Blacksmith* No. 60, Spring 1991, p. 10.

⁸ Points are awarded in competitions for "Design and construction, taking into account originality and suitability of purpose 35 points; Technique and Quality 25 points; Balance and choice of materials 20 points; Fitting and finish 20 points." *Handbook for Judges, Stewards & Exhibitors in Wrought Ironwork Competitions.* NBCC, Exeter, p. 5.

⁹ As a consequence of this link with agricultural shows, unhelpful, historical, or irrelevant associations with largely rural or amateur activities, such as, jam-making, Pony Club demonstrations, agricultural livestock competitions, displays of domestic pets and flower arranging have been encouraged.

¹⁰ Such as those produced by the Rural Development Commission, Jack Andrews, magazine articles, and a number of out of print volumes.

¹¹ Including those devoted to particular periods or classes of objects, concentrating on the provenance and date of works, such as those by Campbell, Seymour Lindsay, Lister, and Starkie Gardner.

¹² Intended for school or amateur use, which can include a mixture of technical and other information.

¹³ Such as those by Fritz Kühn, J.A. R. Stevenson, Jonty.

¹⁴ For example *The Scythemen of Belbroughton*, Alfred Habermann, Samuel Yellin.

▪ Profiles and portfolios of work are contained in Internet Web Sites such as the ArtMetal Project <<http://wuarchive.wustl.edu/edu/arts/metal/ArtMetal.html>>, The Forge, or Metalgarden; Magazines such as British Blacksmith, The Anvil's Ring, Hephaistos, Californian Blacksmith and Kontsmide; General craft publications such as Crafts and American Crafts; Newspaper, magazine and newsletter articles, features, and pictures; Catalogues and brochures for exhibitions such as Fe, Lindau, Friedrichshafen, Towards a New Iron Age, or for trade related purposes; Government sources, such as the Rural Development Commission or the Crafts Council; and non-specialist sources dealing with a number of craft or design areas, interiors, decoration, or business.

▪ A large number of which are held by BABA as educational material.

▪ Much available literature relates to the circumstances *surrounding* the crafts - recipes, catalogues, coffee table surveys of one particular craft - and there is a paucity of information relating to the activity of craft with its tacit, tactile and informal qualities, compared to design work, whose activities may be more easily formalised. "Whether or not we accept such a hard-and-fast distinction, it's clear that the concept of craft as a special kind of knowledge has proved extremely difficult to write about. Which in some cases makes it vulnerable." Frayling, C. & Snowdon, H. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be. *Crafts* No.59, Dec. 1982, p.12.

▪ "... one really has very little idea what was going through one's head while one was at it. ... Introspection after the act tells very little indeed." Pye, David. *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design*. Herbert Press, London, 1983, p.144.

▪ Chatwin, A. *Into the New Iron Age: Modern British Blacksmiths*. Coach House Publishing, Cheltenham, 1995.

▪ There are folders of full sized drawings; the RDC catalogues of designs; books by Starkie Gardner about the V & A collection and 17th and 18th-century work; and books of a mixed character, such as those by Lister and Seymour Lindsay where some history, some technical information about techniques and some historical commentary is given along with illustrations of historical pieces.

▪ Despite being perhaps the most important series of books about the history and development of ironwork the books of Starkie-Gardner have some serious deficiencies, which were noted at the time of publication and to an extent have provided the model for mistakes in later works.

▪ The canon of baroque and rococo work of the 17th and 18th centuries held such sway through the Victorian and Edwardian eras that little was done in Art Nouveau styles, despite its suitability for expression through the medium of forged metal. This powerful influence continued until the 1980s when significant quantities of contemporary work began to be produced.

▪ Pamela Johnson questioned how the discourse of art criticism, designed to investigate meaning, could be used on objects which were not in the main, attempting to produce meaning. Practitioners are urged to use a more theoretical approach to articulate their worth as "... repositories of knowledge of materials and processes." As such they could occupy a range of positions within contemporary culture. Johnson, Pamela. Positive Thinking. *Crafts*, July/August 1995, p. 37.

▪ Rathbone, R. Ll. B. New Publications: Ironwork Part 1. From the earliest Times to the End of the Mediaeval Period. by J. Starkie Gardner. *The Studio*, 1, No.1, April 1893, p. 167.

▪ Stevenson, J. A. R. *The Din of the Smithy*. Cambridge University Press, London, 1936, p. 1.

▪ Parkinson, Peter. Book Review: Kunst aus dem Feuer (Julius Hoffman, Stuttgart, Ed. Gretl Hoffman.) *British Blacksmith* No.44, June 1987, p.33.

¶ In the first volume of *ArtMetal News*, Enrique Vega describes how he obtained his first commission by e-mail; Jurgen Kull describes in a Hephaistos translation his computer design techniques for ironwork; and Walfrid Huber gives his views on the influence of developing technology upon the style and manufacture of ironwork.

¶ The Forge is the Web Site of ABANA, and Giuseppe Lund began his own site after finding *ArtMetal* useful. Lund's *Metalgarden* site is the forum for discussion about an interactive design influenced by the views of web site users on gardens and their meaning, which Lund is producing in Surrey.

¶ Writing in 1988 Theo Crosby, an architect and Partner in the Pentagonam design group, noted that the ideological collapse of Modernist architecture had made a space for action and involvement from many directions. Crafts were flourishing and architects were taking seriously their reintegration with building. Crosby, Theo. *The New Iron Age. British Blacksmith* No. 49, Sept. 1988, p.24.

¶ Dawson, Alan. *State of the Iron Art. Essay for the Forging Links Project*, Lincoln, 1990.

¶ The Landon Brothers were put on war work under the Sykes engineering firm making bell crank levers, clevis joints, signalling levers, etc., using metal directed to them by the Ministry of Supply.

¶ Bainbridge Reynolds were still able to attract work after WW2 because of the reputation of their drawing office with cathedral architects in the construction of memorial screens, and commemorative work. Stephen Dykes Bower of Westminster Abbey, for example always took his work to Reynolds, serving as an example of the increase in activity during the immediate post war period, especially in the case of firms who had been successful in war work. Reynolds' had a works that was becoming derelict, even though it was a busy time for them. The landlords noted that despite a full repairing lease that little had been done to the place for the previous forty or fifty years. The business had to close, but the Landons, who were working there, continued in other premises in the Walworth Road. Later they moved to Jarvis Brook aided by Rural Industries organisers. Their premises were beginning to be too small and too close to other premises whose residents were less tolerant of loud noise after the war - their power hammer shook the building, and to some extent the surrounding ones.

2. Rural Industries' Organisations and Their Influence.

The accelerating decline of agriculture and related industries is the underlying feature of the early twentieth century. Aggravated further by the first world war, blacksmithing as a traditional rural industry found itself in depression. It is this pattern of disintegration and the efforts to revive blacksmithing as an industry that marks the first stage in a development that was to lead to a major revision of its practices and role.

At the outset it was the 1909 and 1910 Development and Road Improvement Funds Acts that laid the foundations of the influential Rural Development Commission.¹ The Acts set up the Development Commission² giving it the power to administer Treasury funding for the purpose of:

1.1.(a) Aiding and developing agriculture and rural industries by promoting research, instruction and experiments in the scientific methods and practice of agriculture ... and by the adoption of any other means which appear calculated to develop agriculture and rural industries³

The Development Commissioners were able to appoint officers and embark upon projects that would create employment in the areas of:

... agriculture and rural industries includes agriculture, horticulture, dairying, the breeding of horses, cattle and other livestock and poultry, the cultivation of bees, home and cottage industries, the cultivation and preparation of flax the cultivation and manufacture of tobacco, and any other industries immediately connected with and subservient to any of the said matters.⁴

It was the beginning of a movement that led to the foundation of the Rural Industries and Intelligence Unit, and the creation of the Rural Industries Bureau (RIB) in 1921. It brought about a new professionalism both in agriculture and in support agencies and a national intervention in local and regional problems. It is debatable whether this stifled self-help,⁵ but it must have certainly changed the structure of many of the rural industries.

Arguably, after 40 years of decline local solutions were no longer adequate. The RIB introduced organisations and bodies containing many well meaning individuals who over the years were to do much good, but who had the development and preservation of their own interests at heart as well as their obligations to the countryside.

Richard Quinnell,⁶ whose company has been a long term recipient of the services of the various versions of the Rural Development Commission notes that they operated a 'divide and rule'⁷ policy clearly aimed at increasing their influence. There was little sense of the encouragement of a grass roots movement for rural regeneration, but rather of a colonial attitude.⁸

The war years were to provide an interlude of demand,⁹ with many serving in the armed forces while others did war work,¹⁰ make do and mend, and addressed the needs of farmers. In the post war years farm prices fell, and tax and other factors caused the break up of many estates. This accelerated the problems facing rural crafts and

industries, and the Government responded by appointing the Trustees of the Rural Industries and Intelligence Bureau¹¹ and creating Rural Community Councils¹² in 1921. Rural Industries Organisers were appointed by these Councils in 1925, and had the responsibility, subject to Government approval, for planning and supervising a national policy designed to maintain and develop rural industries. The RIB was composed of Trustees, Council,¹³ Administrative and Technical Staff, and tried to achieve its objectives through loans, grants, training and advice.

The Bureau, during the inter-war period, encouraged blacksmiths to develop new roles in the face of competition for agricultural work from large, usually American, machinery companies, and the reduced amount of horse-shoeing which accompanied the increasing mechanisation of agriculture. In the mid 1920s¹⁴ they advised smiths to modernise, and to introduce wrought ironwork as a sideline, providing support for training in oxy-acetylene welding for machinery repair.¹⁵ They had noted that the blacksmith had been "...displaced as the general rural mechanic as a consequence of the rural garage"¹⁶ as part of the rationale for encouraging wrought ironwork production. To assist this development they began the drawing and design service and were, "prepared to provide designs for simple decorative work for specific purposes on request."¹⁷ The Bureau policy from 1928 defined the blacksmith's trade:

The blacksmith was to become: 'the general ironworker for the district. In becoming the skilled agricultural engineer he will perform an act of real service to agriculture. For he who has not the mechanical aptitude, nor the scope in that direction, there is wrought

ironwork'.¹⁸

This places wrought ironwork, perhaps for perceived economic reasons, in a secondary position and implies that it is done by less capable smiths.

There was also concern about design standards. It was the time when the extended debate on Art and Industry, and Design and British Industry gained its momentum, raising questions on ornamentation and functionalism.¹⁹ There appears to be only anecdotal evidence for the success of these initiatives, but it is clear from the change in direction of the rules of the Bureau, towards the provision of advice and design services that these were aimed at diversification to improve the competitiveness of blacksmiths' businesses. A number of articles were published in the Rural Industries quarterly magazine, relating to design and taste both generally and aimed at the blacksmith.²⁰ These articles were added to during the 1950s and 1960s by a series of books dealing mainly with matters of technique, but with sections relating to design. These books contained descriptions of the techniques addressed in the syllabus for wrought ironwork training, and were set out as a series of lessons. The designs described, whilst demonstrating the techniques required to undertake work in a 17th- or 18th-century style, did not themselves relate directly to that period.²¹ The later volume, *Decorative Ironwork*, contains work of a contemporary design, manufactured using traditional techniques, anticipating what is a typical pattern of work

for many artist blacksmiths during the 1990s.

Despite these changes in the rural economy through farm mechanisation and the increased popularity of motor transportation, the work of the country general blacksmith was still very much determined by the agricultural cycle: Spring Tilling, Hay, Corn, Root Crops, Winter. During the Winter, there was the shoeing of horses for hunting and not much else - so winter was taken up with ironwork and toolmaking.²² Spending only part of the year working on wrought ironwork, and not having any education in design, it is not surprising that the pieces made during these winters tended to be derivative of, or identical to, previous or established work. Often the only sources of design information were the books by Starkie Gardner published by the V & A,²³ or the designs provided by the Rural Industries Bureau - the smiths were "Too busy to have the time for innovations, they had their living to make!"²⁴

The Bureau's main concern became the encouragement of high standards of craftsmanship, so that rural industries became regarded as rural crafts. Hand production, rather than large scale manufacture was the objective. There were two benefits of this strategy, separating the products from the markets being created for mass consumer goods, and allowing the revival to be established in existing workshops thus avoiding the need for large scale investment. In taking this line, the Bureau located itself in the campaign for the protection and reconstruction of rural England.

There were attempts during the early years of the Rural Industries Bureau to define rural industries, and then decide how to encourage them in line with its constitution. When Williams published his study, *The Country Craftsman*, in 1958, it appeared that in practice there was some consensus about a definition of who could be given assistance, and the RIB and the National Council for Social Service could agree upon a joint statement:

Preference is given to the smaller industries, normally those employing up to 20 journeymen, situated in the countryside and in country towns of up to 10,000 inhabitants. Industries which have a bearing on food production, production for housing and export, now have a prior claim to the technical services which are available.²⁵

This definition is still being used as a guideline for decisions on whether assistance should be given. Although, with the expansion of towns and villages during the intervening 38 years, the definition now applies to fewer areas .

Technical instruction was to be one of the most important activities of the RIB and subsequently CoSIRA and the RDC. A.W. Elwood²⁶ was the first forgework advisor employed by the RIB, having become insolvent because a building firm didn't pay him for a large railing job. He began to do a little lecturing for the RIB before being employed full-time. He was working during the 1930s, travelling around the country and providing drawings and design work for blacksmiths. According to Tucker "he was the king of the wrought iron smiths in his time"²⁷ and it is clear that he had a major influence during the early years of the RIB. At the start of the second World

War Elwood was the main Wrought Ironwork Advisor, assisted by Augustino Zanni, who had been appointed during the early stages of the war²⁸.

Before WW2 the RIB were instrumental in the formation of a number of co-operatives, essentially organised by 'the county'. There was, for example a co-operative in Kent, with a shop in Folkestone. Tucker remembered that:

The Rural Industries Organiser went around on a motorbike collecting up candlesticks, small lanterns, sets of fire-irons, etc., in a little cart to take to the shop in Folkestone.²⁹ (figure 1)³⁰

Tucker pointed out that that the work of a number of the County Organisers was worthy of note:

Several of the original County Organisers who served, and continued to serve for years after the war, all truly dedicated men had a great regard for the craft industries, it being the main subject in pre-war days, to name men like Harold Mabbitt, Essex; George Shaw, Somerset; Basil Roberts,³¹ Gloucester; Fred Shepherd, Derby and Leicestershire - later to become Southern Area Officer, Kent to Cornwall. ... All great pioneers of the craft instruction, it was the job in those days.³²

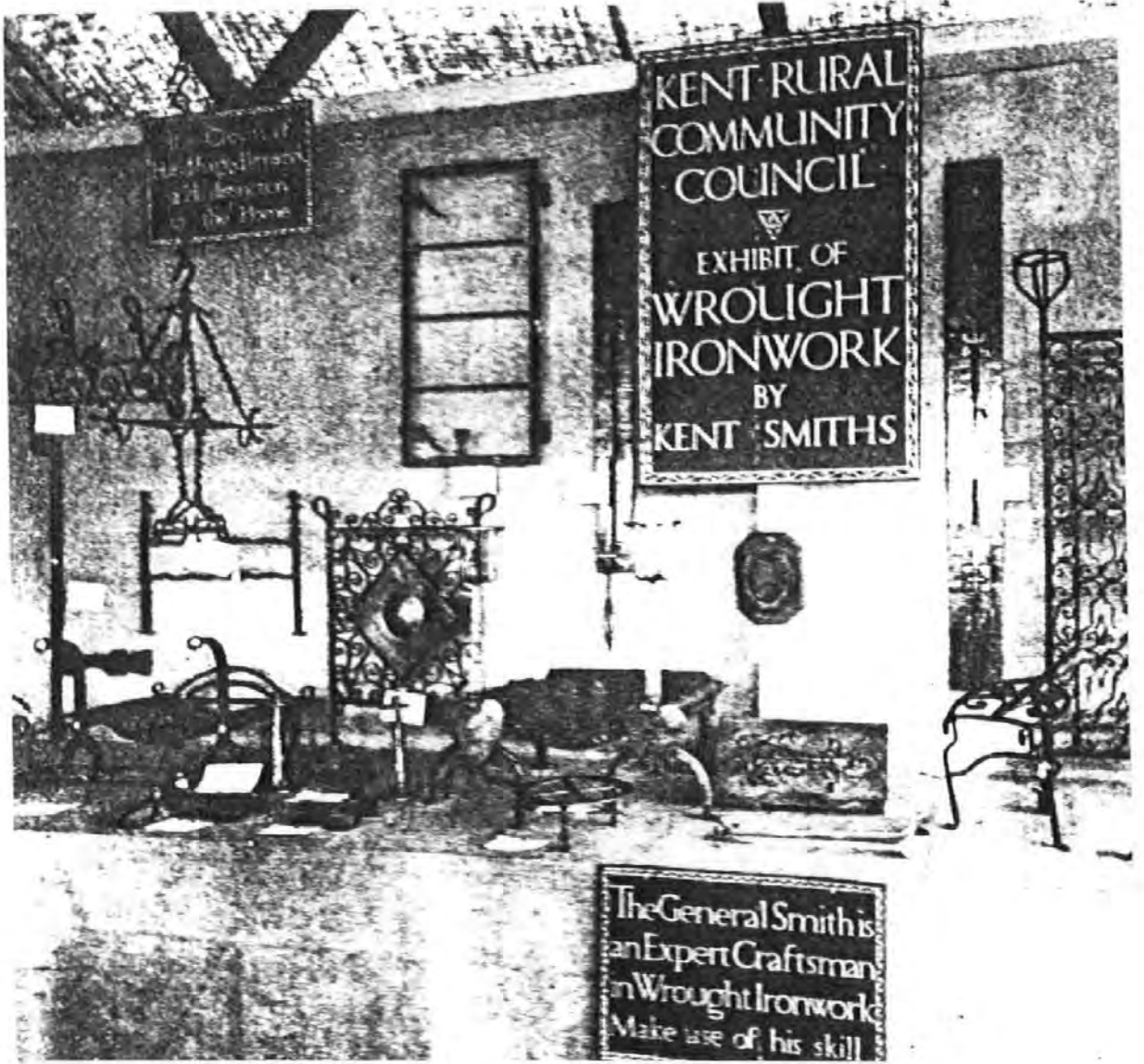


Figure 1. An exhibition of wrought ironwork by Kent smiths organised by the Kent Rural Community Council in 1928.

The Development Fund loans were particularly important in terms of the provision of equipment and the purchase or improvement of premises for rural businesses. The Rural Industries Loan Fund (RILF) *Annual Report 1965-6* describes how the use of the Development Fund to “.. maintain and develop rural industries, particularly those which were ancillary to agriculture”³³ developed between the early 1920s and the end of WW2. Increased demand for home-grown food during the war lead to the introduction of the Equipment Loan Fund in June 1940. It was a fund administered by the National Council of Social Service to provide free of interest loans to enable small firms to obtain new and up-to-date equipment more speedily. The RILF began with £2000 and by 1947 had provided loans of £118 500 by 1947.³⁴ In its final Annual Report (1967-8) the annual total stated had reached £472 305 for the three funds in existence at that time.

It is clear from the RILF reports over the years that the provision of funds and advice on equipment and technical matters had significantly affected the business of the blacksmith in rural areas. When blacksmiths wished to purchase equipment through the Equipment Loan Fund they were permitted to buy only the equipment approved by the RIB, essentially a result of wartime trade restrictions. Administered by the Business Advisors, advice on the equipment was given by the Technical Instructors:

Nora Newton was the Director of it (Loan Fund Ltd.) - she devoted her life to it, even in the holidays she'd visit people unable to pay, going into their problems - welfare side of the job.³⁵

The rapid wartime mechanisation of farming had provided much repair work, in particular of tractors, while reducing the work in repairing horse drawn equipment. Employment in farming was affected both by mechanisation and improvements in fertilisers, making the land more productive. Bailey notes that tractors in the 1930s:

... were still a rarity in fields managed by 'horse and hand', numbering only 60 000 in 1939. By 1945 the 'lend lease' scheme to support self-sufficiency in food during wartime had put 260 000 tractors on the land.³⁶

In order to work effectively with tractors and the associated equipment, it was necessary to improve the facilities for repair work. In 1950 it was possible to equip a blacksmith's shop with a forge, grinder, drill, Sitringham arc welder and a gas plant for around £600. The Sitringham welder was oil cooled and was the one always specified. However, air cooled welders:

... went on and on, but they could never get on the approved list - they got transformer chatter through rust on the plates.³⁷

Clearly a system such as an 'approved list', whilst it may have some advantage in the sense that all the equipment on it is likely to be adequate, is open to abuse through personal preference, etc., and to a broad brush approach where individual differences in requirement tend to be ignored. As in the above example, it is clear that air-cooled welders were not quite as good as oil cooled ones, but for someone who required the equipment to be portable, whilst not using a gas plant,³⁸ they would have had the advantage of being much lighter, and

therefore more easy to transport - surely a useful feature in a rural context.

Licensing restrictions and bureaucratic formalities would have made it difficult or impossible for many rural smiths to take advantage of new equipment during war time³⁹ - if only because of their dislike of, or lack of confidence with, 'paperwork'. The Bureau also provided training in the use of the equipment supplied through them, and advice about the design and operation of workshops - in turn often financed through the RILF. The intention was to give assistance in the purchase of modern equipment to "approved rural craftsmen,"⁴⁰ more especially those engaged in agricultural repair work."⁴¹

It was claimed in the 1950 RILF report that the Equipment Loan Fund had made an important contribution to the war effort:

Even before 1939 it was generally recognised how essential to farming were rural craftsmen, then diminishing in numbers... Breakdowns were inevitable, spare parts hard to get, unusable implements meant delay and waste, labour was scarce... Adaptions and adjustments were necessary, also new tools to work faster and do new types of work.⁴²

The equipment supplied had a significant impact upon working practices, and at first was restricted to oxy-acetylene welding and cutting outfits, hand screwing and drilling machines.⁴³ In 1941 the range of equipment available was widened to include power driven tools and equipment such as those with electric motors, petrol and oil engines, electric forge blowers, drills and grinders, and towards the end of the war, electric arc welding equipment. In many cases the

equipment already in use and the layout and scale of the premises would have been very familiar to the blacksmith's mediaeval counterpart, so the introduction of powered equipment was in effect the first major step since the introduction of ready-made sections of iron after the Industrial Revolution. An example of one of these changes is given in the RILF 1947 report:

The installation of an electric forge blower in place of the old type of hand bellows in effect provided the smith with another pair of hands,⁴⁴ and besides saving him a great deal of work, enabled him to undertake tasks which would have been impossible single-handed.⁴⁵

Clearly, power tools and equipment had a greater effect upon the capabilities of the small rural blacksmith's business than on the town-based or industrial smith, as they had had access to water and steam power for some time and electric power during more recent times.

The reason why so much of the early efforts of the RIB were directed at assisting blacksmiths is given in the report covering the period 1939-47:

There are more blacksmiths in England and Wales than any other group of rural craftsmen. Next in order are the wheelwrights and the blacksmith-wheelwrights... Accordingly, it was to the blacksmith and the wheelwright that the Bureau Technical staff devoted greatest attention, not only because they were more numerous but because of the fact that the smith provides repair, maintenance and farriery services to the farmer.⁴⁶

There are claims that demands for smithing instruction continued to increase," though no indication is given of the extent of the instruction or the increase, other than to say it is considerable. Instruction was also given in the form of a series of books on technical subjects,⁴⁷

which have had a considerable influence upon the practice of blacksmithing, often because they were the only books available on the topics. Although they didn't in themselves suggest a style of working explicitly, it was clear that examples and precedents are taken from established traditions. There were many examples of how traditional techniques could be used in a variety of ways, but no indication of how to experiment, or adapt them; and no significant reference to design theory or practice. The inference may be drawn from this that technical skills are either more important than design skills, or sufficient in themselves.

It was a period when there wasn't sufficient work for all of the farriers and agricultural blacksmiths, especially with the increased mechanisation of agriculture, many trying to take over the premises of rivals when they retired or went out of business and diversifying into wrought ironwork. As Tucker recalled:

The Rural Industries were on their bicycles teaching these agricultural smiths to make domestic articles - and lectures and demonstrations on gate making...Their objective was to provide another string to these rural farriers and smiths, simply to keep them there - to make sure the farmers survived, to keep the person on the spot.⁴⁸

A library of scale drawings was available and many copies of drawings were sent out to blacksmiths and others. These drawings continue to be available both in the form of books⁴⁹ and in the form of working drawings today, and it is clear that the drawing and design service of the RIB and later CoSIRA had perhaps the most important influence on the style of ironwork in the UK, certainly up until the

1980s, and for many smiths working in a more traditional style, into the 1990s. Some copies of examples are contained in Appendix Two.

Wrought ironwork instruction was suspended during WW2 in favour of agricultural work, to be resumed in 1948 with one travelling technical officer giving assistance to those "... who show an aptitude for it."⁵⁰ By then there was a shortage of blacksmiths capable of fine work and of high quality work, and the Bureau set out to train a sufficient quantity of skilled smiths to meet the limited demand for fine wrought ironwork, recognising that, 'At present the market tends to be overrun with examples of the craft in which gas welding is used without discrimination.'⁵¹

In 1944 the Headquarters of the RIB was moved from Taunton to Wimbledon in order to improve its organisational efficiency.⁵² One of the first tasks to be taken on was an economic survey which assessed the prospects for the survival of certain trades, and the means of recruitment of "youths and young men for training in some of the rural crafts."⁵³ As a result, training facilities were set up at Wimbledon, with the Bureau acting as agents for the Ministry of Labour under its Vocational Training Scheme. The training of blacksmithing apprentices was begun under the joint scheme of the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, and effectively run by the National Master Farriers' and Blacksmiths Association and the RIB. By 1950 there were approximately 350 apprentices registered under the National Joint Apprenticeship, with trainees attending local

Education Authority centres⁵⁴ - usually Technical Colleges, on a block release scheme. In later years the Government brought in charges for training courses and instruction which made it much more difficult to train apprentices, which along with natural wastage, as Tucker indicates, "... put paid to the Joint Apprenticeship Scheme."⁵⁵

Over the years it is clear that the emphasis of the RIB's work has been upon the technical and economic factors. It summarised its functions as:

the development and maintenance of a high standard of design and craftsmanship in the rural crafts. To this end the Bureau maintains a nation-wide service for practising rural craftsmen. It is concerned with the recruitment and instruction of new workers, the instruction of practising craftsmen in their own crafts and the conversion from old ideas to new. In providing a technical service for the craftsman the Bureau inevitably becomes involved in the social problem of raising his status. The two tasks are complementary. Any attempt to separate the technical aspect from the social is both impractical and undesirable.⁵⁶

In later times more emphasis was put upon the status issue, but as long as the policy dictated that agriculture was the driving force, the rural crafts could only take a subservient or secondary role.

Naturally the RIB was providing assistance on the selection of equipment and the layout of workshops both in the form of booklets and advice, as well as advice on the purchase and use of equipment. From 1945-7, "... a 5 ton van equipped with the most up-to-date machines has toured a large number of the counties,"⁵⁷ instructing potential purchasers on how to use it. By 1947 there were 17

instructors dealing with oxy-acetylene welding, 1352 blacksmiths had completed courses and 805 were under instruction. Tucker states:

The War stimulated the policy of working in agricultural areas - there had been some work before the War, but the rural blacksmiths were hostile to acetylene welding - partly because it wasn't very good, it was in its infancy - the Alan Liverage outfit (now BOC) with their acetylene generators and low pressure acetylene.⁵⁸

In 1949 as a result of increased interest in fabrication the van was re-equipped to demonstrate new welding and cutting techniques. By 1950 the amount of instruction in the use of new types of equipment was increasing in line with changing working practices. The requirement for forge work was decreasing and the amount of welding and engineering work was increasing. Instruction in the use of power hammers, drills, grinders and lathes responded to strong demand. Gas welding instruction was steady, but there was an increase in demand for arc welding instruction. The result of this was that all RIB engineering instructors were trained to give instruction in gas and arc welding and cutting; blacksmithing and agricultural work, as it was claimed that: "... to a certain degree a smith must be competent in all these subjects before he can offer a full service to agriculture and industry in the countryside."⁵⁹

Tommy Tucker says of this trend:

Wrought Ironwork, one way and another, was a very popular subject. At an annual conference about 1952 at Ashridge College, Berkhamstead, Herts, Harold Mabbitt, organiser for Essex speaking from the platform put a proposition that selected engineering instructors who had been basically blacksmiths could have in-service training in wrought ironwork. The proposition was acted on. Zanni and myself in the early 50s and beyond periodically were allocated to

providing in-service training to members of our engineering instructional staff, who worked a syllabus of instruction on an itinerant basis as part of their duties.⁶⁰

This marked a clear change of policy both in terms of the focus of the instructional effort away from specialist smithing instruction, and also away from a strictly agricultural emphasis by accepting that other rural industries needed assistance.

The 1967-8 report describes how progress had been made from helping those working in trades ancillary to agriculture and others, including:

... a wide variety of small industries employing up to 20 journeymen and using, almost as part of their stock in trade, modern machines which can call for loans up to £3000. But the value of this assistance has not been solely economic. The social consequences have been important too. By improving the range of activity which up-to-date equipment makes possible, by improving working conditions, and by increasing a firm's financial viability, the opportunities for earning a living in the countryside become more numerous, and young men and women are therefore more readily encouraged to work in the countryside and live there.⁶¹

This change had begun in 1952 when facilities had been extended to manufacturing trades which might make a direct or indirect contribution to the export drive.⁶² Clearly the second world war had caused economic imperatives to dominate the 'civilising rôle' proposed at the end of the inter-war period. As a consequence, more effort was put into helping the increasing numbers of agricultural engineers, rather than the blacksmiths who had previously provided a service to farmers. Although there has been a continuous provision for blacksmiths it was clear that in the view of some:

The transition from Blacksmith to Agricultural Engineer has taken place ... in this Committee's view, smithing training alone is now obsolete.⁶³

The sections of the Bureau reports dealing with wrought ironwork between 1950 and the formation of CoSIRA in 1968 provide perhaps the best available information on the development of practice during the time, as they are based upon a view developed by Technical Officers travelling the country. Little evidence is available on the size of the trade or its economic characteristics during this period, other than that contained in these reports. The reports are a little light on criticism of the service offered and are couched in very positive terms, as they were being produced as evidence of the success of the Bureau. However, there is evidence of the changes which had been made in response to developing market conditions after WW2. As has already been noted there was little wrought ironwork produced during the immediate post war period and the first sign of increase coincides with the resumption of instruction in the subject in 1948. Increase was noted in almost all subsequent reports in demand for help, though when starting from a base of no instruction, this is perhaps less impressive than it would at first appear.

The competitions and exhibitions at County Agricultural Shows had helped to foster the appreciation of the blacksmith's products, and the increasing range of restoration work was also providing employment, even though smiths needed extra training, for example in leaf work, in order to complete it.⁶⁴

Insight into the balance of functional and decorative work is provided by these reports, with the majority of blacksmiths not encouraged to: '...neglect agriculture and its modern requirements in order to dabble in decorative ironwork unless they have talent for it.'⁶⁵

The pattern of contact between the national body and individual businesses was fairly standard. Courtenay Paul, a Somerset blacksmith, farrier and Master of the Wessex Guild had used the training service for a number of years:

The RIB used to come about once a month for about half a day, we had Zanni, Tommy Tucker then Frank Day - mostly Frank Day towards the end - normally they made a piece and you had to make a similar piece after. We used to have an organiser who came regularly, Mr. Shaw most of the time - he came to see if you wanted any help and just checked up on you - if you wanted the courses he organised all that.⁶⁶

Although finance was offered to improve equipment and premises, there was reluctance amongst smiths to take advantage of it as there were interest charges applied to the capital sum. By the mid 1950s the number of one-man blacksmith's shops continued to decrease and it was said that "... work of this type seems to have a very limited future,"⁶⁷ as 'progressive, larger concerns' could provide a service over a larger area. In practice, many single smith businesses were also involved in farriery, and in order to survive at a time when horses were no longer being used on farms they had to provide a mobile service in order to satisfy the demand from recreational horse riding.

The Bureau evolved an experimental workshop in order to look at the adaptation of equipment and techniques from heavy industry and to develop new ironwork designs, for example machines for bending ironwork cold, and a number of designs for fabricated metalwork.

Most smiths at this time were agricultural and general blacksmiths⁶⁸ who sometimes did wrought iron work. Because of developments in the design of agricultural machinery, forge-work was no longer essential to repair it, although it could be very useful. This meant that those with an aptitude for mechanical work had effectively become agricultural engineers, and others who were more interested in blacksmithing looked to expand that area of their work. This was clearly an important period for wrought ironwork as it marked the end of the time when many could be commercially viable general blacksmiths.

There was growing involvement in wrought ironwork amongst the more general kind of smith, both in terms of high quality work, and in the cheaper, cold-bent fabricated kind, and by 1957 the RIB believed that there was a need for more modern designs to be included in the Catalogue of Drawings as most were derivative of late 17th- and early 18th-century work:

Many rural ironworkers are mainly dependent on the Bureau for designs, It is felt that these designs should not merely meet the demand for designs in harmony with present-day taste, but should to some extent create this demand.⁶⁹

During the 1950s, the revival and study of techniques from the 13th and 14th century was felt to be appropriate, and a number of experiments were carried out to this end and the results incorporated in new designs for the catalogue. The roots of this interest in mediaeval practice may be seen to be in the Arts and Crafts Movement and its subsequent development of Modernism. Gordon Russell's membership of the Development Commission may be seen as a further example of links with late 19th-century concerns.

By the end of the 1950s there was a slowing down in the increase of demand for ironwork. At the same time there was an increasing demand for instruction in power hammer, toolmaking and advanced repoussé techniques. In connection with this the Experimental Workshop developed epoxy tooling, which made the manufacture, by pressing, of repoussé features more economical than by hand hammering into blocks of pitch, thus making restoration work more profitable.⁷⁰ An exhibition of ironwork was held in the Ceylon Tea Centre between 20-29 July 1960, but no record of it is made in an annual report.

The demand for large, usually restoration, work continued until the early 1960s, but from 1963 there was a sharp decline in requests for important new work and restoration, and an associated drop in demand for instruction and technical advice on projects.⁷¹ An exhibition of country industries was held at the Nottingham Building centre in 1963.⁷²

By the mid 1960s general metalworking and smithing firms were finding it necessary to set up separate wrought-ironwork sections and were modernising and extending their premises in order to take advantage of an improving market. The demand for new designs was good, whilst the interest in the drawings from the standard Catalogue was declining "...due possibly to the need for new designs."⁷³ This was perhaps indicative of a trend away from designs with a 17th- or 18th-century origin, reflecting a growing awareness of the changes in attitudes to design⁷⁴ and lifestyle during this time. It was a development encouraged by the Bureau who claimed to be taking: ...steps to impress on a number of wrought ironworkers the need to produce designs more in keeping with the requirements of modern architecture - a breakaway from the 18th century style.⁷⁵

Whilst this was good advice, it wasn't clear how smiths would be capable, without specialist or extra knowledge, of producing good quality modern designs. They were very rarely trained in design and would have had little or no experience of modern design in metal as so few examples were available to study. There were some German books available, but the Bureau had few of these. The Bureau's instructors were also not trained in design and had little experience or interest in it, so it is unlikely that they could have been of much assistance.

A visit was organised to meet French Ironworkers in Rouen on the 17th of June 1965, and visit the Musée le Secq des Tournelles with the intention of exchanging ideas on design and production methods.

The Museum is perhaps the best and most extensive collection of ironwork, but is only of old work, the most recent being 19th century. The work displayed there is extremely impressive and would have provided excellent examples of work which would have helped with restoration work, work in older styles, and examples of older techniques. However, there are no examples of modern work, and it's difficult to see how French smiths could have been of much help with it, since the vast majority of their work was in older, derivative, styles.

A group of smiths from the West Country, organised by Frank Day, a part-time Bureau Instructor, discussed the potential for an exhibition in London. The Bureau assisted in the preparations for this exhibition which took place in the London Building Centre between 13-23 September 1966. Twenty six blacksmiths took part in the event and launched an *Architects Guide to Wrought Ironworkers*.⁷⁶ It stimulated work and interest for Westcountry smiths.

Export orders were healthy and a consortium of smiths was organised to produce a large commission for a memorial park in Virginia, USA. Much of the background work for this was done by Shirley Pickett, the RIB's Public Relations Officer, who had had a significant impact upon activity in the trade by increasing promotional activity during her period of employment. The large gate order was a result of the West Country Ironwork Exhibition:

... five large sets of gates, each 20 feet wide by 14 feet high. Bureau help was requested in all aspects of design and planning, and with the county rural industries service, a network plan for the production of

the gates was evolved, five firms of wrought ironworkers acting as a consortium, and in turn sub-contracting to other small firms of wrought ironworkers. As a direct result of work on this project the Guild of Wrought Ironwork Craftsmen of Wessex was formed to undertake further large projects of this nature. The commission from West Virginia is worth over \$25 000 and as far as is known, this represents the largest single order for wrought ironwork ever to be obtained by a British Craftsman.⁷⁷

In 1968 the Rural Industries organisations were united in carrying out the objectives of the Development Commission under the banner of the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (CoSIRA).⁷⁸ On the 19th February 1968 the Rural Industries Bureau; Rural Industries Loan Fund Ltd.; Rural Industries Committees and other organisations amalgamated to form the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas⁷⁹ (CoSIRA).⁸⁰ Up until the involvement of the Crafts Council, and the formation of the British Artist Blacksmiths Association (BABA) in the late 1970s, CoSIRA continued to be the major influence upon blacksmiths' work. In the 1990s they are still important, but in terms of providing training, funding and advice to blacksmithing businesses on a national basis. The training function began to be eroded when cost-cutting measures and the paperwork associated with a view of accountability were encouraged by Government.

Reference was made to the *Bolton Report on Small Firms* in the CoSIRA report for 1970-72. It was an influential report set up by Rt. Hon. Anthony Crosland, President of the Board of Trade on 23 July 1969. The expertise of the Committee was largely in the area of finance, and the Committee commissioned 18 research reports on

aspects of the operation of small firms, all of which were published separately. Evidence was taken from a very large number of firms, individuals, trade associations, training associations, financial organisations, councils, firms and overseas organisations, who are listed in the report. The terms of reference for the Committee were linked to the need to study small firms.⁸¹

The Committee reported on 21 September 1971. It indicated that the value of craft industries was far beyond that of monetary potential, and included quality of life and tourism. Finance was to come in future from the Dept. of the Environment and not from the Dept. of Industry, who would no longer assist crafts. The *Bolton Report* led to both the setting up of the regional Small Firms Advisory Bureaux of the Dept. of Industry⁸² and the Crafts Advisory Committee⁸³ who had:

... a remit to promote the work of Artist Craftsmen ... CoSIRA has long had a special interest in craft industries and will work closely with the new body. The dovetailing of the work of the two bodies will be ensured by the fact the the chairman of CoSIRA has been appointed as the Chairman of the Crafts Advisory Committee.⁸⁴

The report of the Committee of Enquiry was discussed at great length within CoSIRA, and Sir Paul Sinker summarised the most important recommendations in a talk to staff. He stated that responsibility for the crafts had been moved to the DES in advance of the official publication of the *Bolton Report*, and that Lord Eccles of the DES had appointed the Crafts Advisory Committee, of which he was to be the first chairman. One of the most important conclusions, at which he expressed some delight, was that: "... our justification is social rather

than economic.”⁸⁵

In a CoSIRA memo commenting on the *Bolton Report* small firms were defined in a new way:

... definition of a small firm for manufacturing is 200 employees or less - the Commission uses 20 skilled employees, which can mean up to 100 employees overall, but the average in CoSIRA is 5-7.⁸⁶

With reference to this definition, Sir Paul Sinker, in a 1970 talk to staff said:

I don't know who first thought of that definition, but on the whole it has turned out in practice to work rather well. There is not much logic in it but from an administrative point of view I think it has been convenient, particularly as we don't apply it too rigidly.⁸⁷

Bolton thought that a readiness to consider supporting the crafts was justifiable on the same social and cultural grounds as the service provided to rural industries by CoSIRA, its Scottish counterpart and the work of the Arts Council, as: “Respect and care for these values is in our view obligatory for any rich and civilised nation.”⁸⁸

The economic recession during 1972 had been felt throughout the small industry sector. The contraction of agricultural businesses had continued steadily, but there was a “... considerable upsurge in the crafts industries in the country.”⁸⁹

CoSIRA had helped with a number of commissions which included a large Royal Coat of Arms for the British Embassy in Rome;⁹⁰ Bedford Park gates; gates and rails for Lord Derby's estate; gates at Chevening

House and the Lincolnshire Show Ground.

The Joint Apprenticeship Scheme run between NAFBAE,⁹¹ the Department of Employment, and CoSIRA⁹² had effectively disappeared through natural wastage. The NETS⁹³ were introduced in 1973⁹⁴ both to replace this system and to provide training more appropriate to contemporary needs. The reduction in the instructional force and the introduction of charges were jointly responsible for the decline and eventual disappearance of apprenticeships in blacksmithing.

At present there are no indentured apprenticeships available in blacksmithing,⁹⁵ and the dominant, but not the only, means of training for those *in employment* is the RDC NETS.⁹⁶ The series of weekend courses run at Cannington College in Somerset were grant-aided by CoSIRA for a number of years, until the death of Frank Day, who as a former CoSIRA Technical Officer was responsible for setting up and essentially running the courses.⁹⁷

Trainees were selected and a two way contract was entered into, and the employer received the grant. At the start of the NETS, the instructors already employed needed more assistance, so Tony West was employed to run the courses. Tucker noted that the introduction of the NETS had a lot to do with the specialised needs of the countryside:

Wrought ironwork as a specialised subject was not catered for at the right level in the colleges - it was an optional extra from the old City and Guilds 68 paper - we were asked by them to set the test ... Hereford ran that ... Vic Humble was the instructor, he was an old trainee of ours. There's been so much confusion and change about this

NETS scheme.⁹⁸

The NETS was specifically designed to achieve City and Guilds recognition and be a qualification which would meet the needs of the wrought iron specialist. It was thought important to make provision for succession in the business, and as Paul Allen stated: "...the important thing is that it actually helps existing businesses to stay in business."⁹⁹

In the final two weeks of the NETS courses, trainees are asked to design and make an object of their own choice:

A wide variety of designs are made ...whereas we would like to see traditional styles of work produced, encouragement is also given to the trainees to produce modern and sculptural work if they wish.¹⁰⁰

The examples of completed pieces illustrated in British Blacksmith are typical of the kind of work produced at the end of NETS courses.

(figures 2,3) All of the pieces incorporate a number of forging techniques and are completed to a high standard. Five of the items,¹⁰¹ out of the six illustrated, (figure 4) use forms, patterns and techniques often found in 18th-century gates - riveted mortise and tenon corner joints, forge-welded leaf and scroll forms from heavy section and incorporating a variety of end finishes, the use of fullering, hot and cold chiselling, top and bottom tooling and stake work, twisting. The changes of section in scroll work tend to occur at the ends, rather than throughout their length as in the best of the 17th- and 18th-century work.¹⁰² The five items in broadly traditional style use conventional forms to illustrate skills, but not design to the same extent. The work

of Julian Coode, which was judged by Tommy Tucker to be the best piece in terms of quality and design, (figure 2) addresses both of these criteria equally to produce a cross which is much more evocative of the plastic quality of steel when forged hot and makes extensive use of a power hammer to achieve changes of section which would otherwise have required an immense amount of hand work. The scroll forms and some other components produced by other trainees could have been bought as 'off the shelf' components or produced by cold bending and forming processes to a very similar standard. Scroll work of the kind in these examples has been taught extensively by the RDC over the years, in earlier times because that was what the market required, but in more recent times because, it is argued, progress in forging skill can more easily be measured against existing work than the more free form work typical of modern smithing.

Prior to the late 1960s, power hammers were relatively rare, especially in rural forges, and it was therefore appropriate to concentrate upon work which could be carried out by a smith working alone using essentially hand forging methods. Julian Coode's work and the firescreens by Stephen Saunders and Andrew Wilkinson demonstrate techniques only possible by hot forging.

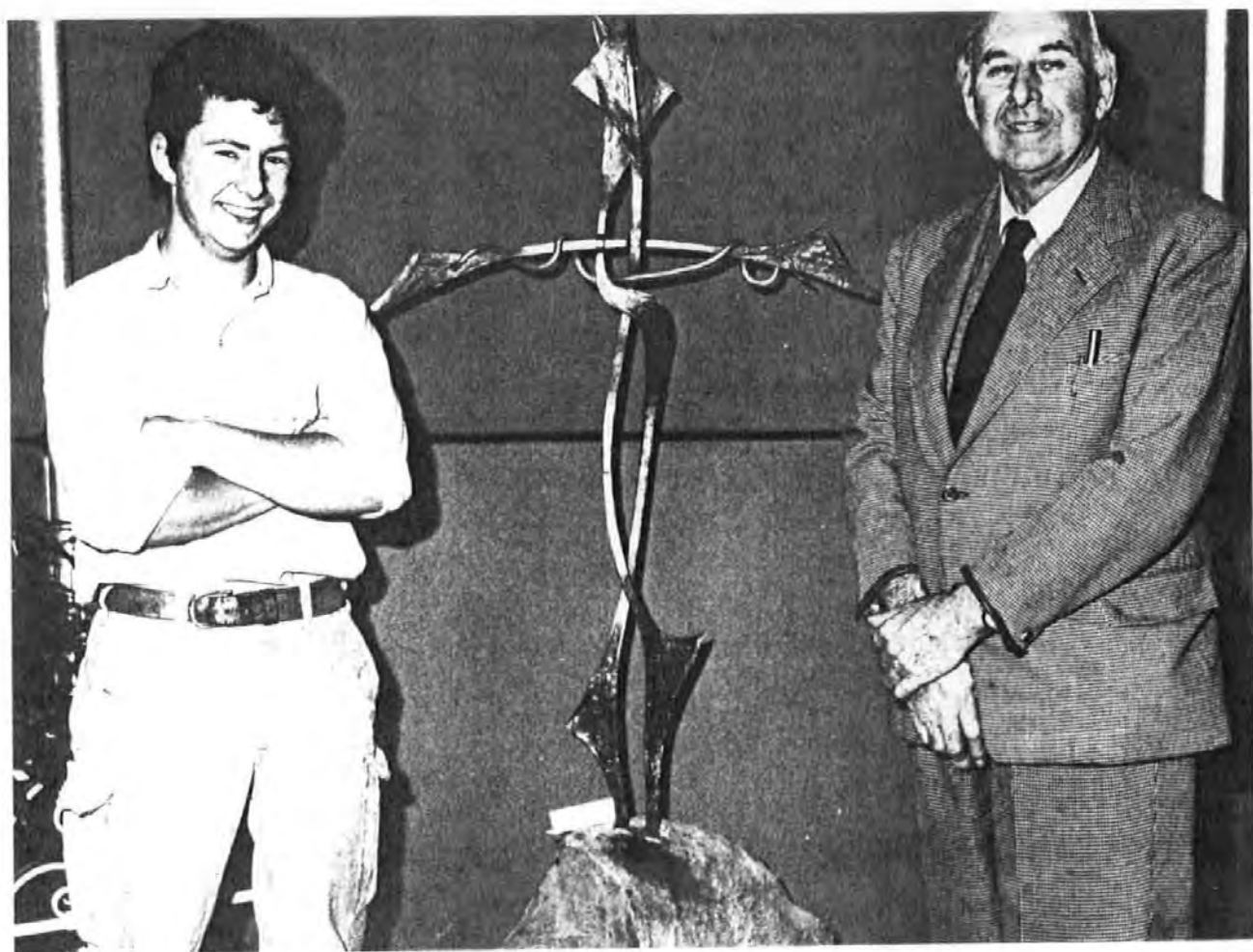
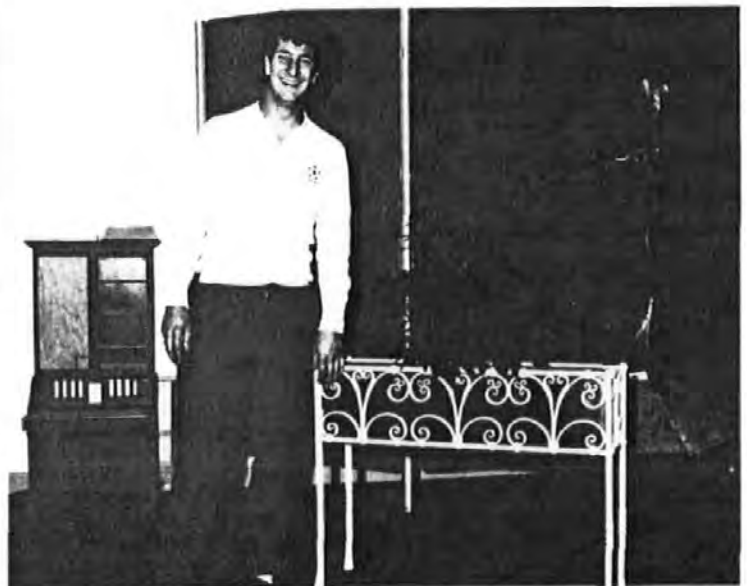


Figure 2. Julian Coode, left, with Tommy Tucker at the end of a CoSIRA NETS Course, 1984.



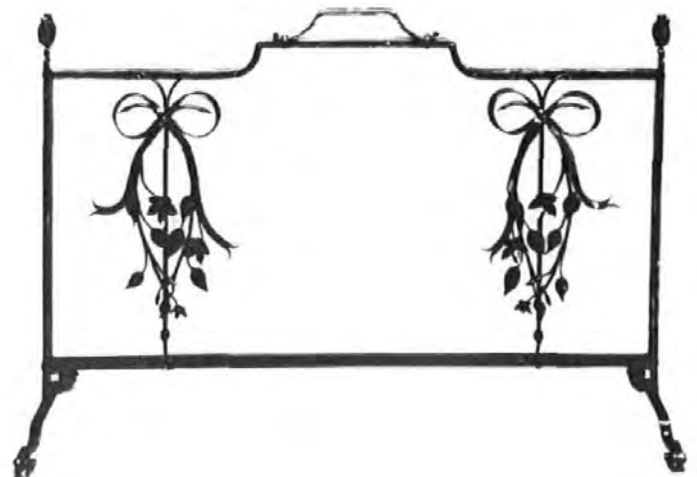
John Allin from Nottingham.
 Mike Wilkes from Stockton on Tees.



Gerry Baker from Princes Risborough.



Firescreen by Stephen Saunders,
 Herts.



Firescreen by Andrew Wilkinson, Kent.

Figure 3. Work completed at the end of a CoSIRA NETS course, 1984.

Whilst being responsible for introducing many craftspeople to traditional forging techniques, the practical reality of late 20th-century metalwork has been a little different. As Neil Hawkins pointed out:

Firms have survived by going in for fabrication work as well. The Rural Industries system was slow, and the assistance overly selective in favour of new entrants rather than established people.¹⁰³

During the early years of operation of charges for services, introduced in February 1972¹⁰⁴ and 1977, they sometimes caused problems with trainees and employers so a grant could be negotiated at a local level for the provision of business and technical advice. Tucker describes the way in which charges could be abated:

Provided the County Organiser agreed, we had a system of abatements and waivers, we could abate a charge to 25%, 50%, 75% and in exceptional cases through agreement between the instructor and the organiser the charge could be waived altogether.¹⁰⁵

The system appeared to be flexible, so that those who could afford to pay were asked to do so, in order to help those who couldn't .

However, this flexibility wasn't present in all counties and charges were applied uniformly in some cases. The system of waivers and abatements for priority areas was seen to have been applied in a variable way, which prompted the Chief Executive to circulate a memo:

1. Effect 1.4.77 Controller Field Staff Division responsible for monitoring and reporting all waivers and abatements - also responsible for approving applications... Exceptional Treatment for Priority Areas. 2. (a) Areas of Pull - defined locations surrounding Development Commission factories in Special Investment Areas. (b) Pockets of Need - not in Special Investment Areas and selected by County Small Industries Committees.¹⁰⁶

The two expressions 'Areas of Pull' and 'Pockets of Need' both cropped up in subsequent memos and records of talks to staff and became an aid to decision-making about priority. Consequently, instructional effort was expected to be targeted at Rural Development Areas: "You were expected to go in the most practical manner to areas designated of special economic need."¹⁰⁷

NETS grants and charges were set at Salisbury by a Board decision and reviewed in 1982 and subsequently in 1985, when average earnings and the ability to pay were looked at as well as the potential loss of income due to time lost in the business through training. Whilst during the early 1980s there was a greater amount of power at a local level in terms of service charges and coordination, during the second half of the decade Treasury targets were set to generate income, with the result that this regional influence was reduced. While charges for advice were in place, there were grants available for training, so that at a local level it could be decided which was appropriate after an Application for Service had been received - as all advice was chargeable, decisions were often made in line with the "strong caring culture"¹⁰⁸ in the organisation.

The compulsory registration of those shoeing horses required by the 1975 *Farriery Registration Act*, had a profound effect upon the way in which, especially rural, blacksmiths were able to run their businesses. Many were able to carry on shoeing if they were suitably qualified, and others were allowed to continue under another section

of the Act if they were judged to be competent. The major effect, however, was to polarise new entrants to blacksmithing into those who were mainly or exclusively farriers, and those who were blacksmiths. The reasons for not registering or undergoing training could be described as either economic - where there were not sufficient horses in the area to make paying registration fees and insurance worthwhile - or career-based - where the individual didn't wish to become a farrier. Registration increased the requirement for training and education in order to specialise in farriery. The consequent increasing specialisation within blacksmithing coincided with, and was partly responsible for, the formation of BABA, as the existing organisation for blacksmiths (NAFBAE) was seen to be almost exclusively concerned with farriery. Although NAFBAE didn't see themselves in exactly the same way, despite having a membership with a majority interest in farriery. This bifurcation, allied to the changes brought about the post-war mechanisation of farming and the resultant rise of the specialist agricultural engineering firm, were major factors in the more recent increase in the activities of wrought iron smiths, and the development of the artist blacksmith.

Despite sharing a chairman, the precursor to the Crafts Council and CoSIRA appeared to have little common ground between them. CoSIRA were operating within the framework of an economic approach and whilst they tried to promote contemporary work on a number of occasions they found few 'takers' amongst blacksmiths, especially in rural areas. The Crafts Advisory Council, whilst having

an interest in economic factors were primarily driven by cultural imperatives. It is clear, however, that BABA recognised the importance of the work done both by the Crafts Council and CoSIRA.¹⁰⁹

Although forgework courses had been run for some years at the Somerset College of Agriculture and Horticulture, it was on 25th March 1983 that a specialist facility was formally opened by the local MP and Secretary of State for the Environment, Rt. Hon. Tom King.¹¹⁰ Finance was provided by the Somerset Committee of CoSIRA, with much of the work being done by Frank Day, a former CoSIRA Forgework Instructor.

Frank Day was an effective lobbyist with a robust approach, who was able to use his friends and contacts to keep the links between Cannington College, Cannington Forge, and the Guild of Wrought Ironwork Craftsmen of Wessex. An AGM, Dinner and Exhibition has been held at Cannington every year until 1995, when costs excluded the possibility. It is at first surprising that at such a relatively minor event either Sir Edward Du Cann¹¹¹ or the current local MP¹¹² would attend and support the link between the College and the Wessex Guild.¹¹³ But Frank Day had been friends for a number of years with Edward Du Cann and it was clear that he was a firm supporter of the Guild and the Cannington courses.

The CoSIRA workshops at the Great Yorkshire Showground at Harrogate were officially opened on October 25th 1983.¹¹⁴ The centre was to be run by Joe Hansan, a well known industrial and decorative

smith.

During parts of 1981 and 1982 there was an experiment in the joint management of the advisory services of the Small Firms Service of the Industry Department and CoSIRA in three regions. A joint document reported on the results of the experiment:

The two services are complementary ... although the possibility of duplication exists it is not a material factor in practical terms ... there is no justification for radical changes to existing successful operations.¹¹⁵

Most of CoSIRA's training effort was through the NETS, the 81-82 report states:

The new entrant schemes have been very successful. Since 1973, when they began, 95% of those completing their training have remained in their chosen trade and over 40% have set up on their own account; some of these having themselves accepted trainees under the scheme.¹¹⁶

That was the only piece of numerical evidence of the success of the NETS which was provided through annual returns. In more recent times more recording of statistics such as retention rates has taken place - these are confidential to the RDC at present. Perhaps more important is an overview from employees and ex-employees:

Of course we started off so many firms - for many people it was the initial contact - Giuseppe Lund was one. In a way the NETS or equivalent type of course is possibly the most significant thing in the development of a lot of companies. Ron Carter, who was a mill engineer and loom setter, he came on some courses. I'm confident that without the Rural Industries service and the impact it made over many years, it virtually resulted in the wrought iron industry being what it is today.¹¹⁷

The 1984-85 report stated something not noted for some time, that “the economy of rural areas is closely linked to the fortunes of agriculture.”¹¹⁸ No evidence is provided in support of this assertion, and though it may be an intuitive remark, it is more likely that it is a restatement of the early objectives of the former RIB.

For a number of years technical staff were involved with the National Handicraft Teachers Association by attending their conferences, providing demonstrations, books and advice about equipment. Short Summer Schools and day courses were provided, and this was approved of by County Inspectorates and HMIs who were very much in favour of the inclusion of some smithing in school curricula. It was regarded as ‘getting in on the ground floor’ to create an interest; even if the schools were in towns, they supplied rural areas. There was an annual one week course for London handicraft teachers.¹¹⁹ Other courses were run at centres organised by LEAs or at The Institute and College of Handicrafts.¹²⁰

In the final report of CoSIRA, of 1987-88, emphasis was placed upon the profile of needs and geographical factors. In April 1988 the Rural Development Commission was formed by the amalgamation of the Development Commission and CoSIRA. As part of the formation of the RDC, priority areas were identified. One of these was “traditional craft-based activities, some of which may otherwise die out, are supported by the Commission.”¹²¹

Some work in 'traditional' styles is produced as restoration work is an important source of income for many smiths. To put the importance of restoration work in perspective, it has been stated that there is a growing demand for traditional skills, and the Conference On Training in Architectural Conservation (COTAC) estimate that around 50% of work in the building trade is in the management of existing buildings - almost 1.5 million structures have some form of protection or listing. COTAC also indicated that 380,000 people, including 220,000 craft-related jobs, are involved in the repair of pre-1950 buildings and that there is the beginning of a skills shortage.¹²²

The problems of marketing and presenting a professional image have been addressed since the earliest days of the RIB, when the first Technical Officer, Elwood, produced a number of articles for the Bureau's periodical. In the 1990s, Paul Allen, Elwood's successor has identified a small number of smiths who appear not to be committed, and of whom it has to be asked "why are they in business?" While this is not seen as typical it appears that they deliberately undersell themselves to avoid their businesses becoming larger - perhaps they are looking for an easy life, or to avoid bureaucracy. The emphasis in terms of client contact at present in the RDC is upon those businesses who are seen to be ambitious and progressive, so that employment prospects and profits are likely to improve.

Advice has been given within regions set by the Government, which can vary from time to time but, essentially concentrated upon areas

defined during the very early days of the RIB. Most assistance was given to businesses with between five and twenty employees.

Developments were being frozen during 1993 and 1994 awaiting the findings of a Training Review (due out in July '94) and any decisions taken consequent upon its findings.¹²³

Despite all of the main blacksmithing organisations having been involved with the development process for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), there has been difficulty in agreeing what are the defining activities and skills of a blacksmith. Work towards the construction of an Industry Lead Body¹²⁴ began in 1988. The LIB produced Units of Competence which the members of the committee felt required too little. In mid 1990 the LIB responsibility was transferred to the Crafts Occupational Standards Board (COSB). A Functional Map was produced, which was considered to be an overview of what blacksmiths do in their day-to-day work. The Government then insisted that the COSB should produce a common functional map for all craft sectors, so the previous Steering Committee was dissolved and Derek Lloyd of Hereford Technical College¹²⁵ and Peter Parkinson of BABA represented blacksmithing on the revised COSB.¹²⁶ The Pointing Group produced a mapping document after consultation, in December of 1993.¹²⁷

NVQs were seen as being necessary for compliance with the requirements and recommendations of the Treaty on European Union regarding the equivalence of qualifications and the push towards

greater availability of vocational and post experience training opportunities.¹²⁸ There had been some opposition from within the RDC to the inclusion of basic business skills in the courses, but it was difficult to separate basic training from business. One of the major problems during 1993 and '94 had been the freeze on developments in training programmes pending the outcome of the Training Review, despite being aware of how to make improvements. An example of this would be the inclusion of basic design training on blacksmithing courses, as design is seen as particularly important to small firms.

The Drawing Service was started by the first forgework instructor, Elwood, in the days of the RIB. Ziggi Schramm was responsible for this service for some time between the 1960s and 80s, and re-drew many of Elwood's drawings because of deterioration in the film on which they were originally produced. In retirement, Ziggi Schramm is still responsible for producing many of the drawings at the time of writing.¹²⁹ (see Appendix 2) A number of drawings in a modern style were produced during the sixties and seventies in order to “.. go with modern times.”¹³⁰

The wrought ironwork drawing service was to be closed during the early part of 1994, but was bid for by, and was transferred to, the Training and Productivity Section later in the year. The drawing section, despite being located in the headquarters building at Salisbury, reported to the Taunton office - presumably a relic of earlier days when the organisation's HQ was located at Taunton to



Figure 4. RDC Wrought Ironwork Drawing No. 311, 1965.



Figure 5. Copy of RDC design 311, by Wing and Staples, 1980.

In line with modern drawing office practice, there has been a programme of transfer of the original drawings from plastic film to computer disc via a scanner. Many new drawings are being produced using Autodesk's *AutoCad* computer-aided design and drawing program, so that they may be plotted or printed onto paper without resort to chemical reprographic processes such as dyeline printing, and they may also be scaled to size easily.

During the earlier days of CoSIRA it was possible to provide technical assistance whenever it was requested, but under the RDC an on-line service was withdrawn. When assistance was given to a firm it could be categorised as comfort, advice, keeping morale up, and fire-fighting, which are all things which businesses in rural areas might need from time to time. Sometimes advice was given by telephone - this was seen as helping to keep Technical Officers 'on their toes' and to develop courses to fit clients' requirements more closely.¹³³

It was the intention that future NETS courses would fit within the NVQ system, but as NCVQ had insisted upon a generic template for all crafts, this resulted in a lowest common denominator approach, putting the situation back five years and resulting in a failure to develop an NVQ syllabus for blacksmithing.¹³⁴

The facility at the Harrogate showground, for example had been taken up on a three year lease, and because of a "... lack of demand"¹³⁵ it was likely to be closed. As the courses had to be economic, it wasn't

possible to justify running them where only two people, for example, had applied to take part.¹³⁶ There is some evidence, however, that the quality of the training provided at Harrogate was high and met with the approval of those receiving it.¹³⁷

The Training and Productivity Section of the RDC were subject to a review during 1993. This review was put out to tender, and Ecotec were due to report on the 7th July 1994.¹³⁸ The official line taken at the time of publication of the Training Review was that it was generally supportive of the way in which the section operated, but the RDC Commissioners proposed that they would consider ending the direct training services at Salisbury in addition to the withdrawal of forgework training at Harrogate showground. This caused great consternation amongst blacksmiths who attached some importance to the service provided - many regarding the RDC as the torch-holder during decades of decline and decay before the recent revival in activity. BABA officers wrote to a number of Government ministers and constituency MPs during January 1995 to protest at the potential loss of these services and received, aside from the polite topping and tailing of the letters, word for word, exactly the same response. This response had emanated from the Department of the Environment:

Following a review in 1993 of the Commission's Corporate Strategy, it was decided that the Commission's resources should be concentrated in the priority Rural Development Areas (RDAs) where social and economic needs are greatest. The Commission is also required to carry out periodic reviews of all its economic and social programmes to ensure that the most cost effective use is made of its resources. As part of this process, the Commission's training services have recently been subject to an independent value for money review. As a result of this training review, which also took account of the outcome of the wider strategy review, the Commission's consultants

have made a number of proposals for the future provision of training services. I understand that the Commission will be giving further consideration later this month to the options for further provision of training services before coming to a final decision on its direct training facility. Any decision is likely to take account of the availability of suitable alternative training facilities or services.¹³⁹

It is interesting to compare this reading of the *1993 Corporate Plan* with the sector wide approach advocated for NETS and Open courses. The response from the Dept. of the Environment might be seen as a comment upon all of the RDC's economic programmes, and as such not specific enough to rule out the retention of the existing approach to the provision of training. The issues had been discussed at a number of internal meetings leading to a submission on various aspects of their work by the Training and Productivity Section on the 20th March '95 to a meeting by the Development Commissioners on the 21st March. In April of 1995 it was decided to fund the Training and Productivity activities of the RDC until 1998 when a further review would take place possibly involving a link with the Department for Employment¹⁴⁰ in the future, or franchising of the training courses to another provider.¹⁴¹

In conclusion, the RDC in its various incarnations was the most important influence upon blacksmithing until the 1980s. It has at times held back progress and at other times encouraged it, but in general its influence has been positive. In the 1920s and 1930s it encouraged a progressive view of design, but concentrated upon economic considerations. It achieved this by a mixture of training,

advice, financial assistance, the production of books and drawings and an involvement both at national and local level with interested parties and organisations. It responded to changing needs in the marketplace, but has been subject to major shifts of policy - in particular with regard to: its relationship with agriculture; whether its role is mainly social or mainly economic; and the links it has had with various organisations. The training and provision of advice and assistance to blacksmiths has been effective over the years and has an important role to play in terms of skills training in particular, subject to the evolution in what is now an expanding, and still largely rural industry.¹⁴² Its training courses and publications are considered amongst the best available, but they will need to be adapted to new patterns of practice in order to retain their relevance.

Whilst the impact of the RDC was foremost up until the 1970s, other organisations and institutions began, subsequently, to exert a greater influence upon blacksmithing. In Section 3, the sub-sections relating to associations and guilds, the Crafts Council, and the V&A, discuss the way in which they have influenced the moves towards art-blacksmithing and away from blacksmithing's rural and industrial origins.

¹ "In the nineteenth century many rural craftsmen worked for country estates; their welfare was largely the concern of the squire and the large landowner. Others were village craftsmen who catered for the needs of their own localities; the growth of industry and transport was only beginning to threaten their livelihood when the century ended. In the next ten years cheap rapid transport and increasing quantities of factory-made goods brought competition to the village craftsmen's doorstep and their numbers began to decline. At the same time estates were being split up into single farms and their craftsmen were forced to fend for themselves." Williams, W. M., *The Country Craftsman*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1958, p. 4.

² It was some eighty years later that it became known as the Rural Development Commission.

³ *Development and Road Improvement Funds Act, 1909* (9 EDW.7.Ch.47) 1.1.(a)

⁴ *Development and Road Improvement Funds Act, 1909* (9 EDW.7.Ch.47) 6.0.

⁵ Bailey, Christopher. Progress and Preservation: The Role of Rural Industries in the Making of the Modern Image of the Countryside. *Journal of Design History*. 9 No. 1, 1996, p.35.

⁶ Head of Richard Quinnell Ltd. one of the leading architectural metalworking and blacksmithing firms in the UK. Founder of the British Artist Blacksmiths Association. Awarded an MBE for services to blacksmithing in 1992.

⁷ Quinnell, Richard. Interview, Leatherhead, 31.8.95.

⁸ An example of this is given by the attitude of the local Rural Industries Organiser somewhat after the second world war to the sale of Gliddon's blacksmith shop in Braunton Devon in 1959. A city smith from outside of Devon was favoured by the Organiser and given financial support to take over a blacksmith's shop carrying out a variety of agricultural and decorative work, including machinery manufacture and development work for major machinery manufacturers. The foreman blacksmith, Neil Hawkins, responsible for several smiths and most of the work, was refused help in favour of the incomer. He left to work elsewhere, and much of the work left with him. The business depended upon local knowledge and trust and the relationships with customers, not new business practices of a generalised kind of the sort which the Organiser thought his man would adopt. The business folded within six months leaving several smiths unemployed and the town without a smithing and repair shop. It is an example of where the imposition of outside views despite local conditions led to failure. Hawkins, Neil. Interview, Barnstaple, 19.12.94.

⁹ Many farriers were serving at the Fronts, as horses were often the main or only viable means of transport.

¹⁰ Including manufacturing for import substitution, and the production of ordnance and equipment for military use.

¹¹ Later the Rural Industries Bureau.

¹² The county bodies responsible for the maintenance and development of rural life in their areas. They employed the Rural Industries Organisers - who operated as the agents of the organisation and travelled around meeting craftspeople - and were funded by the Development Commission.

¹³ Representatives of the Rural Community Councils and the National Council of Social Service sat on the Bureau Council. The NCSS were generally concerned with rural affairs, received a grant from the Development Fund and provided the secretariat for the Rural Industries Loan Fund, advised the Development Commission about grants to Rural Community Councils.

¹⁴ Rural Industries and Intelligence Bureau, Leaflet No. 4, *The Village Blacksmith and His Outlook*, HMSO, 1924.

¹⁵ A number of leaflets were written to provide information on oxy-acetylene welding over the years: Leaflet No. 33, *Oxy-acetylene welding for Country Smiths* 1937; RIB Publication No. 44, *Oxy-acetylene Welding*, 1950; RIB No. 50, *Uses and Abuses of Oxy-acetylene Welding in Wrought Ironwork*, 1950.

¹⁶ Rural Industries and Intelligence Bureau, Leaflet No. 4, *The Village Blacksmith and His Outlook*, HMSO, 1924, p. 3.

° Ibid., p.15.

° Tebbutt, Holly, *Industry or Anti-Industry, Crafts* May/June 1991, p.17.

° "...which had previously played only a minor role in the economy of the forge....But, the degree to which it could ever have constituted a viable substitute for the loss of trade caused by mechanisation of agriculture and the self reliance of farmers encouraged by new technology, remains open to question. The success claimed for the revitalisation of this craft through the application of new technology and a new rôle should therefore be considered at least partial rather than total". Ibid., p.18.

° Design and Taste. *Rural Industries*, December 1926; Tortured Cleverness and the Beauty of Simple Form, *Rural Industries*, June 1927; Design as Applied to the Blacksmith's Craft, *Rural Industries*, June 1930.

° *The Blacksmith's Craft*. RIB, London, 1953; *Wrought Ironwork*, RIB, London, 1953; *Decorative Ironwork*, RIB, London, 1962.

° Hawkins, Neil. Interview, Barnstaple, 24.12.94

° Mainly about 17th and 18th Century work on a grand scale.

° Hawkins, op. cit.

° Rural Industries Organisation in England and Wales 1956: a joint statement issued by the National Council of Social Service and the Rural Industries Bureau (RDC Library ref. P.037.067)

° He was a London man who had learnt his trade at Starkie-Gardner's.

° Interview at the RDC, Salisbury, 9.7.93 with Tommy (C. A. H.) Tucker the well known former forgework instructor for the RDC and Paul Allen, Current forgework instructor.

° After Elwood's death early on in the War, at Taunton. "Zanni who continued at the welding and agricultural smithing instruction, and earned a great reputation particularly after reverting to wrought ironwork instruction at the cessation of hostilities." Tucker, Tommy. Letter, 26.3.95.

° Tucker, 9.7.93., op. cit.

° This display is typical of those found at rural shows, even at present. the slogan above the work reads 'The Charm of Hand-forged Ironwork adds Distinction to the Home'. Anon. Rural Crafts, the smith comes back. *Architects' Journal*, Nov. 14, 1928, p.723.

° Grandfather of Alan Evans

° Tucker, 26.3.95, op. cit.

° *Rural Industries Loan Fund Annual Report, 1965-66*, HMSO.

° In January 1947, "... experience gained with the Equipment Loan Fund revealed the inadequacy of working accommodation to the point of justifying the introduction of the Workshops Loan Fund. At the same time there was also the formal registration of the Rural Industries Loan Fund Ltd. under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act. In 1963 the third fund was established to help businesses with working capital." *Rural Industries Loan Fund Annual Report, 1965-66*, HMSO.

° Tucker, 9.7.93., op. cit.

° Bailey, Christopher. Progress and Preservation: The Role of Rural Industries in the Making of the Modern Image of the Countryside. *Journal of Design History*. 9, 1, 1996, p.37.

° Tucker, 9.7.93., op. cit.

° While a gas welding set is capable of many kinds of welding and cutting, there are situations where an arc welder is preferable or necessary.

° "... when machinery was in short supply, the Fund was able to achieve quicker delivery than would be obtained by individuals, and secondly to deal with the formalities for obtaining licences to purchase machines when war time controls required these." *RILF Annual Report 1956 - 57*, HMSO.

“Whilst, however, these men had the skill, they had not the modern equipment necessary to effect repairs speedily as well as efficiently, nor, being indirect sufferers from the agricultural depression of the pre-war years, had they the ready cash to buy it.” *Ibid.*, p.4.

▪ *Rural Industries Loan Fund Ltd. Annual Report 1950*, HMSO, p.4.

▪ *Ibid.*, p.8.

▪ Mains electricity wasn't available in many rural areas until the 1960s so manual equipment was appropriate. Generators could be used but they were rare, expensive to buy and run, and unreliable.

▪ During wartime any available labourers or children who may have helped with the forge blower were, for example, put to work on agricultural jobs, or had joined the forces and so weren't available. Consequently more smiths had to work on their own or in small workshops.

▪ *Rural Industries Loan Fund Ltd., Annual Report for 1947*, HMSO, London, p.7-8.

▪ *RIB Annual Report 1939-47*, HMSO, p.12.

▪ Subjects such as 'The uses and abuses oxy-acetylene welding'; 'Fabricating simple structures'; 'Estimating for blacksmiths and agricultural engineers'; 'Book-keeping for blacksmiths'; 'Decorative ironwork'; 'The blacksmiths craft'; 'Wrought ironwork'; 'Metals for Engineering craftsmen'; 'Cold formed ornamental ironwork'; 'Notes on the building and layout of a rural blacksmiths shop'.

▪ *RIB Annual Report 1939-47*, HMSO, p.12.

▪ *Catalogue of Drawings for Wrought Ironwork; Catalogue of Drawings, Gates; Catalogue of Drawings, Weathervanes*, RDC.

▪ *RIB Annual Report, 1948*, HMSO, p.20.

▪ *Ibid.*

▪ It was badly placed at Taunton if it was to continue to provide a country-wide service with an increased staff and a development of its activities. Accordingly in February, 1944, the Headquarters moved to No. 35 Camp Road, Wimbledon Common, and in spite of the difficulties encountered through the recommencement of air raids, the staff were able to operate from the new Headquarters far more efficiently. *RIB Annual Report 1939-47*, HMSO, p.22 It would seem to be a little odd to move to London at a time when air raids were common, but it appears to have been successful. An introduction to a Garden Party to be held at the RIB's newly completed HQ at 35 Camp Rd., Wimbledon, in July 1964 explains the history of the early re-locations: "The RIB was established in November 1921. From 1921 - 1939 the Bureau's offices were located in various rented premises in central London. A few months after war began evacuation to Taunton in Somerset became necessary. The Bureau soon outgrew its temporary quarters and it became apparent that a national organisation needed offices nearer to London. In 1943 the Trustees were able to acquire from the Drax Trustees the remainder of a lease 'by Caesar's Camp' Camp Road, Wimbledon Common. Where the Headquarters was established later that year. In consultation with the local authority plans for a permanent Headquarters of the Bureau at 35 Camp Road were prepared and in December 1961 the proposals were approved. ... building work commenced in August 1962 and was completed in April 1964." Introduction to a Garden Party at the Bureau's HQ on Thursday 2.July.1964, 3.30-5pm.

▪ *RIB Annual Report 1939-47*, HMSO, p.22-3

▪ *RIB Annual Report 1949-50* gives the following list: Hereford, Exeter, York, Newtown (Montgomery), Yeovil, and Rycotwood College.

▪ Tucker, 9.7.93., op. cit.

▪ *RIB Annual Report 1939-47*, HMSO, p.24-5.

▪ Mainly welding and cutting equipment.

▪ Tucker, 9.7.93., op. cit.

▪ *RIB Annual Report, 1949-50*, HMSO, p.9.

▪ Tucker, 26.3.95., op. cit.

- ⁶¹ *Rural Industries Loan Fund Ltd. Annual Report 1967-8*, HMSO, p.4-5.
- ⁶² *Rural Industries Loan Fund Ltd. Annual Report 1961-2*, HMSO, p.3
- ⁶³ Minutes of the meeting of the Devon Rural Industries Committee, April, 1953. Quoted in Williams, W. M. *The Country Craftsman*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1958, p.69.
- ⁶⁴ RIB *Annual Report 1950-52*, HMSO, p.20-21. Effectively a revival in old techniques prompted by the RIB.
- ⁶⁵ RIB *Annual Report 1953-54*, HMSO, p.22. 300 workshop visits were made during this year.
- ⁶⁶ Paul, Courtenay. Interview, Cannington College, 7.11.93.
- ⁶⁷ RIB *Annual Report 1954-55*, HMSO, p.9.
- ⁶⁸ Those undertaking a variety of work - normally, blacksmithing, farriery and industrial or agricultural work, possibly also including domestic work and repairs.
- ⁶⁹ RIB *Annual Report 1956-57*, HMSO, p.24.
- ⁷⁰ RIB *Annual Report 1959-60*, HMSO, p.38-39.
- ⁷¹ RIB *Annual Report 1962-63*, HMSO, p.52-53.
- ⁷² A tape recording of this is in the RDC archives at Salisbury.
- ⁷³ RIB *Annual Report 1964-65*, HMSO, p.21.
- ⁷⁴ This is also evidenced by the appearance of the Bureau's own Annual Report, which took on a more modern appearance and format for the first time in this year. Less in the way of detailed content was provided, and more emphasis was put upon layout and the quality of presentation.
- ⁷⁵ RIB *Annual Report 1965-66*, HMSO, p.19.
- ⁷⁶ The copy in the RDC Library consists of a printed folder with some typed stapled sheets inside containing the names and addresses of the exhibitors with a description of the work they were displaying - no illustrations or photographs.
- ⁷⁷ RIB *Annual Report 1967-68*, HMSO, p.20.
- ⁷⁸ CoSIRA and the Development Commission were later combined to form the Rural Development Commission (RDC)
- ⁷⁹ CoSIRA was founded under the Companies Acts, 1948-1967, and the first page of the Memorandum and Articles of Formation states that it was a "Company Limited by Guarantee and not having share capital"
- ⁸⁰ CoSIRA *Report 1968-70*, HMSO, p.3.
- ⁸¹ "To consider the role of small firms in the national economy, the facilities available to them and the problems confronting them; and to make recommendations. For the purpose of the study a small firm might be defined broadly as one with not more than 200 employees, but this should not be regarded as a rigid definition. In the course of the study it will be necessary to examine in particular the profitability of small firms and the availability of finance. Regard should also be paid to the special functions of small firms, for example as innovators and specialist suppliers." *Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Small Firms*, Chairman J E Bolton, HMSO, London, 21 September 1971, page v.
- ⁸² Now the Small Firms Service of the DTI
- ⁸³ The precursor of the Crafts Council.
- ⁸⁴ CoSIRA *Report 1970-72*, HMSO, p.1.
- ⁸⁵ Sinker, Sir Paul. CoSIRA - *Report of the Committee of Inquiry on small firms (The Bolton Committee) - Sir Paul Sinker's talk to CoSIRA staff*, memo ref. C39/71.
- ⁸⁶ CoSIRA memo - *Summary of the Bolton Report*, ref. C40/71.
- ⁸⁷ Sinker, Sir Paul, transcript of a talk to CoSIRA staff at Wimbledon 12.8.70 (RDC library)
- ⁸⁸ CoSIRA, *Summary of Bolton Report*, memo ref. C40/71 (RDC Library)
- ⁸⁹ CoSIRA *Report 1970-72*, HMSO, p.10.

⁹⁰ Made by Richard Quinnell Ltd.

⁹¹ At the time known as the National Master Farriers, Blacksmiths and Agricultural Engineers Association (NMF&AE)

⁹² RIB when the scheme started in 1946

⁹³ The General Conditions for the New Entrants Training Scheme (NETS) published by CoSIRA state that: "The scheme, which is managed by CoSIRA, is planned to provide a balanced mixture of practical experience under the supervision of a skilled employer and intensive periods of residential training in a Training Centre. ... Trainees will be expected to practise, in their employer's workshop, the techniques they are taught at the Training Centre, in the periods between the residential courses.... intended for applicants aged from 16 to 19. ... Applicants for training must first have established their aptitude and career intentions in working with a reputable firm which itself is within the CoSIRA eligibility classification... The prescribed period of training will be two years." CoSIRA. New Entrants Training Scheme: Forgework. *British Blacksmith* No. 36, June 1985, p. 8.

⁹⁴ The NETS was introduced in 1973 at the request of Bill Trust, who wanted a scheme for wrought ironwork which mirrored the one already available to thatchers. It was introduced by Acting Director, Col. Briggs, prior to the appointment of General Battye. Paul Allen indicated that the NETS was introduced because, "... there wasn't an apprenticeship as such any longer for the trade. It was thought that there was a need for it - it was to help the employer to a certain extent because they were finding it difficult to find the time to train these youngsters and carry on running the business at the same time." Allen, Paul, Forgework Advisor. Interview, RDC, Salisbury, 9.7.93.

⁹⁵ There is a certain amount of interest in expanding the recently introduced New Apprenticeships, which are funded effectively as further education courses, through Government agencies.

⁹⁶ There are other part time courses run by the Wessex Guild of Wrought Ironwork Craftsmen at Cannington College in Somerset; and some at West Dean College; in addition to a number of full time further and higher education courses - but for those employed full time in the industry the NETS courses are the main source of 'on the job' and block release training.

⁹⁷ Although a number of members of the Wessex Guild have had significant involvement in both teaching and administration.

⁹⁸ Tucker, 9.7.93., op. cit.

⁹⁹ Allen, 9.7.93., op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Anon. *CoSIRA NETS Course*. *British Blacksmith* No. 30, June 1984, p.10. (probably written by publicity section of CoSIRA).

¹⁰¹ Stool by John Allin, Firescreen by Stephen Saunders, Table by Mike Wilkes, Planter by Gerry Baker and Firescreen by Andrew Wilkinson.

¹⁰² The work of Jean Tijou's firm for Hampton Court is a good example of the way in which the changing of section of scroll work can enhance the appearance of this style of ironwork. Bars of uniform section weren't available at that time, so it was probably as easy to vary the section as not - less hammering in one area and more in another amount to the same work as producing a bar of uniform thickness. As bars are now provided in uniform thicknesses the tendency, for economic reasons mainly, is not to change the section of many bars for scroll work - which is to be regretted. Changing the section of bars is a strong feature of contemporary blacksmiths' work and has probably contributed strongly to its increased popularity.

¹⁰³ Hawkins, Neil. Interview, Barnstaple, 26.12.94

¹⁰⁴ Waivers and abatements were first described in a memo of 29.2.72, circular C48/1 from the Chief Executive.

¹⁰⁵ Tucker, 9.7.93., op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ Dabell, B. P., Chief Executive, CoSIRA, *Waivers and Abatements of Charges in Priority Areas*, internal memo ref. C5/77, 25.2.77.

¹⁰⁷ Tucker, 9.7.93, op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Evans, Peter, Interview, RDC, Salisbury, 24.2.95

¹⁰¹ CoSIRA did not become involved in this, so does not have a place in the history. I being retired of course did have a lot to do with the early days of BABA and became the only Honorary Life Member in 1984 when David Petersen was Chairman. A fine certificate will always occupy a place of pride on my wall." Tucker, Tommy. Letter. 26.3.95.

¹⁰² Anon, CoSIRA at Cannington. *British Blacksmith* No. 23 April 1983, p.8.

¹⁰³ For much of the time he attended, Chairman of the Conservative Party an MP and Chairman of Lonrho plc.

¹⁰⁴ Tom King and more recently, David Nicholson.

¹⁰⁵ Sir Edward Du Cann often told his favourite Winston Churchill story - it may be speculated - to add a little gravitas and humour to the occasions - it was always politely received!

¹⁰⁶ Anon, *British Blacksmith* No. 23, April 1983, p.14.

¹⁰⁷ Dept. of Industry, Small Firms Service and CoSIRA joint report. *Report on the joint management of the advisory services of the small firms service and the council for Small firms in Rural Areas from 1st October 1981 to September 1982*. Section 1. 1982 (RDC internal memo files)

¹⁰⁸ CoSIRA Report, 1981-82, HMSO. p.15.

¹⁰⁹ Tucker, 9.7.93, op. cit.

¹¹⁰ CoSIRA Report, 1984-85, HMSO, P.3.

¹¹¹ Tucker, 9.7.93., op. cit.

¹¹² Tucker, 10.3.95, op. cit.

¹¹³ CoSIRA Report 1987-88, HMSO, p.29.

¹¹⁴ Davies, Richard (COTAC). They don't make them like they used to. *The Lecturer*, Feb. 1995, p.7

¹¹⁵ Allen, Paul. Forgework Advisor, Interview, RDC, Salisbury, 28.5.93.

¹¹⁶ In the first instance the Lead Industry Body (LIB) was the National Joint Apprenticeship Council for the Farriery, Blacksmiths and Agricultural Engineering Trades, headed up by NAFBAE. This group was to draw up, in consultation with relevant people, titles, units and elements of competence for blacksmithing. A draft set of standards was set up and members of various trade organisations and interested bodies were invited to sit on a committee to evaluate what had been produced.

¹¹⁷ Also a member of other organisations - WCB, NAFBAE, Wessex Guild.

¹¹⁸ A final draft proposal was developed for NVQ level three blacksmithing in June of 1992. This was sent out with a covering letter to interested parties for comment. The plan at that stage was to pilot in September 1993 after the official launch in 1992. Funds ran out and the Employment department insisted that a revised mapping exercise was carried out by what they described as an independent firm of consultants Pointing Consultancy services Ltd. were appointed to research the issue. The Pointing Functional and Occupational mapping report was funded largely by the RDC and is discussed in section 3.3.1. of this report. Something odd or unusual was clearly happening, and a note put at the bottom of a memo detailing what should be published in craft publications only served to highlight this.

Note. "I don't think we should go into more detail re. problems etc. The general public will not understand the ethics of the ED and the NCVQ which could result in total confusion". COSB internal memo, sent prior to the release of the statement. Undated.

¹¹⁹ The Crafts Occupational Standards Board (COSB) which gathered information on the crafts for input into the process of developing NVQs was wholly funded by the RDC between 1991 and 1995. The 1993 Corporate Plan comments upon this provision. "In 1992 the Commission provided some core funding for the Craft Occupational Standards Board (COSB) Further core-funding will be provided in 1993/94 but funding for future years will depend on the award of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) accreditation during the year." *RDC Corporate Plan 1993*, section 4.31, p.50.

▣ Sections 126 and 127 of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union.

▣ 7.8.95

▣ Allen, Paul. RDC. Phone conversation 24.4.95

▣ *Catalogue of Drawings for Wrought Ironwork*. RDC, Salisbury. p.33.

▣ Photo Feature. *British Blacksmith* No. 12, June 1981, p.11.

▣ Evans, Peter, Interview, RDC, Salisbury, 9.5.94

▣ Ibid.

▣ Ibid.

▣ Evans, Peter and Allen, Paul, Interview, RDC, Salisbury, 24.2.95

▣ "Danger bells were ringing when we learnt of the running down of Harrogate, can you imagine the joy I once had of taking two of my lads up north by car to meet with other smiths, where together in the Yorkshire Showground CoSIRA Workshops, a supremely talented 'northern' smith taught us the merits of making maximum use of the power hammer. Yes, even I, as Forgemaster had something to learn; alas, that has gone forever. A part of the life and soul of rural Britain has vanished. Nothing can replace the quality, the priceless experience..." Townsend, David F. Vice Chairman and Education and Training Officer of BABA. Letter to Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, 5th January 1995. Mr. Townsend is also Forgemaster of Capricorn Architectural Ironwork Ltd., Hammersmith, and Village Blacksmith of Haddiscoe, Norfolk. and so has experience of both rural and urban practice as a blacksmith and forgemaster.

▣ Plans which were made to improve the training and advisory services some two years earlier had been put on hold pending the publication of the Training review Report - this had meant that much needed developments had been "... stifled for around two and a half years." Evans, Peter. Interview, RDC, Salisbury, 9.5.94.

▣ Robert Atkins MP, Minister for the Environment and Countryside, Dept. of the Environment. Letter to Richard Ryder MP; Sir Paul Beresford, Office of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Dept. of the Environment. Letter to Matthew Carrington MP; Nick Jenkins, Rural Development Division, Dept. of the Environment to Chris Topp, Hon. Sec. BABA dated 10 January 1995 and to David Townsend, Vice Chairman & Education & Training Officer, BABA, dated 19th January 1995.

▣ In July 1995 combined with the Education Department.

▣ Allen, Paul, RDC, telephone conversation 24.4.95.

▣ It is still largely a rural industry, and there are in excess of 3000 'wrought ironwork' businesses in England alone - BABA have stated that their 400 or so members employ close to 2000 people. Approx. 3000 sets of information are held in a personal archive (D. J. Hawkins) - there are likely to be more businesses than this, and many of them employ three to five individuals.

3. Institutional Influences.

The effect upon the blacksmith's practice of the organisations discussed in this section has been profound. The guilds and associations represent the views and traditions of the smith, whilst the Crafts Council and the V&A are representative of a wider tradition of craft and industrial applied arts. They have all been important in shaping the transition from traditional working.

3.1. Associations and Guilds

Blacksmiths' organisations prior to the development of BABA had been concerned overwhelmingly with commercial, employment and trade issues. These guilds, livery companies, trade unions and associations presided over the decline of blacksmithing, and failed to recognise the opportunities presented by a culturally aware, designer-maker approach to work. The recent development of the artist blacksmith, with which this study is concerned, has been linked closely to BABA.

Although in the last two hundred or so years rural smiths have had a degree of independence often denied to their urban colleagues by market conditions, and a variety of work, including farriery, general smithing, and decorative work, they were being pressured financially, by the farmers. This situation had worsened gradually between the Reformation and the end of the 19th-century. Farmers were becoming an organised and powerful lobby group towards the end of the 19th-

century, so the most effective way for the blacksmiths to retain independence and influence was in turn to organise themselves. As a result the National Master Farriers Blacksmiths and Agricultural Engineers Association was formed in 1905 to promote, develop and protect their interests on a national basis. Although there had been local groups for a number of years, a national organisation was required in order to lobby effectively. One of the most important things which the 'Farriers' Association'¹ was able to achieve was the informal setting and updating of norms for pricing.² NAFBAE was instrumental in the development, and is largely responsible through its membership of the Farriery Registration Council, for the policing of the Farriery Registration Act 1975.³

Although blacksmiths have been important members of multi-craft guilds and associations such as the Devon Guild of Craftsmen,⁴ the Society of Designer Craftsmen and the Art Workers Guild, it is the specialist blacksmiths' organisations which have been most important and influential, particularly in conjunction with bodies such as the Crafts Council and the Rural Development Commission. Since its formation in 1978, by far the most important and progressive organisation has been the British Artist Blacksmiths Association (BABA). Previously, the National Association of Farriers, Blacksmiths and Agricultural Engineers had addressed the needs of a group largely composed of general blacksmiths and farriers for over seventy years. NAFBAE currently has approximately the same number of blacksmith members as BABA, but about four times the membership in total⁵, the

majority of whom are farriers, with a smaller number of fabricators, structural steel workers and agricultural engineers. Many smiths are members of a number of organisations, but there is the largest overlap between BABA and NAFBAE in numerical terms. There are a number of other Guilds and Associations such as the Wessex Guild, Welsh Guild, and the Northern Guild of Professional Blacksmiths reflecting mainly regional interests.

NAFBAE had treated blacksmithing as a trade and, particularly, a rural industry, and had made attempts to promote it over the years as such. It was an approach that had failed to bring about a revival, and as the new marketplace for the crafts was being increasingly dominated by craftspeople with art and design training, the need for a new approach became self-evident. It is in this context that BABA has proved to be the organisation best able to relate these aspirations to the highly regarded traditions of the craft and operate as an agent of change and a promoter of the blacksmith's work. A new tradition of selfconscious working allied to creativity, business awareness, and commercially appropriate use of blacksmithing skills has begun to form.

The two oldest organisations connected with blacksmithing are London Livery Companies;⁶ the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths and the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers. However, for the past couple of hundred years they have been little more than ceremonial institutions and City luncheon clubs and their stranglehold over the

trade is long gone. The Ironmongers have been active since the inception of BABA in promoting the work of smiths through the provision of funds and mounting a permanent exhibition⁷ of the work of BABA members at Ironmongers' Hall.

The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths (WCB) had developed by the 1970s into a City Club, which retained the structures and titles of previous times.⁸ Since the 1980s in particular, prompted by the Clerk Raymond Jordan, they have taken a more active role by becoming involved in awards, committees and bodies relevant to blacksmithing. The involvement has been largely positive, but they have almost always promoted traditional modes of practice and skills, and ignored art, design and business. In taking this approach they have failed sufficiently to acknowledge and promote the work of artist blacksmiths,⁹ who represent the best potential for the continuity of the craft skills for which they have been lobbying.¹⁰

In 1951 the Architectural Metal Craftsmen's Association¹¹ was formed:

To act as the official channel of communication between the Industry and the Government, public authorities and Trade Associations in matters of commercial and economic policy, and to promote good relations between members and their clients.¹²

Membership of this Association included a number of the large firms of the pre-war and immediate post-war era such as Listers, Comyn Ching and Starkie Gardners.¹³ There was some expansion in the years between 1951 and 1962 and some extra members¹⁴ were noted in

the brochure from the later year,¹⁵ but there is little to show it was able to make significant progress towards its objectives.

Frank Day, at the time a forgework advisor with CoSIRA, instigated the Guild of Wrought Ironwork Craftsmen of Wessex in order to link a group of mainly rural smiths to undertake a large commission for an American client on a cooperative basis during 1968 and 1969.¹⁶ The Guild continues to have strong support today but is involved in a variety of other areas, including exhibiting at craft shows¹⁷ and agricultural shows as a group; running forgework courses at weekends at Cannington Agricultural College; issuing certificates, awards and trophies, running competitions and being involved in representative activities such as on the Lead Body for the development of NVQs, the National Blacksmiths Competition Committee, and liaising with other blacksmithing organisations.

In the early days of the Wessex Guild there was a much greater emphasis upon entering competitions at agricultural shows, as

Courtenay Paul noted:

We've lost a lot of our members who were in a competitive mode, you know, through ill health, some others have lost interest, so we don't get the pieces around the shows ... Things have to be made so early. If somebody has made something for a customer, he can't just say, I've made it, now I'll show it. The work has to be entered for the show three months before - also at the shows it's getting in and out on the last day - you have to wait so long before they let you in to take it away again.¹⁸

The Wessex Guild membership is mainly from the South West of England but includes smiths from Hereford and Wales to the North

and West, and as far East as Watford. Most members are professional smiths, but as with BABA, important contributions are made by enthusiastic amateur members and interested parties, such as former Secretary of State for Defence and Bridgwater MP, Tom King and former Conservative Party Chairman Sir Edward Du Cann. Its key function is in providing a forum for the exchange of views and information of technical or business related kinds within the context of social and formal events.

As a group, the Wessex Guild members work overwhelmingly within the traditional mode, much work being direct copies or adaptations of pieces in the RDC catalogue or in 17th- and 18th-century styles - particularly repoussé-orientated work. This style or mode of working has been strongly influenced by training given by the RDC. There is no doubt that the making skills shown in annual exhibitions and at shows, etc. are of a high order, but there is little or no discussion of design or design approaches and philosophies as a group. The Frank Day Trophy produced as a cooperative effort by Guild members, coordinated and designed by Bob Hobbs, was a remarkably skilled caricature in metal, exhibiting almost photographic realism (figure 8). There is a very strong concern about traditional techniques and their use, which is very much the legacy of the concerns of the founder, Frank Day, although gradually more contemporary work is being undertaken.



Figure 6. The Frank Day Trophy, R. Hobbs, 1992, approx. 60cm high, mild steel, silver and brass, on a marble plinth.

Much of the best quality contemporary work has been designed and made by those who are, or have been, members of BABA.

Communication and the exchange of views through meetings, exhibitions, conferences, masterclasses and a wide variety of other activities such as collaborative working, have all contributed. BABA is unusual in that it isn't a 'Trade Association' as such, like NAFBAE, as it includes anyone who would like to be a member and does not permit the use of its name or logo for the promotion of individual businesses. It exists for the promotion of blacksmithing, not individual blacksmiths *per se*.

Whilst many people have contributed to its development over the years, Richard Quinnell and his late first wife Jinny were responsible for its foundation. (see Appendix Three for a full transcript of an interview with Richard Quinnell) Quinnell was managing the family blacksmithing business after studying Zoology at Cambridge, specialising in restoration and one-off work, essentially in 17th- and 18th-century styles. The work was going out of fashion in the 1970s and the business was in decline. He had become disillusioned and was thinking of giving up the business in 1975. In describing the background to the development of BABA, Quinnell noted:

One must appreciate that one's design horizons were rather limited by the CoSIRA design book and historic examples ... Out of the blue I got an invitation to go to the United States to a conference of the Artist Blacksmiths Association of North America (ABANA) - whom I'd never heard of, and I thought 'what are they talking about, Artist Blacksmiths? very 'high falutin'. I was really under the impression like a lot of people were at that time, that they were sort of the last one doing it the right way. One thing that I think CoSIRA can be censured for is that they very much kept people in isolation from

each other- to some extent I feel a kind of 'divide and rule' policy¹⁹

Quinnell received his invitation to the USA from Ivan Bailey, a student blacksmith, who had trained at Aachen in Germany with Fritz Ulrich. The Artist Blacksmiths Association of North America (ABANA) was founded in 1972. In 1974 they had invited Fritz Ulrich over to demonstrate, and he subsequently had died of the effects of Mercury gilding in his youth. Bailey was then looking around for another 'European Master', and obtained Quinnell's name from somewhere.²⁰ He was met by Alex Bealer, who was the co-founder of the revival in North America, having written a book about the 'ancient dying craft of blacksmithing' which was picked up by Brent Kington a Professor of Silversmithing at Carbondale, who asked if he could introduce some of his students to some of the 'dying old blacksmiths' and it developed into an association. Quinnell attended a meeting of approximately 100 people, at Greenville:

I was absolutely amazed because... in a typical American way, they weren't going to accept that there were any rules about design and they had broken all the barriers... there were young people doing amazing things with two inch round bar... I'd never seen anything like it, I saw my first Albert Paley piece illustrated, though I didn't meet Albert until the next year, and I suddenly realised that there was something to it, that there was a future, and that it could be very exciting.²¹

The next year Quinnell returned to the USA with his wife Jinny, to Carbondale in Illinois, which is often referred to as the 'Woodstock of American blacksmithing', a magical occasion, where 500 people gathered. There was an exhibition featuring some large pieces by

Albert Paley and a positive, energetic atmosphere:

On the plane home Jinny said 'you know its got to work in the UK, we've got to do something about it'.

So that is late 1976, and I have to say, I didn't really do anything about it, although she kept nagging at me to do something.²²

In 1978 he applied for a Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship²³ for six weeks in the USA and six weeks in Europe, and was given two weeks in Europe.²⁴ At the same time he was in contact with the Crafts Council. He had had some contact with the CAC previously because he knew Sandy McKilligin, a furniture maker, and Faith Shannon, a book binder, who were very active in it, but hadn't previously had close contact himself.

Around 1978, the Crafts Council began to form the notion, in particular as a result of the comments of Ivan Smith, that ironwork was something of a neglected area of the crafts. Following an international conference for glass that had gone a long way towards revitalising hot glass work in the UK, they thought they would try to do the same for ironwork and blacksmiths. As part of this development they contacted Quinnell, he thinks because of his American connections. Caroline Pearce-Higgins, the Crafts Council's Education Officer, obtained funding from the British Council and the Crafts Council and went with Quinnell on his Winston Churchill trip to visit European blacksmiths. Pearce-Higgins was given the names of a number of friends in Europe by Giuseppe Lund, who had been making contacts during the 1970s, and had already been working

hard to persuade them to take part in the V & A exhibition he was organising:

When Richard Quinnell travelled with Caroline Pearce-Higgins (Crafts Council) around Europe on a Churchill Foundation many of the people they visited were friends of mine - I had even recommended them to Caroline - and I found Quinnell's subsequent attitude to the style of work in Europe far too disparaging.²⁵ I had worked hard to gain promises of work from these people for the V & A (they were not interested in exhibiting in England because they thought that the public and professionals would not have much interest in metalwork which was not reproductive in style) and I was worried that British blacksmiths might get the wrong attitude from Quinnell. However, the Crafts Council were far more global in their thinking and two international conferences helped to sow fresh seeds in Britain. I have been very surprised to see Quinnell described as a strong influence in the revival of blacksmithing. I think he did everyone a great service in founding BABA but I believe that much of what developed after that was despite him not thanks to him. But dialectic cannot lead to a synthesis without a protagonist so who am I to say what the true influences were.²⁶

The Crafts Council saw the trip with Quinnell as a good opportunity for Pearce-Higgins to do research for the forthcoming conference.

Simultaneously, Quinnell had been contacting blacksmiths in the UK through CoSIRA. Tommy Tucker provided him with a list and 50 blacksmiths were contacted to find out if they would be interested in joining an association. Quinnell described the proposed meeting as a Forge-in:²⁷

It was something like September 10th 1978 and it was a wonderful sunny weekend and 30 people came, I think hardly anybody knew anybody else, and by the end of the weekend we were all fast friends and we had an association. We had got a rough constitution, we had got a steering committee and it was absolutely super, and it went on from there, we started publishing a newsletter immediately, Stuart Hill started publishing it almost straight away and the result you know.²⁸

The purpose of the association is to promote the highest standards of craftsmanship, design and commercial practice, among Artist Blacksmiths in Great Britain. The constitution included a number of supporting aims relating to communication, increasing awareness, promotion and representation.²⁹ Various categories of membership were introduced, but perhaps the most significant difference from other bodies is the encouragement of anyone interested or supportive of the aims of the association to join, therefore not restricting membership to professional members. When writing about the early development of BABA, Alan Dawson recalled:

I was working in isolation in a collapsing cow shed, thinking that I was the only decorative blacksmith in the World when, in 1978, I heard through CoSIRA that a Mr. Richard Quinnell was organising a gathering of blacksmiths. Scraping enough pennies together I managed to attend this inaugural meeting, which was soon to become the British Artist Blacksmiths Association, and my life changed.³⁰

There was no formal link between CoSIRA and the beginning of BABA; Tommy Tucker had retired at that stage:

Somebody here had poured cold water on the whole darned thing, it was Bill Trust ... he sent a letter to Dick Quinnell ... it really went on to say that this sort of thing had been considered before ... but we could have had a major influence.³¹

Dick Quinnell had written to Bill Trust at CoSIRA to say that he would be grateful for his views, as he was aware of developments in other parts of Europe, which allied to the formation of the Crafts Council meant that the time was right to form a new blacksmiths' organisation. Quinnell had seen the success of ABANA in the USA and was convinced that an association could work in the UK. Tucker was

on the Caretaker Committee, and as the majority of BABA members had been clients of CoSIRA at one time or another, there was a degree of influence despite the official rebuff.

Tucker noted that much of the early contemporary work by BABA members was of poor quality, but has developed since:

... by leaps and bounds... You see there was the rift in BABA - BABA was very rocky for a long time, there was very much 'us' and 'them' ... the Crafts Council rather over did their thing and anybody that was a traditionalist was nobody - and if you weren't making some contemporary monstrosity, you weren't the cat's whiskers.³²

Quinnell, whilst acknowledging that there were some teething problems, holds the view that the modernists weren't particularly hostile to the traditionalists, but the traditionalists had been hostile to the modernists. The traditionalists were feeling threatened by the changes, and became defensive of their practices. Quinnell recognises that amongst the modernists there are those who wish to make forms, and don't really mind how those forms are achieved, as long as the piece is durable, the form is right and it functions as intended. At the other extreme there are people who are dedicated to what they perceive as correct technique, or the basic techniques of blacksmithing:³³

For instance, you always punch a hole, you don't drill it, you always forge weld if you can, you don't arc weld, you probably use sledge hammers rather than a power hammer ... generally you do things the way it has always been done. So I suppose that because of particular conditions in this country it has got muddled up with the idea that the particular style that came into this country in the late 17th century is the 'correct' style. ... I think, really, that as people see that this (new) work is really appropriate to where it's going we begin to understand ... if people aren't threatened by anything they are free to expand

their horizons.³⁴

The first few years of BABA's development³⁵ saw some important events which were to shape the organisation and, to an extent, the practice of blacksmithing in the UK. In 1979 BABA took a stand at the Royal Show, where the work of thirty members was well received. Later in the year the first national conference was held at Ron Trapp's forge over a weekend, the Association was formalised and Alan Knight elected as the first Chairman.

1980 saw the important Hereford conference, *Forging Iron*, which was influential for many present and which served to strengthen BABA. As a result of improved communication with European smiths some BABA members began to enter competitions and exhibitions in other countries. In 1980 Stuart Hill entered his *Frog Metamorphosis* table and won the major prize at the Lindau exhibition in southern Germany. This table was bought subsequently for the permanent collection of the V&A. Tony Robinson's Resurrection sculpture (see figure 7)³⁶ was purchased from the 1987 Friedrichshafen³⁷ exhibition and is sited on the shore of the Bodensee.

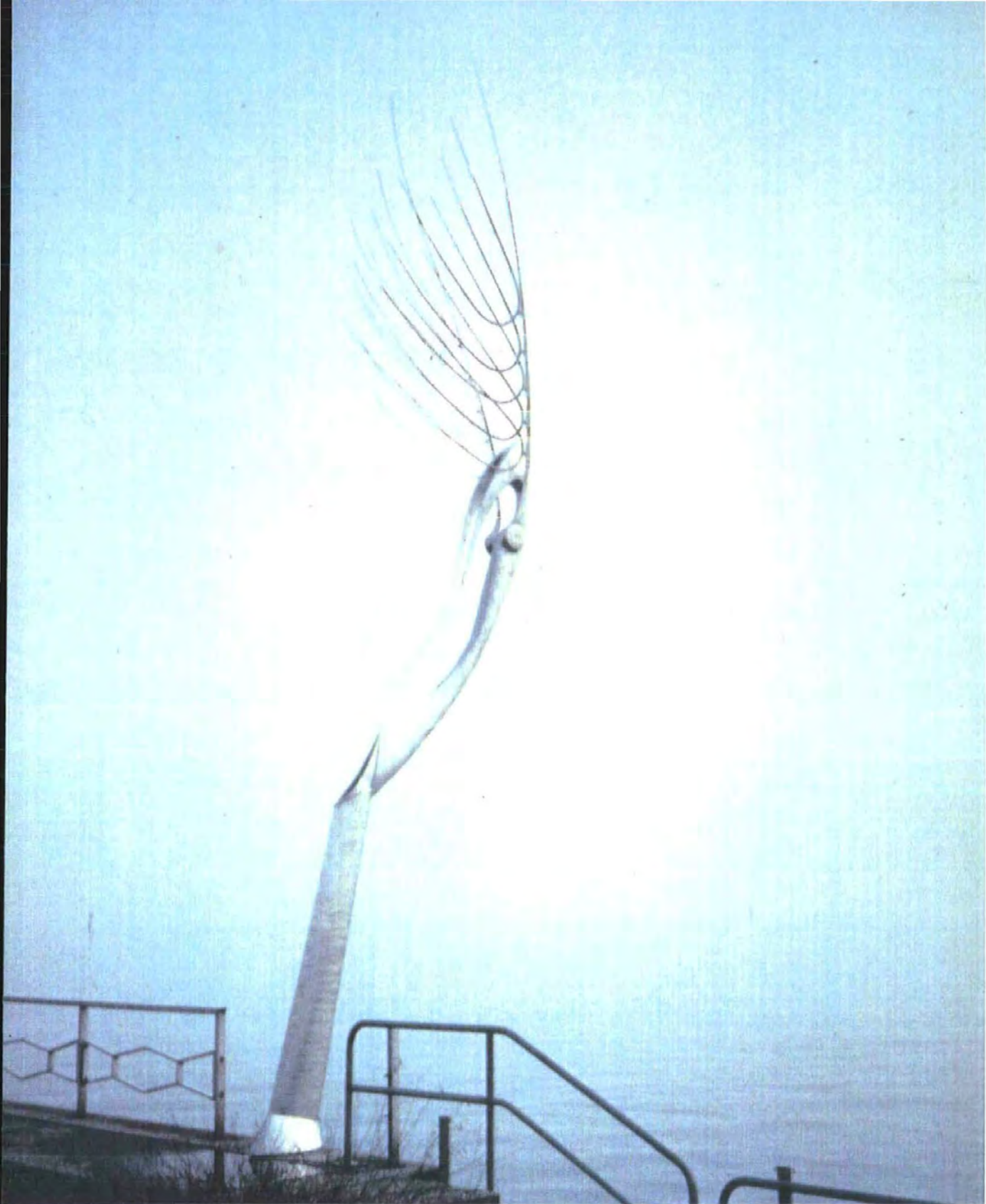


Figure 7. Resurrection, Antony Robinson. Friedrichshafen, Germany, 1986, stainless steel, approx. 8m tall.

BABA has published its magazine, *British Blacksmith*, on a quarterly basis since its formation. This has been an important source of information about other smiths, issues, and events. It represents the most complete record of blacksmiths' work and events both in the UK and abroad since 1979. It is characterised by an openness about methods of working and techniques alongside good quality illustrations and photographs of work. The *Anvil's Ring*, the ABANA equivalent, is also read by many British blacksmiths and operates a reciprocal information exchange with *British Blacksmith*. In 1991, when it was first published, *Hephaistos* the German language blacksmiths' magazine also began to be an important source of information and debate.

Blacksmithing organisations went a stage further in 1995 and 1996 and put information, including portfolios of work and English language translations of *Hephaistos*, on the Internet as part of a Web Site known as the *ArtMetal Project* based at a server in Washington State University in the USA. This is a continuation of the very strong tradition of international communication between blacksmiths that has developed in the last twenty years.

The 1981 BABA AGM and conference was held at Sheffield Polytechnic, with Hermann Gradinger of Mainz in Germany, who demonstrated the use of a Reiter/Kühn air hammer. The *New Directions in Design* forum at the conference dealt in particular with the contemporary/traditional issue and as Dawson has noted:

The argument still remains but is tempered these days by a much greater understanding and consideration of the role of blacksmithing in the latter part of the twentieth century.³⁸

In 1982 the exhibition *Towards a New Iron Age*, the first³⁹ international exhibition of ironwork in the UK, took place at the V&A.⁴⁰ Work was exhibited from Eastern and Western Europe, Japan, the USA and the UK. In the same year a travelling exhibition entitled *Six British Blacksmiths*⁴¹ was organised by the Minorities of Colchester and the British Crafts Centre. In 1982 two BABA members, James Horrobin and Alan Evans, won limited competitions to design and make gates for the Ironwork Gallery of the V&A and the Crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral respectively. In the same year the first specialist ironwork gallery, *Fire and Iron*, was opened by Richard and Jinny Quinnell adjacent to their Rowhurst Forge workshops. The BABA AGM was held at the West Surrey College of Art and Design at Farnham, with Paul Zimmerman as the guest demonstrator.

The success of the early events was to be sustained throughout the 1980s. 1983 saw an exhibition of the work of some Northern Blacksmiths organised by Brian Rourke in collaboration with the Mid Pennine Arts Association. In that year there was the first concrete evidence of an interest in the work of BABA by the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths, when they presented the Addy Taylor Cup for work in the exhibition. Two years later Jinny Quinnell set up the first permanent exhibition of BABA members' work in the foyer of the Ironmonger's Hall. The 1983 AGM was held at Farnham, with Vaclav

Jaros and Alfred Habermann of Czechoslovakia as guest demonstrators and the opportunity to view Antony Robinson's gates in the Great Hall of Winchester Castle for the first time. The 1984 conference was also at Farnham, with Jan Dudesek as demonstrator. Dudesek was the maker of a set of fire irons mounted upon a stone base and exhibited in the *Towards a New Iron Age* exhibition. These are on show in the Fire and Iron Gallery on a permanent basis (figure 8) and have been described by Alan Dawson as, "One of the finest pieces of ironwork I know."⁴²

The 1985 conference was held at Ironbridge and the 1986 event at the Great Yorkshire Showground at Harrogate. Twenty eight BABA members travelled to Manfred Bredohl's *First International Congress* in Aachen, Germany, also in 1986.

Perhaps realising that they had been remiss in not supporting the initial work of BABA, CoSIRA did support the formation of the Northern Guild of Professional Blacksmiths in 1986, providing administrative support. It was seen as complementary to BABA and emulating the work of the Wessex Guild. It is likely that CoSIRA felt able to support an association of this type given their necessary bias towards the promotion of economic activity. The minutes of the inaugural meeting of this guild were published in the BABA magazine,⁴³ *British Blacksmith*, and most of those who agreed to form an association were members of BABA, so other than to provide a specific Northern focus there was bound to be a duplication of effort.⁴⁴



Figure 8. Set of fire irons by Jan Dudesek, each forged from a single piece of steel. Photographed at the *Fire and Iron* Gallery, 1995.

The 1987 BABA Conference and AGM were once more held at Hereford, the theme being a review and reappraisal of developments in the years since the 1980 International Conference. Many of the participants in the earlier event were present and giving demonstrations. The conference included an exhibition, part of which was a *Light Wall*⁴⁵ consisting of a large number of approximately 400mm square back-lit transparencies.⁴⁶ The *Light Wall* featured the work of members and after being exhibited at Hereford was transferred to the London Building Centre. This work was much less traditional in style than that exhibited in the 1960s at the Building Centre when CoSIRA were the organising promotional events of a similar kind, but had a similar beneficial effect in terms of orders.

The first Scottish Forge-in was organised by Phil and Maureen Johnson at Ratho Byres in 1987 and marked the first of the major joint forging projects that were to become such an important part of BABA events in later years. A gate was made for Edinburgh Zoo featuring animal forms within circular bands, a little reminiscent of earlier work by Fritz Kühn. The 1988 AGM was also held at the Johnson's and included a visit to the recently completed Princes Square work by Alan Dawson and Company. In September of the same year Jinny Quinnell died, which was a cause of some sadness amongst the members of BABA in particular.

The *First International Festival of Iron* (FIFI) was held at Cardiff between the 27th of August and the 2nd of September 1989. It was

the largest and most ambitious BABA conference to date, with a large number of exhibitions, demonstrations and other events in various locations throughout Cardiff. David Petersen was the driving force behind FIFI and set up a separate limited company to manage the event and avoid the need for liability on behalf of BABA. Although FIFI was thought to be a marvellous event by all those who participated, it made some financial losses. It took some time to wind up the financial affairs of FIFI and it was decided that holding an exhibition and sale at Sotheby's would be an appropriate way of clearing any outstanding debts and providing funds for the development of new initiatives. The Sotheby's event, organised by Alan Dawson, achieved these objectives, but was not repeated in the following five years. (figures 9,10,11)

In addition to conferences and forge-ins, BABA has conducted a number of seminars on relevant subjects, including design and specific making techniques.⁴⁷

At Easter in 1991 the first BABA forge-in in another country was held, at Letterkenny in the Republic of Ireland, organised by Joe Bonnar. Although BABA is essentially a British organisation, many of the members are from other countries. This international involvement and the resultant communication and exchange has been essential in shaping the character of the organisation. With its strong links with both individuals and organisations abroad BABA members form part of a world-wide community of blacksmiths. Work from BABA

members has influenced work in other countries as well as the converse, but it hasn't resulted in a single 'international style'. There are some tendencies, such as the interest in pattern-welding⁴⁸ and the importance of individual expression in the USA,⁴⁹ and the extensive use of hammered surface texture in German work,⁵⁰ but there is such a diversity of styles and methods in many countries that it is more appropriate to look at developments in the work of individuals, than for national styles.

In 1992 a major forge-in was held at Alford in East Anglia, it involved the manufacture of a large screen, later sited in the town hall grounds, which involved smiths making decorative elements based upon the character of the locale. An exhibition was held in parallel with a craft fair and a visit to the huge steelworks at Frodingham near Scunthorpe. This event was typical in that it included public forging, an exhibition, educational events, social events and the completion of a large co-operative forging project.

The 1992 AGM and conference was held at Gressenhall Museum of Rural Life in Norfolk. A very large pair of gates (figure 12) was constructed for the museum, and exhibitions and demonstrations by international guests such as Wilhelm Jonkers of the Netherlands, Matthias Peters of Germany, and a group of smiths from Estonia, with whom BABA has enjoyed strong links since the break-up of the Soviet Union, were held. This event formed part of the European Arts Festival of that year, coinciding with Britain's EU Presidential term.

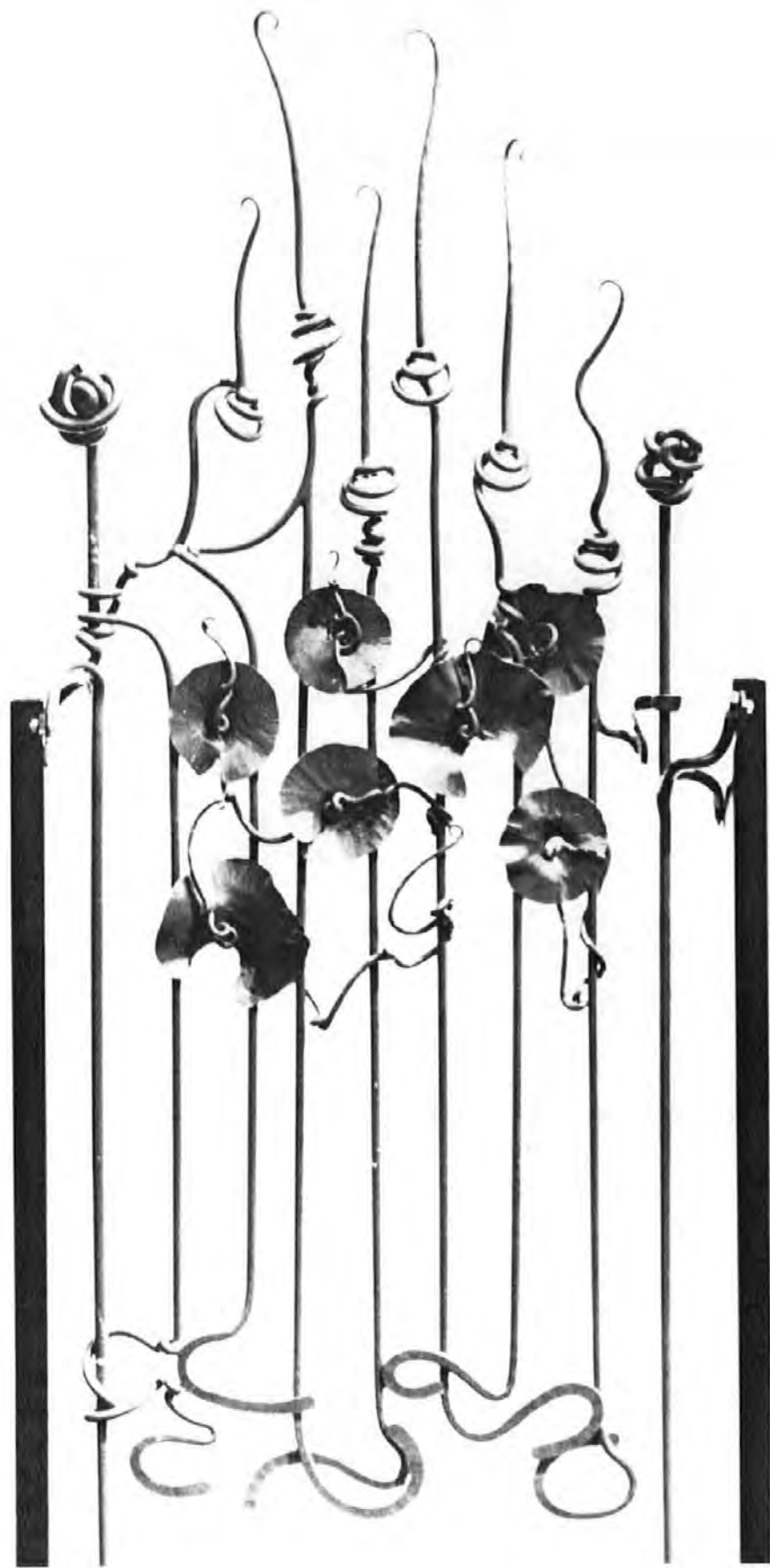


Figure 9. Work by Alan Dawson auctioned at Sotheby's, 1990. mild steel, approx. 1.4m tall.



Figure 10. Gate by Melvin Pinnock, auctioned at Sotheby's, 1990, mild steel, approx. 1.5m tall.



Figure 11. Vessels by Paul Gulati for the Sotheby's auction, 1990, mild steel, approx. 0.8m tall.



Figure 12. Gates made over a weekend at the Gressenhall International Blacksmith's Conference, 1992, mild steel, approx. 4m wide.

An event was held at the Yorkshire Show Ground in 1993, where a pair of gates was made for the entrance to the flower hall, in an appropriately floral style. In reporting the Harrogate event, John Hill noted that attending forge-ins can be expensive and time-consuming, and so the efforts that blacksmiths make voluntarily to produce large pieces of work over a weekend are especially remarkable. The 1993 AGM was held at West Surrey College of Art and Design in Farnham where Mike Roberts demonstrated and discussed techniques for use with the non-ferrous materials with which he has had extensive experience.

The 1994 AGM and conference was held at Ironbridge and had the selection event for the *Fe* exhibition. Some railings were made for the Gorge Museum using wrought iron rolled in the restored ironworks, and talks and demonstrations were given by Tom Joyce and David Norrie, amongst others. *Fe* is still touring during 1996 to a variety of locations.⁵¹ This exhibition is unusual in that it was based upon a brief to look at iron through the senses. At each venue visited by the exhibition, a section of a 7.5 metre high sculpture *The Blacksmiths' Needle* is to be constructed, until the structure is sited on Newcastle Quayside during September of 1996. The *Fe* exhibition was visited by 220 000 members of the public at the first five gallery locations in 1995.⁵² In 1973 an attendance of 26 000 was thought impressive for *The Craftsman's Art* exhibition at the V&A.

Also in 1994 a forge-in was held at Sunderland with subsequent work

at Brian Russell's and the Lunn brothers' forges, to make a set of gates for a public park in Sunderland. These gates were perhaps aesthetically the most satisfying of the cooperative projects made at forge-ins to date. (figure 13)

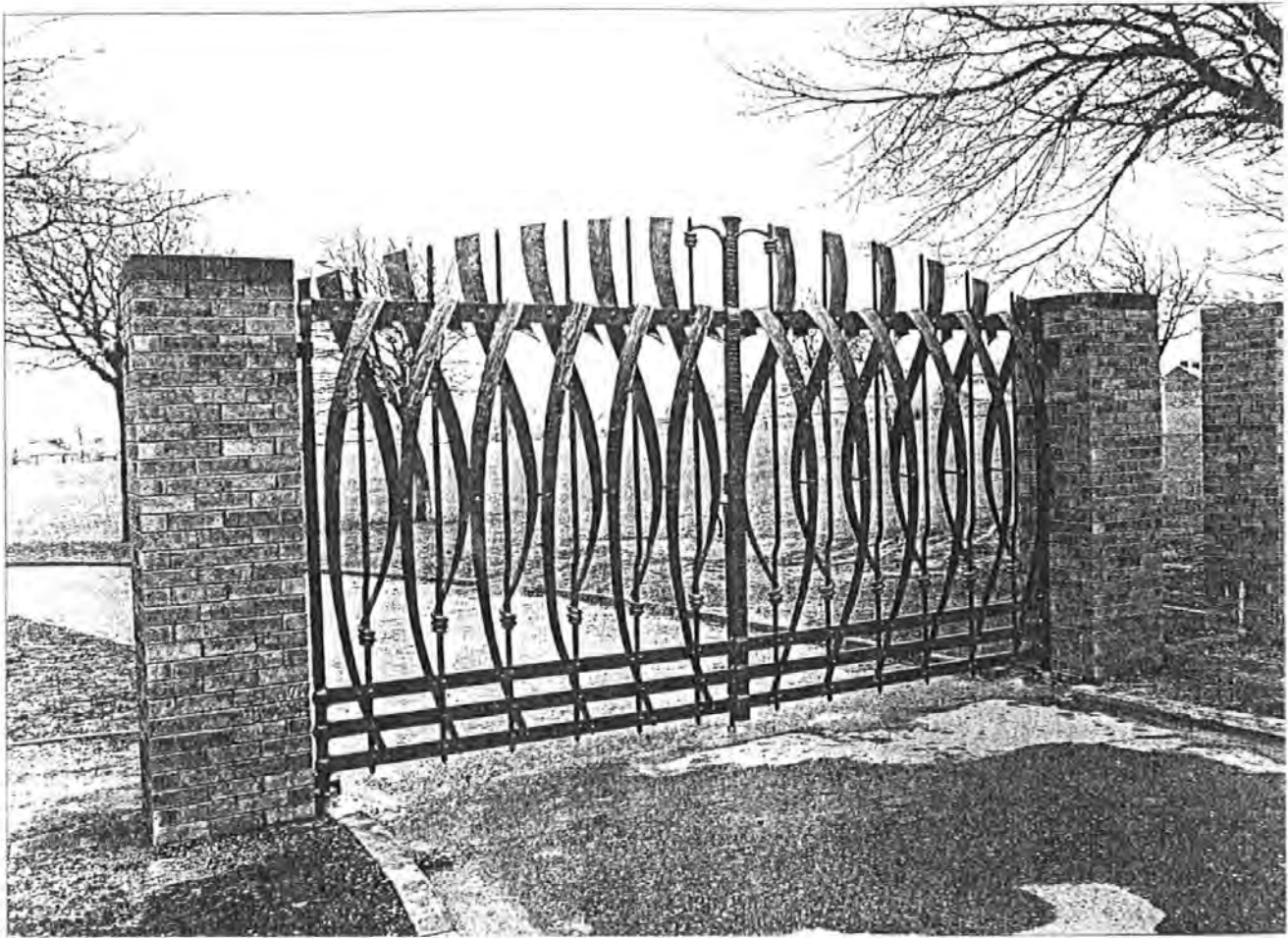


Figure 13. Thompson Park Gates, Sunderland. A BABA weekend forge-in project, 1993.

Although the membership of BABA has increased only slightly in the last ten years or so, the level of activity has increased. There is an improved understanding and interest in the work of contemporary blacksmiths amongst the general public and art and design professionals - at a level which would have been difficult to predict in the early days of the operation of BABA. In respect of achieving a wider recognition of the work of contemporary blacksmiths BABA has been very successful.

As a result of investigating the working lives of a variety of craftspeople, Ranson identified typical phases in their careers, including "... initial enthusiasm, critical involvement, commercial realism, and mature reconciliation."⁵³ As a great many of the members of BABA started their careers as artist blacksmiths in the modern mode at its inception, it is possible to detect something of a similar pattern in its development. Initial enthusiasm was essential and commercial realism had to accompany it to ensure the financial viability of businesses. Critical involvement has been lacking until relatively recently, making the process of the mature reconciliation of practice a little slow to achieve. There is no doubt that the commercial climate is such that business is likely to increase in the foreseeable future, however, the definition and retention of a cultural identity and importance in line with the aspirations of members of BABA will require mature reflection and comment upon critical factors. There is a danger that without this, the activities of BABA, and artist blacksmiths generally, will be regarded as fashionable or 'of this time'

only, and as a consequence decline in due course.

To summarise, BABA has been the organisation which has had the most important impact upon the development of the artist blacksmith since the 1970s. It has achieved this influence through cooperation and communication with others, and because external factors combined to render its activities timely. Sections 3.2 and 3.3. discuss the two organisations which have had the most important influence upon the work of BABA, and through them, upon the development of the artist blacksmith.

'The short title used by most of its members until the acronym NAFBAE came to be used.

'This meant that a farmer couldn't threaten to go to a cheaper smith elsewhere as they were all charging around the same amount. Later, in the 1980s, the name was reduced in length to the National Association of Farriers, Blacksmiths and Agricultural Engineers (NAFBAE) at around the time its HQ moved from Yorkshire to the National Agricultural Centre at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire.

'This Act was extremely important in that it ended casual or amateur farriery. Because of the cost and effort of maintaining registration and the penalties for infringing legal requirements this legislation was effective in protecting the farrierery trade but it also deterred the general blacksmith in rural areas from being quite as general as they had been in the past. It wasn't quite the end of the village general blacksmith, but it was the beginning of increased specialisation in rural blacksmithing - something which had begun with the urban smiths some two hundred years earlier.

'Neil Hawkins is one of the founder members of the Devon Guild. Jim Horrobin is the only other blacksmith member at present.

'Numbers vary from time to time but are close to 2000 at present.

'Livery Companies and their equivalents in other towns and cities used, during the Middle Ages, to control entry to trades and the standards of work, imposing fines for sub-standard work and granting the freedom to trade in a particular place. By the end of the 17th century the grip of the Guilds was severely weakened. Urban smiths largely lost their independence and protection some two hundred years ago, whereas the rural smith has maintained a degree of independence to the present day, despite being heavily dependent upon agriculture. Tuckett, Angela. *The Blacksmiths' History - what smithy workers gave trade unionism*. Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., Swindon, 1974, p.27.

'The work itself varies from time to time, but the exhibition itself has been continuous.

'It has an 'apprenticeship scheme' where, after a number of years, and/or by paying a certain amount of money one could become a Liveryman and gain the *Freedom* to trade within the City of London as blacksmith. Unlike in mediaeval times this *Freedom* is no longer a legal requirement and went with certain ancient, if impractical rights, relating to sheep and London's bridges and so on.

'They have presented a large number of awards and medals to artist blacksmiths, for example, Giuseppe Lund, but haven't been consistent in promoting the work and working methods of those they have rewarded. When asked to describe the best work they invariably describe work of either ancient origin or in the styles of earlier times, notably the 17th and 18th centuries.

'There are a variety of reactions to the efforts they have made in the last ten years or so, as Legge noted, the WCB were: "On the whole, good. There are mistakes made, the Worshipful Company for example, is basically a diners' club with the majority of the members, although there are more and more blacksmiths getting involved. I think Ray Jordan has done a fantastic job to be honest, since he has been Clerk of the Company, because he has been a driving force to actually get the Worshipful Company more involved in smithing again, against quite a lot of resistance from the trade, funnily enough, because the Worshipful Company did themselves no favours in the previous twenty five years." Legge, Adrian. Interview, Ironbridge 5.8.94.

" 2 Caxton St., London SW1.

" Brochures kept in the Library of the Rural Development Commission, Salisbury, of 1951 and 1962.

▪ In 1951 the membership was: Best and Lloyd, Birmingham; Bigwood Bros., Birmingham; Birmingham Guild Ltd.; Carlton Metal Moulding Co. Ltd., Battersea; Craftmetals Ltd., Birmingham; Falcon Forge, Surrey; Frome Metal Workers Guild Ltd.; Gardiner and Sons Ltd., Bristol; T. A. Harrington and Sons Ltd., Middlesex; Chas. Henshaw and Sons., Edinburgh; Hurst Franklin and Co. Ltd., London; Hyders Ltd., Sevenoaks, Kent; Johnson Bros. Ltd., London; Lister and Sons, Cambridge; Luco Art Metal Co. Ltd., London; Morris Singer Co. Ltd., Walthamstow; Parnall and Co. Ltd., London; J. R. Pearson, Birmingham; J. Starkie Gardner Ltd., Southfields, London; Wainwright and Waring Ltd., London.

▪ Blunt and Wray, London; Comyn Ching and Co. (London) Ltd.; Culford Art Metal Co., London; Grundy Arnott Ltd., Middlesex; Hill and Smith Ltd., Staffordshire; H. H. Martyn & Co. Ltd., Cheltenham; Woodrow Metals Ltd., Plymouth; George Wragge Ltd., Manchester.

▪ It hasn't been possible to find any reference to them after that date or to any achievements which related to their stated objectives.

▪ See section 2 for details.

▪ The Guild made £4000 during the 1993 craft show season, but it took a lot of effort to achieve that figure

▪ Paul, Courtenay. Interview, Cannington College, 7.11.93.

▪ Quinnell, Richard. Interview, Leatherhead, 31.8.95.

▪ "I don't think it was through the CAC, I'm pretty certain it wasn't. I don't know quite, and I've always said he got me out of Yellow Pages which is almost the case I think." Quinnell, op. cit.

▪ Ibid.

▪ Ibid.

▪ Other BABA members who have been awarded similar Winston Churchill Travelling fellowships include Mike Malleson and Neil Hawkins.

▪ At the time he thought this a little ungenerous, but realised that they knew he would go to the USA with or without their assistance. Quinnell, Richard. Interview, Leatherhead, 31.8.95.

▪ Dick Quinnell has denied that he was disparaging of European work.

▪ Lund, Giuseppe. email interview. 15.5.96. (G. Lund <metalgarden@enterprise.net>).

▪ Almost all of the meetings of BABA are now described as 'forge-ins' and involve a large amount of forge work, often towards the completion of a large project over a weekend.

▪ Quinnell, op. cit.

▪ To provide means of communication between artist blacksmiths and those interested in their Craft and Trade; for the exchange of ideas, experience, and information of mutual benefit, in particular the regular publication of a newsletter. To encourage a greater awareness of, and interest in, the applications of the art of the blacksmith among architects, interior designers, other interested groups, and the general public, and providing links between blacksmiths and their potential customers by means of exhibitions and publications. To promote appropriate training schemes. To act as a body representative of the interests of British Artist Blacksmiths locally, nationally, and internationally. BABA Constitution, published in *British Blacksmith* issue number 4 in February 1980.

▪ Dawson, Alan. Birth of BABA - the story so far. *British Blacksmith* No.53, August 1989, p. 22.

▪ Tucker, Tommy, Interview, RDC HQ, Salisbury, 9.7.93.

▪ Ibid.

▪ Punching, splitting, forge-welding, drawing down, upsetting, bending, swaging and fullering, etc.

▪ Quinnell, op. cit.

▪ Summarised by Alan Dawson in an article in *British Blacksmith*: Dawson, op. cit., 22-23.

³⁶ Site photograph, Friedrichshafen, David Hawkins, 1988.

³⁷ Friedrichshafen, further along the shore of the Bodensee, took over from the former Lindau exhibition when the local chamber of commerce decided it was too expensive to continue to fund it for future years.

³⁸ Dawson, op. cit., p. 22.

³⁹ If the earlier exhibition of work by the *Compagnons du Devoir* of France alongside the work brought along by CoSIRA and its clients, at the Ideal Home Exhibition held at Olympia in London, some twelve years earlier is excluded, on the ground that it was not an exclusively ironwork exhibition.

⁴⁰ This is discussed in more detail in the Museums section.

⁴¹ Alan Evans, Stuart Hill, Jim Horrobin, Ian Lamb, Peter Parkinson and Antony Robinson.

⁴² Dawson, op. cit., p. 23.

⁴³ Barker, Don. Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Northern Guild of Professional Blacksmiths. *British Blacksmith* No. 39, March 1986, p. 23.

⁴⁴ No later mentions of this guild were made in the magazine and no further evidence appears to be available as to their efforts.

⁴⁵ Organised by Richard Quinnell.

⁴⁶ A number of similar transparencies are to be seen at the Fire and Iron Gallery.

⁴⁷ The design seminars run by Peter Parkinson and David Petersen, for example, included consideration of a number of art and design issues: Blacksmithing in the context of other craft work; composition; contemporary sculpture; Basic design, structure, material and form; the use of drawing and critical reflection; Design History - introduction to some of the major design movements; problem solving techniques; design sources; idea development; design presentation. from a draft syllabus produced by Peter Parkinson in January 1991 and distributed to BABA Council Members.

⁴⁸ There has been extensive coverage, during the last ten years of the methods and products of the pattern-welding processes in *The Anvil's Ring*, the foremost USA blacksmithing periodical. For example, as a representative product of American blacksmithing, a pattern-welded bowie-knife, with a 'stars and stripes' motif running through it, was presented to George Bush by ABANA to mark his inauguration as President.

⁴⁹ The American Crafts Council's magazine, *American Crafts* has featured this expressive style of work extensively since its' inception.

⁵⁰ Parkinson noted this tendency in his V&A lecture: *Design Themes in Contemporary British Ironwork*, given at the symposium, *From Forge to Foundry*, V&A, 29.10.94.

⁵¹ Milton Keynes Exhibition Gallery, Jan. -Feb. 1995; Sunderland, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, March-April 1995; Glasgow, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, May-July 1995; Nottingham, Harley Gallery, Aug-Sept 1995; Bradford Design Exchange Centre, Sept-Dec 1995; Oriel Gallery, Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Clwyd, Jan-Feb 1996; Leatherhead, Fire and Iron Gallery, Feb-April 1996; Coventry, Mead Gallery, April-May 1996; Stirling, The Smith Gallery, June-Aug 1996; Carlisle, Tullie House, Sept-Nov 1996

⁵² Source, *British Blacksmith* No. 76, January 1996, p.26.

⁵³ Ranson, Brian. Craftwork, Ideology and the Craft Life Cycle. *J. Design History*, 2, Nos. 2 & 3, 1989, p.89.

3.2. The Crafts Council

The Crafts Advisory Committee, formed after the investigations leading to the Bolton Report¹ was renamed the Crafts Council to mirror the Arts Council. Particularly at the early stages of the operation of BABA, they were important in helping to revitalise blacksmithing in Britain, and to an extent in the rest of Europe.²

In the first issue of the Council's *Crafts* magazine, in March 1973, Editor Marigold Coleman set out a view which was to prevail for at least the next twenty years about the intentions of artist craftspeople as compared to traditional practitioners. Taking a position between the arts, and trade or traditional crafts, it is simplistic, inaccurate and unhelpful to many practitioners:

A craftsman sets his own standards: something either pleases him or it does not. For the traditional craftsman, concerned largely with achieving a high degree of technical skill, this is exacting enough; for the artist craftsman, whose intention is also to make a personal statement, it can feel even more daunting. Small wonder he sometimes feels isolated in a society which is geared to mass production.³

The relationship between craftwork, skill, standards and traditions is complex and variable. Coleman wished to define craftspeople of the sort *Crafts* was to address, as those who might from time to time feel isolated as a result of their intention to make a personal statement. The statement implies that there might be a general understanding of what a traditional craftsman is, and that a high degree of skill is sufficiently exacting. This simplified view of the motivations of many

workers in craft was used in succeeding years in *Crafts* to differentiate what had been happening before the Crafts Council's inception from that which they wished to encourage, and to aid artist craftspeople in creating a new sense of identity. This viewpoint had the effect both of encouraging those who regarded themselves as part of the new tradition of artist craftwork, and alienating those who thought themselves part of older traditions.

In its earlier incarnation as the Crafts Advisory Committee (CAC), the Crafts Council (CC) was able to put small sums of money towards the development of projects such as the Dove Centre of Creativity. Ivan Smith, whose forge at the Dove Centre benefited from a grant⁴ towards its glazing, was later important in persuading the CC that blacksmithing was a craft worth trying to develop. Smith, a blacksmith and teacher of the craft⁵ recognised that blacksmithing needed to change if it was to survive in modern times. In 1977, as Caroline Pearce-Higgins pointed out:

He put the blacksmith's dilemma to the Crafts council in eloquent terms, stressing the enormous potential of this difficult craft, and the need for a new imaginative breakthrough.⁶

The CC set up an exploratory committee to investigate what could be done. It was composed of Ivan Smith, Richard Quinnell, Claude Blair,⁷ Neil Cossons⁸ and Victor Margrie,⁹ with Caroline Pearce-Higgins¹⁰ as Secretary. As part of the preparation for the CAC's conference on wrought ironwork, Caroline Pearce-Higgins¹¹ gained British Council support for a study tour with Richard Quinnell. The conference was

held at Hereford Technical College in July 1980 after a smaller Experimental Workshop was held in August 1979.

The Experimental Workshop at Hereford between the 8th and 16th of August 1979 was an important staging post in the development of new approaches to blacksmithing. It was felt that in order to overcome differences in language, background and approach, the best way for smiths from different countries to communicate was by working together in the forge. The workshop focussed upon design, and was led by smiths from four different countries. Hermann Gradinger from Germany, Simon Benetton from Italy, Serge Marchal from France, and Eric Moebius from America. Stuart Hill, one of the participants, and at the time Editor of *British Blacksmith*, noted that cultural, historical, aesthetic and technical issues were raised as part of a challenging programme and that:

... a deeper understanding of ironwork of the past, not only in technique, but also in intention, could show the way to the creation of new ironwork of quality today: there is no doubt that this was the aim of many people involved in the Hereford course.¹²

Simon and Toni Benetton of Italy were influential during and after their time at the Hereford Experimental Workshop. Their distinctive use of texture and flame cut forms was particularly important and very different from the work of the traditional British smith. A Benetton grille and sculpture were illustrated in *British Blacksmith* in 1980. (Figures 14,¹³ 15¹⁴) Antony Robinson, with whom Giuseppe Lund worked for some time, has cited the Benettons as important in

influencing his own work, an example of which is the stainless steel flower illustrated in *British Blacksmith* in 1986. (figure 16¹⁵)

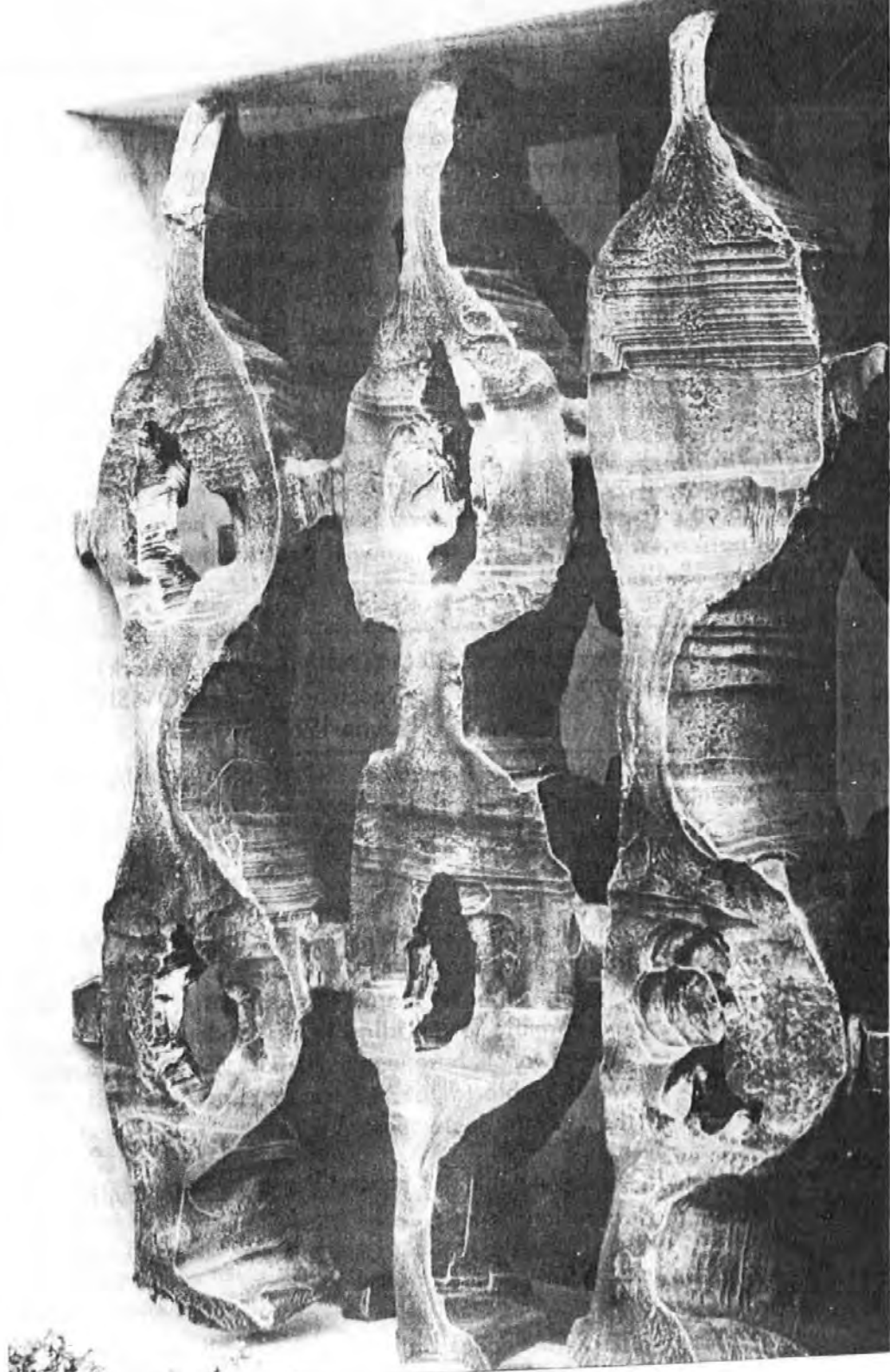


Figure 14. Window grille, Simon Benetton, Treviso, Italy, 1978, forged mild steel, approx. 1.5 by 1.5m.

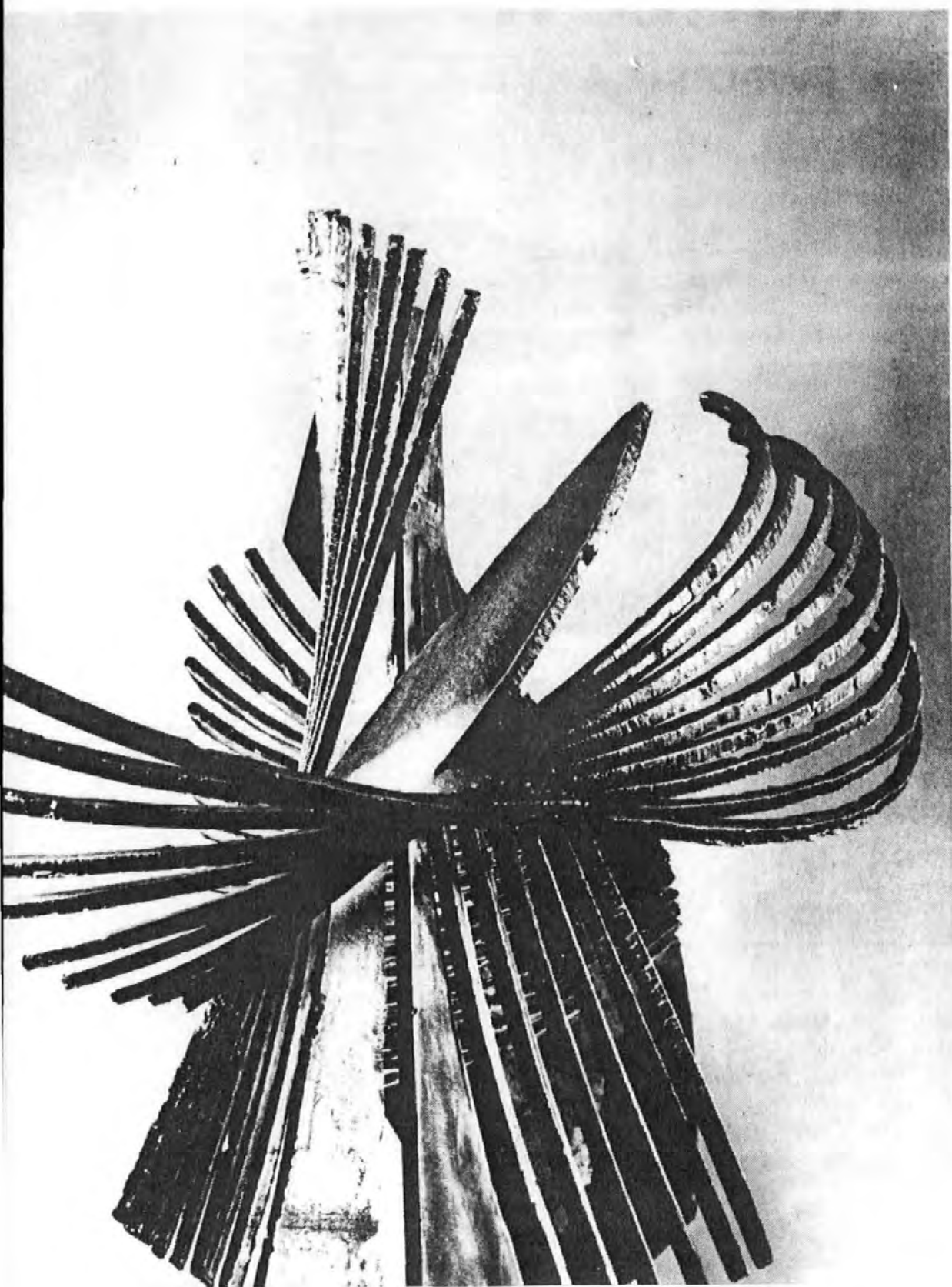


Figure 15. Sculpture,
Simon and Toni
Benetton, Italy, 1980.



Figure 16. Stainless steel flower by Antony Robinson, 1986, approx. 300mm tall.

Giuseppe Lund was one of the first to investigate modern Continental work and was quoted in a profile article in *Crafts* in 1979 as speaking:

... enthusiastically of Fritz Kühn's practice of submitting the whole iron bar to heat and hammering before use, in order to 'personalise' it.¹⁶

This working of bars has become characteristic of Lund's work, his gates for Victoria Plaza in London from 1985 continuing this theme. It is clear that despite the reaction of the traditionalists the visual language of the blacksmith's work was entering an innovative period in both style and technique.

The attitude that it is preferable to use traditional techniques whenever possible, in combination with newer ones, when producing new designs, is dominant amongst BABA members and is an identifying characteristic of modern British work. There is a strong conservative streak in technical terms in British blacksmithing, together with much innovation in stylistic terms, reflecting the diverse nature of modern commercial practice.

After attending the event that started the move in Britain towards contemporary blacksmithing, Ivan Smith asked:

Is the scroll, as we know it, dead? Do we ever make good scrolls, with the flair of a Bakewell, nowadays? Can we devise new scroll forms that pay homage to, without imitating, the work of Jean Tijou?¹⁷

Together with the Metalwork Department of the V&A, the CC organised an *Ironwork Study Day* at the V&A on Saturday 31st May

1980, as a precursor to the later Hereford event.¹⁸

With CC support a short design course was held at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts from 8-12 July 1980, dealing with basic aspects of the design process. The Silversmithing and Metalwork Department was later to set up the first degree level course in blacksmithing.

The *International Conference on Forging Iron*, organised at Hereford Technical College between the 22nd and 28th of July 1980, was the most influential international¹⁹ gathering of smiths to take place in Britain, perhaps at any time. Victor Margrie, then Director of the CC, had the idea for the Conference after the success of a similar initiative in promoting work in hot glass in September of 1976. Blacksmiths seemed isolated from the aesthetic and technical developments taking place both in other countries and within the country. It was organised largely by Caroline Pearce-Higgins. Lectures, demonstrations, workshops and social events all contributed to the success of the initiative. The event was primarily intended for professional smiths, but was attended by others, such as architects and interior designers. Stuart Hill printed Jim Horrobin's comments:

It was a great experience. The outstanding thing was the quality and diversity of the work shown. There were fewer arguments on traditional versus contemporary work, which I felt was good. ... I am sure that in 20 years or so the Hereford 1980 workshop will be pointed at and be held responsible for changing the face of ironwork in this country and in other countries as well.²⁰

Although it takes more than a single event to effect a general change

in practice, it was a very important conference, which changed the lives and working practices of significant numbers of the participants and is frequently cited by smiths as the most influential single event they have attended.

A similar, but smaller scale event to *Forging Iron*, was to be arranged by the Welsh Arts Council for October 1981, featuring Alfred Habermann, but had to be rearranged later, due to "... his other commitments."²¹ Another experimental workshop was organised later in 1981 by Giuseppe Lund in conjunction with an exhibition in the V&A.²²

Around this time there was a climate of change within the crafts generally, assisted and encouraged by the CC, towards a more selfconscious and expressionistic mode of working. *Crafts* magazine quoted Neil Hawkins when reporting the Jubilee Exhibition of the Devon Guild of Craftsmen in 1981: "Years ago a blacksmith would make a gate, and a furniture maker would make a chair. Now we're making sculpture - things you can't use."²³

In 1982 the Crafts Council moved into its extended headquarters in Waterloo Place in London, and celebrated it with an exhibition entitled *The Maker's Eye* in which a number of craftspeople were invited to select objects or pieces for exhibition. Amongst a varied selection, the work of blacksmiths Neil Hawkins and Stuart Hill, amongst others, was included, both providing work in contemporary

styles, not derivative of 17th- and 18th-century blacksmithing. At a time of debate about the nature of craft work and whether it was deserving of Government support, the exhibition addressed craft work and its quality. William Packer writing in the *Financial Times* suggested that the consensus from the exhibition was that:

The product of individual intention and skill, the particular, peculiar object of whatever kind, carries necessarily the mark of whoever made it, and deserves in turn our own especial consideration and celebration. if this is to blur the line drawn for convenience between artist and craftsman, a line in any case that has not always been noticed, let alone required, no matter.²⁴

In commenting about their involvement with blacksmithing in 1983, Victor Margrie, Director of the CC noted that at the time of their involvement with the conferences, wrought iron was a very neglected area. The CC saw blacksmithing as an area where there was skill and talent, but an:

... amazing lack of appreciation of what was happening in the world of art and design. The climate wasn't really propitious, and we were criticised by some blacksmiths for positively interfering. but from that challenge some splendid work is coming up, and it couldn't possibly have emerged from the very low-key area that previously existed.²⁵

Since it began, the CC has channelled substantial funding for support of the crafts through the Regional Arts Associations (RAAs), who especially since Lord Radcliffe-Maud's 1976 report²⁶ had taken a larger role in fostering the arts in the regions. This meant that blacksmiths would have to lean towards artistic, culturally biased work, or get little support from RAAs. Businesses which carried out a variety of practices, as do many firms of blacksmiths, could have to

look to a minimum of three different bodies for assistance - the RAAs, the CC, the RDC, or local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) amongst others. Because the work might not fall clearly under the aegis of any one of them, it would be simple to envisage a situation where no-one would be prepared to provide assistance on the grounds that another body would be the most appropriate.

Despite the CC's support for blacksmithing there was confusion and distrust for some time amongst many smiths. An example of this is the reaction of Tommy Tucker, one of the founders of BABA and a long serving Forgework Advisor with CoSIRA. Tucker noted that there were only seven blacksmiths on the Crafts Council's Selected Index²⁷, and that he was disappointed with this and with their interpretation of 'artist blacksmith' as a term.

At Wimbledon, we couldn't understand it, we knew there was a grant available to help people to start up and there was an approved list, there was all manner of assistance - but none of our blacksmiths could be considered for any of it. But you see, say a man had been a farrier... and he was a welder and he could do a bit of fabrication and repairs, that would run against him - he would be out, the Crafts Council it appeared to me, didn't want to know him at all - but if he was in art...²⁸

This is an extreme interpretation, but nevertheless indicative of the divisions and misunderstanding that still existed.

By 1988, Tony Ford, newly appointed Director of the CC, noted that the climate had changed politically and socially, and: "as the crafts have moved more broadly into society they have met the enterprise culture coming the other way."²⁹

Shortly after this, in 1990, a Government Report, written by Richard Wilding, former head of the Crafts Council's funding body, the Office of Arts and Libraries, recommended that the CC should be merged with the Arts Council as a cost-saving measure. As reported in *Crafts*,³⁰ there was widespread disquiet over this proposal, and William Packer of the *Financial Times*; cutlery designer and manufacturer, David Mellor; and designer and entrepreneur, Michael Peters, protested against it. Arts Minister, Richard Luce announced³¹ to the House of Commons on 13th March 1990, that the Arts and Crafts Councils were to be kept separate, but required to co-operate more closely to avoid the duplication of effort.

Post-Wilding, Tony Ford noted that it was necessary to select which areas of activity the CC should support, in line with their charter. They were to encourage the creation of works of fine craftsmanship and promote the interest of the public in these artefacts and their makers, in England and Wales. In doing this they excluded work largely reproducing past styles; areas of work covered by the Arts Council such as print making; rural crafts which were being helped by CoSIRA/RDC; fashion; and crafts impinging upon industry. Criteria such as originality, innovation, a combination of excellent design and appropriate making skills:

We have suggested that the work should in essence be designed and made by the same person, but while we are open minded about the use of machinery, we have become worried about long runs or very large workshops.³²

This policy tended to exclude the work of blacksmiths in transition between traditional and artist blacksmith's practices; and those whose businesses were operating pragmatically for commercial reasons. The tendency was therefore to support commercially unviable makers, or those catering for the art, or expensive, end of the market.

Crafts Council sales initiatives have been largely successful, but there was a high profile failure in the USA in 1990, which gained coverage in the national press.³³ Despite noting this, Worsthorne saw a change in the perception of crafts and craftspeople, which the Crafts Council had undoubtedly influenced and a new stereotype which fits blacksmiths to an extent. Worsthorne noted how British craftsmen were:

... one of the great success stories of the present time... They used to be sandalled Hampstead cranks hooked on vegetarianism, socialism and pacifism ... no longer. ... the crafts today are the last refuge of the English gentleman. ... If you see anybody in overalls today, with clay on his hands, it is a reasonable bet that he has been to Oxbridge and a public school.³⁴

Of course it was a piece of journalism, and from one known to have strong opinions, but there was an element of truth in what he was saying. The gentrification of the crafts has been an important factor in their revival and continued success. The Crafts Council, have generally been very effective in promoting those crafts within the art college realm in particular. In spite of many blacksmiths' practices violating the guidelines set out by Tony Ford, in that they may sometimes do reproductions, long production runs, or receive help from the RDC,

etc. the CC has been very important in the development of the work of contemporary blacksmiths.

Adrian Legge in discussing the way in which the CC in 1994 appeared to be less involved with the development of blacksmithing, felt that they had been:

... just a wee bit incestuous, they did a great job, gave BABA and blacksmithing a bump start - they were very heavily involved in the early days. They seem to have drawn back, I don't know whether it's blacksmithing's fault in ... not actually knocking on the door of the Crafts Council, ... but ... I find that the Crafts Council tends to be a little bit more 'arty' than 'crafty', and I'm not sure whether that is the right thing.³⁵

Legge's comment that the CC could be a bit incestuous, refers in part to the way in which the Selected Index of Makers has been used as an aid to advising on the award of major commissions. This index is used by the CC as a resource from which they can reliably make recommendations about makers who might be suitable for certain kinds of work. There is an unselected index with details of many more makers, but anyone viewing this has to make an assessment about the potential suitability of the maker for themselves. This differentiation is understandable, but there has been unease over the years at the way in which makers had failed to have their work picked for the Selected Index. The index is perhaps too restricted in scope as there are many makers not included who are of equal standing and capability in the eyes of other practitioners as those who have been included.

In order to increase the space available for exhibitions and reduce the rent, the CC moved to its present HQ in a converted chapel in Islington, London. They are likely to continue to be an important influence upon the work of blacksmiths, and provide a means by which their work may be promoted. However, it is not clear that the CC's areas of interest match closely the wide range of aspirations and working practices of many blacksmiths, who operate between and within craft, art, industry, trade and design at various times depending upon inclination and commercial factors.

In conclusion, the Crafts Council, especially in the early days of the development of BABA, did much to encourage the development of art blacksmithing, very much in line with their encouragement of the work of other kinds of artist craftspeople. However, their support for art craftwork and their lack of support for those who saw themselves as traditional craftspeople did something to encourage the development of so-called traditional and modern camps within blacksmithing. The following section relates to the influence of the V&A, who along with the Crafts Council and BABA were influential in the early development and encouragement of artist blacksmithing.

¹ See section 2. for a discussion of the implications of the Bolton report.

² They have had a continuing but less intensive involvement in subsequent years and have been implicated in the award of a number of important commissions through the use by potential patrons of the Selected Index. Sir Paul Sinker was the first Chair of the Crafts Advisory Committee, which was formed in 1971, at the same time as he was head of CoSIRA. They were funded from the Office of Arts and Libraries, with the aim of promoting the crafts by various means, including the provision of grants and loans, education and the dissemination of information.

³ Coleman, Marigold. Introduction. *Crafts*, No. 1, March 1973, p.8.

⁴ A three hundred pound grant was given for glazing to make the blacksmith's shop more habitable. Horrocks, Anthony. *A Craft Community. Crafts*, No. 1, March 1973, p. 12.

⁵ Including at West Dean College and for CoSIRA.

⁶ Pearce-Higgins, Caroline. Forged Iron Today. in exhibition catalogue for *Towards a New Iron Age*. p.10.

⁷ Keeper of Metalwork, V & A.

⁸ Director of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum.

⁹ Director of the Crafts Council.

¹⁰ Education Officer of the Crafts Council.

¹¹ A brief report is given in *Crafts Magazine*: Pearce-Higgins, Caroline. The Continental Blacksmith, *Crafts*, March-April 1979, p.9.

¹² Hill, Stuart. Hereford Workshop. *British Blacksmith* No. 3, November 1979, p.2.

¹³ Benetton, Simon. Photograph of grille. *British Blacksmith* No. 4, Feb. 1980, p. 15.

¹⁴ Benetton, Simon. Sculpture. *British Blacksmith* No. 8, Oct. 1980, p. 27.

¹⁵ Robinson, Antony. Stainless steel flower. *British Blacksmith* No. 40, June, 1986.

¹⁶ Lund, G. Forging ahead. *Crafts* July/August 1979, p. 17.

¹⁷ Smith, Ivan. co-author. Pearce-Higgins, Caroline. An Experiment In Iron. *Crafts* November-December 1979. p. 10.

¹⁸ At around the same time Caroline Pearce-Higgins had prepared and was circulating a 150 title book list on blacksmithing and related topics. This was a small but important part of the work of the CC, as communication and knowledge of the work of others was conspicuously lacking amongst British smiths.

¹⁹ 80 from the British Isles, 25 from German speaking countries, 5 from France, 3 from Italy, 3 from Czechoslovakia, 3 from Japan, 1 from Finland and 12 from the USA and Canada. Hill, Stuart. International Conference and Workshop. *British Blacksmith* No. 8, October 1980, p.8.

²⁰ Ibid., p.10.

²¹ Letter from Patricia Harding, Welsh Arts Council to prospective delegates.

²² Discussed in detail in section 3.3.

²³ Hawkins, Neil. Notes. *Crafts*, November-December 1981, p.48.

²⁴ Packer, William. The case for the crafts. *Financial Times*, Tuesday January 19th, 1982.

²⁵ Margrie, Victor. View from the bridge. *Crafts* No. 61, April 1983, p.12.

²⁶ "Support For the Arts in England and Wales".

²⁷ The Crafts Council Selected Index of Makers in 1995 was comprised of the following blacksmiths: Adam Booth, John Creed, Alan Evans, Stuart Hill, Jim Horrobin, Giuseppe Lund, Peter Parkinson, Tony Robinson and Ivan Smith.

²⁸ Tucker, Tommy, Interview, RDC HQ, Salisbury, 9.7.93.

²⁹ Ford, Tony. Director's Statement. *Crafts* No. 95, December 1988, p. 17.

³⁰ Wainwright, Martin. Crafts Council at the Crossroads. *Crafts* Feb.. 1990 pp. 16-17.

³¹ Collingwood, Peter. Craftnotes. *Crafts*. June 1990, p. 13.

³² Ford, Tony. Crafts Council Debate. *Crafts*, October 1990, p.13.

³³ Peregrine Worsthorne, writing in his Daily Telegraph Diary column later in 1990 commented on how badly organised and unsuccessful a sales Expo in Orange County, Los Angeles, USA, had been, despite the inhabitants having the highest average incomes in the world. Worsthorne, Peregrine. The crafts promoters so short on skills. Peregrine Worsthorne's Diary, *Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, November 14, 1990. p. 20.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Adrian Legge, Interview, Ironbridge 5.8.94.

3.3. The Victoria and Albert Museum.

Museums, and in particular the Victoria and Albert Museum, have had a significant influence upon late 20th-century British¹ blacksmiths and their work. Influence has been exerted through their policies, collections, related activities and cultural position. The collection, selection and presentation of items for display in museums have been value-led. These values have evolved along with museums - although it is not clear that public perception has developed in the same way, or at the same rate.

Museums² have their roots in the developing art collections of the Renaissance.³ Galleries were built in palaces and major houses, principally as decorative features.⁴ These were not on public view, and it wasn't until the late 18th-century that the first purpose-built museums were constructed.⁵ The museums built for public use were intended to be 'palaces of culture,' often in the form of imposing neoclassical structures, of which the British Museum⁶ is a prominent example.

While the elevation of the taste of the citizens might have been the intention, often only national collections are of a sufficiently high standard for this aspiration to be realistic. Much work of value, and in particular contemporary work, is not collected, or appreciated for what it is, unless it has been produced by a well known 'name'. This has been the result of conservatism or snobbery, but also in the case

of the blacksmiths' work, a history of anonymity on the part of the maker.⁷

Museums are involved in the process of cultural validation:

The entry of a piece into an established museum collection ... conveys a kind of legitimacy, and also a kind of immortality. The piece is lifted from the world of the outmoded, the worn-out and the rubbish ... and into that of the culturally durable, the 'heritage' as we now call it, to be studied and displayed, protected and defended as the raw material from which cultural values will be spun.⁸

A similar 'stamp of approval' may also be given by prominent - especially Royal - patronage as Pearce has noted:

Material Knowledge ... is crucial in a society where prestige of authentic ownership, the capitalist creation of goods, the notion of verifiable evidence and the physical embodiment of value are fundamental.⁹

In more recent times, museums have become more diverse and have melded into a wider 'Heritage Industry'¹⁰ or discipline with its own academic courses,¹¹ specialist journals, experts, and cultural momentum. The popularisation of 'heritage' has done much in recent times to reinforce in the minds of the public, who are often potential customers, the view of blacksmiths as quaint, timeless, upholders of village traditions, producing traditional products. Blacksmiths seen, therefore, as part of a comfortable history.¹²

The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) contains one of the best and largest collections of ironwork in the world, ranging in date from the 12th to the 20th century. Its collection, especially the British work, has been built largely by passive acquisition - ironwork was offered

to the museum by developers, builders and others as the result of the re-development of property, especially in the London area.¹³ Some of the work was purchased and some given.

The collection is strong in the English and Continental work of the 17th- and 18th-centuries often thought of as the high point of the work of the smith through such exponents as Jean Tijou and Robert Bakewell. It is difficult to ascertain exactly what effect the mix of the collection has had upon contemporary perceptions of ironwork, but it is clear that much of the writing about ironwork during the time that the V&A has existed, has centred around the work of this period. If the Museum has functioned as an arbiter of taste, then it must be assumed that the composition of the collection has had an effect. For many blacksmiths during the early part of the 20th century virtually the only texts available to them related largely to work of the 17th- and 18th-centuries, or that in the V&A's collection. It may be argued that the development of new styles and thinking about ironwork during the period up until the 1970s, when texts from Germany began to become more easily available, was not assisted by the absence of new work in the V&A.

The high point in terms of the volume of collecting of British work was at the start of WW2 as, until that time, nothing in the way of contemporary or cast work was acquired, the exception for cast work being domestic ware. This was surprising, given the high quality of much cast iron work produced for architectural and sculptural

purposes and the way in which cast and wrought work have been seen together on so many occasions.

The quality of the museum's collections has depended upon the best efforts of staff at various levels, driven by their knowledge and enthusiasm. The attitude of directors and keepers was important in shaping the collection. Henry Cole, H.P. Mitchell, Claude Blair and Roy Strong are seen by current staff as having been 'good' for the ironwork collection.¹⁴ Others were regarded less affectionately because of their steering of metalwork collecting policies away from ironwork, into the acquisition of material such as Japanese Tsuba, or silver.

There was no *written* policy relating to ironwork until recently, when a Collecting Plan (see Appendix Four) was written for the Metalwork Collection in 1993:

Metalwork follows the principle laid down by Henry Cole in 1863 'The best works of all periods and countries should be obtained.... Where the taste of an age or country has been low, few specimens only will be necessary ...where the art is excellent ...the specimens may be more valued and numerous' tempered with the recognition that this comprehensive exhortation sets an impossible target. The collection centres on the Art of Living in all its aspects. Our aim is to play to the strengths of the Collection, building the internationally acknowledged areas of excellence, both English and European, from the early Middle ages to the present and continuing the concerted campaign to acquire important contemporary or recent work. Metalwork assesses all potential acquisitions by the following criteria: beauty of design, quality of execution, significance for the study of metalwork, provenance, authenticity, condition, relevance to the displays and to the permanent collection, value for money.¹⁵

The V&A has sought to further these aims by a variety of means, but the first priority has been the identification and location of works of

quality and importance which have the potential to enhance the Collection. The available budget, from whatever source, then determines whether the work might form part of the Collection. The work is then displayed and/or explained. The explanation could be by way of notes, verbal descriptions through lectures or guided tours, or through the internal and external publication of information in various formats.¹⁶ Research, scholarly activity and their encouragement is an important part of the Museum's work, aided by the retention and enhancement of archives, library material and other records.

Commissioning has played an important role in the development of the collections, as it is seen as the only way of ensuring that they are representative.¹⁷ The Museum has commissioned ironwork throughout its history; the original buildings containing staircase balustrading, radiator panels and restaurant tables designed by the sculptor and designer Alfred Stevens. The wrought iron gates at the entrance to the back road opposite the science museum were commissioned from the firm of Starkie Gardner. More recent commissions have included, gates to the Ironwork Gallery by James Horrobin; a steel chandelier by David Watkins for the Silver Galleries; the public Exhibition Road entrance gates by Christopher Haye; and a bench seat by Albert Paley.

Following the Museum's first exhibition of new twentieth century ironwork *Towards a New Iron Age* Claude Blair, then Keeper of Metalwork, instigated a limited competition in 1981 to design some

gates for the entrance to the Ironwork Gallery from the Music Gallery with advice and support from the Crafts Council. In 1980, the V&A received its funding from the Department of Education and Science, but the Ministry of Works was responsible for structural and practical work within it. It was established that the Ministry of Works/DoE would not fund work seen to be largely of cultural importance, but would fund 'Security Gates'. Blair described the proposed gates as both security and art, which when backed by Roy Strong, then V&A Director, achieved acceptance. Members of BABA were then invited to submit proposals. David Watkins, Antony Robinson and James Horrobin were short-listed. Horrobin's design was chosen and responds to the shapes in musical notation, is large and heavy for security reasons and is in a distinctive, modern style, making extensive use of power hammer techniques. The importance of this work is that it was the first piece of 20th- century ironwork to be commissioned by the V&A, placing it alongside works by established past masters and effectively giving an official 'stamp of approval' for contemporary work. The DoE, responsible for installing the gates, were difficult to please, because of the floor loading imposed by the gates, but eventually relented.¹⁸ The brief sent to participants included the following statements:

The Ironwork Gallery contains one of the world's largest and most important collections of wrought ironwork, and it is intended that the gates will be working exhibits, representing the best in modern design in wrought metal, labelled like the rest of the collection with full details of designer and maker. The judges of the designs submitted will therefore be looking for quality and originality of design, as well as for functional suitability. An important consideration is that of cost, for the sum available for making and installing the gates in position cannot exceed about £2500. Work in any wrought metal with or

without applied decoration in other materials will be considered within the proviso. These gates are required so that the Ironwork Gallery may be shut off from the public when necessary during museum hours, by barring access to and from the stairs ... they must therefore provide a secure barrier ... and must provide a good look. They must be substantial, securely hinged, lockable, and fitted within their own frame ...¹⁹

In describing the manufacture of the gates (figure 17) Jim Horrobin stated that the techniques used were basically traditional, including punching holes, riveting, stretching, bending and drawing down. Splits in the horizontal bars were achieved using a hot set and sledge hammer. Vertical bars were flame-cut then drawn down with a power hammer, the curved sections formed by sledge hammering into a pre-shaped bottom tool. The centre post was made of tube in four sections bellied out, welded and re-forged. Assembly was by riveting using oxy-acetylene as a heat source. The finish is a combination of red oxide coated with wax then coated with black etch primer.²⁰ The use of traditional techniques combined with modern form derived from a feel for the location, and the innovative use of power hammer, welding and fixing techniques makes the gates very appropriate for the Ironwork gallery. Modern work is seen, as a result of this commission, as being of equivalent worth to existing pieces, and in a different, yet linked, genre.

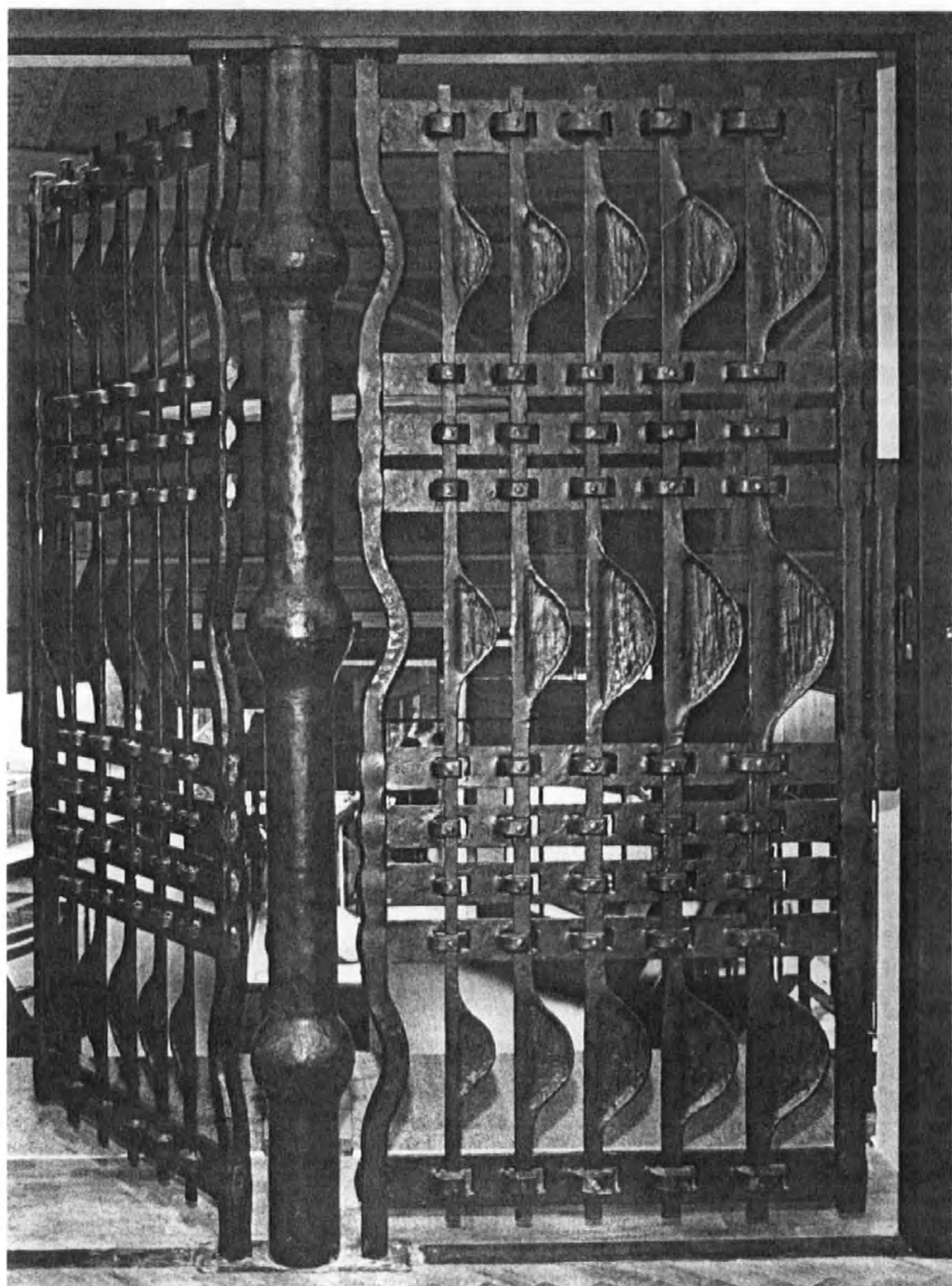


Figure 17. James Horrobin, gates between the Music and Ironwork Galleries, V&A, London, 1982.²¹

As a consequence of entering the competition for the gates, David Watkins was commissioned in 1983 to make a chandelier in steel and neoprene for the Silver Galleries. The design was based upon work he produced for the gate competition, the style matching his gate design proposal.²²

Christopher Haye was commissioned to design and make gates for the public Exhibition Rd. entrance. He is a graduate of the Royal College of Art (RCA) and had apparently 'caught the eye' of Roy Strong at the Graduation Show. He was not a blacksmith and didn't at the time possess sufficient knowledge of processes and techniques to carry out the commission immediately, but he was able to consult smiths and get help in order to complete it.²³

In December 1994, Albert Paley, one of the most innovative and important American blacksmiths and sculptors, delivered a bench for public seating in the ironwork gallery to coincide with an ironwork symposium at the museum. (Figure 18) This represented the happy end to a saga of confusion and embarrassment. During the early 1980s discussions were taking place between Paley, Claude Blair and Roy Strong, both of whom had admired his work for some time and wished to award him a commission for the museum. Roy Strong appeared to award Paley a commission for an ironwork fountain to be sited in the courtyard. There seems to have been some resistance amongst the trustees and museum staff to this proposal, on the grounds that a fountain would not be the best sort of product either to

demonstrate the best of his work, or to be made in iron or steel. There may also have been some monetary problems, relating to the proposed scale of the project. Marian Campbell has said that she would have preferred to see the commissioning of some Albert Paley gates, as they often represented the high point of his work, which would then have matched closely the original Collecting Policy of the Museum as laid down by Henry Cole.²⁴ However, Roy Strong backtracked on the proposed fountain, for reasons not explained to all museum staff. Claude Blair was very annoyed and embarrassed about this apparent U-turn, but Paley, apparently, wasn't aware of the confusion over the fountain proposal.

The Museum's staff were still keen to acquire a Paley piece, and successfully lobbied during 1993 for a budget to be allocated to achieve this. The Director agreed to \$10,000, and a bench was commissioned. Clearly, given the piece now in the Collection, and the price normally commanded by such works, it was acquired at a knock-down price. Essentially this was possible because Paley had been keen to have a piece in the Collection and was prepared to accept a low price.²⁵ The result was that he was pleased and the Museum's staff had no longer to feel embarrassed about the aborted fountain commission.

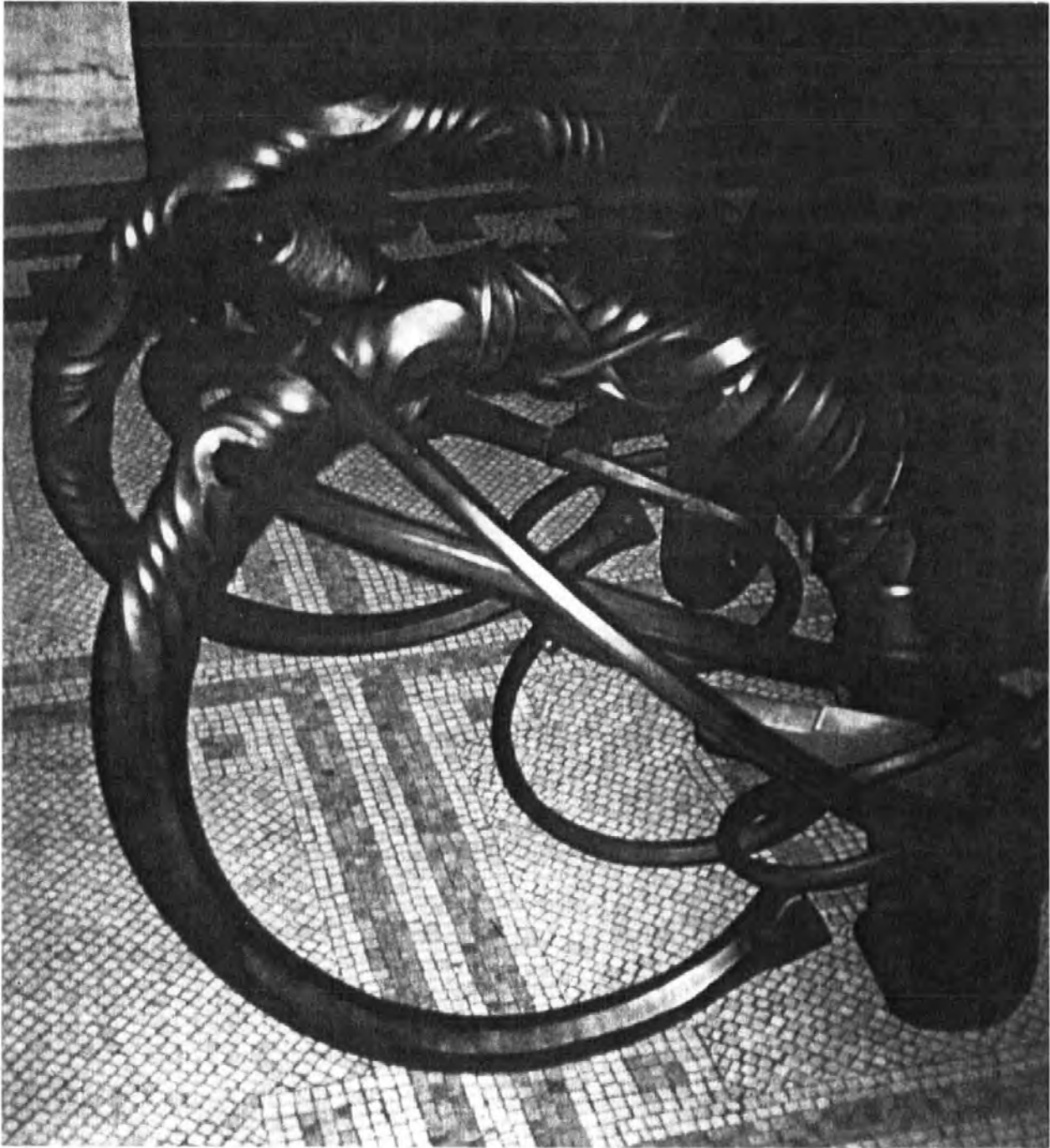


Figure 18. Albert Paley's bench for the V&A, forged steel and mahogany, detail from site photograph, 1994.

Activity during the first half of the 20th-century was limited to the collection of older work, and in this respect the Metalwork Department conformed to the general Materials Department policy of not acquiring contemporary material. Things began to change in the late 1950s and during the last twenty years the policy has been reversed so the the majority of acquisitions are of 20th-century work, more than half of which are post 1975. The Metalwork Department benefited from the buying policy of the Circulation Department. Twentieth century work is now being collected retrospectively in order to form a representative selection. The Policy states that:

In some areas, because of rarity, there is still a reactive element to collecting, but in most collecting fields we can pursue the work of specific artists, designers and firms with the expectation that objects can be secured, if funds are available.²⁶

Sir Roy Strong, writing in *The Times* in 1983 put forward an argument for concentrating more upon the virtues of contemporary work, and less upon a distorted view of heritage.

The word heritage is beginning to make me shudder. ... Heritage was essentially a 1970s cult which has now spread down the social scale. ... It is an industry kept going by a hundred and one societies from the National Trust onwards and hysteria about heritage is a permanent media feature. The worship of the past and what it created has been taken to an extreme unknown in any previous century.²⁷

It is clear that this kind of thinking was instrumental in moving the collection policy of the museum towards contemporary work. The policy doesn't mention it, but clearly, if important work is acquired at or near the time it is produced, it is likely to be less expensive than when it has value as an antique. Also, a producer's work will increase

in value simply as a result of it appearing in the collections of the V&A, thus enhancing the overall value of the collection.

Strong also gave some insight into his view of the commissioning of new work by saying that:

I used to recoil at the introduction of new things into historic environments. I now realise that it was because they were the wrong new things not that they were new. Enormous sums are consumed in restoring and maintaining the status quo to the point of the past denying us a future. To my mind the balance has gone wrong. You see it in so many country houses. Apart from a superficial overlay of photographs and magazines, the clock stopped in 1914. There is the odd exception but one has to think hard.²⁸

There have been a number of events arranged jointly between the V&A and the Crafts Council²⁹ which have had an impact, either directly or indirectly, upon blacksmithing. They have had an influence, both in defining the place, importance and to some extent the relevance, of craft work in general, and blacksmithing in particular.

The first of these events, *The Craftsman's Art*, which followed a series of exhibitions of artist-craftspeople's work, has been written about extensively as an important and influential exhibition. It opened on 15 March 1973 at the V&A and contained both selected and specially commissioned work from a range of craftspeople, traditional crafts being represented by slides. Blacksmith's work was represented by Ivan Smith, who showed a set of nine fire tools and eleven glass-maker's tools.

The category 'traditional crafts' as used in *The Craftsman's Art* is probably inaccurate in many cases, and including them as a category to be shown in the form of slides³⁰ rather than by exhibits, almost certainly did little to help them. All crafts use some techniques which could be described as traditional, and many, if not all, involve making products and forms with a long history. Ideas, ideology, history and context are major factors in determining whether work in a given craft is 'traditional'. There can be very few, if any, traditional crafts *per se*, but there is no doubt that there are many craftspeople working in long established or 'traditional' ways using long established designs, equipment, materials and processes.

Sir Gordon Russell,³¹ in the foreword to the exhibition catalogue, remarked that:

... two disastrous wars have so speeded production for temporary use, and people have become so rootless, that the mere idea of fine quality products for permanent enjoyment has been much eroded - except, of course, in the case of antiques, a cult sedulously fostered by the vested interests concerned, with ample financial resources. ... When the Arts Council (as public patron no.1) was set up at the end of the second world war its terms of reference were to the fine arts - drama, music, ballet, painting, sculpture. The crafts were not even mentioned although they faced similar hazards and could, over centuries, show as fine a humanising tradition in Britain as anywhere else in Europe. This situation has at last been remedied by the setting up of the Crafts Advisory Committee which by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum and with the active help of many craft associations, has been responsible for this exhibition.³²

A conference of craft societies was arranged at the V&A on 7 April in parallel with the exhibition. In the second issue of *Crafts* magazine it was noted that it was visited in its first three weeks by:

... a staggering 26,000 people ... There has been excellent and enthusiastic coverage in the national press and this has undoubtedly brought people in, but there is also the fact that it comes at a time when there is a strong but undirected interest in the crafts among the public. This exhibition has provided a focus for that interest.³³

Whilst it is clear that many people visited the exhibition, and the press covered it extensively, it is not clear what was the basis for the assertion that there was a 'strong but undirected' interest in the crafts. It may have been a combination of factors which led to the exhibition's popularity. These included the fact that it was in the V&A, and therefore given an official 'seal of approval'; that crafts were, and are, considered 'a good thing'; that the work was presented well and in an interesting, enjoyable manner; and that the show was well publicised. As John Houston, the exhibition's organiser, has noted in retrospect: "The exhibition's success was a charming example of ... public relations: all these artifacts were paraded as support for a worthy cause."³⁴ The popularity of the exhibition was, as Houston, indicated: "... a major force in the launch of that embryonic quango, the Crafts Advisory Committee."³⁵

This success undoubtedly helped not only the CAC, and subsequently the Crafts Council in defining its sphere of operation, but also served to mark out, perhaps more clearly than previously, the territory of the crafts. As Christopher Frayling has written:

For the *Craftsman's Art* tradition, 'home' is indirectly, the first Bauhaus manifesto of Walter Gropius, where 'architects sculptors and painters' were all exhorted to 'turn to the crafts' - not 'return' to the crafts, as it has been consistently and disastrously mistranslated. 'Home' is also that tempting space in the art market which has been

vacated by most of the significant British art movements since pop.³⁶

Frayling also speculated that the other two main traditions of post-war work in the crafts are 'Arts and Crafts' and 'designer-craftsman' and that all three have one thing in common:

... they all resent, deeply, any association with the popular image of 'the crafts'. Most craft shops, it has often been said by contemporary artists, craftsmen and designers, are full of very good examples of very bad craftsmanship.³⁷

Blacksmiths had been working in a variety of traditions until this time,³⁸ but the success of the exhibition, and the Crafts Council, undoubtedly gave smiths some confidence and support to broaden their horizons; in part prompted by those who had been through art schools during the 1960s and 70s, and aided by the 'craft revival' of the time. Until the formation of the British Artist Blacksmiths Association in the late 70s the title or description Artist-Blacksmith had been unknown in the UK.

Houston noted that during the 1970s, the rise of complementary studies in the art schools of the 1960s had:

... reversed official expectations: teaching the history of modern design had made many students into historicists, not modernists. A new awareness of the limits of systematic design led to a renewed appreciation of the unique diversity inherent in the crafts. The New Crafts Revival was under way.³⁹

During the 1970s, changes in the culture of the crafts generally laid the foundations for developments in the practice and critical appreciation of blacksmithing. The inclusion of items in *The*

Craftsman's Art, as contemporary craftwork⁴⁰ was part of the beginning of a revival of interest.

Work of a modern kind, consistent with the aims and objectives of the Crafts Council had been exhibited for some years by blacksmiths prior to this date. For example, Neil Hawkins had been exhibiting modern and sculptural work in the well-known Summer Exhibitions of the Devon Guild of Craftsmen⁴¹ since the 1950s. Three examples, from a series of poker designs developed during the 1950s and 60s were shown in Crafts Council's *The Maker's Eye* exhibition in 1981.⁴² It was more a question of recognition, than whether the work existed, in however small a quantity. Clearly, before the Crafts Council, there was difficulty in achieving appropriate recognition.

The V&A, in conjunction with the Crafts Council, ran an Ironwork Study Day in the Summer of 1982 as part of the second series of five study days based around important holdings in the museum's collections. This took place on the 5th June and coincided with the exhibition *Towards a New Iron Age*. Speakers were Albert Paley, James Horrobin, Richard Quinnell and Dorothy Bosomworth. The day included discussions about objects in the collection, and smiths discussing their own work.⁴³ Both of these events, and the linked exhibition *Six British Blacksmiths*, were essentially the result of enthusiasm generated in 1979 by the Experimental Workshop and the 1980 International Conference which were organised by the Crafts Council, and held at Hereford Technical College.

The exhibition, *Towards a New Iron Age*, was organised by Claude Blair, the Keeper of Metalwork, and inspired largely by Giuseppe Lund. Sir Roy Strong in the preface to the exhibition catalogue noted: "Particular thanks are also due to Giuseppe Lund, one of the exhibiting blacksmiths, whose enthusiasm inspired the exhibition."⁴⁴

Amina Chatwin gives this explanation of the V & A exhibition's origins:

Claude Blair was the Keeper of Metalwork, assisted by Marian Campbell. It came about partly because Giuseppe Lund designed ironwork for an 11th century church in Godalming, which was seen by Claude Blair. Lund asked why there were no examples of modern work in the V&A galleries and showed him work by German smiths. This led to interest and the suggestion of an exhibition. Giuseppe Lund helped Paul Williams, the designer of the exhibition, with the setting up and organisation.⁴⁵

Chatwin doesn't give the date for this meeting but it was after the earlier events at Hereford where the two met for the first time. The promotional leaflet for the exhibition claims:

In recognising the growing achievements in the contemporary field of forged ironwork, the Victoria and Albert Museum is mounting the first international exhibition in Britain. Smiths from Britain, Eastern and Western Europe, Japan and the USA will be exhibiting work demonstrating the flexibility and scope of the medium.⁴⁶

As described in the section relating to the RDC, the *first* international exhibition of ironwork was that by British smiths and French smiths from Les Compagnons Du Devoir,⁴⁷ who were very much involved with contemporary work, at the Ideal Home Exhibition at Olympia in 1967. However, *Towards a New Iron Age* involved work from a wider range of countries, from many internationally renowned smiths and was,

partly because it was staged in the V&A, a more important and influential event.

Giusseppe Lund has noted that his relationship with the V&A started off well, but later became soured by political factors within the museum. The inclusion of a number of examples of foreign work also caused him some problems:

British smiths seemed to think I was out to belittle them with foreign ideas and there was strong lobbying for a greater representation of their work in the exhibition. To appease them a firebasket competition⁴⁸ was introduced. In addition to all this I had two studios running and far too many employees. Following "*Towards a new iron age*" (it was always meant to be *The New iron age*") I shut myself off from the politics and got on with the work.⁴⁹

Victor Margrie, in the foreword to the exhibition catalogue noted that forged iron had remained in the grip of historical pastiche for most of the 20th century:

... or worse, ill digested modernism of the most banal kind. Certainly there have been isolated examples of sensitive and generous work, mostly springing from the influences of the Arts and Crafts Movement, including that of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, but however glorious these individual creative statements there is no evidence of sustained aesthetic development. The past, while providing inspiration, has contributed to the craft's decline.⁵⁰

There is no doubt that historicism *has* been a problem in terms of the development of blacksmithing during this century. But part of its appeal to many is that it *is* an ancient activity, and blacksmiths, even modern ones, tend to play on this for commercial reasons. This sentimentality is important in the sale of many deliberately hand-made items, but it could be argued that its benefits are mixed - a stick

for one's own back - and make the sale of contemporary work more difficult. However, it can be a little too easy to cite 'Arts and Crafts' and Mackintosh as important influences.

Caroline Pearce-Higgins noted that up until the 1970s British blacksmiths had been conservative in outlook, so that by then, in spite of the efforts of CoSIRA, blacksmithing had reached a low ebb:

The blacksmiths themselves were isolated, not only geographically, from each other, but from opportunities to develop their design thinking in, for example, art college courses; from architects and other patrons; from contemporary developments in visual arts and crafts in this country and abroad. In addition, forgework had largely disappeared from the curriculum of schools and teacher training institutions. The craft was static.⁵¹

In a letter to fellow BABA members requesting help with the Experimental Workshop and the V&A exhibition, Giuseppe Lund made some important points:

When I began to work with steel, it was with great astonishment that I noted how little enthusiasm there was for a material with so much potential. I discovered rapidly how ignorance had encouraged an almost snobbish distaste for the so called 'rustic' or 'retrospective' work of today's blacksmiths. The general opinion is that ironwork is either purely structural or an optional ornament. So rarely is a building or room designed with forged metal as part of the original concept. When it comes to new constructions we are an afterthought.⁵²

The development of blacksmithing in other, especially Continental, countries had been continuous, and it was part of the function of the exhibition to show work from prominent smiths from these countries. Lund himself had seen much of the work in Germany, and made the following comments:

Sadly, and primarily due to economics, the British Blacksmith has had little chance to experiment and develop upon the work of the past. It has been safer and less demanding to recreate well tried designs. In many other countries the development has never stood still and in consequence, design in forged work has moved at a similar pace to that of other materials and crafts. The work of such men as Kuhn, Bergmeister and Benetton has set us a great challenge but at the same time, the public attitude has not changed ... When the V&A exhibition is presented it would be tragic if the British Blacksmith cannot make a comparable show to that of Europeans and Americans.⁵³

As it turned out there was enough interesting British work of good quality, as David Petersen noted: "This exhibition must mark a 'birthday' or even a 'coming of age' celebration of the new vigorous movement of ironwork, which had the Hereford Conference as its first birthday."⁵⁴ Petersen felt that the exhibition didn't help to address the various arguments in the debate about Art and Craft one way or another:

What it did do for me was to focus upon the Blacksmithing excellence that clearly does exist both in Britain and elsewhere in the world. Some of this excellence accomplished its purpose, some did not. ... I did not think it a wise move to include sculpture in the exhibits. The sculpture whilst being well made was well below reaching anything like a comparable standard of such a magnificent exhibition of Blacksmithing.⁵⁵

In retrospect it probably was a good decision to include 'sculpture' in the exhibition as it prompted debate about the role of the artist blacksmith. There are many smiths who have described their work as sculptural, but few if any would describe their work as sculpture:

To speak of the sculptural qualities of steel is not to imply we are sculptors - very few of us would accept this as an epithet, but if we merely force the metal to comply with our graphic ideas then we are blinding ourselves to a wealth of decorative and functional characteristics of steel.⁵⁶

Richard Hughes noted that the work was least successful where the functional element was minimal or absent and that:

The sculpture in particular tended to be limited, and largely concerned with the elaboration of some very restricted formal themes; the work lacked the intensity and deeper sculptural concerns of a Gonzalez or a Chillida. The fanned-out flame-cut surfaces of Antonio and Simon Benetton for instance, fell too readily into the category of decorative pattern making. Perhaps the richest area of potential for the artist blacksmith remains, as it has been historically, rooted in its relation to architecture. Although the purely sculptural element of the craft will continue to have a place, I believe that if blacksmithing is to continue its revival, then its functional and architectural roots must not be neglected.⁵⁷

Hughes also noted the effect of the use of the power hammer, and that its use almost amounted to a style, which in turn had influenced hand hammer work. In the case of the smaller objects, he was less convinced that they were successful.⁵⁸ Hughes warned that the measure of artistic autonomy won by blacksmiths would be lost:

... all too soon if freedom of expression is not matched and tempered by a more detached appraisal of the role of the craft and the true worth of recent work. If blacksmithing is to have a healthy long term future then it must begin to rework its own tradition in contemporary terms.⁵⁹

The debates noted by Petersen, Lund and Hughes about the nature of the work of the blacksmith are still live in 1995, but have been addressed in the intervening years. The V&A exhibition *Towards a New Iron Age*, was perhaps the first national exhibition where issues other than those of tradition and technique were discussed by a wide range of interested parties. There is no doubt that because the exhibition was based in the V&A⁶⁰ and organised with the Crafts

Council that it attracted the attention of architects and others and resulted in a number of important architectural ironwork commissions from exhibitors.

Guiseppe Lund's comment about the sculptural qualities of steel, in retrospect, is perhaps nearer the mark than those of Petersen and Hughes about sculpture. The overwhelming majority of British smiths had only recently been introduced to the possibility of designing and making in other than 'traditional' styles - they were still 'in the sand pit' enjoying an exploration of the potential of iron and steel. The use of texture or deliberately allowing hammer marks to show was anathema to the traditionally-orientated smith, for whom a smooth surface was an indicator of skilled work. There were dark mutterings about 'metal bruising' and it is easy to recall numerous comments made at County Show exhibitions during the late 70s and early 80s about the 'BABA lot' and how they 'aren't proper blacksmiths, they can't forge weld or make proper scrolls' - what the 'BABA lot' were doing was what Hughes was exhorting them to do, engaging in a more detached appraisal of their work and the craft, and reworking traditions in the light of contemporary developments.

The Benettons' work was not, as Hughes had implied, about decorative pattern making, but it was important in opening the eyes of smiths to the potential of metal, new technology, and their own ideas. A number of important smiths, for example, Stuart Hill⁶¹ (figure 19) and Antony Robinson⁶² have been directly influenced by their work.



Figure 19. Firegrate by Stuart Hill, flame cut from mild steel plate, Fire and Iron Gallery, 1995.

Lund hoped that the V & A exhibition:

... could set in motion a 20th Century Renaissance for our craftsmen and erase the over - simplified idea that work is either traditional or sculptural. A true progression of ideas leaves no clear cut division between traditional and modern. To be 'modern' for its own sake can often lead to flippancy and gimmicks. Whatever our techniques, tools, designs, and personal fantasies, if we are to be respected, then a dedication to sensitive design and an intimate understanding and love for our metal is essential.⁶³

Some fifteen years after this was written it represents and predicts the prevailing mood amongst blacksmiths more accurately than comments by many others since that time. At that time Lund's comments were significantly ahead of most blacksmiths perceptions and because they found what he was saying hard to accept some friction resulted within BABA, and it was 1995 before he was to rejoin.

The demonstrations and lectures at the 1980 Hereford conference, the 1979 *Experimental Workshop*, and the 1982 Study Day at the V & A were at least as important as the V&A exhibition in terms of inspiring the work and reflection upon it amongst smiths - it was this package of events over three years that marked a new phase in British blacksmithing - Lund's renaissance did happen.

Essential building work had to be carried out on the ironwork gallery in the V&A which meant that it was closed to the public for a time until the summer of 1994. Although there was still a large section of the Gallery, and hence a large part of the collection, unavailable for

public viewing, the new western wing display was designed by John Ronayne, with Marian Campbell, the curator responsible for the collection. Shortly after the collection was re-opened, an important symposium, *From Foundry and Forge*, was held with sessions on 'The Museum's Collection and its context',⁶⁴ 'Hearth and Home',⁶⁵ 'Ironwork in the Built Environment',⁶⁶ and 'Ironwork in the Twentieth Century',⁶⁷ during 28 and 29 October 1994. The sessions, with the exception of the last, which included Albert Paley describing his own work and ideology, and Peter Parkinson who gave an overview of Design Themes in contemporary British Ironwork, did not address late 20th century practice. The symposium was effective in giving a selective overview of the importance, interest and developments in ironwork design and manufacture over the centuries between the mediaeval period and the present, and related very much to the content of the museum's collection.

There are a number of other museums and collections which include ironwork, but they deal with historical or heritage issues. Museums can provide source material relating to design and sometimes technique or materials, and have been important in providing inspiration and visual reference material. In concentrating, for either reasons of policy or budget, upon historical work, there can be little encouragement for the contemporary practitioner.

The V&A has been particularly important in the development of the artist blacksmith in Britain because it has taken action since the late

1970s in terms of involvement with contemporary practice through symposia, conferences, exhibitions, commissioning and experimental workshops. It has been this work, often in conjunction with the Crafts Council, that has helped to give what amounts to official or establishment recognition and encouragement to developments in contemporary ironwork. This has helped to create a climate for change, and would undoubtedly be approved by Henry Cole were he alive to see it.

The influence exerted by organisations and institutions upon the development of art blacksmithing was within the context of changes in the culture of craft, and the manner in which they were examined and communicated. The cultural and philosophical debates within craft culture, and in particular those which have had a direct or indirect effect upon the work of the artist blacksmith since the 1970s, are discussed in the following section.

¹ Amongst others.

² Temples of the Muses "L.f.Gk *mouseion* seat of the Muses (moussa)" Concise Oxford Dictionary, 6th Ed. 1976.

³ "Art collecting started with the Renaissance. The Middle Ages could not look at art *qua* art and could not collect art at such" Selig, Helmut. The Genesis of the Museum. *Architectural Review*, 141, 840, Feb. 1967, p. 103.

⁴ In the 17th century and during the 18th century, they began to become standard features, "... for example, the first great gallery of antiques in England, the Earl of Arundel's built before 1618" Ibid.

⁵ "... the whole conception of a special building in a public square to be devoted to art and learning is a conception of the Goethe period or the Humboldt period of the great period of *Bildung* with its faith in the educational, elevating power of the arts in the widest sense - including that is, the *beaux arts* as well as what comes under a faculty of arts." Ibid., p. 104.

⁶ The collection of the British Museum was at first housed in Montague house and so didn't have a building of its own. It may be that the government of the day didn't believe in the 'elevating' power of the museum, or it may have disagreed with the restrictions put on entry, but at any rate, they didn't wish to fund the building of the British Museum - the money was raised by a State lottery.

⁷ Charles Voysey, architect and designer, in an interview with The Studio in 1893 discussed this: "So far as it concerns the general public, it is curious to note how the mere accident of his material determines the popular recognition of an artist. Oil paintings and pictures generally are signed, books and musical compositions are also inseparably associated with their authors; but architectural works, and the whole mass of decorative designs, whether in carving, furniture, wallpapers, or the thousand and one applied arts, are entirely anonymous to the majority of people." Anon. An Interview With Mr. Charles F. Annesley Voysey, Architect and Designer. *The Studio*, 1, 6, Sept. 1893, p.229.

⁸ Pearce, Susan. Studying Museum Material and Collections. *Int. J. of Heritage Studies*, 1, 1, 1994 p. 30.

⁹ Ibid., p. 39

¹⁰ Mushroomed under 1980s 'enterprise culture'

¹¹ "Heritage Studies, under various names is rapidly cohering into a discipline in its own right. About twenty British Universities have programmes in heritage, sited in numerous departments, and in the USA thirty universities have programmes in Historic Preservation. The same is true elsewhere." Howard, Peter. The Heritage Discipline. Editorial, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 1, 1, 1994.

¹² As Fowler states: "Fragmentation of the academic vision of past time for popular consumption has disassociated chronology from the present. The nearest bit of past can, as cultivated heritage, be kept at a comfortable distance; it need not threaten... timeless visions of the past could be reflecting society itself as it too fragments in so many of its structures and activities. 'Each generation produces the history it needs' is cliché: so perhaps should be 'Society needs the history it generates.'" Fowler, Peter J. The Nature of the Times Deceas'd. *Int. J. of Heritage Studies*, 1, 1, 1994, p.6.

¹³ It was often the case that woodwork was offered at the same time by the same people, this forming the basis of the museum's architectural woodwork collection.

¹⁴ Marian Campbell, Asst. Keeper of Metalwork. Interview, V & A, 15.5.95

¹⁵ V&A unpublished internal document. *The Collecting Plan of the Metalwork Collection*. 1993, .p.1, section 1.1.

¹⁶ At present only printed.

¹⁷“Commissioning, in the history of metalwork from whatever country and culture, has played a vital role in the development of the craft. We can only achieve a representative survey of twentieth century developments, nationally and internationally, if we undertake a policy of commissioning prominent artists in their respective fields, many of whom work only to commission. Otherwise we can only expect a patchy and arbitrary representation of their work by relying on whatever emerges in the market in the distant future.” V&A unpublished internal document. *The Collecting Plan of the Metalwork Collection*. 1993. p.1, section 4.1.3.

¹⁸ Campbell, Interview, op. cit.

¹⁹ Horrobin, J., Victoria and Albert Museum Gates. *British Blacksmith* No.22, Feb., 1983, p.11.

²⁰ Ibid., p.12

²¹ Ibid., p.13. Photographs were taken on site, but proved unusable due to poor lighting.

²² Campbell, op. cit.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ V & A unpub. internal document. *Collecting Plan of the Metalwork Collection*, section 3.5, 1993.

²⁷ Strong, Sir Roy. Hooked on Heritage, *The Times*, London, 24 Sept. 1983. Also *Crafts* No. 66, Feb. 1984

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Crafts Advisory Council in its earlier manifestation.

³⁰ Anon. In Brief, exhibits for sale. *Crafts*, No. 1, March 1973, p. 9.

³¹ He was involved both with the Crafts Council and the Rural Development Commission, in addition to his own involvement in furniture.

³² Russell, Sir Gordon. Forward, exhibition catalogue, *The Craftsman's Art*. V&A, London, 15 March 1973. p. 5.

³³ Anon. The Craftsman's Art. *Crafts* No. 2, May/June 1973, p.41.

³⁴ Houston, John. Back to the Future. *Crafts*. Oct. 1989, p.32.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Frayling, Christopher. The Crafts. Introduction: concepts of 'craftsmanship' since the War. In *The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain, Volume 9, Modern Britain*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. p.174.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Including an overwhelming majority who shared the resentment of the popular image of 'the crafts' noted by Frayling

³⁹ Houston, 1989, op. cit., p. 33.

⁴⁰ It was perhaps the first *major* national multi-craft exhibition where a blacksmith's work was included.

⁴¹ After taking place in various locations, including the Devon County Show in Exeter, the annual summer exhibition took place for many years at Dartington Cider Press Centre - leading to the Dartington trustees turning it into a permanent craft gallery in the seventies, forcing the Devon Guild summer exhibition to take place in a school in Totnes for a few years before it found its own premises - perhaps a little uncharitable after the Guild had done the hard work. The Guild was centred around the Dartington area, until it moved to its current premises in Bovey Tracey. This was essentially because many of the prominent early members were living and working in the area. The philosophy and selection procedures were firmly based upon the production of modern work - when provided with facilities by the Elmhursts at Dartington Bernard Leach became a member for a number of years and influenced the thinking of many members of the Guild, including Neil Hawkins, a founder member.

- Crafts council. Exhibition Catalogue, *The Maker's Eye*. 1981, p. 102.
- Anon. Craftsmanship - five Study Days. *Farriers' Journal* No. 954, Feb. 1980, p. 15 (advance notice of the study days).
- Strong, Sir Roy. Preface to the exhibition catalogue, *Towards a New Iron Age*. V & A London, May 12th - July 10th 1982.
- Chatwin, Amina. *Into The New Iron Age: Modern British Blacksmiths*. Coach House Publishing, Cheltenham, 1995, p.37.
- Anon. *New Ironwork: a programme of events commencing May 1982*. V&A publication. 1981.
- The Companions of Duty. Essentially an amalgam of craft trade guilds relating to building. Ironwork is dealt with by the locksmithing (serrurier) sections. The compagnons have, throughout France, accommodation and training facilities for apprentices and journeymen. An apprentice may qualify at the end of a period of study, but rarely, can complete the second stage, where they work at various locations in France, occasionally other countries to become a respected Compagnon du Tour de France. Serruriers are trained in traditional blacksmithing and locksmithing techniques, but there has been recently an increasing emphasis upon working as a designer maker or artist blacksmith, such as Daniel Souriou or his former apprentice, 'sculpteur forgeron' Serge Marshal, who had been trained at the Nîmes house of the Compagnons. Ref. Hawkins, Neil. Winston Churchill Fellowship Report: *Recent Developments in the Practice of Blacksmithing and Farriery in France and Germany*. 1987.
- *The British Grate Exhibition*.
- Lund, Giusseppe. email interview. 16.5.96.
- Margrie, Victor, Director of the Crafts Council. Forward to the exhibition catalogue *Towards a New Iron Age*. V & A, May 12 - July 10, 1982, p. 7.
- Pearce-Higgins, Caroline. Op. cit.
- Lund, Guiseppe. A letter from Guiseppe Lund concerning an Experimental Workshop in connection with the 1981 Victoria and Albert Museum Exhibition. *British Blacksmith* No. 3, Nov. 1979, p. 18.
- Ibid.
- Petersen, David. A Personal View of the "Towards a New Iron Age Exhibition", *British Blacksmith* No. 20, October 1982, p.
- Ibid.
- Lund, op. cit., Nov. 1979, p. 18.
- Hughes, Richard. *Towards a New Iron Age*. *Crafts*, Sept./Oct. 1982, p. 51.
- "... the detail that arises out of the techniques of working is out of scale with the pieces themselves. Details which can be absorbed into the visual fabric of items on the scale of a fire basket or gate tend to be very obtrusive in the smaller items, leaving the raw material exposed and unrefined. One is too aware of the technique and fails to see a coherent form." Ibid. , p.50.
- Ibid. p. 51.
- Later it toured various locations in the USA.
- His fire grate in the exhibition, catalogue number 50 was formed from steel plate , which had been flame cut in the same way as the Benetton's sculptural pieces.
- He noted in a talk given at the Ironbridge conference of BABA in 1994 the profound influence of the Benetton.
- Lund, Nov. 1979, op. cit., p. 18.
- Campbell, M. *Ironwork and the V&A*; Stratton, M. *The Technology and Artistry of wrought and cast iron*; Geddes, J. *Mediaeval ironwork in Europe*; Jackson-Stops, G. *English decorative ironwork and its French sources*.
- Fox, C. *The battle of the railings*; Himmelheber, G. *Iron Furniture*; Wedd, K. *The fireplace: heating and cooking*.

⁶⁸ Thorne, R. *The iron revolution in 19th century architecture*; Stamp, G. *George Gilbert Scott and Alexander Thompson*; Harris, R. *Conservation of historic ironwork*; Baty, P. *The uses of colour in ornamental and architectural ironwork, 1660-1930*; Howell, P. *Francis Skidmore of Coventry and his church ironwork*.

⁶⁹ Bosomworth, D. *Art nouveau ironwork*; Paley, A. *From jewellery to architectural ornamentation and public sculpture: the work of Albert Paley*; Parkinson, P. *Design themes in contemporary British ironwork*.

4. Crafts Culture and the Artist Blacksmith.

Designing and making are at the core of much of the 20th-century debate within the crafts. Separate or combined these activities are seen to be distinguishing features of objects and practitioners.

Defining values and roles they ultimately determine the cultural location of the crafts.

From the arts and crafts debate of the late 19th- and early 20th-century, to the design for industry concerns of the 1930s to 1960s, it is the crafts as art, design and manufacture, which have claimed attention since the 1970s. Part of the post-industrial and post-modernist debate that has examined self-sufficiency objectives, the crafts have been reconsidered in terms of 'craft culture' and their position within contemporary culture. It is important that the relationship of the primary issues of this debate to the positioning of the work of artist blacksmiths are fully understood.

In the second edition of *Crafts* magazine of April 1973, Marigold Coleman's editorial briefly outlined some of the major issues with which the journal would address over the next twenty years; the position of the crafts vis a vis art; the relationship between machine and hand production; the humanising value of the crafts; the business of learning or mastering a craft; the anonymity, or otherwise, of makers and the economic imperative. It was an agenda that had been followed since the beginning of the 20th-century. Framed by middle-

class and upper-class taste, it was the crafts for domestic consumption rather than for industry that had formed the core of an ideology emanating out of the arts and crafts movement. The principles of practice had less to do with style, than the relationship between materials and makers, generating a craft culture that defined the object as art and the maker as artist-craftsperson. In this respect the debate distanced itself from the crafts that were absorbed into the new industries, most noticeably in the transfer of skills from carriage building and the work of the wheelwright to the coachbuilding of the motor car.

4.1. Rural Identity

The question, 'What is craft?', and the supplementary issue of how it differs from industry and from art, have exercised the minds of writers on the crafts movements of the 20th-century, and increasingly so since the early 1970s. It is perhaps a reflection of the uncertain position of the crafts - and particularly in its early days, of the Crafts Council itself - that there has been so much debate about cultural place. This was certainly the case in the 1920s. On the one hand was the desire to save 'the crafts' as a rural industry, and on the other a ridicule for those who sought to escape the modern life into the nostalgia for rural England. Intent on projecting the crafts as integral to contemporary society it is not surprising that the Crafts Council has been keen to dissociate itself from the rural image of the crafts, seeing it as incompatible with the need for them to be value and ideology led. It is a complex issue that remains unresolved. Tony

Ford, Director of the Crafts Council, writing in 1989 commented that in earlier times many people he knew entered the crafts as an escape from capitalism and rampant materialism, but later saw that impulse as a little false, as crafts will inevitably fall into the luxury market. More recent entrants were seen as being more positive in taking up craft because of its expressive potential.¹

4.2. Hand-made

Frayling and Snowdon noted that craftspeople they interviewed were keen to distance themselves from the image of being folksy alternative people who have opted out.² Ranson noted, however, that most craft workers have rejected the dominant values of modern society and hold:

... essentially expressive orientations towards work. They place a high priority on creative production. Many also hope for opportunities of self-expression in their work, and some seek for public recognition. Most craftsmen have a strong moral involvement in what they do, and for most work has high saliency and provides role enhancement. And, for the majority of craftsmen, work has symbolic significance.³

Craft as work, distinguished by the skill of hand-made, is a dominant element in the philosophy of the crafts. It is work seen as the fusion of intellect and eye, hand and head.

The crafts - and this clearly includes the work of the blacksmith - are not yet regarded by all but a small minority as intellectual⁴ and therefore worthy, or associated strongly with art, and therefore of high status. As Freeman has noted:

The crafts continue to carry low status among the arts as a whole. And

among the visual arts they are still the poor relations, unable to offer a significant challenge to the dominance and prestige of the fine arts.⁵

In the longer term, however, the development and testing of occupational ideologies is likely to lead to a stronger intellectual basis for the crafts generally, and blacksmithing in particular.

There is a strong link in people's minds between hand-made and well-made:

People find a link with traditional values in the crafts; values which are lacking in other areas of life. We may mock the arrogation of the word 'craft' by advertisers of mass-produced ware but at least they know, even when they set out to exploit, that customers *want* to believe that things are well made; people want reassurance.⁶

Frayling and Snowdon writing in *Crafts* noted that the word 'crafted' is one which is used to "...beguile as well as inform"⁷ - being used as a substitute for 'manufactured' in an attempt to mislead buyers into thinking that the product has been made in a careful old fashioned way. With craft identified as hand-made, and hand-made linked to the integrity of the maker, there is a sense in which craft becomes the shorthand for the guaranteed quality of the product. For the craftsperson's work to be regarded as shoddy is a personal insult, since so much of their self-image is invested in, and represented by, the product. The craftsperson may regard their work as a symbolic embodiment of their own lifestyle or philosophy. In contrast, the production of a manufacturing company is much more anonymous and faults can be ascribed to 'temporary problems with production', for example.

4.3. A new aesthetic.

As writers such as Herbert Read, Noel Carrington and Anthony Bertram, set out to articulate an aesthetic for the machine product and everyday object, so developed a wide ranging discussions on the beauty of industrial and craft productions and the role of the artist and craftsman. *The Studio's* Editor noted in 1934 that:

The business of the artist is to create things of beauty. The business of the craftsman is to create an object of use capable of performing its function reliably. The combination of the two is an altogether desirable one, though not easily obtainable. In Great Britain we incline to the latter - to craftsmanship.⁸

Locating craft as art took on a renewed urgency. Although intent on securing the position of pottery, the works and writings of Leach had a wider significance for the repositioning of the crafts in general.

4.4. The exhibition piece.

Objects or bodies of work by craft workers which have been subjected to judgment, have a cultural value and position apart from any economic value, although these judgments often affect economic value. To have shown a piece of work in an exhibition could be thought to be of more value than to have made a piece for a private client, because it has received greater exposure to value judgment.

This tends to establish that a piece of work, regardless of how well it is designed or made, has more value if it has been displayed in a gallery rather than a shop. Bernard Leach, for example, was obsessive about the pot as an art object and how this related to economic value.

This is craft as the manufacture of the 'object product' where their

value is more as cultural icons, or embodiments of the maker's philosophy, than as utilitarian objects. For exhibited craftwork, its iconic or narrative value is important in determining price. Noticeably, blacksmiths have been attempting to enhance the value of their work through exhibitions, even though it might be confused with sculpture, which may also be shown.

It is interesting to speculate on the distinctions that are drawn if the craft product as 'cultural icon' is evaluated as art, or as utensil/appliance. Craft critics seem to have steered clear of objective assessment as an adjunct to conventional criticism. This may be because making a categorical assessment of someone's work and working practices is potentially difficult and time consuming, whereas making comments in an article based upon undirected experience is likely to be simpler and quicker.

In a sense, assessment is the first stage of the commissioning process,⁹ where the decision is made about the potential suitability of the maker. The second stage may be one of empathy for the work, the maker, or their ideology - an emotional reaction, essentially. The third stage then is one of commitment or decision making - 'closing the deal' in sales terms.¹⁰ Craft criticism's categories help with stage one, create a climate for the development of stage two, and have little or no impact upon stage three. If, as the Crafts Council hopes, craft criticism is to have an increased impact upon the economics of craft, then writers may in future have to address function, intention, cost

and manufacturing methods in addition to historical factors.

4.5. Making.

This critical realignment, alongside the questioning of the industrial, rural, traditional contexts for the crafts in general has been an essential prerequisite for the development of the artist blacksmith. It is a move that has been heavily dependent on the culture of making.

As Sir Misha Black has said about craftwork:

The aesthetic quality of handicraft arises from its individuality, from the direct personal contact between the maker and the materials which he manipulates, from its capacity to reflect the personality of the craftsman, and, through him, the human qualities of... society.¹¹

For craftwork to gain a strong and unique cultural place, then it will need to be regarded not as a sub-set of art, agriculture, building or manufacture, but as having its own unique character, values and ideologies. In too closely emulating the critical, promotional and educational structures of art, the opportunity to develop a unique cultural place may be lost through confusion, association and dissipation. The work of art is often to publicly comment upon or highlight the mental and social aspects of the human condition. The work of craft, as its products are in the main utilitarian, comment upon the making process, the personal ideology of the maker and the physical relationship with making and the material.

Dormer has argued that, because craft knowledge is difficult and time consuming to acquire, this is irritating to intellectuals who feel that

they would like to participate in a craft.

The first move in the intellectual's stripping out of the craft from art in order to appropriate art for themselves is, of course, to downgrade the craft element¹². The second stage is to uncouple 'creativity' from 'craft'.¹³

If an attempt is to be made to elevate the perceived status of the work of the blacksmith by emulating the culture of art, it is necessary to engage in critical debate and discussion; both of which have been conspicuously lacking in writing about ironwork. The kind of criticism required is that which puts work into an appropriate contextual and conceptual framework, decodes it and aids understanding.

Lucie-Smith noted in 1982 that the crafts were gaining intellectual respectability, and that a 'craft hierarchy' had begun to emerge - there were 'names' whose work was seen in terms of 'periods' - rather in the same way as artists were described. This respectability was seen to threaten:

...one of the advantages that fine art still had over their rivals - the advantage of what one might call historical legitimacy, a place in the main line of cultural development and descent.¹⁴

4.6. Design.

In regarding craft as design, the intuitive or subjective relationship with the material is distanced and there is an increased emphasis upon function. The breakdown of modernism involved the weakening and disintegration of the rule that form was to follow function, and of accepted aesthetic rules and norms. The advent of post modernist ideas and sentiments has been instrumental in the revival of the

decorative arts in general, and blacksmithing in particular since the 1970s.

In making a *design* there is an assumption that the material's qualities are known in sufficient detail to predict that the design will work visually or structurally. Design works best as an iterative activity where the intention can be honed and improved. Tacit skills become more important if the nature of the material and process are not easily predictable, as in the case of blacksmithing, where skill is required to judge the correct working temperatures. This temperature judgment is based mainly upon the colour of the material, but it may be affected by variations in the material or external conditions, such as when using wrought iron or stainless steel instead of mild steel, or by lighting conditions in the forge or studio. Tacit knowledge may also be important in the development of designs when the design intention is formed during the making process.

It is the combination of utilitarian function and decorative function which characterises much of contemporary blacksmithing. It is a tendency amongst the blacksmiths to 'structure the decoration, rather than decorate the structure', making objects decorative, rather than decorated, in a response to the nature of the material, the process, the site and the design brief. David Pye discussed the concept of useless work at length in a chapter of his book *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design*,¹⁵ and noted that:

Workmanship is very largely useless work and, in the West at least, has seldom been recognised for the art it is. It has never been easy to

say where workmanship begins and design ends, for the simple reason that workmanship is design.¹⁶

In the first edition of *The Studio* in 1893 in an article entitled 'Artists as Craftsmen', it was said that:

Yet although a craftsman is rightly held to be the actual worker, we may strain the sense a little for our purpose and permit the designer for various definite industries, one who has mastered the technical requirements of the process, to be included among the craftsmen, whether he really sets the tesserae together for mosaic panels, cuts and fits the coloured glass for windows, or merely provides working drawings, and is content with experiments sufficient to thoroughly master his material, leaving its ultimate fashioning to be carried out by other hands.¹⁷

A distinction was drawn, therefore, between designers as makers and those designing for making.

Yanagi has differentiated between the work of the artist craftsman and the folk craft worker, and noted the qualities which both share. Intimacy, the relationship between beauty and function, the role of personality, and the relationship with the needs of the user were cited, as: "Apart from use and the people there is no meaning in either craftsmanship or its beauty."¹⁸ It may be that this rather delicate and respectful relationship between the maker, their products and the user, is only possible in a pre-industrial society, but the links are increasingly important to present day craftspeople.

The question of whether the crafts are *about* functional objects or not is an important one. Peter Dormer has addressed this issue in his

book, *The Art of the Maker* and has listed four categories of operation within the crafts:

Functional, Representational, Figurative, and Self-referential. ... Functional craft is designed for practical use ... a market exists for well-designed, handmade, useful items, especially in ceramics, glass and furniture. Representational craft ... includes all kinds of craft objects that resemble objects but whose aim is to be decorative ... They aspire to sculpture while keeping the look of a familiar object: they are domestic art. Figurative crafts include all forms of figure and animal and nature studies in two and three dimensions. Self-referential crafts ... are neither functional or figurative, nor do they represent anything - they are art objects whose meaning needs further elaboration in a catalogue or a caption ... one also finds objects that are abstract and sculptural and have no encoded 'meaning'¹⁹ Dormer's classification seems useful in general terms, but excludes two very important components of the matrix of approaches - the relationship with materials and methods, and pragmatic business considerations.

Whether craftwork is produced through an organised design approach or is in essence expressive, the relationship of the maker with the material is the key factor in determining quality, either in terms of enjoyment or critical appraisal. Texture and surface finish are often identifying factors in craft products; their relationship to the object or product as a whole being important. Walker advocates the combination of 'micro-complexity' and 'macro-simplicity' as an elegant, simple form may be best in environmental terms,²⁰ for example, to aid disassembly. In the case of a gate, it may be appropriate, if Walker's advice is followed, to make the outside frame relatively simple, with bold, 'readable' outlines and recognisable parts; then on approach the complexity of the decoration in terms of the

formal elements would become more apparent, then upon closer inspection the nature of the material and the working processes might be emphasised by the expressive character of the individual elements and the surface finish applied to them. This should result in an object that retains interest on a number of levels and at various distances. David Pye has also suggested that design can enrich the environment by paying heed to the way in which the eye moves between the focusing on tiny details and taking a view of the overall object. So to be fully satisfying to the eye, design must satisfy it at a number of visual ranges.

4.7. Materials and skill.

The notion that the form of the object should respect the characteristics of the materials employed has a long history, from the writings of Vitruvius, through Ruskin and Morris, to the present.²¹ In responding to the nature of materials and their potential to sustain forms, makers have often operated at the mechanical or stylistic limits of their craft. Blacksmiths have at times fallen prey to this tendency and produced forced or over-exuberant forms. However, the best work involves a regard for the characteristics of the material.

Although kinds of form may become fashionable across a number of material areas, the nature of the material and the processes employed to exploit it often determine how successfully the style can be realised. The decorative styles of Baroque and Art Nouveau fitted the techniques and materials of blacksmithing well, whereas the nature of

modernism largely precluded its use - no doubt because of this association with decoration and ornament. As J. A. R. Stevenson mused in his book, *The Din of the Smithy*, in 1936: "I used to wonder why it always seemed to be more difficult to design simply than to design complicatedly."²²

The relationship between the skills of making and designing is a delicate one, linked to the ability of the maker to realise their intentions. Skill in manufacture, material selection, design, communication, analysis and business, are all part of the mix which determines the success of an individual or their work, but the focus within the crafts has been upon making skills. These making skills and the maker's relationship with their material are at the core of craftwork, being both tacit and selfconscious.

Knowledge or skill may be either rule-bound via practice or training, or related to the maker's own framework of experiences. In both cases skills are developed as a combination of patterns of operation, timing, control, and the use and interpretation of sensory feedback, such as kinesthetic, visual, aural, and tactile. Work takes the form of a series of feedback loops²³ where an action is taken, its effect assessed, then an appropriate follow up action is taken in response to the first one. In the case of the skilled or knowledgeable person the number of feedback cycles to complete an intention are likely to be fewer because actions and decisions are more effective. This economy and effectiveness of effort are amongst the most admired aspects of the

work of the best makers.

If a number of craft products are to be produced then the first few will require selfconscious work combined with tacit skills. When the making process is known and practiced, the activity moves to being less self-conscious and more tacit. The production of multiple examples of objects or components is a feature of the training in many crafts, and blacksmithing apprenticeships are no exception.

The cultural and economic importance of a work is not determined, *de jure*, by the skill of the maker, but form, or constructional accuracy and variation from intention *will* be affected. Often, variation is lauded as a virtue of the hand-made. If it is not to be merely serendipitous, then the variations are best produced by a more skilled maker. Peter Fuller noted that:

There is now growing recognition that achievement in any art (or craft) requires as a *sine qua non*, acquisition of skills, and of real knowledge. Of course these things in themselves are not enough. Imagination and originality are certainly essential. ... But, as Donald Winnicott once put it, 'There can be no originality except on the basis of tradition'. To which I would add, there can be no freedom without mastery.²⁴

Makers may have achieved what they intended in an exemplary manner, but what they intended may not be of importance. In discussing importance, Ernst Gombrich has asserted that there *can* be absolute values in art or craft, and voiced his discontent with critical relativism: "The 'intentionalist fallacy'... which insists that the real measure of the work of art, or in this case craft, is simply what the

artist intended to do.”²⁵

The separation of the maker’s ‘craft knowledge’ from their ‘craft skill’²⁶ was seen by many as being complete by the end of the 19th century, by which time the Arts and Crafts movement was working against this and trying to reintegrate them.

Later, in the first decade of the 20th century, there were those, such as W. R. Lethaby, concerned with the application of craft principles to education, who:

... by first stressing the didactic and therapeutic value of craftwork - paved the way for the present day belief that craft producers have a special value in that they express the individual personality of the maker in a direct unmediated way that is impossible in the case of work - even handwork - undertaken at second hand.²⁷

In writing about various perceptions of skill, Frayling and Snowdon note that there are those with Arts and Crafts sympathies who see problems in making any clear distinction between thinking and making. Also, they noted that there is a contrasting view that the quality of *thought* is what matters and that the making, a merely mechanical skill, is of “an altogether different and lower order of skill.”²⁸

The second argument is difficult to sustain, unless it is proposed both that thinking is a skill, and that making is always tacit or lacking in a reflective component. It is easy to conform to the establishment view that thinking²⁹ is somehow better than making and its association with

'trade'.

There are clearly a number of elements of skill in the craft process, all linked to intention and context. The trainee in a particular technique or craft is aspiring to achieve *control* over what they are doing; so that the ability to produce a number of identical or at least very similar items might be considered a skilled activity. Another kind of skill, open to the more experienced worker is that of choosing the best technique to produce a given effect, or *judgment*. Judgment might include emphasising or subduing the evidence of hand work, for example, showing hammer marks or making a smooth surface. The third aspect might be described as *timing*, which could be considered as a component or aspect of *control* and *judgment*. Timing may be divided into fixed and variable approaches, where forging is an example of a variable approach, and the setting of the speed of a lathe to achieve a given quality of finish might be regarded as an example of a fixed approach. Much of the appeal of work in plastic materials is linked to the dynamic quality achieved by adjusting the speed at which actions may take place - in the hot working of metal, for example. The blacksmith requires good control over the speed, weight and direction of hammer blows, allied to the choice and use of tool or surface used as a reactor against them.

Part of the difficulty of forging is taking account of the way in which hot material shrinks and becomes less plastic as it cools. Different thicknesses cool at different rates, and when holes are being punched,

for example, contraction has to be accounted for to prevent tools from jamming. In the case of hammer marks on forged metal, it is more difficult to produce a smooth surface, than one which shows evidence of hammering. The less skilled worker may accept that they are unable to produce a smooth surface, indeed they may prefer it, as it shows evidence of hand working and the plastic nature of the material.

The quality of making, and therefore expression, in craftwork requires skill of both careful and dynamic kinds, as is appropriate to the intention and the market. Even in careful making, there will be some inaccuracies, particularly in the case of handwork. As David Pye has written: "There may be nothing of chance about the design of the work but there must be about its execution."³⁰

Dynamic, time-based control, is less easily reproducible, than the careful, dimensionally accurate kind, though not necessarily less skillful. This kind of dynamic virtuosity is highly regarded in both Japanese calligraphic work and art blacksmithing.

Practice in careful skills may aid work in dynamic skills or vice versa, but there is no doubt that 'careful' virtuosity is more often admired by lay observers than expressionistic virtuosity, which can often be confused with roughness and a lack of care or skill. Dormer, after first noting that he disagreed with her views, discussed Alison Britton's working philosophy, where she asserted that the main responsibility

of the artist craftsperson is:

‘the skillful achievement of relevance’... crafts are, like art itself, useless - mass production and the industrial designer have made it irrelevant for the craft movement to hold on to function as the core of its work ... because technology gives us smooth finishes, it is part of craft’s oppositional role to adopt the rough aesthetic.³¹

The rough aesthetic has been adopted by makers in many crafts, sometimes skillfully applied, sometimes in terms of an expressive naivete, but it can communicate very well the nature and qualities³² of the material.³³

There is a skill in recognising when a piece of work has ‘worked’ or achieved an appropriate visual balance and character³⁴. Sometimes this can be assessed as the piece is made, and aspects of the making adjusted, sometimes it has to be left to the operation of a machine to achieve the desired effect, such as the firing of pottery in a kiln.

Bernard Leach was not remarkably skilled in making, but had a good ‘eye’ for a piece and in conversations over a period in the late 1950s and early 60s³⁵ during the early years of the Devon Guild of Craftsmen, stressed the importance, for him, of making a large number of similar pots and then selecting the best one or two for an exhibition.³⁶ This is much more easily done where batches of similar pieces are made, as is often the case with ceramic work, rather than blacksmithing or furniture, where the production of many similar items would be excessively time consuming, and in any case the influence of chance factors such as the effect of a particular glaze recipe is less.

As craft skill is linked to intention, then a good craftsperson may or may not have a repertoire of competences in techniques which exceeds that which they require. In terms of the work in hand, any skills which are not key to achieving the intended result are redundant, though perhaps only temporarily. A wide repertoire of techniques may allow the maker to achieve a wider range of intended results, but that in itself may not be relevant to the individual's work. The possession of redundant skills or techniques is no guarantee of holding the moral, commercial, or artistic high ground. Traditional smiths have found this hard to accept, although they may be respected for their mastery of technique. In anything other than heritage terms this mastery may be no longer relevant. As Deanna Petherbridge, noting Theodore Adorno's views, commented:

The technique of a work is determined by its problems and the paradoxical task it poses objectively for itself. It is against this foil alone that technique can be assessed as adequate or inadequate.³⁷

An economic aspect of the development of making skills is that there may often be little difference between the accuracy of work of a trainee and a more experienced maker, but there may be great differences in terms of speed and better decision making about the degree of control or accuracy to apply. The inexperienced or less skilled maker may do unnecessary or inappropriate work and achieve no more of the intended effect or function. John Hagan, who had worked as a smith throughout his working life, in a letter to the Editor of *British Blacksmith* gave his view of what constituted a good blacksmith.

To my idea, being a good smith is all about time, for they say that time is money and it's even more so in the smithing trade. I came into the craft when piece work was on the way out, but to my mind that's the true test of a smith's skill.³⁸

In craft work, therefore, there may be two major types of skill; the first linked to economic factors, the skill of efficiency; and the second, the ability to put into form an idea, the skill of expression.

4.8. Criticism and categories of practice

It would be easy to regard work in the crafts as a form of escape from the rigours and pressures of trade, however, an adequate capacity to do business is essential in order to earn a living. Business practice within the crafts may take a number of forms depending upon the quantity and quality of work, the market sector and the cultural positioning of the maker.

In practice, whether craft work is fashion-conscious or based upon other approaches depends upon the maker and the market for their wares. In producing items for sale, makers need to have making skills, a knowledge of making and a background knowledge which enables them to put their work into an appropriate critical or commercial framework. The distinction identified by Michael Oakeshott³⁹ and much discussed in design theory publications, between 'knowing that' or formal knowledge and 'knowing how' or tacit, practical knowledge, is particularly important. It would be mistaken to assume that all craft work conforms to a standard relationship between these two.

There may be several modes of working within the manufacture and planning of a single object, and it may not be possible to describe or explain the changes or the events taking place accurately. In the case of a complex product, there will be many possible alternative solutions, all capable of fulfilling the requirements of the brief from a functional viewpoint, but the chosen solution is likely to be clearly based upon the characteristics of the maker. There is potential for individual expression within the confines of a brief, but without information from the maker, especially about intention, the quality of the decisions may not be assessed.⁴⁰ The selfconscious maker isn't selfconscious throughout the entire designing and making process, and neither is the unselfconscious one entirely so.

Although the artist blacksmith has taken advantage of links with fine art, they have also engaged with industrialism. Many take a pragmatic, business-orientated view of using industrial techniques, not normally ruling out techniques on ideological grounds, as their concern is more with the quality of the result, than the culture of making.

There is no doubt that modern smiths are concerned with economic and efficient production through an appropriate use of equipment; but much store is set by hand work and the use of suitable traditional forging techniques. It can be argued that the blacksmith engages in a variety of modes of practice which link art, craft and industry in a seamless manner. The artifice in the blacksmith's art is to know what

the requirements of the customer or market are, and how this relates to the imperatives of economic manufacture.

John Makepeace and Patrick Reyntiens identified three kinds of craftsperson: the person who, dissatisfied with working in industry, wanted to work in an area which gave a greater sense of personal satisfaction; the ex-art-student who knows what happens in a studio, and is more concerned with aesthetics; and the rarer third type who has had an apprenticeship in the craft, and turns out to be an excellent maker, but is less concerned with design.⁴¹

Speaking at 'The Crafts in Question' at the ICA in 1985 Paul Filmer identified: "...three levels of craft activity: the artist craftsperson, the journeyman craftsperson and the amateur."⁴² This classification, however, doesn't rest easy with the practical reality, or inform as to the quality of work or commitment of the individual. One who may be classed as an amateur blacksmith may be one of the finest exponents of a particular technique, style, or way of working. The amateur members of BABA, as in many other craft organisations, are crucial to it, and take on many of the organisational roles, as well as contributing important work to exhibitions and events. Amateurism is therefore a sure sign *only* of economic independence from the craft, and not a measure of the individual importance to it. Amateurism is often associated with a less serious approach, which in practice may be unfair, as the amateur may be forced to earn their living in other ways for reasons beyond their control.

Pamela Johnson also argued that it would be helpful if the contrasting approaches to craftwork were categorised: "Craft is the only cultural practice where the professional and amateur spheres are so totally confused."⁴³ In fact the confusion is more complex, for there are also the crafts of trade, industry and art to be taken into account, and in the case of the artist blacksmith it is evident that all three approaches are brought to bear on the practice.

Therefore, craft definitions applied through conventional critical structures have distorted the view of contemporary practice. It is inappropriate to simply apply the Arts and Crafts tradition, the language of the applied and decorative arts, or that of design for industry without addressing the unity of practice which artist blacksmiths represent.

It would be perhaps best to classify according to a matrix of professional status, ideological stance and mixture of work practices. A linear or two-dimensional matrix will inevitably exclude important categories and appear to introduce unhelpful and artificial hierarchies. The system used by the BABA members handbook has evolved as a means of addressing the classification issue, and it assists the reader in deciding what sort of individual or business they are dealing with. The categories include: amateur, professional, apprentice/student; design to commission, restoration; willingness to provide work experience or take on trainees; specialist skills, for example.

The Arts and Crafts movement provided a basis, earlier in the century, for the making and communication of work. Following from this the 'home crafts' and DIY have influenced attitudes to 'workshop crafts' where a combination of mending and making may take place. The working environment and its culture have been important factors in shaping the perception of the artist blacksmith, and in particular the relatively slow acceptance of the value of new work. It is only by distancing their work ideologically from workshop crafts and associating with the culture of art and the decorative arts, that it has been possible to achieve suitable recognition and acclaim in the period since the late 1970s.

It is the belated entry of blacksmithing into the late 20th century cultural landscape, allied to increased international communication and the assimilation of modern working practices, which have been key elements in the development of the artist blacksmith in the UK since the 1970s. An important part of these developments has been the emulation, along with other craft sectors, of the culture of fine art. In order to progress further there is a requirement to develop a unique craft culture which will stand up to scrutiny in its own right and not be regarded as the 'poor cousin' of fine art.

Artist blacksmiths' work demonstrates a unique relationship between function, process, ideology and economics, and is not assessed accurately or fairly by critical structures based upon that of art, where the intention of the artist is the measure which dominates. The

artist blacksmith's work depends for its success upon optimising the relationship between intention, ideology and practical factors related to client needs and resources. Whilst it has been essential to the revival of blacksmithing that it should associate with art and with craftwork in general, their critical structures have been unable accurately to recognise the value and importance of work which might variously be considered art, craft, trade, or industry.

In order to illustrate the ways in which a variety of practices have developed from a number of traditions, the following section discusses the work of a series of representative individuals. They have all been affected by developments within the cultural and philosophical debate in the crafts and by the various organisations and institutions discussed in the preceding sections, by varying degrees. Later sections discuss general issues arising from the work of these and other individuals.

¹ Ford, Tony. Person to Person. *Crafts*, October 1989, p. 18.

² Frayling, C. & Snowdon, H. The Myth of the Happy Artisan. *Crafts* No. 54, Jan/Feb. 1982, p. 17.

³ Ranson, Brian. Craftwork, Ideology and Craft Life Cycle. *J. of Design History*, 2, 2 & 3, 1989, p. 90.

⁴ "The fine art world has a long tradition of historical writing going back to Alberti. By contrast the craft world is still dominated by DIY books and remained deeply marked by the absence of intellectual debate." Freeman, June. The Discovery of the Commonplace or the Establishment of an Elect: Intellectuals in the Contemporary Craft World. *J. of Design History*. 2 & 3 1989, p. 65.

⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶ Dormer, P. Dyed in the Wool. *Crafts* No. 69, August 1984, p.12.

⁷ Frayling, C. and Snowdon, op. cit., p.16.

⁸ The Editor. *The Studio*. op. cit., p. 236.

⁹ Buying a craft work, rather than commissioning one, involves a slightly different set of decisions, as the price, form, location, context, etc. for the object are already established. However, the same *kind* of decisions will be made about the purchase.

¹⁰ In many respects this is similar to the stages which would be expected to occur in any kind of negotiating process.

¹¹ Blake, Avril, Ed.. *The Black Papers on Design*. Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 201.

¹² He noted that there seemed to be three main stages in the intellectual sleight of hand: "... when it comes to craft issues. The first is to begin by trying to take the learning of the craft seriously. The second is the realisation that learning the craft is going to require much more time (and humility) than first envisaged. The third stage, because their own efforts are, understandably, not very good, is to dismiss the craft element as 'sterile and rule bound' and claim as more expressive their 'freer' efforts. An additional stage is then to publish a book, the function of which is to provide wordy meanings of their art work and also to provide a theoretical basis for their rejection of the craft." Dormer, p. *The Art of the Maker*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1994, p.65.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Lucie-Smith, Edward. *For Better or Worse*. *Crafts* No.54, Jan./Feb. 1982, p.14.

¹⁵ He notes that the design is incomplete in information terms and doesn't indicate how the object is manifested, and in particular the quality of the surface finish. The finish in particular generally being achieved via useless workmanship, since the surface quality is an aesthetic rather than strictly functional requirement. Pye, David. *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design*. Herbert Press, 1983, p.79.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Anon. Artists as Craftsmen. No. 1. Sir Frederic Leighton, Bart., P.R.A., as a Modeller in Clay. *The Studio*, 1, 1, April 1893, p.3.

¹⁸ Yanagi, S. The Unknown Craftsman. *Crafts* No.2. May/June 1973, p.43.

¹⁹ Dormer, 1994, op. cit., p. 37.

²⁰ Walker, S. The Environment, Product Aesthetics and Surface. *Design Issues*, 11, 3, Autumn 1995, p.24.

²¹ Lambert, Susan. *Form Follows Function*. V&A, London, 1993, p. 31.

²² Stevenson, J. A. R. *The Din of the Smithy*. Cambridge University Press, London, 1936, p.20.

²³ By an appropriate combination of sensation, knowledge and mental ability (specific mental aptitudes for the kind of thinking required to recognise and decide upon the nature and effect of the action which has taken place and the action which is required to get nearer to the intended result.).

²⁴ Fuller, P. Fabric and Form. *Crafts* No.59, Dec. 1982, pp. 43-44.

²⁵ Lucie-Smith, Edward. Absolute Standards (conversation with Sir Ernst Gombrich). *Crafts* April, 1992, p.29.

²⁶ Frayling, C. & Snowdon, H. op. cit., p.21.

²⁷ Floud, Peter. The Crafts Then and Now. *The Studio*, April 1953, p. 127.

²⁸ Frayling, C. & Snowdon, H. op. cit., May/June 1982, p. 19.

²⁹ It should be no surprise that 'thinking specialists' or theorists are better at theory than making specialists, but if the theorists argue the superiority of thinking over doing, they would have difficulty in sustaining this position morally and theoretically, not least because they are inferior as makers, to craftspeople.

³⁰ Pye, David. *The nature and Aesthetics of Design*. Herbert Press, London, 1983, p.113.

³¹ Dormer, 1994, op. cit., p.38.

³² Morris and Ruskin wrote extensively about the qualities of materials, and in particular 'natural' ones.

³³ Stuart Walker has described surface phenomena relating, especially, to natural materials as "micro-complexity."

"... complex surface qualities visible on a small scale, compared to the size of the product or part. Thus from a distance, the product will retain qualities of visual simplicity and visual comprehension; while close inspection will reveal an interesting and durable multifarious surface ... The qualities which a micro-complex surface could exhibit include texture and variation in texture, variation in color, irregularities in contours, diversity in finishes from glossy to matte, and intentional 'imperfections'. The richness of chance effects, both in surface preparation and during product use, also can be explored". Walker, S. Op. cit., p.24.

³⁴ This may have taken considerable effort to achieve, or it may have been relatively simple.

³⁵ Exact dates are impossible to confirm, although they could be implied from dates of various Devon Guild meetings and seminars which took place around this time.

³⁶ Other members of the Devon Guild, aware that he had a number of students working with him at any time, would joke with him at exhibition time, about whether a given piece was one of his, or the work of one of his students. Hawkins, Neil. Interview, Barnstaple, 14 Jan. 1996.

³⁷ Petherbridge, Deanna. Drawing Conclusions. *Crafts* April 1992, p.18.

³⁸ Hagan, John. Letter to the Editor. *British Blacksmith* No. 71, p. 30.

³⁹ Oakeshott, M. *Rationalism in Politics*, London, 1967, pp. 2-36 (noted in Frayling, C. & Snowdon, H. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be. *Crafts* No.59, Dec. 1982, p.13.)

⁴⁰ Why and how makers make individual decisions; at what speed; when actions become mechanical rather than selfconscious; how close they get to what was intended; whether what they intended changes as a result of the making process, or what they see and feel to be right at the time, all matter and vary.

⁴¹ Reyntiens, Patrick and Makepeace, John. What Sort of Life? *Crafts* no. 2, May/June 1973, p. 30.

⁴² Johnson, Pamela. Not Fast Enough. *Crafts* No. 75, August 1985, p.12.

⁴³ Johnson, Pamela. Naming of Parts. *Crafts*, May/June 1995, p. 43.

5. Blacksmiths in Practice

Section five highlights issues considered elsewhere and locates them within the context of a variety of practices through discussion of the work of individual smiths. They are chosen as examples of those regarded as artist blacksmiths, but they have a variety of backgrounds and experiences of practice. Many of the commercial, cultural and institutional influences discussed in earlier sections are noted by the blacksmiths themselves. The following section (six) addresses aspects of the practice of those discussed in this section and others.

James Horrobin, after an apprenticeship as a rural general blacksmith during the 1960s, began to work as an artist blacksmith and designer after being influenced by the 1980 Hereford conference and the advent of BABA. He has become one of the most important designers and makers of architectural ironwork.

Adrian Legge, from an agricultural background he trained as a blacksmith and farrier. He now runs the blacksmithing courses at Hereford Technical College. Influenced by the 1980 Hereford conference, he has gradually worked to his own designs, but with a concern for skill and technique.

Alan Evans, trained as a teacher and jeweller, but had grown up in the Arts and Crafts colony at Whiteway in Gloucestershire. He now produces some of the most important architectural ironwork

commissions, and has a strong involvement with BABA, public art work and innovative making processes.

Giusseppe Lund one of the very earliest investigators of modern ironwork styles, influenced by international travel. His work, often in stainless steel, is concerned with the plastic nature of hot materials and with the symbolic value of shapes and colours. He often works in combinations of hot glass and forged metal to produce some of the most important and controversial work both in the UK and North America.

Neil Hawkins, from a blacksmithing and farriery background, trained through an apprenticeship and worked on a wide variety of projects. He was influenced from the early 1950s by those he met through being a founder member of the Devon Guild of Craftsmen. His working philosophy and approach to contemporary design, whilst informed by a high degree of skill in and knowledge of traditional working, was strongly influenced by artist craftspeople from other disciplines, such as potters, furniture makers and weavers active from the 1950s.

Phil Johnson entered blacksmithing after a naval career and work in mechanical engineering. A former chairman of BABA his work has been influenced by the growth and development of art blacksmithing since the late 1970s.

Bob Oakes worked as a school teacher and as a smith in a traditional

forge. His work was influenced by the early years of BABA, but his success has been limited by location, circumstances and his lack of exposure to a culture of design.

5.1. James Horrobin.

James Horrobin has made some of the most important ironwork of recent times, after making a transition from being a rural general blacksmith to a selfconscious, architecturally-aware artist blacksmith with a high international profile. His progress mirrors that of British art blacksmithing in the last twenty years or so.

Horrobin began work as a blacksmith in 1961 at the age of 15 in Bridgetown, an Exmoor village, apprenticed to his father, Harry. He did the Hereford block-release training course, and had Frank Day, Tom Tucker, Len Hodder and Fred Barnes, from CoSIRA, visiting on a regular basis to teach techniques based upon the CoSIRA syllabus:

That's a pretty privileged thing to have - to actually get one-to-one teaching in blacksmithing today would be quite a remarkable thing - and at the time it was free.¹

After about four years, with his father he left Bridgetown, where they were shoeing horses and doing general farm work, and began to do 'fancy wrought ironwork' based in Roadwater. They attended the Devon County and Bath and West Agricultural Shows, and other suitable venues to promote their work through exhibitions and competitions. This was sufficiently successful for them both to make a living in what were difficult times. They would take on whatever

work came to them, which was typical of rural smiths at that time.

One early job was heraldic work for a Lombard bank in Exeter, involving repoussé work in copper:

That actually is a really terrible piece of repoussé work from a craftsmanship point of view. The armour, instead of being smooth breastplates and finely chased, actually, they are almost as if you had gone in behind with a nail gun. I was only twenty at the time and that was the best I could do.²

Horrobin's later work is characterised by a keen awareness and sympathy for architecture, but he has noted that in the early days that he:

Didn't have any awareness of architects or have any awareness of what architecture was anyway, other than you might get asked to make a gate for a church, but I didn't think 'this is a 15th century church or a 17th century church' I didn't do any research, it was just another job to do really.³

In the mid sixties the books of Fritz Kühn began to be available in English translation, and the Horrobins, like many others went through what amounted to a Fritz Kühn stage, with work based upon pictures that they had seen. With few alternatives, these books played an important role in the development of a new understanding of making practices.

In 1969 Harry Horrobin retired, and Jim set up his own workshop at Torre near Washford. A chandelier for a church in the Quantocks⁴ (figure 20) was the most ambitious piece of work Horrobin did in 1973. Not really conscious of how old this church was:

I was just asked to make a chandelier for that space, and that's what I did. It's about six feet across, took five hundred hours to make, and I

got paid five hundred pounds at the time - one pound an hour was the sort of going rate. I wouldn't design it in the same way today, and I think, well, that was the best I could do at the time.⁵

It was at this time that Horrobin was responding to the demand for vernacular revival, making traditional fire dogs and fire hoods. He found the work repetitive and boring and in response began to experiment with different approaches to construction.

Later in the 1970s Horrobin gave up blacksmithing for about a year and sold most of his tools in an auction:

... because I was using a smaller and smaller vocabulary, I wasn't talking to anybody about anything, wasn't learning anything, or didn't feel I was, and that is when BABA came along - I think in overall terms I've been very grateful for BABA coming into existence, but it certainly changed my life around in a lot of ways.⁶

Attending the early events of BABA and beginning to communicate with other smiths began a dramatic change from a vaguely 18th-century style of working to unsubtle electric welds on forged plate and other exploratory work, including a fire basket for the British Grate exhibition, which formed part of the 1980 Hereford Forging Iron Conference. Horrobin noted:

I think for the first time, for all the people who were involved at the time, there was an excitement that none of us had really felt before. (a) we were talking to people of the same craft or industry, (b) we were talking about design, (c) we were talking about techniques. And suddenly, instead of having a diminishing vocabulary to work ideas out with, there was an explosion of ideas.⁷

Rachel Reckitt, herself a well known artist in metal and other media,

had commissioned a number of gates and other items from Horrobin over the years, about which he has said:

In a way, Rachel's been my greatest patron, certainly work of this scale. Each time she's asked me to design a job, she has simply said she needs, in this instance, a dog gate,⁸ no conversation about what the design should be like, no conversation about finance, no conversation about time really, just that she would like a gate there. It is just wonderful to get opportunities like that.⁹

In 1981 he was invited to take part in the competition to design gates and grilles linking the Great Hall in Winchester with the new Crown Court Building. It was to expose his limitations as a designer.

Front stile, back stile, bottom rail, lock rails, top rail, that was the only form of gate construction that I really had in my head, and I just couldn't get away from it - I was perhaps frightened of the size, and I just remember it as a very difficult thing to try and do - which is perhaps why it didn't win the competition.¹⁰

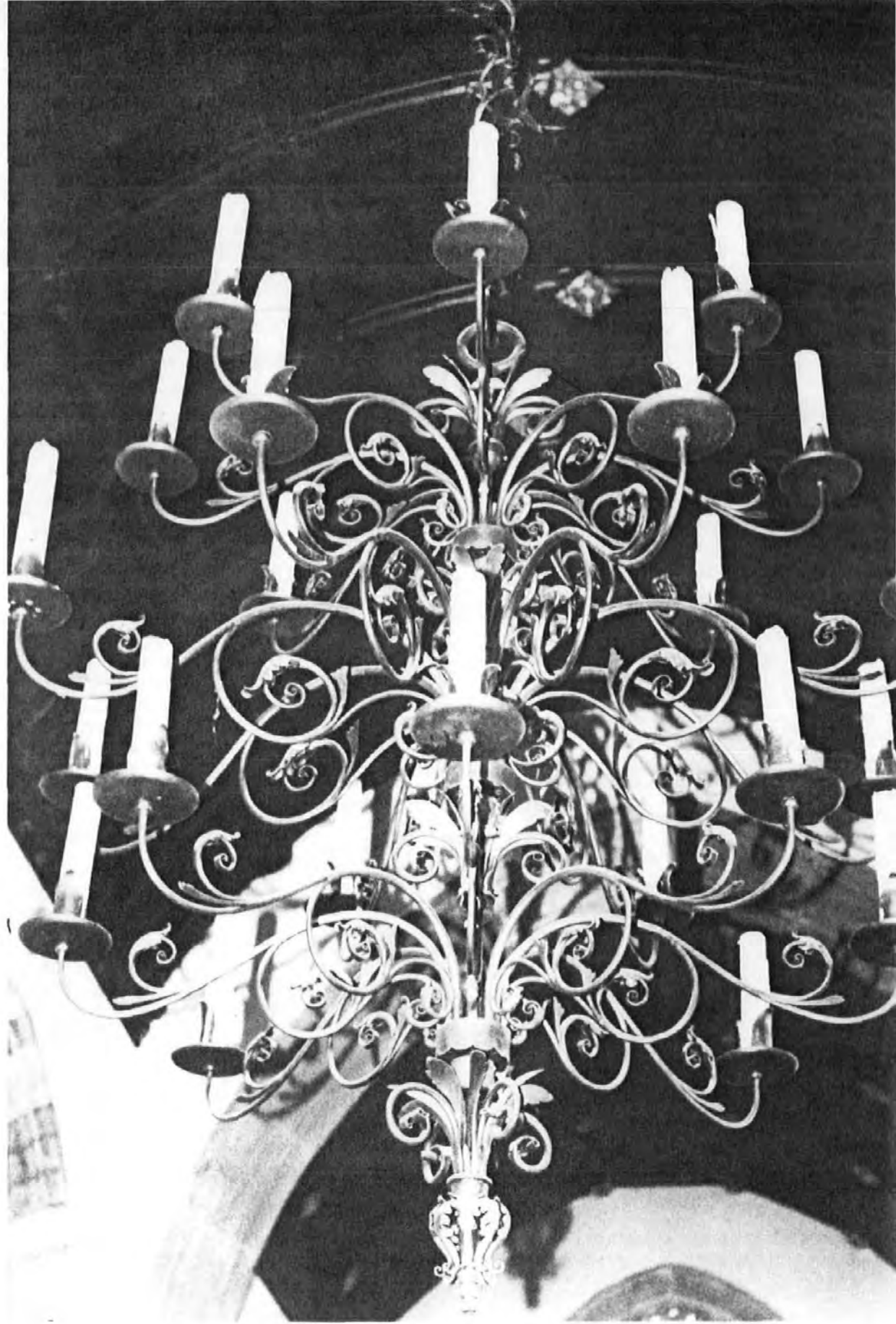


Figure 37. James Horrobin, church chandelier, 1973, mild steel, 2m wide (approx.).

Soon after the failure to be selected to make the Winchester gates he was again asked to take part in a limited competition for gates linking the Music and Ironwork Galleries of the V&A. This time he didn't feel he could go through an extended design process and submitted the first design he thought of based upon ripples in ponds and sound wave propagation allied to the techniques of mediaeval ironwork. He won the competition and proceeded to produce the gates now seen in the V&A Ironwork Gallery. (figure 17) Although they were made using traditional techniques¹¹ they are very much in the modern idiom. Hammer marks are used as texture; the joints and intersections are used as decorative features; and large sections of material are used throughout. The gates were to serve a security function, which they do in an appropriate, powerful and interesting manner.

Around the time of the V&A gates, Horrobin engaged in a period of exploration of the function, context, style and construction of his work. He had tired to some extent of making functional objects - he had been making gates for thirty two years:

Well, some times you feel you want to make something else. Does it have to have a function? What is the function? ... you can have gates that welcome you, gates that tell you to keep out ... it's actually the first thing that you come up against.¹²

This exploration included an increased interest in architecture and fine art. He spent time at drawing, sketching and visual research, which were to be useful skills in his later work, as he would often design for someone else to make and need to communicate effectively with both maker and client. As he has noted:

It's only through education that you can make progress - realising at some point that you can actually learn to draw - that it's not a mystery. You can learn to draw in exactly the same way that you can learn to make an 's' scroll, or forge a piece of metal.¹³

In 1982 Horrobin was able to go to the ABANA conference in West Virginia:

I think going to the States filled in incredible blanks in my education, not only to do with blacksmithing, but you know, at the age of 15 being locked into a village forge in Exmoor, you actually haven't experienced much in life, you know, toting around the village, and that was about it - to actually do a major piece of travelling like going to the States, had a really big effect on my life.¹⁴

From this time, having gained something of a reputation for the V&A gates and other modern work, he began to work on larger architectural commissions, all of which required the ability to draw, design and be aware of the nature of the buildings. He needed to gain a knowledge of the construction industry, the nature of contracts and the dangers of penalty clauses and other legal responsibilities. Other smiths engaged in the new large scale architectural work were having to learn at the same time, which added to the demands of the job.

Traditional blacksmiths had received no training and little or no advice on these matters in the past and so had to proceed almost on a trial and error basis, helped very much by communication with others, and through BABA in particular.

Eleven gates for the Crown Reach flats near Vauxhall Bridge, London, were Horrobin's first architectural commission. (figure 21) The

building was designed by Nicholas Lacy, and the site architect was Arno Jobst. Horrobin noted:

To go from fire-welding and leaf work, to think about cutting RSJs down the middle, turning them into 't' section, and doing a little thing at the top to try and soften, you know, harsh material, was really quite exciting.¹⁵

Horrobin's design entry for the Broadgate competition¹⁶ was unsuccessful as was his proposal for the British Library gate competition. The selected index of the Crafts Council plays a large part in the selection of participants. He noted that:

To keep a long story short, that whole job was a complete fiasco, we were at this meeting and they said 'You realise that if you take this job on you are going to be responsible for 'Damages At Large''- What does that mean, Mister? That means that if your gate moves an eighth of an inch and cracks the next brick, which cracks the next brick, and it goes like dominoes around the whole building, you are responsible for anything and everything, so that if the finger can be pointed at your work - very off putting! To put it mildly.¹⁷

Generally, architectural jobs involve getting asked 'are you interested in this?' Then the smith might agree a design fee, and normally produce a scale, e.g. 1:10, drawing and a maquette or small full sized section of the design proposal.



Figure 21. James Horrobin, Crown Reach Apartments, near Vauxhall Bridge, London, 1983. Site photograph.

Horrobin's third major architectural commission was for about 50 metres of railings with grilles and lamps for Oriel House, near the Edgware Road, London. (figures 22-24) Compared to the small scale local pieces of work, typical of the rural smith, there were many aspects to consider including the nature of the site, the purpose of the ironwork, the aspirations of the client; structural and fixing aspects; relationships with the architect, structural engineers; people responsible for project finance and stage payments, and legal aspects such as penalty clauses.

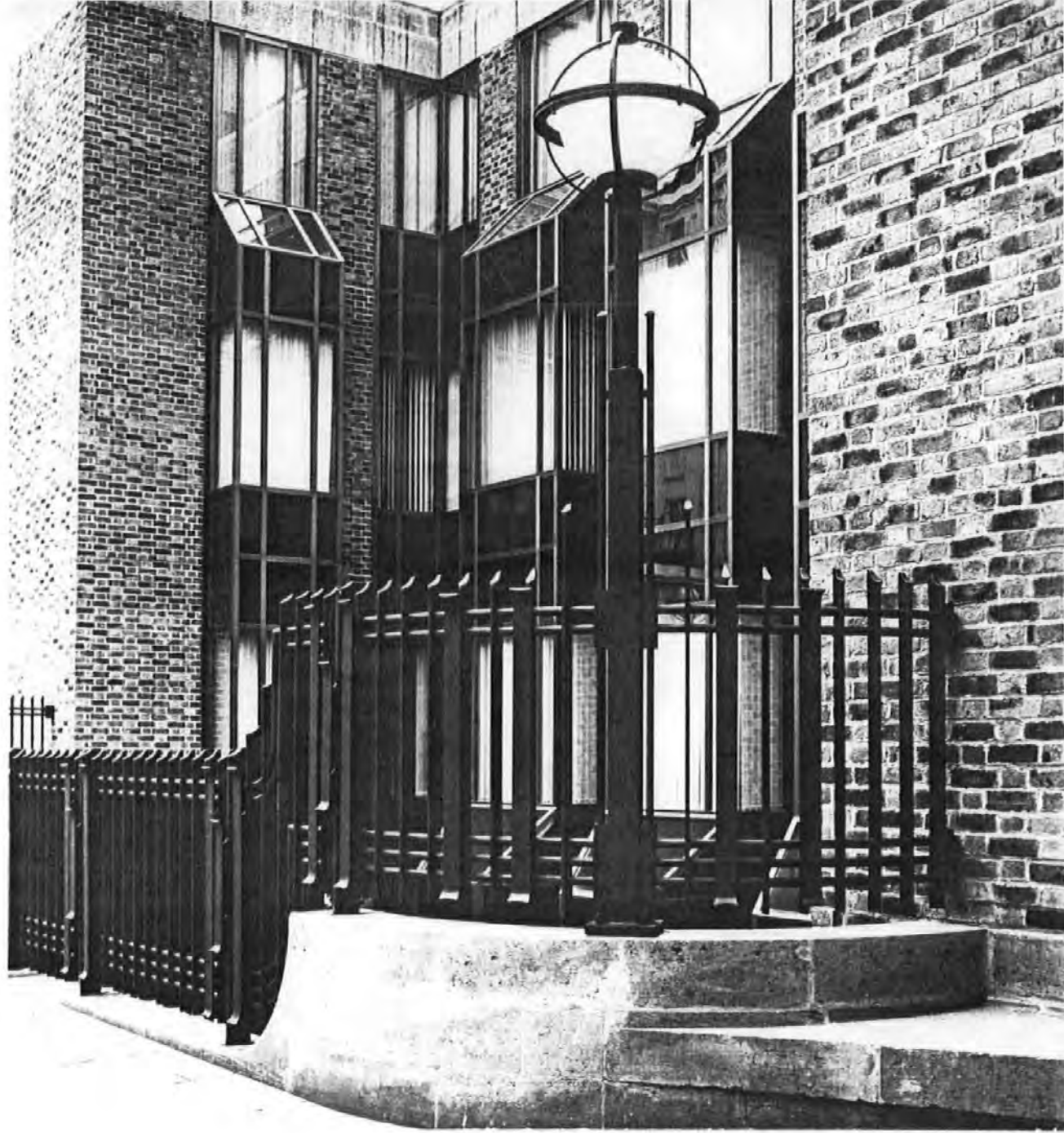


Figure 22. James Horrobin, Oriel House, London, forged and fabricated mild steel, 1984.

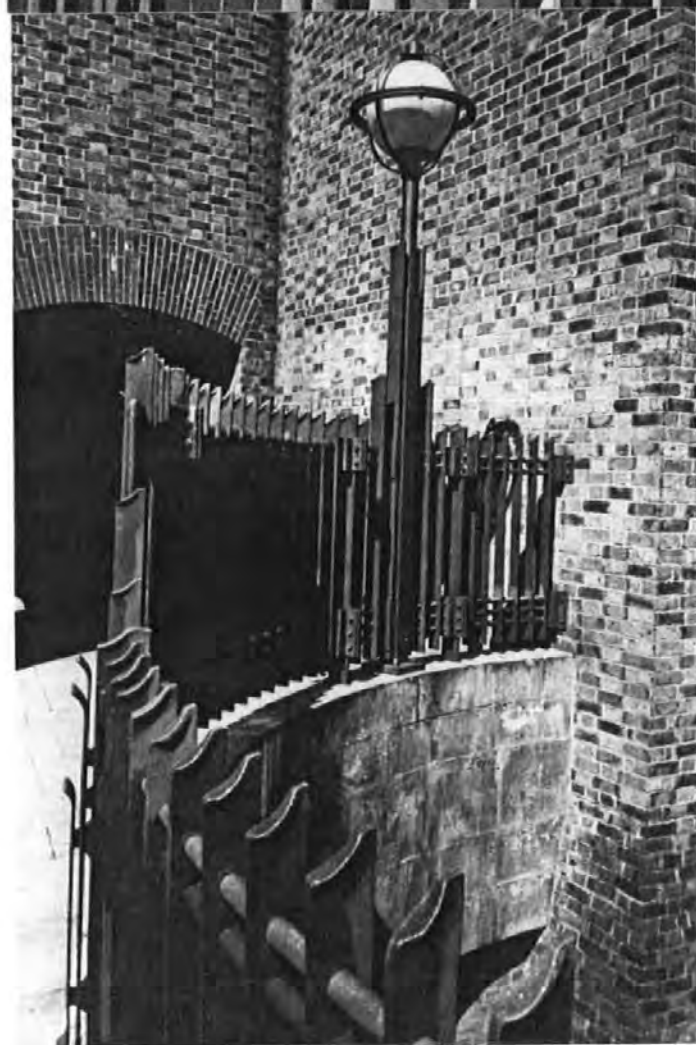
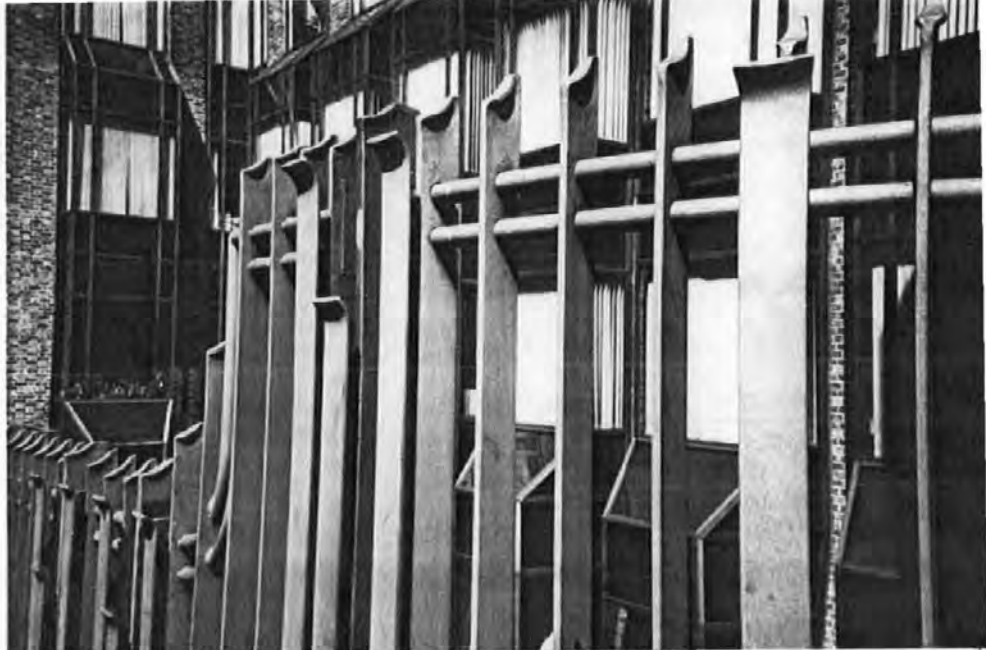


Figure 23. James Horrobin, Oriel House, London, forged and fabricated mild steel, 1984.

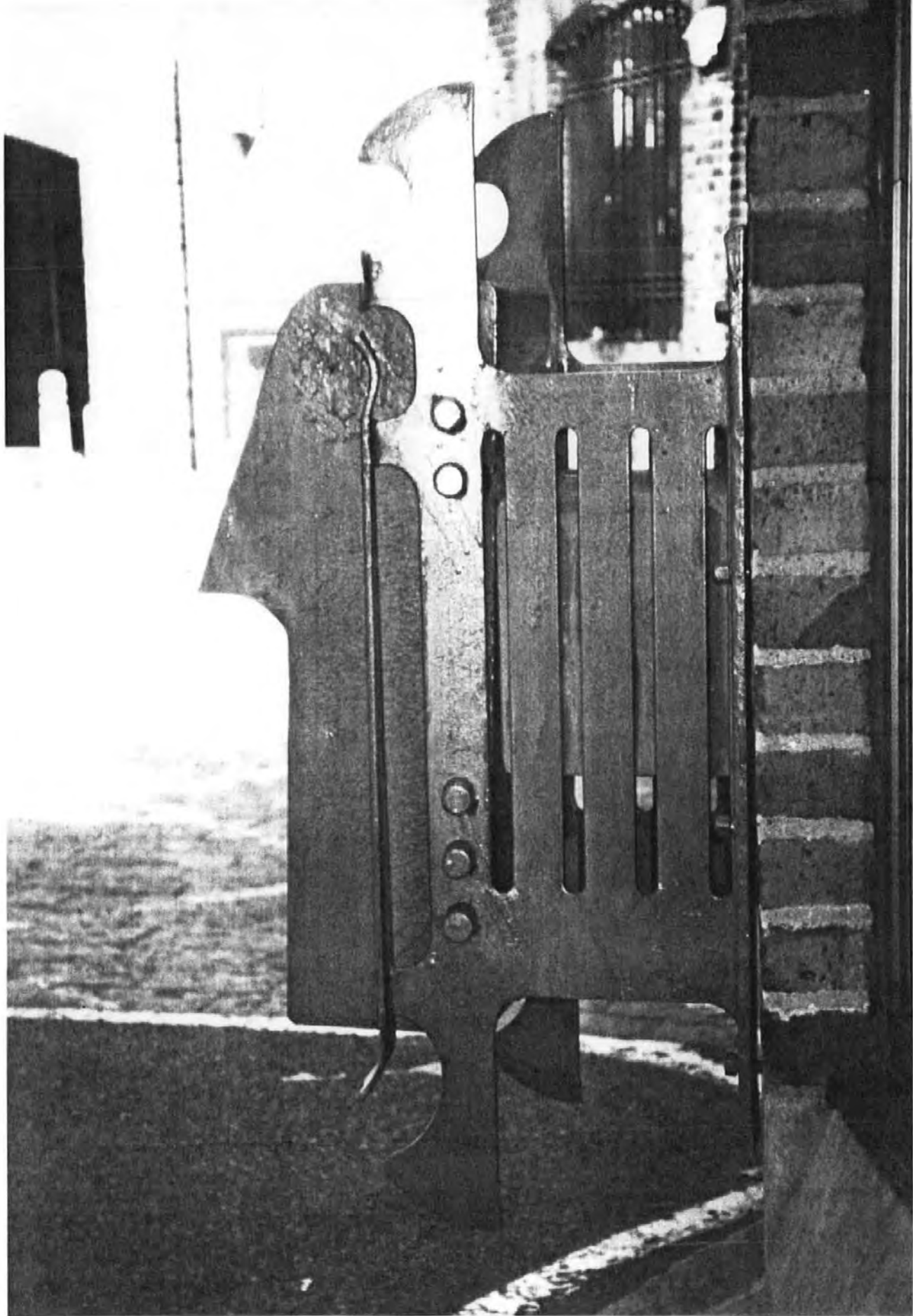


Figure 24. James Horrobin, Oriol House, London, forged and fabricated mild steel, 1984.

Horrobin had also to consider the impact and symbolic value of the work.

In this instance I felt that, the railings actually were the first thing that you came across after you left the pavement or the road, they form a very important psychological change from being on the street to being involved with the architecture. It's something of a human scale whereas the building itself isn't.¹⁸

This job presented manufacturing and financial problems, which it was possible to sort out with the help of Dick Quinnell, and because of the fact that he was self employed, enabling him to make decisions at meetings, whereas virtually everyone else present was an employee of someone else.

The issue of self employment for artist blacksmiths in general is an important one. Control and decision-making are important - there is a degree of control over the work that is done and the way it is done which is not found as an employee. Both Horrobin and Quinnell have said¹⁹ that it is a position of strength, especially in the negotiations which are inevitable when undertaking large scale commissions. The position of artist blacksmiths involved in large architectural commissions is an unusual one in the crafts generally as, for example, a cabinet maker or potter is unlikely to ever get into a contractual relationship with a building firm to produce a piece of craft work. Perhaps the difference is that the blacksmith's work can often form a significant part of the structure of the building, or introduce requirements for the structure to be changed to accommodate its size or weight. As Horrobin noted in relation to the Oriel House contract:

McAlpines actually came down to the workshop, which at the time was an about hundred foot by twenty foot rented builder's yard, there was me, Paul Jobs, one half inch drill stand and that was it. They came down to see whether they actually wanted to take me on as a sub-contractor, this guy who was going to complete a fifty thousand pound job on a penalty clause basis, 'so, where are all of your guys?' 'where are your tools?' 'what is your bank account like?' Anyway, they took me on.²⁰

The Department of Social Security building in Whitehall, opposite the Cenotaph, designed by David Lyle of Whitfield Partners, was the next major commission: (figure 25)

This is where my interest in architecture almost overtakes my interest in blacksmithing really, meeting up with someone like David Lyle really helped me a lot in my education, to give me some better sense of what it is I'm looking at.²¹

Whitfields employed him to design the ironwork, with the prospect of making it as well, but, although the Public Services Agency agreed to the design, they were not prepared to take Horrobin on under their penalty clause contracts.²² So Horrobin nominated Richard Quinnell Ltd. to do the making:

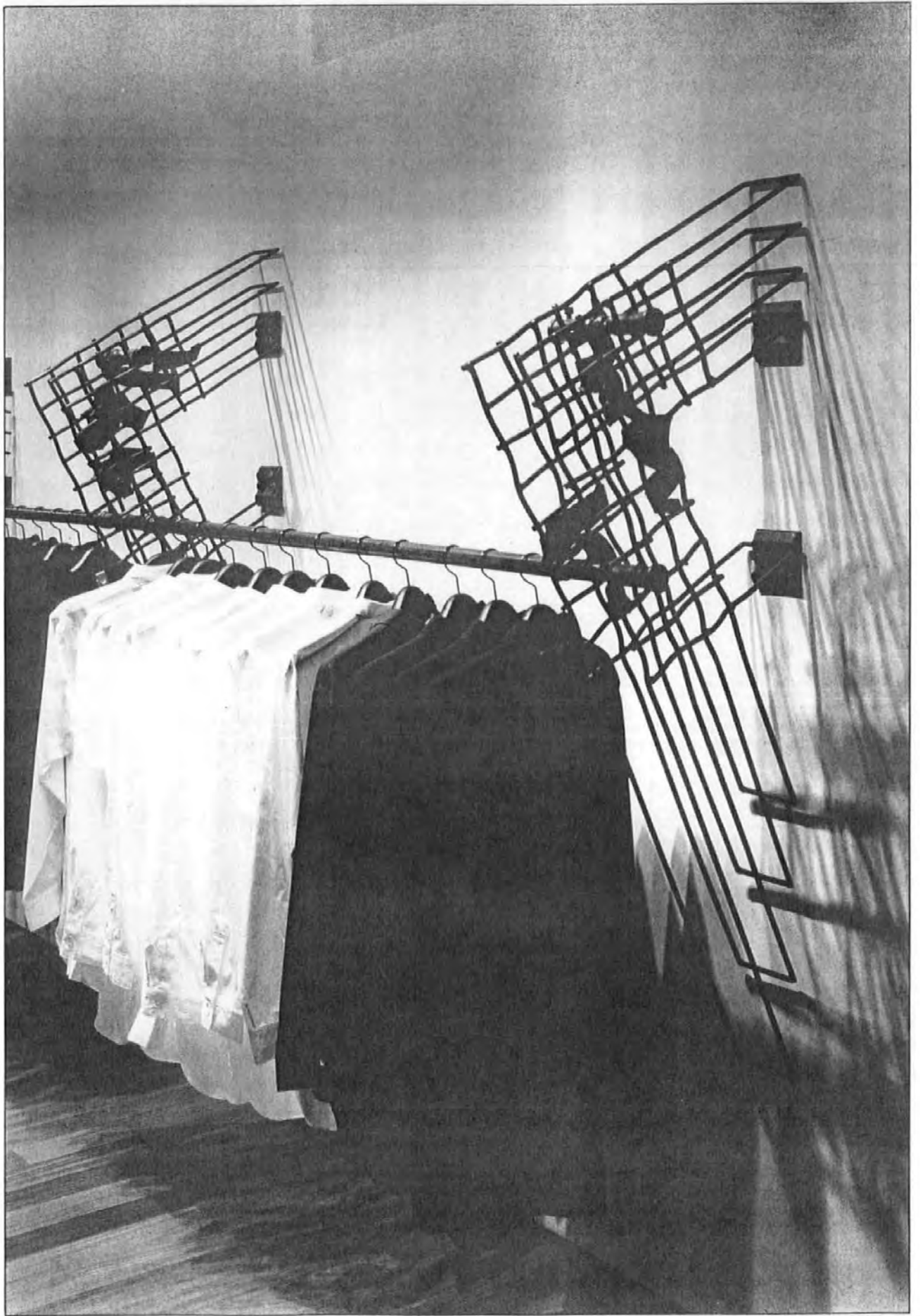
He had the expertise, the facilities, and I felt comfortable about working out both the financial and the aesthetic arrangement with him. And I went up to Dick's and did some of the work - it made sense as it was - at that time Dick only had an elevation drawing, and it would have been very difficult to expect someone to make that, on that sort of basis, as it needed more information as an ongoing thing.²³



Figure 25. James Horrobin, Early photograph of Doverhay Forge (above) and Dept. of Social Security grille, Whitehall, London, 1991.

The screen is thirteen metres long and roughly five metres high, so it was a very large piece of work for a single smith to handle. The finish is zinc metalised, then gloss urethane, with a graphite-black on top; the main vertical strips are very strongly forged as a contrast with the fabricated portions. Working on Oriel House gave Horrobin a sense of Whitfields' architecture, so he had some idea of their intention and was able to produce a suitable design despite being given rough elevations which gave little idea of the visual complexity of the facade eventually produced. Horrobin treats screens and other work as architectural details, the architects having designed the building he considers his role is to liven up these details - in that sense, his work is seen by him as subservient to the architecture.

Not all of his more recent work is on a large scale, an example of this is a clothes rack system for a Japanese clothes designer Yohji Yamamoto, with architects Munkenbeck and Marshall, who was opening one shop in London and one shop in New York. (figure 26)²⁴ The influence came in part from Yamamoto's interest in the work of Gaudi, and from discussion with the architect and a retail designer.



5

Figure 26. James Horrobin, Yamamoto shop, London, 1990, mild steel.

In 1988 Horrobin set up Doverhay Forge Studios in Porlock, Somerset in partnership with glass engraver Gabrielle Ridler. The building had been a forge for some time as can be seen from a photograph Horrobin uses for promotional purposes. (figure 25) His work often involves a substantial amount of fabrication and welding, so he works there with a skilled fabricator, to whom he can pass on drawings for manufacture, taking on the forging work himself. If extra help is needed in either the fabricating or forging areas either one of them could arrange it.

In a return to a more traditional style of working Horrobin was asked to make a ceiling dome grille for Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Field. It is over the centre of one of the picture rooms and is only seen from the inside looking out. Claudia Petley and Paul Shepherd assisted:

I hadn't actually done a job like that for ten or fifteen years and I was no longer sick of that sort of stuff, I really enjoyed doing 102 fire welds, and doing something in a very repetitive way. I built that to an 1895 drawing from an architect who was doing restoration in 1895 - whether they actually had that dome made, I don't know - there was no evidence of it.²⁵

A balustrade for Charles Saatchi's house, is an example of a large scale private commission, once again working with Munkenbeck and Marshall as architects, done in 1989. The architect didn't want this balustrade at all as he is a minimalist, and he would have had a top rail, a few verticals and possibly a middle rail running through. However, the Saatchis had been to the Picasso Museum and had seen

a massive staircase there, and had a picture of it from a magazine.

Horrobin recalled:

... so the architect said, 'there you go, he wants something like that.' well it was obvious that he didn't want something like that because the handrail was about nine inches thick - you know, it was different architecture altogether. What they actually meant was that they wanted the staircase to have some sort of life in it. They didn't want it to be geometric, so I worked on that basis. the architect didn't actually want a repeat pattern, he said 'Make it like a piece of music, like a piece of jazz, with some sort of idea running through it.' actually the design doesn't repeat itself anywhere on the twenty three metres. They decided to spend just under forty thousand, which is just under two thousand per running metre, and they bought that job on the strength of that drawing and that model.²⁶

In making some fire baskets for the Saatchi house Horrobin noted a change in the way he had worked over the years. There were some large finials to be put on the ends of some of the bars which in earlier times he would have made by forge-welding a huge collar on, which would have taken about four hours a piece by traditional forging methods. In this case he cut a disc out of 25mm plate, cleaned up the edges and squashed it under the power hammer, forged it around the edge to get an oval shape, and then MIG welded it to an upright bar before adding more weld to build it up, then reforging it. He found this approach faster and more enjoyable than the traditional method, as well as achieving virtually the same result. This flexible approach to the use of techniques and equipment allied to forging techniques and an awareness of architectural context, characterises the best of British contemporary ironwork. As Horrobin has said, "I make work whatever way I fancy really, if the job works."²⁷

Whitfield Partners and David Lyle, who were restoring the Savoy Theatre, commissioned Horrobin in 1991 to make a large Art Deco style screen for the exterior, and some figures based upon characters from Gilbert and Sullivan works for the inside.

In situations where there is a mixture of fabrication and forge work it is usual for a number of businesses to be involved. When possible, for both legal and practical reasons, Horrobin prefers large firms such as Dorothea Ltd., or Quinnell's, to be responsible for fixing on site, which in itself is a potentially tricky task:

... there is no way that I want to become sub-contracted to Bovis Construction. If I do then I'm down the plughole as far as time ... my job changes, I become a pure administrator.²⁸

A series of changes in working practice and philosophy have taken place, from working as a traditionally trained rural blacksmith producing effectively production-line reproductions of 17th- and 18th-century style work, to a selfconscious, businesslike practitioner, prepared to use the most appropriate means to achieve the intended result. Horrobin's work has gone from being local, small scale and old-fashioned, to being recognised as innovative in its design and technique at a national and international level. The love of hand forging and the sense of material quality this gives are still important elements of even the fabricated work. The sense of design and an awareness and sensitivity to material quality are typical of artist blacksmiths like Horrobin, and untypical of fabricators in the conventional mould, who work to the drawings of others or with

structural and cost considerations as the major determinants of design. It would be difficult for Horrobin's Cheapside work, for example, to be described as blacksmithing, but perhaps it could only have been designed by one.

Cooperation, networking, and communication - especially at an international level - are important elements in describing the way in which Horrobin and smiths like him have made the transition to contemporary practice. A wider experience and heightened awareness of the needs of architects have been essential ingredients of the change.

¹ Horrobin, Jim, BABA Conference, Redfield, Berks. Nov. 27 - 29,1992.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Crowcombe Church, near Bridgwater.

⁵ Horrobin, op cit.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ To keep dogs *in* the house while the door was open to allow ventilation during the summer.

⁹ Horrobin, op cit.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Horrobin depends very much on hand techniques and simple tools to do his work, although he has a MIG welder and a power hammer. He has only about ten pairs of tongs, half a dozen chisels, and only one pair of dies for the power hammer.

¹² Horrobin, op cit.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ It was a limited competition and each of the participants was paid a design fee of £3000, which, as Horrobin has noted, is the best anyone has come up with for a job so far.

¹⁷ Horrobin, op cit.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² The client was PSA, who are notorious for being really awkward to work for. They took one look at the job, and they took one look at me and they said 'no thanks' - they said 'design, fine, if that is what you and the architect have agreed, we have no comment to make about that, but we are, so what are you going to do about it?' Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Pay, Peter. Profile: James Horrobin. *British Blacksmith* No.51, March 1989,p.5.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

5.2. Adrian Legge.

Adrian Legge is now Course Leader for the blacksmithing courses at Hereford Technical College, but has been involved with blacksmithing and farriery all of his working life.

He had a traditional apprenticeship in farriery and blacksmithing with his father who himself had trained in the early 1940s. After completing 'A' levels at school he began blacksmithing as something to do before moving on, and 'drifted into it'. Following a basic blacksmithing apprenticeship where the decorative element or the aesthetic element didn't form part of the syllabus, he:

... learned to do tenons and things like that. For example in my final trade test, did a fire-welded ring to size; a duck footed harrow tine and a pair of tongs. The aesthetics in that was nil. I find the skills useful - the duck foot harrow tine has been out of date since 1943 probably, I have never had to make one commercially, but knowing how to do that means that you can move those skills around to other things.¹

Developing an interest in ironwork, he then did what he believed most people did at the time:

Copying - get the CoSIRA catalogue out, copy that, see a nice piece of work, copy that. I then started designing my own stuff where I took elements from one thing and elements from something else and shoved them together, and thought 'that looks nice I'll make it'.²

Spending ten years working as a farrier-blacksmith, rather than a blacksmith-farrier, or a pure blacksmith, he still wanted to move into ironwork and took on some part-time teaching to subsidise his earlier

work. As tends to happen with part time teaching it gradually increased and became intrusive and, "...it actually affected my business - I had to do one or the other, I literally flipped a coin, there was no sort of hard and fast decision."³

Legge regards joining BABA in 1980 as by far the most important decision in the development of his work. Prompted by the conference at Hereford Technical College, where he:

... saw this amazing stuff happening, and I thought, oh, I wish I could do that. And for five or six years I sort of watched and waited until I felt confident enough until I actually did a competition at Harrogate. A basic forging competition, you know, a fun thing like we do, and I made this thing and I won it, to my total surprise ... but winning that increased my confidence to such an extent that I started to put stuff in exhibitions and things like that. It started off being not very good, and maybe very derivative, but I think people develop like that.⁴

This is the first time he had seen any modern ironwork, and because he had been trained in a particular mode of working and because his awareness of design was limited at the time, he took a number of years to build up the confidence to enter competitions - even BABA ones that were intended to be for fun. He was a highly skilled and capable smith, and yet despite being excited by the new work, took a long time to come to terms with it in respect of his own practice. This reaction is typical of many traditionally-trained smiths, although not a universal response. It is not a resistance to change, nor even a lack of enthusiasm, but realising that a substantial change of mind set is required, a realisation that things are not how you thought them to be. Legge clearly saw opportunities, and eventually took advantage of

them.

Legge has found in the 90s that public attitudes towards iron have changed markedly. He attributes this change in part to the work of BABA, and an apparent increase in public awareness of craftwork in general. He sees public art projects and the 'percent for art' scheme as being important in this:

It is starting to mean that people are seeing ironwork in the cities. The most common comment I get off people is 'I didn't know it was being done anymore'. Not the fact that they didn't want to buy it, but the fact that they couldn't buy it because they didn't know where to buy it from. Marketing is one of the big areas for the blacksmithing community as a whole. They really need to address it.⁵

He has seen a move, in the last ten to twelve years, away from the perception of the smith by the general public as one who works somewhere where:

... people come through the door, they want the bottom on a coal scuttle, he does that, if they want a wrought iron gate, he does that. Now you get people specialising in different areas of the aesthetic side of blacksmithing.⁶

Legge recognises that where there used to be decorative smithing and industrial or country smithing, now there is art blacksmithing with a variety of approaches and specialisms. He notes, for example, traditional reproduction, traditional restoration, small to average sized contemporary commissions, large contemporary commissions, the gallery trade, those running their own travelling craft shows with perhaps two or three smiths involved. It is the diversity of practice which generates a sense of excitement and involvement for him, and

he notes that, "There are very few jobs which are a way of life, and I think blacksmithing is one of them."⁷

Because of his training in, and affection for, the traditional skills, Legge advocates their use as a way of producing high quality contemporary work. The enthusiasm, especially during the early days of BABA for expressionistic work and an emphasis in particular upon the plastic qualities of steel, didn't rest easily with many traditionally trained smiths, it went against all they had been told about the quality of finish in particular. Legge is enthusiastic about, and capable in modern work, but sometimes takes the view that:

... quite a few smiths have been just a bit lazy perhaps, they may be using the power hammer to squash and splurge the metal around and then getting the MIG out and splatting it all together and saying, here you are, and very often it is very nice aesthetic work, but I think there is an area where if you use traditional skill to produce contemporary ironwork, you can produce something which is that little bit special.⁸

In the course of his college work he gets a number of enquiries from employers, especially at the end of courses, for good students who could be taken on straight away. He notes the similarity with the old journeyman system, where after an apprenticeship a smith would travel around to various workshops in order to gain experience for a number of years. In part this happens because of the expense and difficulty of setting up a workshop directly after college. Many of the larger forges are happy to give young smiths work experience and often take on 'journeypersons' for the duration of a large contract, providing an excellent training opportunity in work which couldn't be

done in a college environment. These young smiths are having an important effect on blacksmithing in that they are providing continuity or succession, allied to new ways of working not constrained by tradition. As Legge notes:

... more and more young smiths are coming through and the younger smiths of say the last eight years or so are seeing the people actually earning money, seeing where they are earning it, and market forces are maybe pushing the craft in a way that a lot of us want to see it go anyway.⁹

He feels that in the future there will be more artistic, individual work, but doesn't think that traditional work will disappear completely, as there are certain styles of architecture which demand a traditional approach. An example of this is the policy of replacing railings which had been removed or become damaged or corroded, in Bath and Cheltenham, where there are a large number of listed buildings requiring ironwork in traditional styles, or as reproductions, using authentic, traditional techniques and methods of construction to preserve their character.

When asked what his ideal working situation would be, Legge replied:

... where I am, I suppose, doing what I am doing. In ten years time, as I feel at the moment, it would be running a studio workshop, on the art-craft side of things rather than the good old fashioned, 'anything that comes through the door that you do'.¹⁰

¹ Legge, Adrian. Interview, Ironbridge, 5:8:94.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

5.3. Alan Evans.

Alan Evans has become one of the most important European blacksmiths, and in doing so has completed some of the largest and most influential commissions of recent years. In describing what he does, Evans prefers to be referred to as a Site Specific Artist or Maker,¹ working through the medium of blacksmithing.

He completed a teacher training course at Shoreditch College of Education, which included silversmithing, then joined blacksmith Alan Knight at Redditch in 1974. In 1978 he set up his own workshop at Whiteway, in a small shed near to his present workshops and his fathers workshop. Evans was brought up in an “Arts and Crafts Movement” household in the Whiteway Colony in Gloucestershire. After the influence of his parents, both craftspeople in wood, his formative influence was the early 20th-century work of Ernest Gimson and Sidney Barnsley:

It was their aesthetic, developed a couple of miles from here in the Cotswolds, which encouraged me to look for my own vocabulary of forms beyond the sub-eighteenth century style which was, and still is, the style of the majority of architectural ironwork produced in this country.²

Evans has completed a number of important commissions including gates for St. Paul's Cathedral; Broadgate Development Screen, London; Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery Grille; Architectonic Totems for the WHCSA Building, Cardiff; Lewisham 2000 project; and the Public Record Office Kew.

As with Alan Dawson, his work often demonstrates that site specific or custom made functions better and is more cost effective than standard factory bought alternatives. This advantage is achieved through a combination of factors: sensitivity to the site, effective collaboration with other professionals involved with the project as part of the decision making process, design ability, making ability, the use of appropriate equipment for drawing such as video and computer equipment to record the site and produce accurate and realistic three dimensional drawings and renderings, the use of power hammers, power presses and modern furnaces in addition to traditional hand forging techniques. This is allied to quite an uncompromising creative vision: work must be “ Right for me and right for the site - ignore the brief”³. He makes his work by:

... following the integrity and the purity of the inspiration - I don't believe the customer is always right - be prepared to lose the job to do what is right for the time and right for the job.⁴

This can involve getting a job by *not* doing what the architect wants, and being prepared to express clear views on what will or will not work from a design standpoint.

Evans has confined his work almost exclusively to the use of forged and fabricated metal; with some exceptions he hasn't collaborated with others using different materials or processes. This gives his work a distinctive character, but tends to exclude the use of an alternative material or process when they would be a more appropriate means of achieving the design intention. An exception to this general rule was

the screen he made for St. George's Cathedral in London. (figure 27)⁵
The screen included 60mm round mild steel, notched to form shoulders, then centred so that it would balance on the anvil and the ends worked. Steel was mixed with canvas and wood by other makers for this piece.

He has often regarded design competitions as an opportunity to explore himself and the site. There is a sense of competition with the site to come up with a good idea. Perhaps his best known work, the gates for the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral resulted from a competition organised in 1980 by the Higgins Ney Design Unit between five smiths, based upon information given to them by the Crafts Council.⁶
(figure 27)

Although he would be regarded by most traditionally orientated smiths as a modern smith, he is clear that what he is doing is firmly within the traditional camp:

I'm more a traditional smith than anyone - the real tradition is of innovation and using the latest technology - the *real* tradition is the philosophy. You should honour the tradition by creating your own vocabulary of forms.⁷

Along with Albert Paley, Evans' work is some of the most important and interesting being produced at the moment, however, because of an apparent misunderstanding Paley is reluctant to speak to Evans because he described some of his work as having fascist overtones.⁸
When they spoke, Paley said there was no point in talking about it,

they were just attractive shapes, and that he wasn't interested in symbolism - he was hurt by the allusion to Fascism, but it seems that he has now started to discuss and relate the imagery of his work. Evans is not pleased about the personal coolness, but he is pleased to have stimulated important debate. Evans sees Paley's work (figures 28,⁹ 29) as, "... the most powerful forged metal that there has ever been. By his being so upset, an opportunity was lost."¹⁰

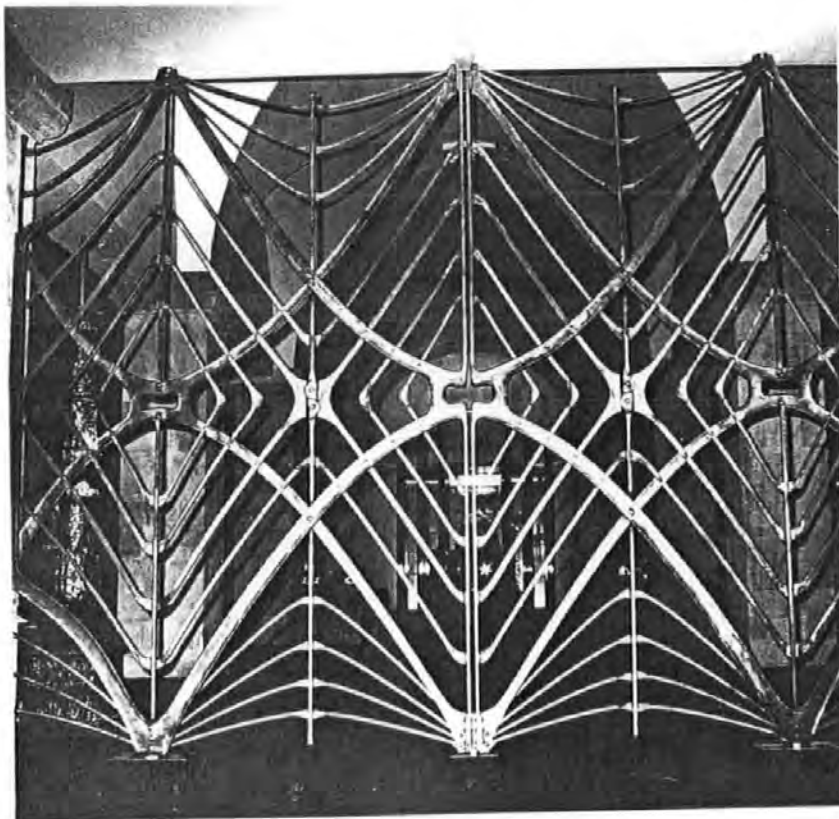
The Public Record Office, at Kew is the location of some of Evans' recent work. It is in a Victorian street, with gables and pitched roofs. The work was to provide a link between the public and the private, something which would be interesting and tactile. Evans noted that:

The distance the work is read at is important - contrasts in forms and masses are important. The larger elements have to be tall because of parked cars and relates to the domestic scale of gardens at each end, planned around focus points, like counterpoint in music. Scale, distance, relationships are all important.¹¹

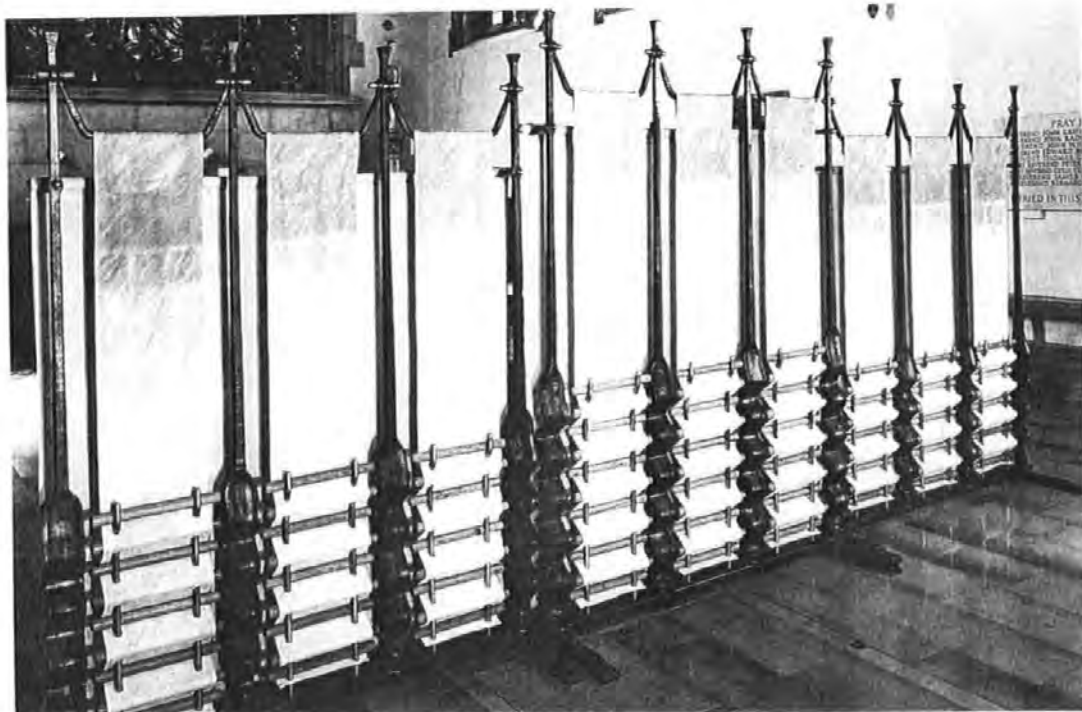
For the Kew project he was recruited as part of a team which included a sculptor to work together on aspects of the architectural and landscape design and perhaps be commissioned to do pieces of work. The nature of the bridge, position of the waterfall and the use of the thick slate shelves from the old Public Record Office, for example, were decided upon.¹²



Alan Evans
Stroud, Gloucestershire, England
Door latch.



Alan Evans
Stroud, Gloucestershire,
England
Treasury gates for St. Paul's Cathedral.



Alan Evans
Stroud,
Gloucestershire,
England
Steel, wood, and
fabric screens for St.
George's Cathedral,
London.

Figure 27. 1992 ABANA Conference preview showing work from speaker, Alan Evans. ABANA and BABA members regularly attend each other's events and demonstrate or lecture.

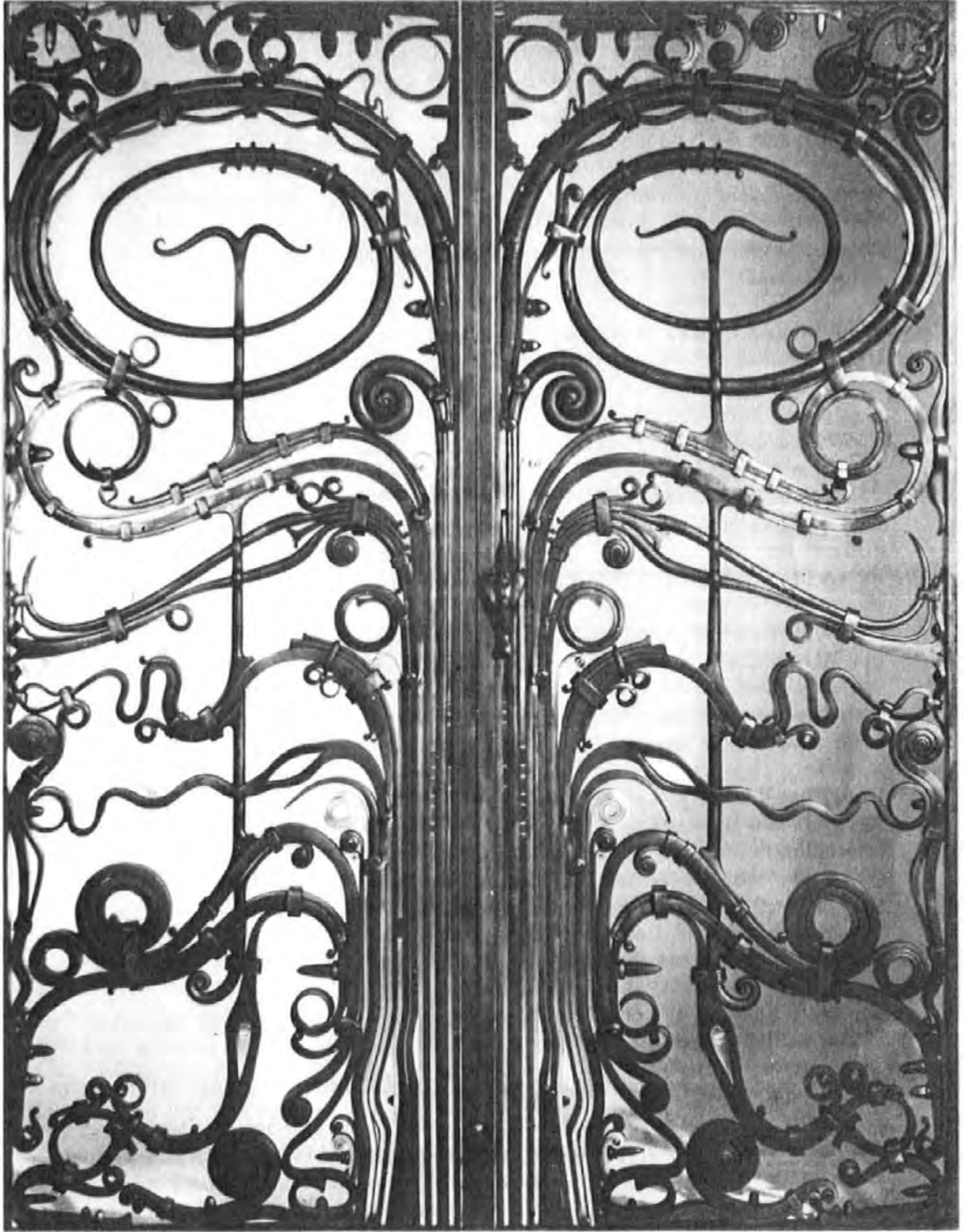


Figure 28. Albert Paley, Smithsonian Institute, 1978.



Figure 29. Albert Paley, table, mild steel, 1989.

The design drawings for the Kew work were computer generated (figure 30), so when they had to be re-drawn to allow for changes in width, the alterations took just six hours. The site engineers ignored the sizes on the original drawings Evans had produced, and assumed that they were 'artist's drawings,' making the plinths too big and the whole design was changed as a result. Using computer drawing Evans finds that proportion, spaces, weights of metal, and balance are easier to achieve. Hand perspective sketches, however, often describe the quality of the metal more accurately, where light, shadow and the softening of the appearance of forged parts are important.

The punched hole is one of the main decorative feature of the Kew work, referring to the hand forging of metal. The imagery of Tally Sticks¹³ and the notches used in them for recording the finances allocated to shires by the Treasury, are also used as decorative elements as they were the only 3D objects in the Public Record Office which could provide suitable imagery, except the Great Seals of State. Therefore, what appear to be the most obviously computer-generated forms, are actually the ones with reference to the hand-made .

Evans has tried to avoid figurative work because of his Quaker background, where ideally, the simpler the design is, the better. When asked to do some figurative work, he didn't feel confident or interested, so for a processional cross he chose to work with a sculptor. Some time afterwards he called at Christoph Friedrich's workshop in Switzerland and discussed it with him:

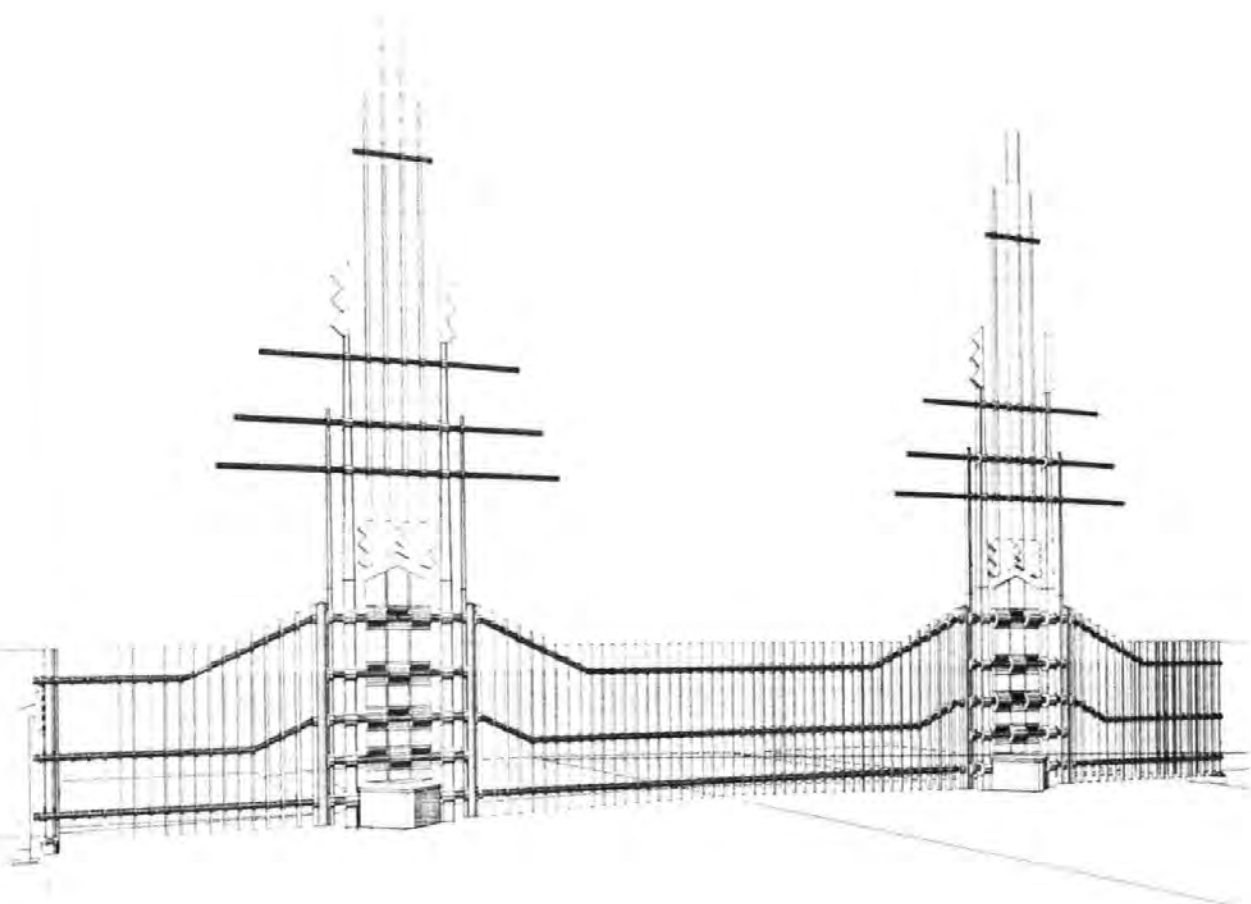


Figure 30. Alan Evans, computer drawing of the entrance gates of the new public Record Office at Kew, London.

I'd hardly picked up a hand hammer in ten years - it had all been power hammer work picked up by a crane - then I felt inspired to have a go. I forged a figure at the end of a bar. A pole with a figure on top of it to be removed from the altar cross with a much heavier frame - the figure on the small pole could then be used as a processional cross, then placed back in the heavy altar cross.¹⁴

Evans isn't clear how much his work has become geometric rather than organic as a result of using computer drawing, as his work before CAD was starting to go in the same direction stylistically. He uses a high-end Macintosh computer system with a number of peripheral devices such as scanner and A2 printer as you simply turn it on and use it, rather than spending time configuring it. He is concerned because at times it becomes toylike or hobbylike and can't be always be justified in terms of economic use. Computers have only really been fast enough in the last couple of years to do the kind of sophisticated image manipulation Evans does at an economic price. Originally he used CAD to get an idea of proportion and real perspective, and to lower the risk of mistakes, particularly of a dimensional nature. When drawing on computer he tends to:

... think of things at an earlier stage, and the unexpected, exploratory feel which used to come through at the making stage is now done at the drawing stage. It could take some of the fun out of the making, it's quite a fundamental change in working practice, there's less fun or serendipity in practice.¹⁵

The use of the computer, while it saves time and reduces errors at the making stage, has contributed to back problems Evans has experienced in recent times, because he has spent so long working at a desk. What tends to happen is that during this time his fitness

decreases and this has coincided with an increase in the size of the projects he has been working upon. So the physical demands of the work have increased at the same time as his physical capacity has reduced, making him more vulnerable to injury.¹⁶

Sometimes his work is function specific rather than site specific, as in the case of projects for Lewisham and Cheltenham involving benching, signposts and bicycle racks. For the Cheltenham pedestrianisation scheme, the Art Committee had a requirement for cycle racks and allowed £5000 for each group of racks. In the first instance they specified a standard rail system based upon cast iron posts linked by tubular steel rails. This system needed 18 tubes to be located in the ground in order to accommodate 24 bikes. Using his cantilever design, Evans was able to fulfil the requirement with four holes in the ground. As the price for the racks was to be £5000 including fixing, £500 of this had been allocated for this to the Engineers Department. As Evans' design required less fixing, the surplus money went to him. Stainless steel loops were fixed to heavy punched and forged bars. Because the drawings were on computer it gave them increased credibility with the Engineers Department, but in order to get the money from the Art Committee there was a requirement for *hand* drawings of the previous computer drawings. So in spite of going against the stereotypical impression of the 'impractical artist', by producing computer drawings, he then had to revert to hand drawing afterwards, to prove his 'artistic' credentials.

Evans hasn't bought tools and equipment as an economic investment but always to enlarge his metalworking vocabulary, allowing him to make things which would be impossible otherwise. This lack of an economic imperative is exemplified by the fact that between August '95 and February '96, he spent his time only on drawing, which in a sense is opposite to normal good business practice, as his other, manufacturing, equipment lies idle until it is needed. He feels that there is vast potential in blacksmithing and equipment purchase helps him to explore it more effectively.

He feels that any skills lost over, for example, a ten year period may be re-learnt for new projects:

You have got to learn how to make it each time for a one-off ... freshness and immediacy has to be maintained each time ... with some practice skills are developed ... you are responding to meaning not to the metal.¹⁷

When working in a particular vocabulary he feels that physical prowess and coordination may help, and practice to get 'up to speed' is important. With the reservation that as soon as you start to think about it, or analyse what you are doing, you can't do it with the same fluency.

Evans thinks that competence comes from a use of analytical design processes, but wonderful things come from a creative process, where there is an intuitive response to the site. He sees the design process as a means of testing the original idea, but it's often best to revert back to an original, 'back of the envelope,' idea. He notes: "The theme and

the spirit is difficult to maintain as part of a big job - all work should contribute towards the whole, the vision is the key.”¹⁸

Evans, in reacting to criticism of Lund’s Hyde Park Gates, commented that, despite some reservations:¹⁹

Hyde Park is not a copy. It didn’t do any harm - it was frothy and fun and that was fine. My own interest is more regulated and controlled, it’s not my style of work.²⁰

Evans noted that:

... ten feet away there are about a mile of railings, box section, components... bland, soul-less ... no one had complained about this. Why criticise an individual work ... it is *worth* criticising whereas the railings are not... yet the railings and others like them are the *real* evil in our cities... they are so bad they don’t exist.²¹

In making this comment he highlighted the existence of a plethora of poor ironwork, often produced industrially, and with little or no sympathy for the site, the material, or their purpose in a cultural sense. This work is almost never commented upon, and yet public spaces are full of it. Public work needs, especially, to address both the issues of practical and decorative functionalism. To be practical it must work, or do its job, for example, providing a secure barrier, ease of opening and closing, the difficulty of fitting on site; safety; structural requirements such as stiffness, sagging or creep; environmental considerations and in particular resistance to corrosion. To be entirely successful, the cultural function of the work needs also to be recognised and addressed.

At present, Evans obtains many of his commissions from Public Art agencies - with whom he has deposited slides of his previous work. He is one of the most effective exponents of Public Art, informed in part by working with his partner Lesley Greene, an important figure in the development of the Public Art movement. An earlier example of a very large public art work is Evan's Broadgate screen in London, (figure 31) which although related to the surrounding architecture, does something to humanise the space and the approach to the area.

Evans has developed his own furnace design which has become an important aid in completing large pieces such as the Kew work. In contrast to solid fuel forges, gas furnaces do not require skilled working, as they can be set to a given temperature and left without fear of overheating the material. For the Kew, it was possible for one person to punch 40 holes in bars of 50mm by 20mm steel in one day, whereas with a conventional hearth two people could do 16 holes per day. A one metre length of heat enables longer tapers to be worked in one heat, so that achieving form is easier and more efficient. A disadvantage is that it is difficult to heat a large three dimensional piece and difficult to focus the heat as required for hole punching, for example. His gas furnace consists of two 150mm gutter sections of ceramic pipe, with a gap between, allowing a long or wide heat, as required. It took three months to develop the furnace, the tools, and to make it work successfully. He regards the development of equipment and techniques as an important part of his work and part of the creative process.²²

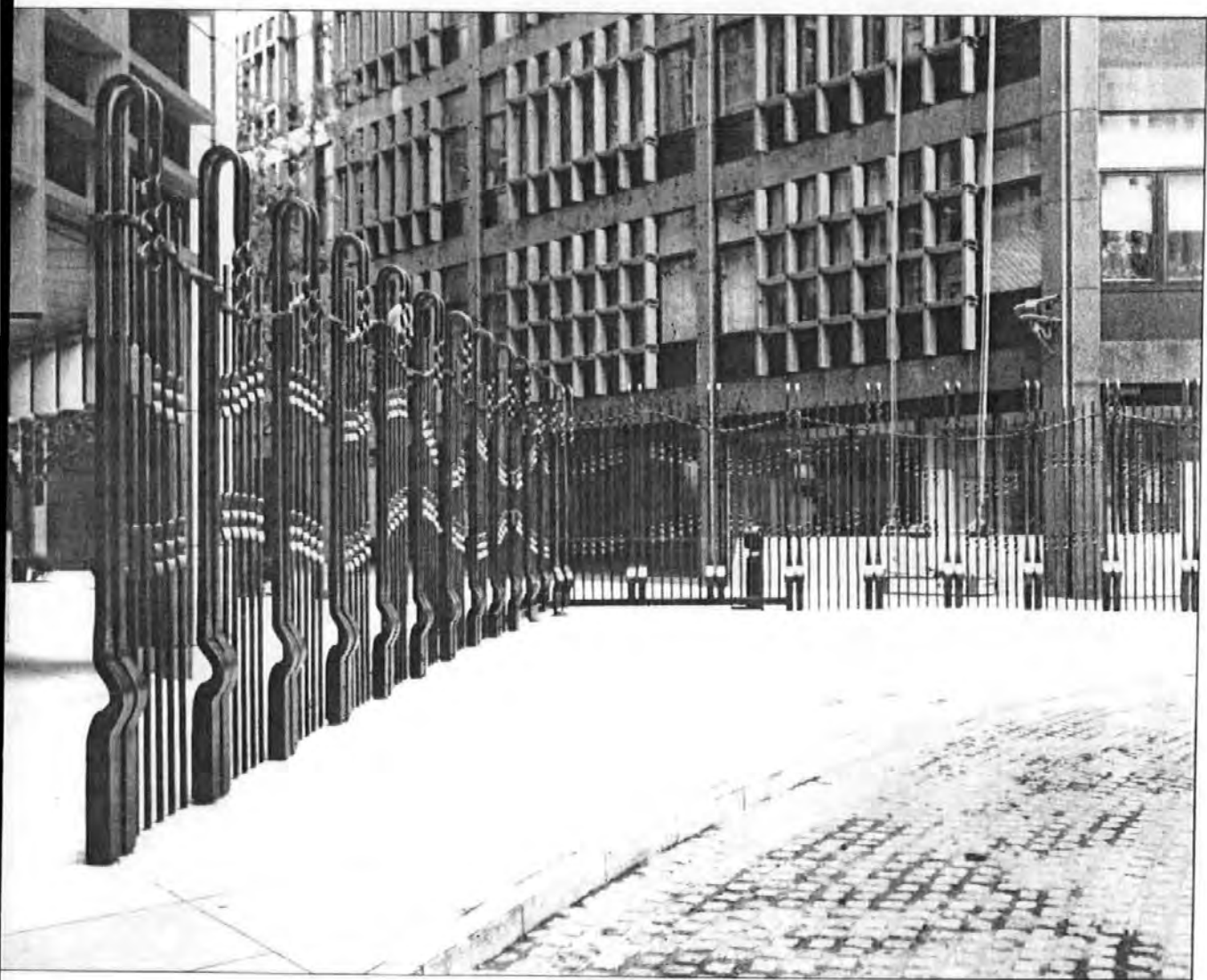


Figure 31. Broadgate Development, City of London, screen by Alan Evans, 1992.

¹ Evans, Alan. Interview, Stroud 1.2.96

² Hawkins, David. Alan Evans: Blacksmith and Site Specific Artist. in, Exhibition catalogue: *Design Innovation*, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome 29.2.96 - 1.3.96, p. 12.

³ Evans, op cit.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Anon. 1992 Conference Preview, Alan Evans. *The Anvil's Ring*, Winter 1992, p.16.

⁶ Chatwin, Amina. *Into the New Iron Age: Modern British Blacksmiths*. Coach House Publishing, Cheltenham. p. 104.

⁷ Evans, op cit.

⁸ At FIFI, Lesley Greene, Alan's partner, said that AP's work is male, domineering, overbearing. It has neoclassical references - bundle of sticks = fascist symbol for justice and freedom. Mussolini appropriated the symbol and the meaning so that now it is fascist - the question was asked at about the same time as the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Tom Joyce's thought that Paley's ribbons represented the feminine restraint of the male rods - there were lots of right wing things happening at the time, Berlin Wall - was he saying 'never again' or were the loosely-bound rods celebration, was it because he was an American and it didn't have the same meaning - was it freedom and justice? At the time a New Zealander who was near to AE went to say that AE, T. Joyce, Etc. were rubbishing AP's work. It wasn't fair that TJ was included. Things are still quite cool. (AP's father owns CBS). - perhaps on reflection it wouldn't be nice to have it said about one's own work. Ibid.

⁹ Paley, Albert. Photo feature, *British Blacksmith* No. 3, Nov. 1979, p. 17.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The bridge had diamond shapes like the passing places in a mediaeval bridge - the position of the falling water was changed to make it more visible. At Chancery Lane there were slate shelves about 25 - 30mm thick, so they were not strong enough to use for vehicles, but they were fine for pedestrian paving. Banding of concrete and slate was used in the building foyer. Sand-blasted designs were used. Outside, a roundel was built and paths aligned with a tower visible in Kew Gardens. Handrail on one side of the bridge and a safety shelf on the other side to relate to the water. Evans is against making everything so that it's impossible to hurt yourself. There should be some individual responsibility, there is a little too much of a big brother approach, things are always somebody else's responsibility. Ibid.

¹³ The Sheriff of the county and the Chancellor would talk about budgets then bring in the tally stick maker, who would then cut a stick of hazel square, then put in a notch - palm width = £1000, thumb width = £100 and smaller notches for smaller amounts. Then the stick was split so that there were two matching halves with writing along the inside of the split stick, so that there was a copy of how much money was agreed to. They were used until about 1830, when documents took over, 4 to 500 years of tally sticks were kept, then they were put in the Houses of Parliament boiler, which was subject to a flash fire, caused by the very dry tally sticks, burning down the parliament buildings - causing the present buildings to be produced. Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "The stone work is very ugly and in bad proportion. Liaison between the architectural drawings, gates and stonework was bad, the pediments are cut away - the stone, the gates and the tree of life are in different directions, uncomfortable - the tree of life is the 'sort of thing a 17 year old would have done' - a knowing crude naivete, not a wonderful direction found." Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

5.4. Giuseppe Lund

Giuseppe Lund has been one of the most successful and influential workers in forged metal of the past twenty years or so; his work has been at times praised, at others vilified. He predicted more accurately than others during the late 1970s and early 1980s the current concerns of the artist blacksmith. He has undertaken some of the largest and most important commissions of recent times, and been involved in a constant process of self-development and innovation in his work.

After travelling in Africa and Europe, he studied Philosophy and Science of Materials at Bristol University. He began sculpting with stone and wood, but moved to metal because it gave an opportunity, "... to bridge the gap between function and art."¹ He began a self-imposed training in the working of hot metal, concentrating upon the use of tools and handling the material, making essentially traditional ironwork. Of this time he notes:

It was quite a shock to find that English metalworkers were so closed in their attitude towards someone trying to learn about forging. At the time my only true support came from Antony Robinson - understandable because he was an outsider and self-taught.²

While working with Robinson, Lund was helped by courses with CoSIRA to gain a greater understanding of tools and processes, and was able to obtain some financial support from them.

After his time with Robinson he was able to spend some time working as a journeyman with Manfred Bergmeister in Germany and Toni Benetton in Italy, both important metalworkers. Lund notes that it was thanks to those two in particular that:

I had the confidence to explore the potential of metal as much as I have. So, in short I never had a preconception of what forged metalwork should look like and I pursued my relationship with iron in a very personal way... of course, many blacksmiths have that kind of relationship with iron, but they seemed to have so little confidence when it came to design. I believe this was a reflection of the class status of the manual worker in England in the 50s and 60s.³

Lund noted that blacksmiths during this time were not prepared to question architects or clients in the way that a designer-maker in other materials would:

But of course, there were far more educated middle-class potters, weavers and furniture makers about at that time. All this has changed now and probably played a strong part in the emergence of a new type of metalworker/artist - I reserve the term 'blacksmith' for true believers in the Zen of rivets and fire-welding. As an artist I questioned and challenged everything, so it is not surprising that I got into trouble.⁴

Lund later formed a short-lived and unsuccessful partnership with Robinson, but has since established successful businesses in both the UK and Canada. Presence on the Crafts Council's selected index of makers and his links with the CC have been very important to Lund:

The Crafts Council gave me financial and moral support over the years and my presence on their index has gained me millions of pounds of work. Their fresh approach in recent years is hopefully more down to earth and I will gladly assist them in any way that I can.⁵

Although Lund's work has been largely architectural in context, he

also produces sculpture without a site in mind and work on a domestic scale where there is a much more personal link with the client. Larger commissions are influenced by the setting rather than the client. He also undertakes, "community projects, where the whole thing evolves from a complex collaboration."⁶

Lund's Victoria Plaza gates, discussed in section 6.3., are part of a large and impressive body of work. He has completed a number of other prominent commissions, such as for Westferry Park, Canary Wharf (figure 32) and Dorset Rise in Blackfriars, London. (figures 33, 34) However, he is perhaps best known for the controversial Queen Elizabeth Gates in Hyde Park. The Hyde Park gates were a very public commission, intended as a national celebration of the life of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and as such were a very high profile work, in a prominent location. (figures 35, 36) Their cost at over one million pounds was criticised in a number of places publicly and privately. Clearly there was a need for them to be functional as gates; they needed to close and provide an effective barrier at one of the entrances to Hyde Park in London. However, their most important function was symbolic, and to that end they are very large, have a tree of life situated between the central surmounting a lion and unicorn with a number of crude animal shapes at their base representative of native Scottish mammals. The gates themselves have a large number of flower and tendril forms, and back stiles composed of bound rods, reminiscent of neoclassical power symbolism and of the 'Tree of Life' gates he made for Westferry Circus, near

Canary Wharf, London. Joining methods such as clips have been employed, making reference to traditional gates, and the gates overall are in a general form which Lund has described to Eric Alexander⁷ as 'cleavage style' - possibly a reference to motherhood.

Discussion about the gates amongst blacksmiths has centred around how the commission for them was awarded, their cost, and the quality of manufacture, which was widely considered to be poor. Two articles were published in *British Blacksmith* which were highly critical of the design and manufacture of the gates and the central heraldic beasts, by Alford⁸ and Townsend.⁹ There was disappointment amongst smiths that gates which are as prominent, and were expensive to produce, should have been, in their view, so poorly crafted. There was a definite feeling amongst some smiths that Lund had somehow let the craft down. It is important to note that the feeling of collective responsibility and group identity of which this is evidence, whilst not unique to blacksmiths, has been important in the recent developments in art blacksmithing, through BABA in particular. To balance this, it isn't clear that there was any intention that the gates should be symbolic of good blacksmithing practice, or any obligation for Lund to 'keep the blacksmithing faith', as they were to be symbolic of the Queen Mother and her life. As Lund noted in *Crafts*:
Here was an opportunity to make gates that would welcome people in rather than keeping them out. The sombre tones of mourning for Prince Albert¹⁰ could be lifted - colourfully - from London's metalwork at last.¹¹



Figure 32. Gate, in Westferry Circus, Canary Wharf, London, by Giuseppe Lund, 1990, forged mild steel.

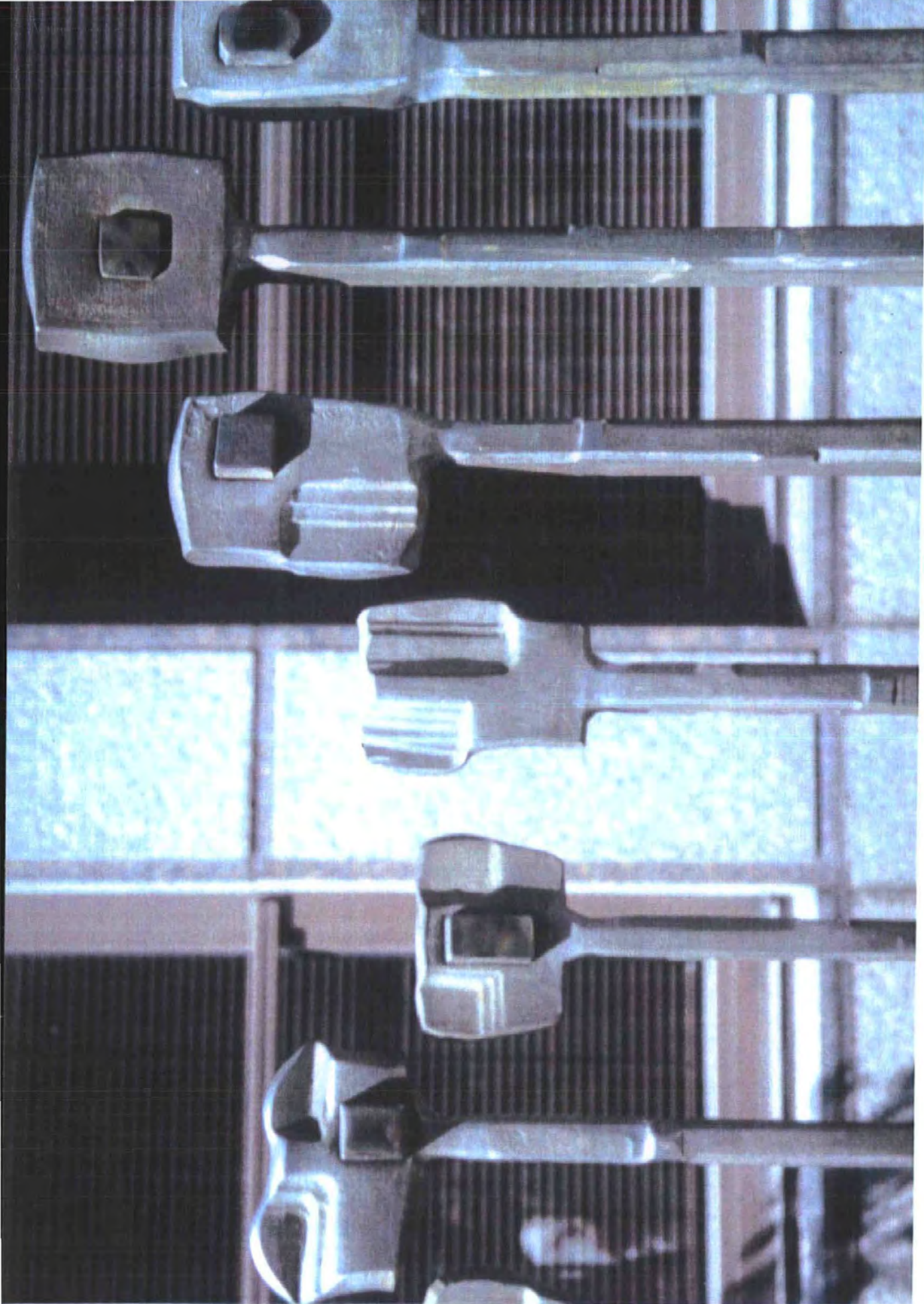


Figure 33. Detail of railings in Blackfriars, London, by Giuseppe Lund, 1988, forged mild steel.

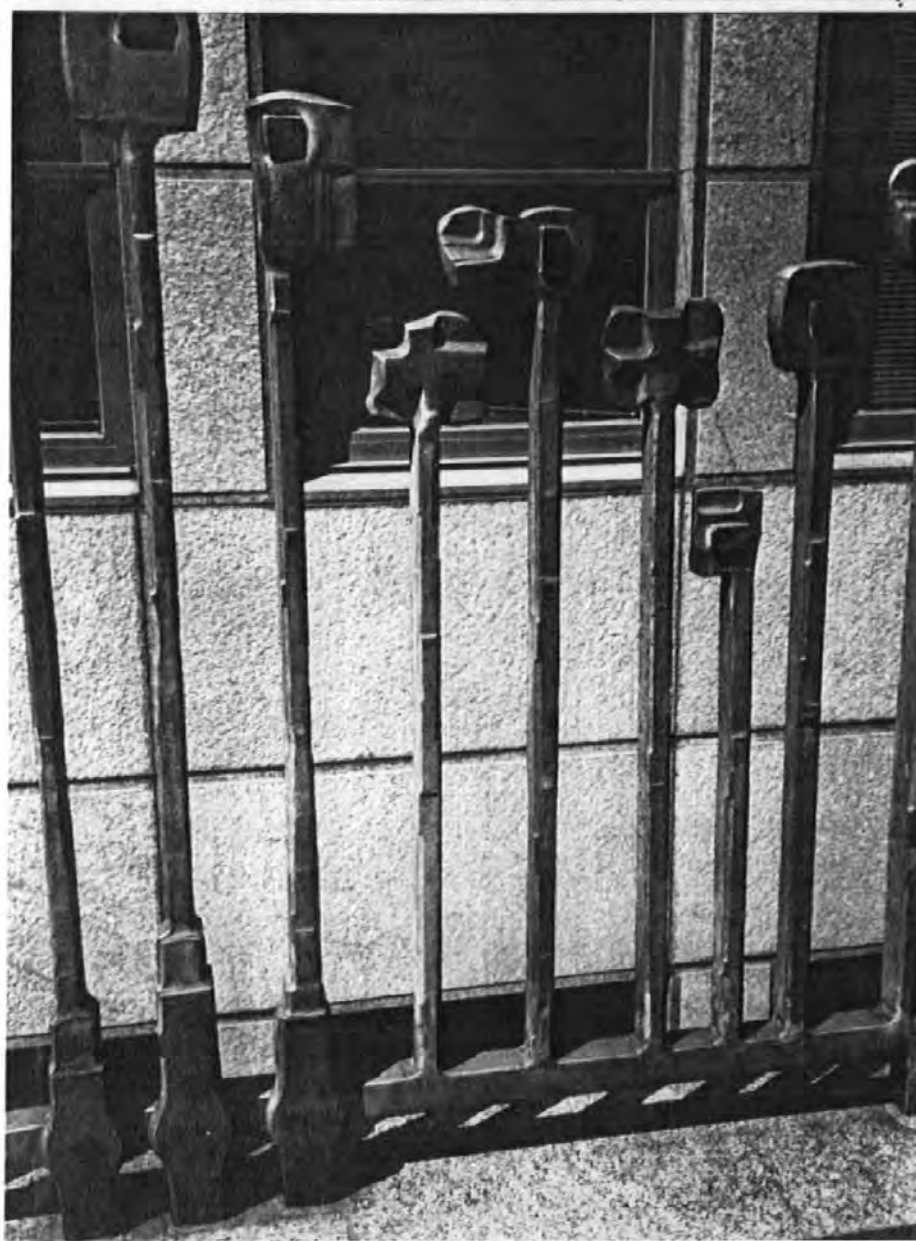
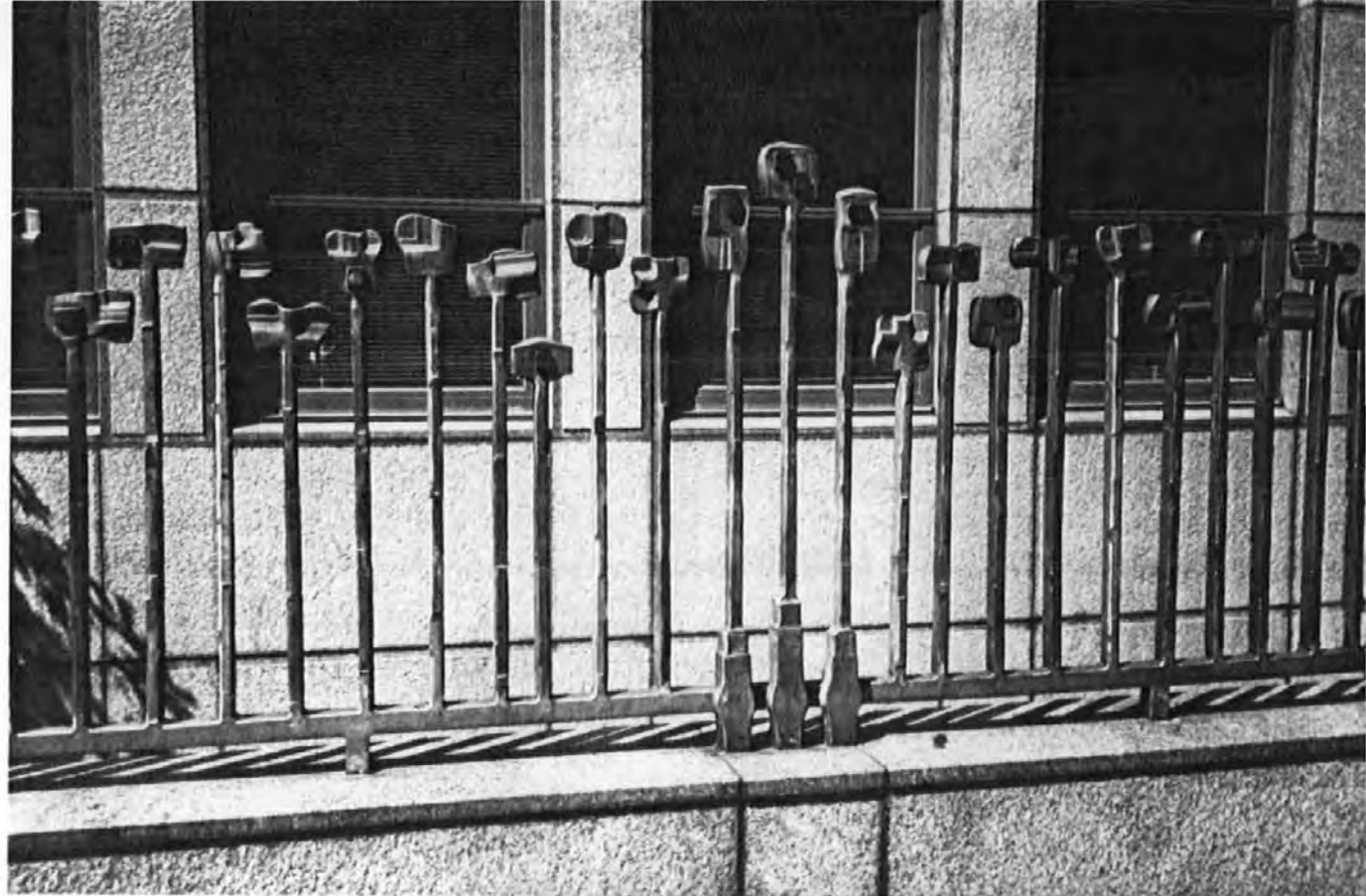


Figure 34.
Railing
details,
Blackfriars,
London,
by
Giuseppe
Lund.

Lund commented, as early as 1980, that, "I do not have any great purpose to save the world from badly made gates."¹² The Hyde Park gates were heavy on symbolism, but light on the practical side. When visiting the gates after reading the reviews, the expectation of an horrific sight is largely unfulfilled, as they are exuberant and individual, and have many features of interest. There are a number of sections which are poorly made in conventional terms, and there appear to be some structural and practical problems. The heraldic beasts in the centre of the two main support pillars are rather naive and out of proportion, the pillars themselves appear to be in a different and conflicting style to the gates. An opportunity to enhance the effect of the gates by appropriate and innovative stonework was lost. However, it was a major step forward in terms of the acceptance of blacksmithing as an appropriate contemporary medium for a national commemorative project, and as such it will be some time before it is possible to gauge whether the gates have had an effect which is positive or negative. It may be a case of, 'any publicity being good publicity.'

Peter Dormer commented in *Crafts*:

The new gates in Hyde Park erected in honour of the Queen Mother are appalling; they are an appropriate embellishment of a country in decline. And they are also a terrible advertisement for the applied arts.¹³



Figure 35. Queen Elizabeth Gates, Hyde Park, London, by Giuseppe Lund, 1993, forged and fabricated stainless steel.



Figure 36. Queen Elizabeth Gates, Hyde Park, London, by Giuseppe Lund, forged and fabricated stainless steel.

Dormer seems to make the incorrect assumption that the Royal family were not involved with the commissioning process, and that the design was forced upon them. There was a design competition which included other artists and applied artists of good standing, such as James Horrobin and Alec Cobbe. Prince Michael of Kent was coordinating the process, and, as Lund pointed out, his own design gained the approval of “Royal Fine Arts, English Heritage, Royal Parks, Westminster, the Royal Family....”¹⁴

Dormer also criticised the gates on the basis that they were: “... fashionably rough and ready, showing the marks of the maker. But that’s not what royalty is about. Royalty means not disclosing the mark of the human hand.”¹⁵

Whilst it is correct that the marks of manufacture feature prominently, Dormer ignored, or was ignorant of, Lund’s status as one of the pioneers and most prominent exponents of this way of blacksmithing - for Lund it isn’t a fashionable approach, it’s an approach he, in particular, has made fashionable.

¹ Lund, Giuseppe. Email. 16.5.96.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lund, Giuseppe. Email 15.5.96.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Related during discussions in March 1996 at Exeter.

⁸ Alford, Wendy. The Queen Elizabeth Gate: Alien Landscape. *British Blacksmith* No. 68, Spring 1993, pp. 2-3.

⁹ Townsend, David. Wastelund. *British Blacksmith* No. 68, pp. 3-5.

¹⁰ It has often been noted that ironwork was normally painted black after the death of Prince Albert, although there may have been other reasons, such as the availability of a good quality black paint at the time. Ironwork was often painted in other colours such as Gunmetal Green (British Museum) or in white or grey lead based paints and light blues. A recently restored gate in the refurbished Ironwork Gallery of the V&A has been painted in its original blue grey.

¹¹ Lund, Giuseppe. Gate Debate. *Crafts*, Nov/Dec. 1993, p. 48.

¹² Adamson, Lesley. Forging Links Between Men of Iron. *The Guardian*, 19th July 1980

¹³ Dormer, Peter. Gate Debate. *Crafts*, Nov/Dec. 1993, p. 49.

¹⁴ Lund, Giuseppe. Email 16.5.96.

¹⁵ Dormer, op cit.

5.5. Neil Hawkins

Originally from Monkokehampton, but now based at Barnstaple in Devon, my father grew up in the shadow of the family forges. One was operated by his Uncle, Samuel Vanstone in the village, continuing a tradition of some 250 years in the village and at nearby Broadwoodkelly. When younger he would go down to the forge after school to, literally, hold a candle to his Uncle's work in the winter evenings. He notes that war work and the pressure from farmers caused Sam's death from over-work during WW2 - the farmers were able to make a good living during wartime, and urged him to work ever harder. Vanstone's son, Herbert took over the forge afterwards, and has remained there until the present. There was no place for Hawkins as an apprentice at the forge in Monkokehampton, which had to take on agency work and the retailing of oil to farmers to survive after the war.

Jack Vanstone, another uncle, was also unable to take him on at his forge in Okehampton, as he had his son George to cater for. Jack was, however, helpful when he undertook his apprenticeship and began to enter shoeing and ironwork competitions, to which they would often travel together.

Because they could anticipate the way trade was developing in the post war period, his relatives urged him to take a joint apprenticeship in Blacksmithing, Farriery and Agricultural Engineering, which he did.

He began his five year apprenticeship with Donald Gliddon of Braunton, North Devon in 1946, under the RIB, NMFB&AE Joint Apprenticeship scheme. Block-release training was provided at Exeter College in the three subject areas.¹ Instruction was both by College staff and Rural Industries Instructors, who also made visits to the workplace when not at college. During the apprenticeship and for the next seven or eight years he took part in a number of ironwork and horse-shoeing competitions and was highly successful, winning a great many prizes, including a Silver Medal from the Worshipful Company of Farriers.²

When taking part in the Devon County Show competitions in 1951, he met Edward Bailey and was invited to meet and discuss an idea for a Devon Guild of Craftsmen. A group, including Bailey, Hawkins, Pat Honor and a local architect later met at Dartington and agreed to shoulder any financial losses the Guild might make in its initial stages. The Devon Guild was officially formed later in a more public meeting in Totnes.

The Guild was largely composed of ex-forces, and art school educated craftspeople in the Leach tradition - Bernard Leach himself joining during the early days of the Guild. Annual exhibitions and a number of lively seminars were held at Dartington for a number of years, until Dartington itself decided to convert the Cider Press into the current craft centre - essentially on the back of the Devon Guild Annual Summer Exhibitions. These exhibitions, unlike the ones in agricultural

shows, had selection committees and an expectation of innovative design. This exposure to the culture of design meant that he was developing contemporary designs in metal from the early 1950s. His work often involved the typical product range of the blacksmith, but involved experimentation with texture, finish, proportion and scale. Some fire-iron designs made by him since the early 1960s were included in the Crafts Council's *The Maker's Eye* exhibition in 1982, and later shown in a small one-person exhibition the following year at the National Museum and Gallery of Wales in Cardiff. The Welsh exhibition was interesting outcome, as his cousin Willie Vanstone had run a blacksmith's shop in Cardiff for a number of years up until just after WW2.

In the early 1960s, Gliddons, where he had been apprenticed, was sold to an outside bidder, despite his making a realistic offer for it, after Donald Gliddon's son decided not to carry on the business. He was foreman smith at the time, with five smiths working under him. Much of the work came there because of his expertise, and the business declined rapidly after his departure. The break-up of Gliddons was the cause of some resentment and regret at the time, since the firm had worked on a number of major projects, including a Royal commission for railings at Windsor Park; the development of the first prototype four-furrow plough for Ferguson's; the design and manufacture of a patented form of hay rake; a considerable number of commissions for decorative work; agricultural work, shoeing and general welding and repairs, including for local author, Henry

Williamson.

Although blacksmithing has always formed part of his work, and has been important in terms of identity, there have been times when it has had to become a background activity. It was necessary during the 1960s a large part of the 70s and early 80s to work largely in agricultural engineering, fitting and welding, although it was still possible to make work for the Devon County Show, and Devon Guild exhibitions, as well as to shoe some horses and undertake commissions. Working at two jobs simultaneously during this period took considerable stamina and determination.

In the early days of the Crafts Council he obtained an interest-free loan, which when added to some savings, was sufficient to construct a permanent studio workshop, to replace the previous temporary structures, where making horseshoes by Tilly lantern in the evening was by no means unusual. Weekend horseshoeing during two years in the late 1970s allowed a local bricklayer to be paid, by the day, to build the studio walls, and the materials to be purchased in manageable quantities each week. The result was a modern, purpose-built studio workshop, which which is in daily use today, although two extensions have been added for office and storage space.

In 1980 he became a member of BABA, having been an active member of NAFBAE for a number of years, and attended the Hereford event, which he found inspiring, but was perhaps less surprised than

many British smiths by the potential of a design culture, since he had been involved since the 1950s through the Devon Guild.

The number of outlets for his products expanded during the 1980s, and included a mixture of standard items and commissioned pieces, including architectural work on a large scale and church work. He gave up horse-shoeing to concentrate upon decorative wrought ironwork in the mid 1980s.

In 1987 he was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship and visited a large number of blacksmiths, farriers and training establishments throughout France. In the second half of the Fellowship in 1988, he travelled through many parts of western Germany and visited a number of blacksmiths and farriers.

His work in the last ten years has increased in scope and become more sculptural and expressive. However, he still works in traditional styles and methods where the client requires work of this kind, but prefers to work in a contemporary style. (figures 37, 38) The first of the two garden gates illustrated appears at first to be a conventional 18th-century style gate, however, the upper part of the central decorative panel of the gate has been mirrored in the lower half and incorporates a classical honeysuckle element taken from an inlay on a family casket as a link with the client. It uses wavy side panels specified by the client and has a version of a Georgian door fanlight as an overthrow. This is a self-conscious manipulation of the visual

language in line with the requirements of the commission and done with a sense of humour. The gate uses a variety of fixing and joining methods, including rivets, fire-welding, MIG welding and clips. Repoussé, hot forging, cold bending and power hammer work are used in its construction. The gate both uses and comments upon both the modern and the traditional in a manner which satisfied the requirements of the client.

He has perhaps been unlucky in being one of the last of the 'old guard,' and not being in a position to expand or take advantage of some of the unique opportunities which were available, during the 1980s in particular. He intends to become semi-retired during 1996 in order to write a simple, and a more advanced book on blacksmithing techniques, as he feels that contemporary smiths, not exposed to the types of work he did in his earlier career, could benefit from the considerable knowledge and skill he has built up in 50 years as an artist blacksmith and general smith.



Figure 37. Garden gate and fanlight by Neil Hawkins, 1988.

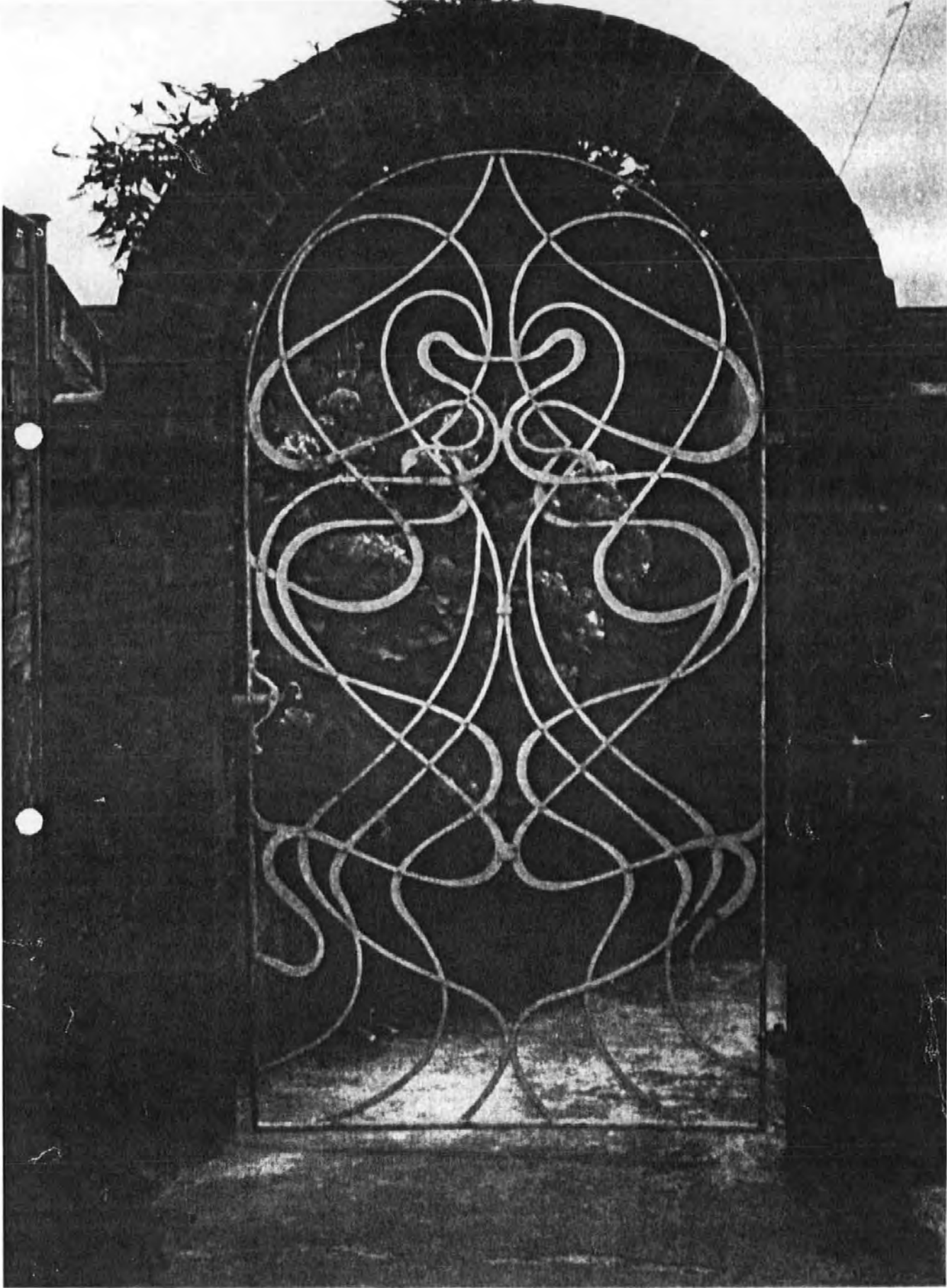


Figure 38. Voysey-inspired garden gate by Neil Hawkins, mild steel 1987.

¹ It also included an element of General Studies which took place in the Gandy Street building which was at the time the first home of Exeter University.

² It should be noted that the horses shod were working farm horses in many competitions and the shoes were much larger and more difficult to make than in present day competitions, where they are almost exclusively for riding horses.

5.6. Phil Johnson

Phil Johnson came into blacksmithing as a second, almost third, career. Because the revival in blacksmithing has been relatively recent, many other smiths have also started work after completing a phase of their career or after becoming dissatisfied with what they were doing before. Johnson is a recent past Chair of BABA, and has been an active and effective promoter of blacksmithing, notably in Scotland through BABA in Scotland and events at Ratho Byres, his works, but also nationally through *Fe* and other initiatives.

Johnson's company works mainly on architectural commissions, with and increasing quantity of forged work:

Customers now seem to have come alive to the possibilities and realise that you can actually change the shape of the material. You don't have to have square and round things and that's all. Once they get educated a little bit.¹

His workshop is large, with ten employees and two workshops of 360 and 1200 square metres respectively, containing forges and several power hammers, and associated equipment. Using these his company is able take on a wide variety of work:

Well we call ourselves artist blacksmiths, but we do such a variety of things, from sorting a shovel to making a sculpture, all in the same hour.²

He was in the Navy for twelve years as a signalman, then undertook a retraining course on welding at Portsmouth, then, after leaving the Navy, went on to train in mechanical engineering. He worked as an

engineer for about five years, then set up his own business. This business grew steadily and then he started doing some blacksmithing and continued expanding until the forgework has displaced the engineering side of the business. Work tends to be large:

...it seems to get larger. We have just finished a sculpture which is three metres high. The work is local authority work ... but commissioned by architects.³

When asked about his interest in blacksmithing, he says:

It's a disease, I'm sure it's a disease! I think the only cure is death. ... I think I like getting better, and making shapes, forms in iron, having ideas ... It's quite nice to achieve something and then put it up, and to go by and later on it's still there...we do it by the best means possible, we don't have a philosophy, I'm not a philosopher.⁴

He doesn't engage in a technique for the technique's sake, but uses equipment, tooling and methods in whatever way is required to complete the work effectively, and with economy of effort. He finds working on self-initiated projects the most rewarding type of work:

I quite like making things for exhibitions, and I quite like them being bought afterwards, someone has actually come along and said, Oh, I like that, I'll have it. The person hasn't actually come to you and said I want one of those ... You have done it because that is what you want to do.⁵

Business, especially in the North and Scotland is buoyant in the 1990s, and has benefited from the promotional efforts by BABA members in particular:

There was that recession which we never had, a lot of people in the south seemed to have it, in Edinburgh we didn't have it, but that was maybe because we were doing something different. I think, especially in the landscaping side of things, there is a bigger demand for our work all over the country, not just us, I think everybody has reaped the benefits of the promotion which has taken place in the last ten

years.

He has the clear view that BABA has had more of an influence than NAFBAE in ensuring a revival in blacksmithing, as NAFBAE is essentially a trade organisation, concerned about blacksmiths, whereas BABA is more concerned about the work, and not the people that do the work. He regards the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths as regressive, ineffectual and overly concerned with the ways of the past.

He is optimistic about the future of blacksmithing and about the inevitability of change and development:

Some of the stuff we are making now won't be around in ten years time, it is too of this time only. Some of it that is being made is timeless aswell, and that is good to be able to make something that is timeless... Looking back at scrolls and all that is just looking back, doing someone else's work. These boys, when they were doing it, that was new and it was adventurous, and that was pushing forward, we have to keep pushing forward ourselves.⁶

In taking this optimistic view he noted that he was, "chock-a-block with things to do, and don't have time to do them, we will get there though."⁷

¹ Johnson, Phil. Interview, Ironbridge, 5.8.94.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

5.7. Bob Oakes

Bob Oakes is in business with his wife Carol and son Nick in Lincolnshire. They are active members of BABA, attending most of the forge-ins and other events. They were responsible for organising the very successful Alford event during 1992, when a large archway was constructed by those attending the conference for the local Town Hall during a weekend.

The Oakes' undertake a variety of blacksmithing work, out of necessity:

We do a fair proportion of work for the local community, won't do any car repairs, vehicle repairs, they're out, we do a bit of work for farmers, general repairs, shafting forks and spades, etc. We do sort of middle of the road ironwork for people that don't want to pay a fortune, but want a good quality job.¹

They regard the majority of their work as ordinary, but try to include a good quality forged element in all of it. It is regarded as a rare treat if someone wishes to pay for fully-forged work. As a marketing ploy they attend a number of craft shows with Four Seasons Events who organise large scale craft shows in the London area. This has been successful for them and enabled them to keep their head above water during recessive times:

I like to think I have brought out some very unusual pieces for interior design - candle holders, lamps, curtain rails, small items of furniture, various things like that, these sell well down at the shows and we get more orders for them.²

Oakes laments that although his interest lies in the area of contemporary work, there is little market for it in Lincolnshire:

I think we can't live in the past, we can't be constantly be producing designs that other people have been producing in a better way shape and form before, we have got to look to the future, we have got to look the way architecture is going, we have got to blend in or fit in our designs with the architect... Then your works become the antiques of the future.³

Oakes worked for a local blacksmith as a Saturday job when he was at school, and was influenced by his metalwork teacher at school who, previously an industrial blacksmith after the war, had gone into teaching. He attended a technical grammar school and went into teaching metalwork himself for a few years, but became disillusioned when what he regarded as a practical subject was moved in a more academic direction by curriculum changes. He then attended a number of courses on blacksmithing and decided to apprentice himself to a local blacksmith for three years before setting up on his own. He joined BABA in the early days but let his membership lapse, rejoining in the late 1980s. He has found membership of BABA valuable in terms of communication about design and working practices, and joint marketing initiatives.

When asked what it is about blacksmithing that appeals, he comments that:

It is the nature of the material, its the way sometimes that you have got to attack it, and the next you coax it gently into shape, it is a challenge, you have only got a very short amount of time while the metal is

malleable enough to work. There is only a certain limited number of heats that you can use in a fire without seriously affecting the structure of the - the quality of the material. Yes, it's an addiction really, I've done cabinet making, I found woodworking very tame, very very tame, it is a delightful material to work.⁴

He regards making a good living as a blacksmith as difficult, in part because of the way in which the public have confused the mass produced cold-bent work with the products of the blacksmith. Many smiths, in his view, are happy to work for little money because of their love for the work. He is engaged in experimental work combining ceramics and stones with ironwork, but finds it difficult because of financial imperatives to devote a great deal of time to this, despite enjoying the work.

He has found, in common with other makers in his area, that the local Arts Association were less helpful than they might have been, as they had a commissioning, and commissioning advisory service which recommended, for investment reasons, that the work of nationally well known practitioners be bought, rather than that of artists and craftspeople within their catchment area.

Oakes thinks that the future of blacksmithing depends upon perceptions of its status and suitability as a medium of expression:

I think first of all we have got to influence colleges into providing facilities where blacksmithing can be taught. People will realise that forge work is just as an acceptable medium in art as ceramics, glass, and

all the other.⁵

Whilst having a high regard for BABA, Oakes takes the view that other organisations have been less effective in promoting blacksmithing:

“NAFBAE has basically looked after farriers and has tolerated blacksmiths.”⁶ He has a low opinion of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths, regarding them as something of a social club. He feels that the future lies in part with improved marketing and the targeting of potential clients through joint efforts, such as might be organised by BABA in particular.

¹ Oakes, Bob. Interview, Ironbridge, 5.8.94.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

6. Towards the Future Agenda

This section traces some of the major developments in the work of artist blacksmiths, and notes the manner in which practices and concerns are either shared with, or differ from, existing traditions. The first section addresses the traditions of practice and how these have changed, especially since the late 1970s. The second section discusses contemporary site-specific working and the third, the role of texture and precision, as these have been important in the practice of artist blacksmiths.

6.1. Traditions, Traditionalists and New Practices.

In the recent past the blacksmith has achieved recognition for practices that have long since been set out as objectives: “the craftsman must be a designer if he is ever to hold fully the artist’s rank... the designer must be able to execute what he designs.”¹ This issue of the status and hierarchy of practice has shadowed the development of blacksmithing as trade² and industry, leading to the emergence of the blacksmith as designer-maker, or artist-craftsperson.

The period between the 1950s and the late 1970s, in particular, was a time of decline and transition where the majority of work followed the pattern set by earlier tradition. As Margrie noted at the time of the *Towards a New Iron Age* exhibition at the V&A in 1982.

...forged iron has for most of the twentieth century remained in the grip of historical pastiche or worse, ill digested modernism of the most

banal kind. Certainly there have been isolated examples of sensitive and generous work, mostly springing from the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement, including that of Charles Rennie Macintosh, but however glorious these individual creative statements there is no evidence of sustained aesthetic development. The past, while providing inspiration, has contributed to the craft's decline.³

Important new work was being created around the turn of the century and subsequently, by those such as Macintosh, Gaudi and Horta, but their influence was negligible upon the 17th and 18th century canon. *The Studio* magazine featured contemporary ironwork and ironwork design competitions extensively between its foundation in 1893 and the first world war, but this had little or no impact upon the practice of blacksmiths. Later, work by Edgar Brandt of France, Mazzucotelli of Italy, Samuel Yellin of the USA and Fritz Kühn of Germany, were all important in influencing work internationally, but had little impact until relatively recently upon British practice. Brandt had rebelled against the prevailing 18th century style, in France during the 1920s and 30s in particular.⁴ Until the late 1970s in Britain, the dominant style of work was that very strongly influenced by the work of Jean Tijou, and his British followers such as Robinson, Edney, Bakewell and the Davies Brothers of Wales. Dick Quinnell, in discussing pre-BABA blacksmithing said: "One must appreciate that one's design horizons were rather limited by the CoSIRA design book and historic examples - we didn't really know much about anything else."⁵

Blacksmiths were not questioning and examining their practices, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the work of the smith declined

significantly in the period between the late 1950s and the mid 1970s, as it continued to be dominated by restoration and reproduction work. This is not to deny the technical qualities of such pieces, as for example, the restoration of the gates of St. Columb's Cathedral, Derry (figure 39)⁶ by Peter Walker and Bob Hobbs,⁷ but to note the creative cul-de-sac in which practice had located itself.

In the 1970s when the new blacksmithing began to make its impact upon an entrenched trade, the traditional smiths, well versed in the 'rules' of proper smithing, rejected its integrity, claiming that these 'iron bruisers' weren't 'proper blacksmiths'. The new smiths, being influenced directly by, in particular, work from Germany, the USA and Italy, exposed the traditional versus modern debate.

The sense of being 'of one's own time' is problematic, in that arguments can be presented on behalf of the conservative positions just as much as for the radical. In terms of blacksmithing it had become an issue of 'style', or more precisely, the use of 'patterns'. Smiths were working in exuberant baroque and rococo styles whose origins and philosophical basis were entirely alien, and largely unknown to them. Familiarity with the names and work of the major 17th and 18th century protagonists, and with every technical and stylistic variation, the expertise was being channelled into reproductions. However, this knowledge was isolated from the cultural context, as Vaclav Jaros has noted:

No one will ever do better baroque gates or grilles than the baroque blacksmiths made, for the gate made in baroque style in 1981 is not a

baroque gate anymore.⁸

The supply of electricity to rural blacksmiths' shops in the post war period has increased substantially the availability of power hammers and other equipment, having a profound effect upon the working practices and styles of work of artist blacksmiths. Many power hammers in current use were designed for use with steam,⁹ but have been adapted in recent times for use as pneumatic hammers.¹⁰ The power and control available through these hammers has been instrumental in the formation of much contemporary practice.



Figure 39. Restoration of the gates to St. Columb's Cathedral, Derry, by Peter Walker (left) and Bob Hobbs, 1994.

In many respects the difference between the traditionalists and the new smiths may be compared to those between the work of architects and builders. It prompts questions as to originality and purpose.

The key difference between the work of traditional and the modern smiths is in their approach to design. The debate over the last twenty years has been between those who prefer to use the styles and methods of earlier centuries and the designs of others, the traditional blacksmiths, and those who refuse to accept that they have to adhere to 'rules' of design, style, method, or the designs of others, the modern,¹¹ artist blacksmiths. Richard Quinnell has commented that there exists a polarity in the craft, the extremes of which are defined by techniques, and a willingness to embrace new processes.

Evidently what had been considered good technique for decorative work, was very strongly influenced over many years by the rules of the blacksmithing competitions at agricultural shows. These rules tended to reinforce existing practice and effect an active resistance to design innovation. This meant that there was little or no questioning of the style in which they were to work - it was essentially baroque - but there was intense interest in the techniques used and the quality of their execution. There is something of this concern in the work of modern smiths, as Quinnell commented:

... there are people who are dedicated to what they perceive as correct technique, basically ... the seven operations, so that ... you always punch a hole, you don't drill it, you always forge weld if you can, you don't arc weld, you probably use sledge hammers rather than a power hammer ... generally you do things the way it has always been done ... I suppose that because of particular conditions in this country it has

got muddled up with the idea that this particular style that came into this country in the late 17th century is the correct style.¹²

For the traditionalist, contemporary work was often perceived as a threat to business and working practices. In a *British Blacksmith* article of December 1990, Chatwin noted a number of differences that she had identified between traditional and contemporary smiths. It is questionable whether the divisions exist in practical terms, but nevertheless they are an important part of the debate. The first contrast noted was the alignment of abstract pattern with design, and naturalism with the traditional approach.¹³ This is too simplistic, as modern smiths often engage with the construction of forms expressive of their ideas and philosophy or of characteristics of the material - although the root of the form may be in existing forms or images. Traditional ironwork also contains abstracted forms,¹⁴ many of which owe their presence to the continued importance of the classical within baroque imagery. A difference between the two camps may be the extent to which the abstraction itself was the work of the maker, or a reproduction of previous abstractions. It is possible to express a wide range of emotions and views through the use of a single decorative style or idiom, but this might equate to expression with a limited vocabulary of words. Quinnell uses the analogy of music.

Style in blacksmithing is like music, and if you stick with the CoSIRA pattern book you are condemning yourself to playing Bach and nothing later ... it's perfectly permissible and pleasant to play folk music and jazz and rave, whatever you like, and then go on and play Bach as well, why the hell not, if that's what suits you, there are no rights and wrongs in this.¹⁵

The visual vocabulary of traditional work has been limited by the accepted canon of styles and techniques, and this has limited the potential for expression, and therefore meaning, both for the smith and the client. This can be compensated for to some extent if the visual language is manipulated in a sophisticated and self-conscious way, but in practice this has seldom been the case.

Traditional smiths have been perhaps more prone to literal, unimaginative copying, with little interpretation - in many cases taking the design from an a pattern book such as the RDC Catalogue. Often this form of copying is less effective than more abstracted or expressive approaches, by which more of the meaning or context may be captured.

On the question of hand and machine production it can be seen that modern smiths use any means at their disposal to produce the designed object, and many are prepared to subcontract out, or share in the making of especially large forgings or pieces. The reality is that commercial practice dictates that in order to make sufficient profit, it is necessary to use the most appropriate and economic methods to carry out the work.

Modern methods are often used for a mixture of reasons. In the case of Alan Evan's very large¹⁶ railings for the new Public Record Office near Kew Gardens, TIG welding was specified by him as the means of assembling many of the parts, whereas the welding contractors

advocated the use of MMA or 'stick' welding on the grounds of cost saving. (Figure 40) The work was completed using TIG welding, as the welds produced were small, neat, required no cleaning up, and because of the nature of the process, the heating applied to the bars was very localised. As some of the major structural components were cold bent using hydraulic presses then excessive heating may have caused distortion. TIG welding reduced the cost of cleaning up and produced an appropriate appearance as forged elements were not ground away.¹⁷

It is by no means universal that the traditional smith uses hand hammering in preference to all other methods. Many have power hammers and use tools and dies to produce forms, and have access to a variety of welding equipment and power tools. Both types of smith use hand methods when appropriate and regard them as being at the core of their work, but use mechanical and electrical aids to improve productivity.

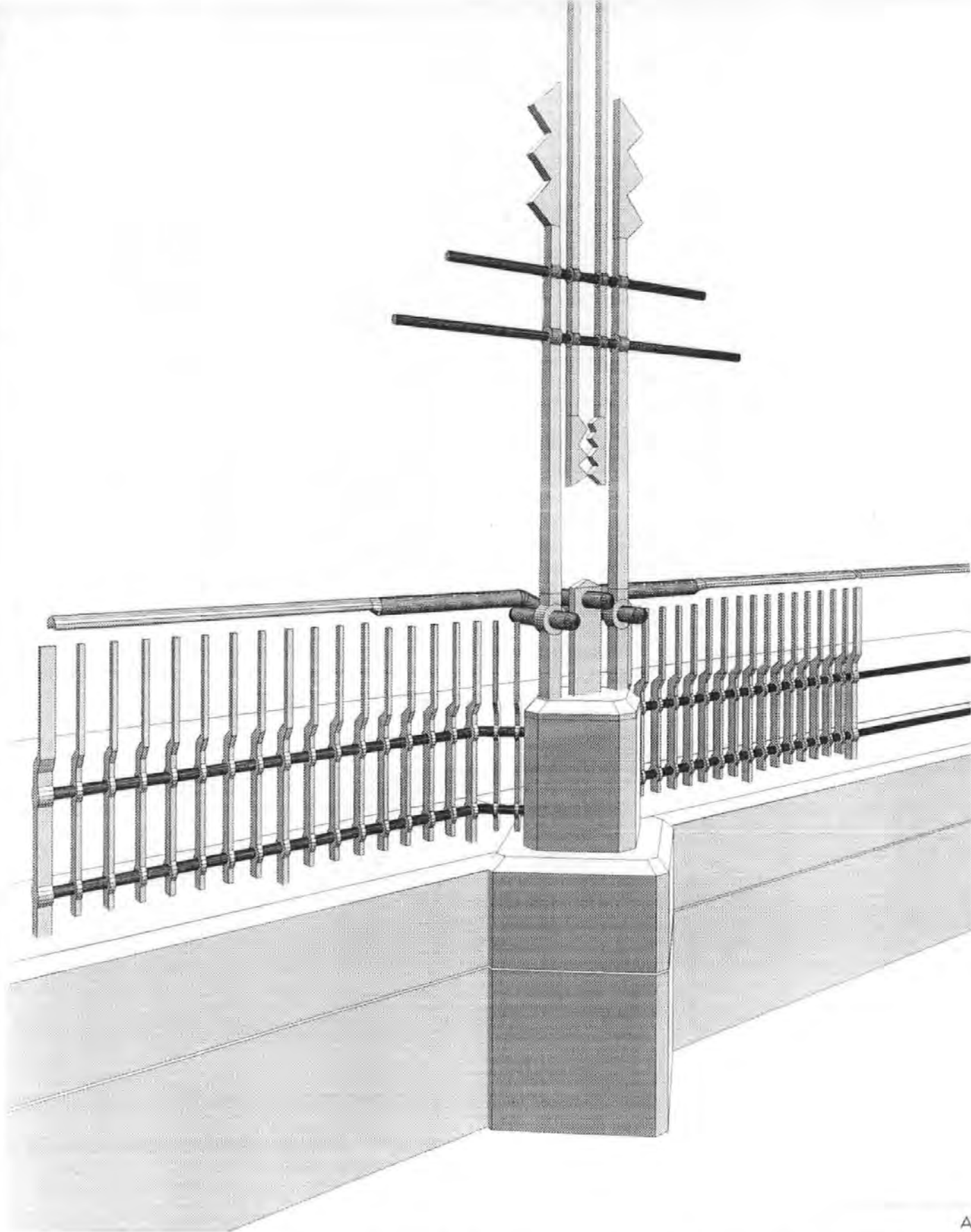


Figure 40. Computer drawing by Alan Evans of a design for the Public Record Office at Kew Gardens, 1994.

The difference between repetitive or machine working in the crafts and in an industrial setting is that of cultural ideology. The craft worker who is self-employed may be able to chose to stop and start working on any project that they wish *in theory*, but the economic demands may mean that this choice is more limited than would first appear.

Power hammers have been used by smiths for hundreds of years, but at first were confined to those who had access to water powered trip hammers, such as are still found at the Finch Foundry (figure 41) near Okehampton in Devon.¹⁸ Many of the ways in which modern and traditional smiths use these hammers are similar, but the differences are important in terms of defining practice.¹⁹

The traditional smith working to 18th-century designs and patterns would typically do most of the work on the ends of the bars to create scroll ends, finials, or the elements of joints. Many designs also make extensive use of straight bars as decorative and structural elements. Straight bars in themselves were examples of skilled work during earlier times, as they had to be laboriously forged from blooms or non standard sections prior to the mass production of iron and the widespread introduction of slitting and rolling mills. Therefore, much of the very heavy and difficult work done by the earlier traditional smith is done by the steel mill, leaving the working of the ends of the bar to the recent traditional smith.²⁰ This is usually light work which could be done by a smith working alone with a range of tools. For

heavier work involving a substantial change of section one or more strikers using sledge hammers and the use of swages and fullers could achieve the desired effect. As the majority of smiths until just after the second world war would have been country-based and would not have had access to electricity, or to steam- or water-powered equipment, then styles of work which required mainly hand work, or the use of a striker, who could be an apprentice or local farm worker, prevailed. In some respects, therefore, the style of traditional ironwork has been influenced both by the absence of power in rural workshops and the training received by rural workers from the RDC, who have encouraged 'traditional' working since the second world war.

The power hammer enabled the smith to work iron and steel, for decorative and functional purposes, at many times the speed possible previously. The widespread availability of welding, cutting and bending equipment permitted the formation of many fabrication businesses which took over much of the work which could previously be done only by the blacksmith. The production of cold-bent imitation wrought ironwork gates proliferated and because they were made by industrial processes and at much lower cost than the blacksmith could achieve, much potential business was lost. Many rural smiths continued to do the heavy work single-handed and without mechanical assistance, but they were gradually being priced out of an adequate living and had to turn to those aspects of welding, fabrication and repair work, which could easily be carried out alone.

Therefore, rural smiths had lost business to agricultural engineers, garages, fabricators, the cold-benders and others, leaving them little commercial room for manoeuvre. They were, in general, left with repair and restoration, general smithing work, farriery and the manufacture of the more expensive ironwork - usually to designs from the RDC catalogue.

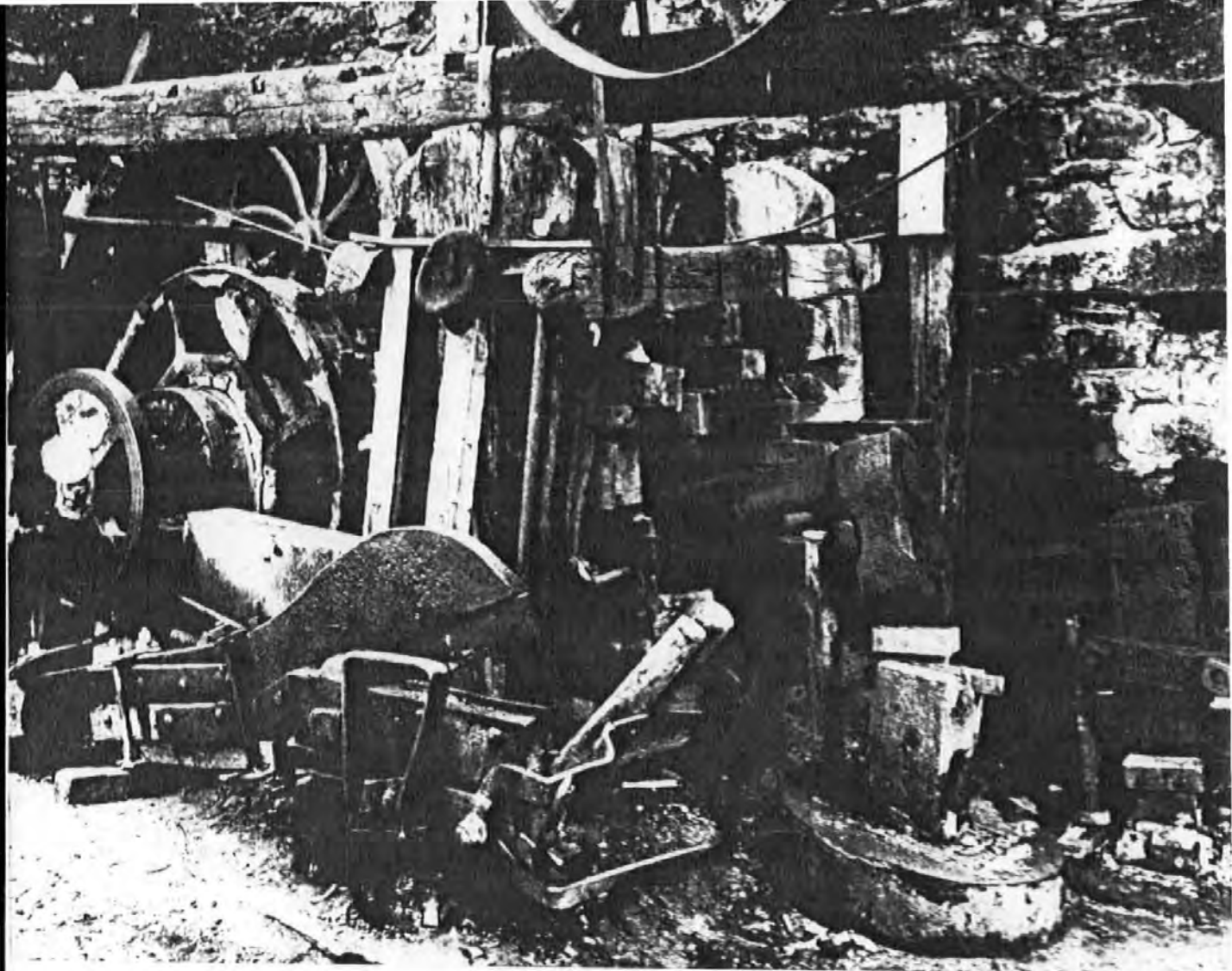


Figure 41. Waterwheel-powered trip hammer and shear at the Finch Foundry, a former edge tool works at Sticklepath, near Okehampton, Devon, 1989.

Work has been more efficient in recent times because of the use of power hammers and hydraulic or air presses and there is a strong tendency to make use of thicker sections of iron or steel in order to differentiate the blacksmith's work from that of the fabricator - who uses the smallest section that is structurally sound, for economic reasons. Alternatively some smiths use heavier sections as Tony Wooton commented, "... to comment upon factory bent forms."²¹

In much modern work, the plastic quality of the material when heated is used extensively, whereas in 18th-century styles the evidence of plasticity tends to be concealed. As Vaclav Jaros has noted:

Even if we use an old power hammer and our hammer is as big as that of the last-century blacksmith, we subconsciously feel that our ability for using strength, shaping and forming has been immensely multiplied by modern technology.²²

Peter Parkinson noted that what was new in the blacksmithing revival was a search for ideas which are not reproductions of the work of the past, including an exploration of processes and utilising:

... an almost industrial capacity to handle sometimes very large sections of material. (The size of your power hammer is practically a virility symbol.) What is also new is the growing creative confidence of smiths who have seen a movement grow and have grown with it.²³

David Petersen's workshop (figure 42), although larger than average, has a typical range of equipment, including a large and a small power hammer, a forge, welding and cutting equipment of various kinds and a mechanical hoist to assist with heavier work.



Figure 42. Site photograph of the interior of David Petersen's metal studio-workshop. James Horrobin can be seen tending the forge, 1992.

Antony Robinson's gates for Winchester Great Hall, although very large, were constructed in a workshop of modest dimensions. These are amongst the finest work by any contemporary smith. (Figure 43)

Richard Bent, a blacksmith, attempted to summarise the 'traditional versus modern' debate within blacksmithing, in an article published both in *Forge* magazine²⁴ and in *British Blacksmith*²⁵ entitled 'The Blacksmiths Craft: A Reappraisal'. By publication in both magazines he aimed to reach both the NAFBAE traditionalists and the BABA moderns.²⁶ Bent used the categories of Design, Construction, Technique and Finish to describe in broad terms what he thought would be common ground. As the 'moderns' don't accept that there are any rules, Bent's advocacy of a series of practices which should be followed isn't necessarily all that helpful. Examples of this include the exercise of care not to usurp the position of architects,²⁷ noting that box section should not be used,²⁸ that colouring should be influenced by natural forms,²⁹ exterior work should be blast-treated and flame-metallised.³⁰

As with practitioners in other craft areas, blacksmiths do not always fall into clear divisions of practice and ideology. The common ground is that they work with a limited range of metallic materials, using a range of methods, with a hierarchy of preference as to their application. As blacksmiths redefined their practice, it was inevitable that notice should be taken of the broader craft debate, and the work of sculptors who had used the techniques of blacksmithing.



Figure 43. Antony Robinson's gates for Winchester Great Hall, stainless steel 1982, approx. 12 metres tall. Site photograph.

The revival in the fortunes of blacksmithing since the 1970s has been assisted by precedents for the use of iron and steel as media for contemporary art and design work. There are a number of sculptors who are, or have been, involved with BABA, and the sculptural work of smiths is beginning to be reviewed favourably. There are many instances of influence by artists upon blacksmiths and some of the converse, but the work of artist blacksmiths generally remains firmly within the boundaries of craftwork. Smith, Gonzalez, Chillida and Butler are often cited by blacksmiths as having had some influence upon their work and it is likely that the work of these and other sculptors was part of the process which has led to the popularity of forged metalwork in recent times.

Parkinson has noted some values which have long been associated with the work of blacksmiths, and so are unifying factors between the traditional and modern smiths - even though many traditional smiths are reluctant to acknowledge common ground:

There is an implicit philosophy which gives a discipline to the forging of iron, derived from the economy of working with what was once an expensive material. Little is thrown away. The metal is re-arranged by forging skillfully in the heat of the moment. A short length of bar becomes a long, thin taper, holes are punched, not drilled, and the cross section of material may change section several times in its length.³¹

Traditional working had flourished because of the unquestioning approach to style of both the smiths and their customers. The traditionalists have argued at various times until recently that there is no market for 'modern work', and therefore no imperative for

change. This, perhaps necessarily pragmatic approach to style, must have contributed to the side-lining of blacksmiths, until recently, by the arts and crafts establishment. The post-war crafts doctrine of individual expression, and working as both a designer and maker didn't fit the traditionally inclined smith.

Until the 1960s blacksmiths were encouraged by CoSIRA to work at mending and maintaining farm implements, equipment and shoeing horses. These were essential to the maintenance of the lifestyle of farmers and the landed gentry, who then had a vested interest in maintaining the *status quo*. For example, the idea of country smiths 'expressing themselves in iron,' rather than putting a shoe on the squire's favourite hunter was resisted. The tradition, after all, of the vast majority of blacksmithing work is to be functional, except where customers are prepared to pay more for a functional item to be more decorative or more decorated. As most of the blacksmith's work is essentially functional there has been a concern since early times to ensure that the structural character of work is not compromised by the decorative style used.³²

Smiths had been, up until the 1980s, overwhelmingly part of commerce, agriculture and industry, and it is only relatively recently that the possibility, for the majority, of becoming part of the cultural landscape has existed. It would be easy to claim that traditionalists tend to concentrate upon given styles, and modern smiths on others. However, this is missing the *real* tradition, of the production of

functional products whose design incorporates an aesthetic element - it's not an issue of *style* at all.

Quinnell has not been able to identify the development of any particular style.³³ He saw a tremendous individuality in style and no easily identifiable aesthetic movement "... like say Art Nouveau, maybe looking back on it one will be able to see some kind of coherence, but at the moment I can't from inside."³⁴ Quinnell commented:

If you look at Jim Horrobin ... there is a very severe geometric style, but he also works in a very romantic style. Tony Robinson, almost exclusively very romantic, flowing, highly worked. Alan Evans somewhere in between the two, but again very much his own thing ... Mike Roberts different again, Charlie Normandale again, there's such a variety of style.³⁵

Alan Evans addressed the traditional/modern issue by stating that he is:

... more of a traditional smith than anyone - the real tradition is of innovation and using the latest technology - the REAL tradition is the philosophy, not the style - the best way of honouring Tijou or Paley is by creating your own vocabulary of forms, not by copying them.³⁶

The new blacksmiths are selfconscious and culturally aware designers and makers, but their commitment to hot forging processes has not diminished with the new emphasis upon design, and has provided a continuity of practice.

A consistent debate throughout the last twenty or so years has related to the need to expose work to the public view and critical comment

through good quality exhibitions. The exhibition style has consistently owed more to the tradition of the art gallery than the trade show, although in recent times much craftwork has been shown through trade shows. The craft fair, even the more intellectually respectable ones organised by the Crafts Council, have tended to be somewhere in between the two, with stallholders effectively setting up mini galleries on their exhibition stands.³⁷ In simple terms it is about exhibitions designed to educate the public rather than to improve trade. Ideally, the exhibition of craftwork should achieve both objectives.

In the 1975-78 CoSIRA³⁸ report, under a photograph of an exhibition, a caption states: "ironsmiths approached CoSIRA when a recession hit the trade. CoSIRA examined the problem and mounted a national exhibition of 'Decorative Wrought Iron' in London."³⁹ This was achieved through a link with the Daily Mail, and was held at their Ideal Home Exhibition during two separate years. The comment in the 75-78 Report rather undersells what was a major and successful event, which was directly as a result of the employment of Shirley Pickett, a public relations officer, by CoSIRA. Tommy Tucker describes both the exhibition and the attitude of the Development Commissioners to the event:

The *Daily Mail* offered this fantastic facility to establish forges up on the balcony at Olympia - with proper fume extraction, fire extinguishers and insurance cover - and they then negotiated a job - massive interior gates for the RAC Club in Pall Mall.⁴⁰

The following year, because of the success of the CoSIRA

blacksmithing stand at Olympia, the organisers repeated it and added a forge run by the Companions du Devoir (France):

They were beating these massive shapes, contemporary shapes out of steel plate and arranging these contemporary edifices - but I think we were involved just for two years.⁴¹

Talking to many blacksmiths who attend craft shows and fairs, their value is viewed as a mixture of sales and publicity, with the hope that interesting commissions for one-off pieces of work might result from exposure to the public gaze, and the costs of exhibiting will be at least covered by sales of standard products on the day.⁴²

The mark-up on craft shop and gallery sales is substantial - often 60% of the retail sales price, which is the same as that put on most shop-sold goods - this demands industrial standards in terms of efficiency and cost reduction, leading to standardised, simplified products, not necessarily representative of the producers' best work. Heavily promoted by lifestyle magazines, as the work of metalworkers in general became more popular during the 80s, an increasingly large selection of mass produced candlesticks have become available first of all in craft shops and 'ethnic shops' and later in mainstream outlets such as Boots, Habitat, BHS, etc. The steel candlestick, often in mock wrought ironwork style, has become about as mainstream as a toaster or kettle and is now being sold alongside them. This parallels the development of the mass-produced gate market since the war.

It is the prevalence of imitation wrought iron work which has to an extent devalued the work of the smith since the second world war - very many houses in the British Isles with a front garden have an imitation wrought iron gate - cold bent and fabricated at the lowest possible cost and using the thinnest possible material, which is exactly what you would expect of an industrial product. In more recent times the industrial producers have realised that not all of their customers are satisfied, some would say fooled, by the cheap work and required some product differentiation, but still at a low cost. This had led to the development of improved machines and 'ironworkers' to simulate the work of the smith and of a components industry supplying parts which are often forged, but are intended to be used by fabricators. The style of work produced by fabricators and industrial producers is almost invariably an imitation of 'traditional' work.

A pragmatic or business-orientated approach has been successfully adopted by many blacksmiths, especially since the advent of BABA in the late 1970s, when electric welding began to become more acceptable to them as part of an appropriate mix of techniques. A good example is the Princes Square project in Glasgow by Alan Dawson and his company, Shepley Dawson Ltd. of Cumbria. This work has received widespread acclaim,⁴³ as a good example of the way in which craft practice can be integrated with modern architectural practice; and at a lower cost than using standard components. Dawson noted that as many people are involved in the construction of a large

project, any single aspect of the work has to meet and fit others successfully both in practical and visual terms, and at precisely the right moment so that a programme of installation might be maintained:

To make an uncompromising statement and hang it on or stand it in front of the building is an easy option. To achieve integration of your work through agreement reached by mutual consent (i.e. compromise) is very much more demanding and challenging but I believe worth the effort.⁴⁴

Dawson also described an important concept:

‘Commercially Acceptable Craft’ ... Most people are, I suspect, in the same position as me and have to design their work to meet a finite budget - I can’t remember ever having been given a blank cheque. Anyone working to a budget or price is producing something which is commercially acceptable and this doesn’t have to preclude in any way its aesthetic and functional acceptability. The trick is to design your work in such a way that it becomes competitive with factory built alternatives.⁴⁵

Dawson notes that it is possible to design a system which will save the client money in areas which wouldn’t normally be considered within the blacksmith’s brief, and he gave the example of building decorative or invisible junction boxes and lighting tracks into the work to save time and materials when electricians are on site, or devising fixing arrangements which will simplify the tasks of joiners, tilers and other people who fit their work to metalwork or vice versa:

At Princes Square for instance a simple but strong balustrade carcass was fitted into the building at a very early stage so that safety rails did not have to be erected by scaffolders throughout the building. After showing the client that it is possible to minimise his overall costs in such ways he can afford to spend larger sums on the visible ‘blacksmithing’ which gives you the scope to create something special. Such a process allows your craft to become commercially acceptable.⁴⁶

Tony Mann described a similar concept five years later:

To use the language of semiotics, this is what I will call pragmatic creativity. The creative use of craft skills to find a compromise between, in this instance, cost and quality.⁴⁷

In 1993, Parkinson wrote a booklet for BABA aimed at architects and designers which clearly described the activities and capabilities of the artist blacksmith. This has been widely distributed amongst architects and designers and whilst it is not possible to establish its impact, the clear definition of the role and capabilities of smiths is a step towards a more professional relationship with clients.

In becoming increasingly professional and market-aware, artist blacksmiths have also been able to reconcile this with the establishment of a cultural place through association with work in art and artistic craft work. This willingness and capacity to work in a wide range of commercial and cultural contexts while retaining an involvement in, and respect for, craft processes and values is perhaps unique to the artist blacksmith.

Bob Oakes noted when discussing the role of his local Arts Association in Lincolnshire that they were advising those commissioning work to go to a well-known maker⁴⁸ as it was likely that the product would appreciate in value over time, thus representing an investment. This, of course, is a cycle of production and consumption that was effectively envisaged in the late nineteenth century by the Arts and Crafts movement, and inevitably reflects many of the procedures and practices associated with the marketing of fine art, and there may be

consequences in terms of the breadth of the potential market:

One of the prime concerns of the art market is to elevate the value of the product as an investment opportunity. This inevitably restricts the size of the market, it affects the nature of the pieces being made and disenfranchises the majority of ordinary people who are eager to buy craft products.⁴⁹

Many large blacksmithing projects and orders in recent times have been completed by networks of smiths formed as task groups rather than permanent mergers.⁵⁰ The result of present day economic pressures and opportunities is a new kind of blacksmith, no longer isolated and working in a tightly defined region, but often selling and working in a variety of modes. Their work often involves the production of a series of standard items such as candlesticks or fire irons which can be sold at various rates of mark-up, but normally the same selling price, in craft events, exhibitions, galleries and shops; they would do work commissioned by individuals and organisations; and they will sometimes be involved with networks of various sizes of companies and businesses to complete major works.

In Germany, ironwork component manufacturers and distributors have had a marked impact upon the style of working and business practice of blacksmiths, by effectively taking away that part of their work in traditional styles. Components are now widely available in the UK and it is likely that they will have a similar effect upon working practice to that already experienced in Germany.⁵¹

The problem of achieving variation in batch or mass produced items

similar to that resulting from hand making may be at least partly solved by the use of computerised or numerically controlled machinery.⁵² This ability to make products unique is something which many sectors of industry are taking on board, using flexible production facilities to produce an increasing range of personalised products.⁵³ By doing this they may put pressure on some craft sectors, such as especially the traditional blacksmiths, which stress the individual nature of their production, but rely on relatively standard designs.

In conclusion, it is likely that the decline in traditional practices will continue, both because of a lack of involvement with design and rigid attitudes towards the the use of processes and technologies. Artist blacksmiths, however, with their pragmatic attitude to manufacture, involvement with design, and cultural objectives, are likely to increase in importance. Site specificity and the use of texture have been identifying characteristics of the work of artist blacksmiths and are discussed, using examples of practice, in the following two sections.

¹ The Lay Figure. On the Responsibilities of the Craftsman. *The Studio*. 49, 205, April 1910, p. 252.

² The number of village general smiths is declining, as many are now near or past retirement age. Modern training does not encompass the range of activities of these businesses, and it is doubtful if it would be economically viable for an incomer. Many such smiths belong to no organisations and don't advertise or promote their work. The status of the general blacksmith's work overall was affected by the *de facto* low status of mending, maintenance and farriery in particular. In this respect it is craft as a utilitarian trade rather than an art practice that is at the core of any understanding of the work of the traditional blacksmith.

³ Margrie, Victor. Foreword to the exhibition catalogue: *Towards a New Iron Age*. V&A, London May 12 - July 10, 1982, p. 7.

⁴ Moyssén, Xavier. Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts. *FMR*, 13, 63, August, 1993.

⁵ Quinnell, R. Interview, Leatherhead, Surrey, 31.8.95.

⁶ Walker, P. & Hobbs, R. St. Columb's Cathedral Gates. *British Blacksmith* No. 72, October 1994, p.20.

⁷ Originally made in 1933 and had been subject to extensive corrosion - Hot Dip Galvanising or Zinc spraying were not available and the existing red oxide paint system didn't stand up well to the effects of salty, sea-side air. The repoussé work was done by Bob Hobbs and the main forgework by Peter Walker.

⁸ Jaros, Vaclav. Czechoslovakian Ironworks. *British Blacksmith* No. 13, August 1981, p.6

⁹ The Nasmyth hammer was improved, according to Moore & Marshall: "...to allow the hammer to be propelled downwards under steam pressure to strike a 'dead and non - bouncing' high impact blow. The hammer's descent could be very accurately controlled by steam pressure and one of Nasmyth's favourite demonstrations was to crack an egg in a wineglass with his five ton hammer without breaking the glass." Moore, C. & Marshall, R. I. *Steelmaking*. Institute of Metals, London. 1991. p.5.

¹⁰ Whereas in earlier times a Massey, or Allday and Onions hammer could only be run from a large steam engine - well outside the capability of an individual smith - they have recently become popular, and often preferred to the more modern specially produced air hammers. Alan Evans, for example, prefers to use an older Allday and Onions hammer, rather than the more modern Kühn equivalent.

¹¹ Whilst they may be modern, they are almost certainly not Modernist - nearer to post-modernist, if anything.

¹² Quinnell, op. cit.

¹³ Chatwin, Amina. Traditional and Modern Ironwork - Peaceful Co-existence. *British Blacksmith* No. 58, December 1990, p.25.

¹⁴ For example, acanthus leaves, water lily leaves, palmettes, scrolls and scroll ends are all abstracted from natural forms and taken from the visual language of earlier times.

¹⁵ Quinnell, op. cit.

¹⁶ Other smiths collaborated in the production of the railings, such as Terry Clarke, Mike Roberts and Richard Quinnell Ltd.

¹⁷ Evans, A. Interview. Stroud, 1.2.96.

¹⁸ Now owned by the National Trust but run as a working edge tool forge, it was a very busy forge up until the late 1960s. The two trip hammers, shears and grinding wheels are all water powered, and although they are in relatively poor condition are still used regularly.

¹⁹ Power hammers such as the Blacker types have been available at reasonable cost for a number of years, and as they are electrically powered they are widely used by traditional smiths. In the first instance they were used for highly labour intensive work such as sharpening harrow tines, where the smith would previously have required a striker to operate at a speed which the farmer could afford, or was prepared to pay for.

²⁰ Over the past three years, for example, there has been considerable discussion in meetings of the Guild of Wrought Ironwork Craftsmen of Wessex, about the availability of certain sizes of steel which would be especially suitable for aspects of scroll work reducing the need to change the section of other material.

²¹ Wooton, Tony. The Artist Craftsman in West Germany: a personal view. *British Blacksmith* No. 9, December 1980, p.21.

²² Jaros, Vaclav. Czechoslovakian Ironworks. *British Blacksmith* No.13, August 1981, p.8

²³ Parkinson, Peter. From Strength to Strength. *Crafts* July/August 1995, p.22.

²⁴ The NAFBAE magazine.

²⁵ Bent, Richard. The Blacksmiths Craft: A Reappraisal. *British Blacksmith* No. 55 March 1990 pp. 21-22.

²⁶ There is considerable overlap in membership between the two organisations so the split isn't a clean one. There are traditional smiths who belong only to BABA and modern smiths who belong only to NAFBAE.

²⁷ Presumably in order to maintain the hierarchical relationship which has traditionally existed between architects and those who work with them.

²⁸ He claims, incorrectly, that the inside surfaces cannot be treated with a protective finish to prevent rust developing. Drilling holes at appropriate points in the box section allows the inside to be coated by hot dip galvanising, where the material is immersed in a bath. If the protection technique being used is metal spraying, then what he asserts is correct, as the material coats only the exterior surfaces.

²⁹ A matter of taste and design, rather than dogma.

³⁰ These are often, although not always the best methods available at present at reasonable price. The surface treatment of metals, and the development of systems of coatings to prevent corrosion has been the subject of a mixture of technical and ideological debate over the years and is addressed in a section dedicated to the subject.

³¹ Parkinson, op. cit.

³² Paul Allen, Forgework Advisor with the RDC has produced a wall chart showing how the decorative elements of a baroque style based gate contribute to its structural integrity.

³³ Quinnell, op. cit.

³⁴ Quinnell, op. cit.

³⁵ Quinnell, op. cit.

³⁶ Evans, op. cit.

³⁷ The fine arts are often now sold in a similar way in exhibitions such as Fresh Art at the Business Design Centre in Islington, London.

³⁸ The government's Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas. Its history and influence are addressed in section 2.

³⁹ CoSIRA Report 1975-78, HMSO, p.2.

⁴⁰ Tucker, Tommy, Interview, RDC, Salisbury, 9.7.93.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Oakes, Bob. Interview, Ironbridge, 5.8.94.

⁴³ Charles, Prince of Wales. *A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture*. Doubleday, London, 1989, pp. 128-129.

⁴⁴ Dawson, Alan. Letter to the Editor, *British Blacksmith* No.49, Sept. 1988, p. 25.

• Ibid.

• Ibid.

• Mann, Tony. *Making Things for Real People*. (Text of a talk given to The Metal Arts Guild, Toronto, November 14, 1993.) *Devon Guild of Craftsmen Newsletter*, Spring 1994, p.9.

• “If you go to somebody who is one of the stars of the craft now, there is a good chance that in future the work will be very very valuable so they will not only be getting a fairly good piece of work, they will be getting a very valuable piece of work” Oakes, op. cit.

• Mann, op. cit.

▪ Details of these collaborative projects are given in various sections dealing with case studies and smith's work.

▪ Hawkins, Neil. *Recent Developments in the Practice of Blacksmithing and Farriery in France and Germany*. Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship report, 1988, section 3.

▪ Frayling, C. & Snowdon, H. Crafts in the Market Place. *Crafts* No.57, July/August 1982, p. 17.

▪ A feature of robotic production is that is involved only with preplanned work and the iterative or gestural nature of much human making is avoided, although it is possible theoretically to describe and vary gestural-type working in practice the skills are quite complex, making this very difficult.

6.2. Site-Specific Work.

In discussing contemporary and site-specific work there are a number of issues which arise. The way in which precision and surface texture are addressed in contemporary work differs from traditional approaches. In contemporary work there are no overt 'rules,' and techniques are open to question and experiment. There is an awareness of design, architecture and related issues not seen amongst blacksmiths to a significant extent before the formation of BABA. Working practices related to those of Commercially Acceptable Craft have led to forged ironwork at times having a higher profile because of its economic and aesthetic advantages.

Site specificity has always been an issue for the smith, however, it has only recently become much more important in stylistic terms. It was as if there was a tacit assumption in earlier times that forged ironwork was styled within the idiom of 17th- and 18th-century styles, regardless of the site.

Crosby noted that one of the crafts integral with architecture is metalwork, but that it had become divided in recent times into two main categories of work; engineering and sub-contracting, with a few isolated artist craftspeople struggling to make ends meet:

the latter were either self taught and thus seldom intellectually able to

transmute their craft skill into relevant form, or concerned with restoration and archaic process.¹

Work such as gates, brackets, grilles, finials are inevitable components of buildings, but their contribution to appearance and quality:

... far outweigh their manufacturing cost ... Ironwork is only at the beginning of a new relationship with building, as this skill and capacity for formal, elegant invention begins to leaven our environment.²

Artist blacksmiths have developed designs, for architectural ironwork in particular, with a sense of the site in both structural and symbolic terms. Issues of scale, proportion, texture and symbolism have been addressed effectively; for example, in work for the Public Record Office at Kew by Alan Evans, Giuseppe Lund's Victoria Plaza gates and Neil Hawkins' garden gates. These concerns are tempered by their own approach, skills and equipment, and by the needs of those commissioning the work.

Work for town centres, for example, may make reference through shape, texture, symbol or form, to the history of the town, the function of the space in which it is placed, or the physical characteristics of the site.

Avril Wilson's Spandrels in Banbury town centre (figure 44)³ are an example of a response to the site and to its history through the use of symbolism, which is very successful and popular. Wilson notes that her work:

...is designed to celebrate Banbury's history as an important market town. The cast metal charms symbolise both past and present, agriculture and markets, including ironmongery, tools and vegetables.

Various farm animals including sheep, pigs and cows are represented. The 'Tree of Life' forms the centre of the main arch. From this, tendril-like roots grow outwards towards the supporting walls and form the main structure for the arch. Caught up in these roots - the roots of history - is the sun, the motif of Banbury. The bulb of the tree also symbolises the moon, and the lattice work and stars represent the heavens.⁴

Wilson's gates for the Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre in Southampton (figure 45)⁵ also represent an effective and appropriate response to the location. Lucy Quinnell describes the gate's design as:

... a reflection of the surrounding flora and fauna at its wild best, and yet a restraining hand is clearly in evidence. The chaotic mass of unattended plants competing for space and light has been carefully disentangled and rearranged to give the gates greater meaning and form. "Keep out!" they tell the onlooker, with their teasel sprays arranged like crossed spears ...the careful placing of component plants serves also to highlight a theme of life-cycle and regeneration...⁶

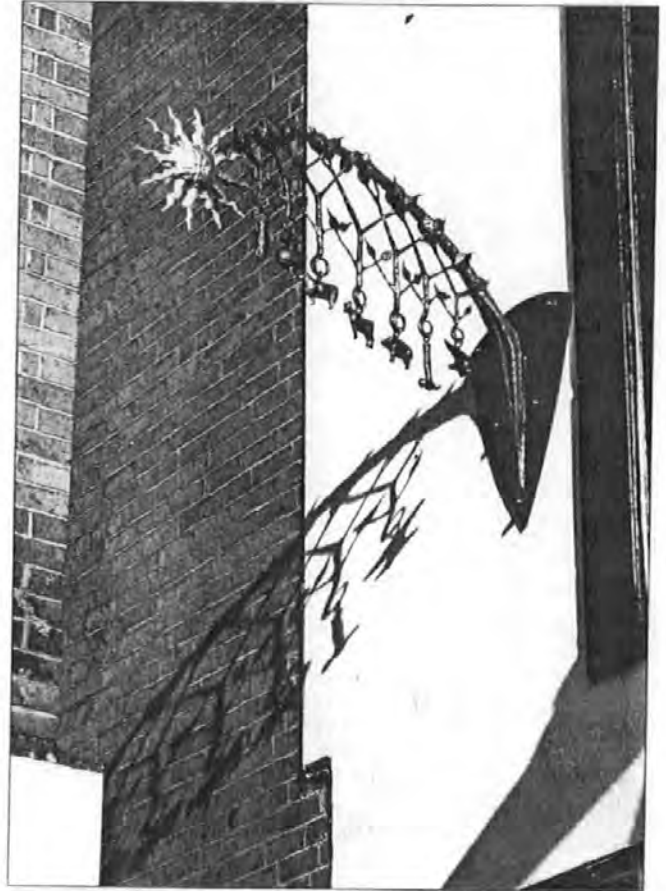


Figure 44. Banbury town centre spandrels by Avril Wilson, 1994, forged and fabricated mild steel.

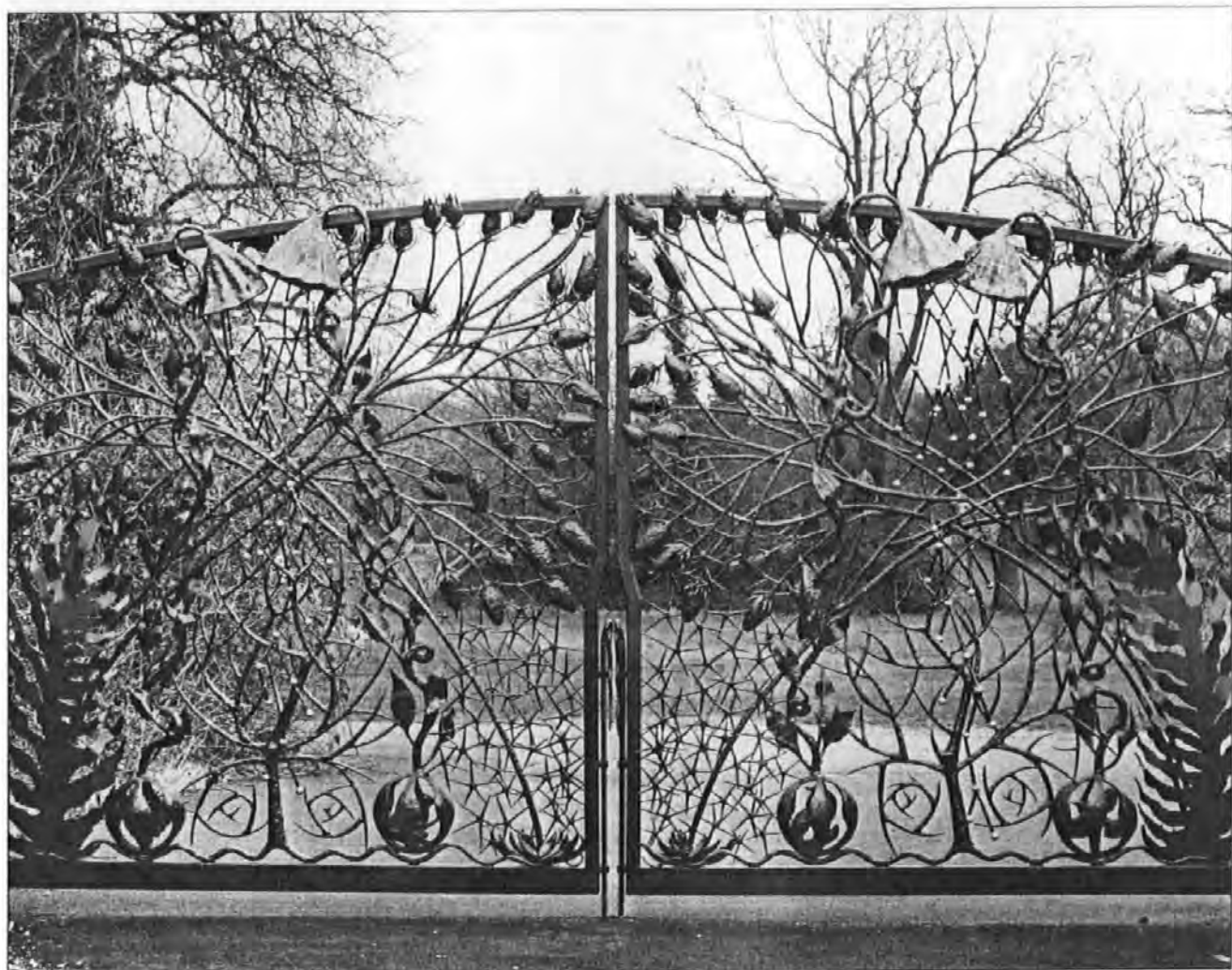


Figure 45. Gates for the Hawthornes Urban Wildlife Centre, Southampton, by Avril Wilson, 1995, forged and fabricated mild steel.

The best 17th- and 18th-century work could be afforded at the time only by the very wealthy, and was heavily symbolic of this, and appropriately extravagant in design. This symbolism of wealth and power has had a secure and enduring cultural position, to such an extent that practically all cold-bent, mass-produced gates, such as are available in garden centres and DIY superstores today, are derivative of the work of Tijou and his followers. The function of these gates is partly to keep out dogs, etc., but in reality they function as territorial markers, as they are not strong enough to provide a secure barrier except to the weakest assailant. They are markers of the defensible space of a property and indicate some sense of guardianship, perhaps because of a folk memory or collective understanding of what a wrought iron gate means.

The modern smith has taken traditional forging processes, and philosophies, and put them together, in a selfconscious and commercially pragmatic manner, with modern manufacturing methods. The work produced is often visually powerful, creative, appropriate for modern times and, what is at least as important, commercially viable, for example, James Horrobin's Oriel House and Crown Reach work. Because of the skills, and sensitivity to the character of the material required, this work couldn't have been made by anyone but a blacksmith.

The new blacksmithing is dependent upon design, communication,

technical and commercial skills for success. Smiths, in the times of guild control, were keen to guard their 'trade secrets' and the work was presented to the public or client as being produced by some mystical process. Often they were reluctant to demonstrate how anything at all⁷ was made - a sure sign of an insecure trade. Modern smiths, in contrast, are keen to show how good and capable they are to the public and potential clients, often using demonstrations as a means of communicating with potential customers. Clients come to them now because of the unique way of working that they have as individuals, or perhaps because they have a particular specialism. This is in contrast to earlier times, where because they were a blacksmith, they were capable of reproducing items, often in a standardised fashion from, for example, the CoSIRA catalogue.

Smiths are undertaking work which might previously have been done by fabricators, because they work in ways which are often cheaper, of higher quality, and more site- or customer-specific, than the competition, who depend upon standardised elements and working practices. Alan Evan's bicycle racks for Lewisham and Cheltenham and Alan Dawson's Princes Square work are examples of this. This amounts to a new economic pattern, where custom manufacturing and craft based work is cheaper than the standard industrial alternative.

Artist blacksmiths are often professional designers, as well as skilled makers. Their knowledge of material and process is essential in ensuring both the economic and aesthetic viability of their designs. They use the characteristics of site and architecture, allied to their own and the client's intentions, to produce appropriate solutions. This informed and professional engagement with design practice, distinguishes the artist blacksmith from the traditional smith.

The following section focuses upon the use of texture and precision by artist blacksmiths. As has been noted, this involvement with surface as part of the design, is one of the identifying characteristics of much work since the 1970s.

¹ Crosby, op. cit., p.24.

² Ibid.

³ Yeatman, S. Avril Wilson. *British Blacksmith* No. 71, June 1994, p. 26.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Quinnell, Lucy. Patterns in Nature. *British Blacksmith* No. 74, pp. 6-7.

⁶ Ibid. p. 6.

⁷ Of course, trade secrets are often the root of commercial success, but it is difficult to see how the unskilled could compete with somebody who had spent years training, by seeing a single demonstration of a simple forging operation. If the work is done well and in an impressive manner, the tendency would be to increase respect for the maker and get them more work, rather than less.

6.3. Texture and Precision.

It is often noticeable that hand-made objects which were intended to be identical or very similar, exhibit variations in dimension, surface texture, colour and shape consequent upon the making process, the skill of the maker and the materials and equipment used. Industrially produced products also exhibit variations, but more control is exercised over them, and limits, or tolerances are set.¹

In high technology industrial manufacturing, the fits and tolerances required can only be achieved with acceptable consistency using industrial equipment - unaided skill is no longer sufficient. In low to medium-tech production, the concept of craftsmanship becomes more relevant, often because the equipment used and the processes undertaken are to all intents identical with craft practice.

The level of precision required varies according to the intended use of the product. A gate with imprecise joints may allow water to penetrate and cause rusting, or the gate to fall apart quickly due to wear or the effects of leverage. If a gate doesn't fit an entrance it may not close properly; it may jam on pillars, latch, or the ground. If a decorative element or structure is not constructed as desired then it may not look as intended and not fit the aspirations of either the maker or the buyer. It is also possible for the fault to be at the design stage, as a piece which is poorly designed may well be produced with a high standard of accuracy.

Fitness for purpose is a relevant concept, both for craft and industrial production, and must be linked to the intention of the producer, the requirements of the buyer or commissioner of the work, and the requirements of the job or situation - whether or not they have been properly recognised by either the maker or buyer. If an error has taken place in recognising requirements or in meeting them, classical error taxonomies note errors of commission - where things are done which shouldn't have been; and errors of omission - where things are not done when they should have been. In much craft production there is a difficulty or reluctance in recognising errors, as the happy accident, or inconsistently produced object is often welcomed as having a humanising influence.

Not all dimensions are equally easy to achieve. Overall size is about the simplest to achieve; internal dimensional relationships, such as spacings between holes are more difficult, as are connection points for other components and thicknesses. The degree of freedom and the importance of fitting with other items or systems determines the difficulty.

The question of accuracy has been dealt with in different ways by smiths. When working to full-size drawings produced by the RDC, there was little decision-making to be made; it was simply a matter of following the dimensions and shapes shown. If a piece of work is to be produced as a one-off, in particular for an unusual or non-standard situation, then there are two options open; guesswork/experience, or

calculation. In most cases experience is sufficient and will be based upon an estimation of the extent to which the section of material will be changed and the final length required. In the case of work which uses larger sections and involves relatively controlled sectional changes, punching or splitting operations, then calculations are necessary to produce the required consistency.

Proportionately, mistakes or inaccurate estimates in work composed of larger sections, because of the amount of metal present, can be more dramatic, noticeable, and considerably more expensive. Larger sections require more work and more heat to manipulate them, so the energy cost of mistakes is even higher. Alan Evans, for example, now calculates the volumes of tapered bars using formulae derived from industrial forging techniques - something he didn't do for the first fifteen years of his work, but now finds important, as he typically works with larger sections.²

Because of the expense and difficulty of larger works, computer drawing (CAD) is often employed in addition to hand methods, sketching, videoing, scanning and other digitised image manipulation techniques. This use of computers tends to lower the risk of mistakes.

Evans notes:

When drawing I tend to think things through at an earlier stage and the unexpected, exploratory feel which used to come through at the making stage is now done at the drawing stage - this could take some of the fun out of the making - this is quite a fundamental change in working practice - less fun and serendipity in practice.³

Traditional styles of work are often notable for their apparent precision and lack of texture as a decoration. A view of precision is used by the RDC training programmes to distinguish between traditional and contemporary work, in that precise work may involve reproducing components or products to a given level of dimensional accuracy. The underlying assumption is that contemporary work is imprecise, unrepeatable and therefore unmeasurable, but there is no inherent reason why one *style* of working should be any more precise than any other. However, unless a precise description of the maker's intention is available, then it isn't possible to measure how precisely the intention has been matched in a dimensional sense.

Gestural, expressionistic work - although it is likely to have *some* fixed points where connections may have to be made to buildings or other structures - depends for much of its character upon the dynamic nature of the making process and the immediacy of the intentions of the maker. It would not make sense, therefore, to describe designs for *this* type of work in anything more than general detail. Forged iron provides a very appropriate medium of expression for gestural and dynamic work because of the need to 'strike while the iron is hot' and the ability it has to freeze the shape. Hot iron has a plastic nature not unlike clay, although it requires considerably more force to shape it, and the difficulty is increased as the material is hot. There is a creative and physical risk, physicality and excitement in hot forging which is unique in craft work. A coat rack made by Keith Thomas, forged from relatively small bar stock illustrates this plasticity (figure 46) as does the piece by Manfred Bredohl of Aachen

(figure 47).

When at forging heat, iron glows, and at welding heat begins to spark giving a dramatic quality to forge welding especially. This often takes place in fairly dimly lit⁴ blacksmiths' shops, where when work is taken from the forge it is the brightest object in the room, concentrating attention upon the elemental nature of the activity. Traditional ironwork⁵ styles do little to capture this, concentrating upon the exhibition of control over the material; and while using the metal to achieve form, subdue evidence of its plasticity. It is therefore not surprising that when so much time was spent in reproducing pieces exactly and achieving a machine-like finish, that casting processes, cold bending, fabrication and the development of 'ironworker' machines,⁶ would inevitably take over much of this type of work. The customer for cast ironwork would in many cases not have been able to, or been interested in, distinguishing it from forged work. The 'hammer finish'⁷ of traditional smithing, whilst demonstrating a high level of manual dexterity and control of the process, was working against the smith, who was in effect often a 'machine for producing ironwork.'

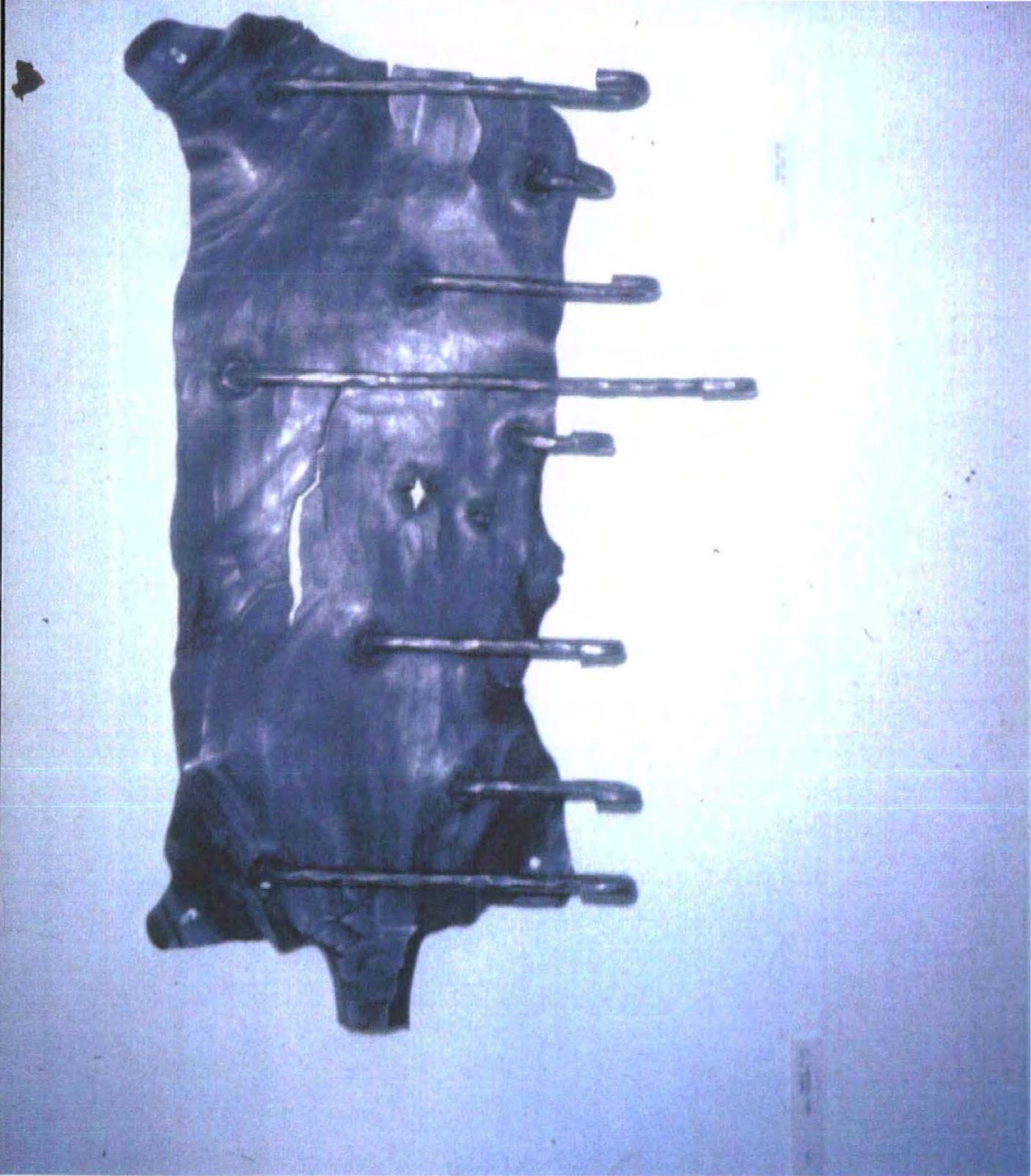


Figure 46. Coat rack by Keith Thomas, a British smith living and working in Germany. Forged from 50 by 25mm mild steel, 600mm wide, 1988.

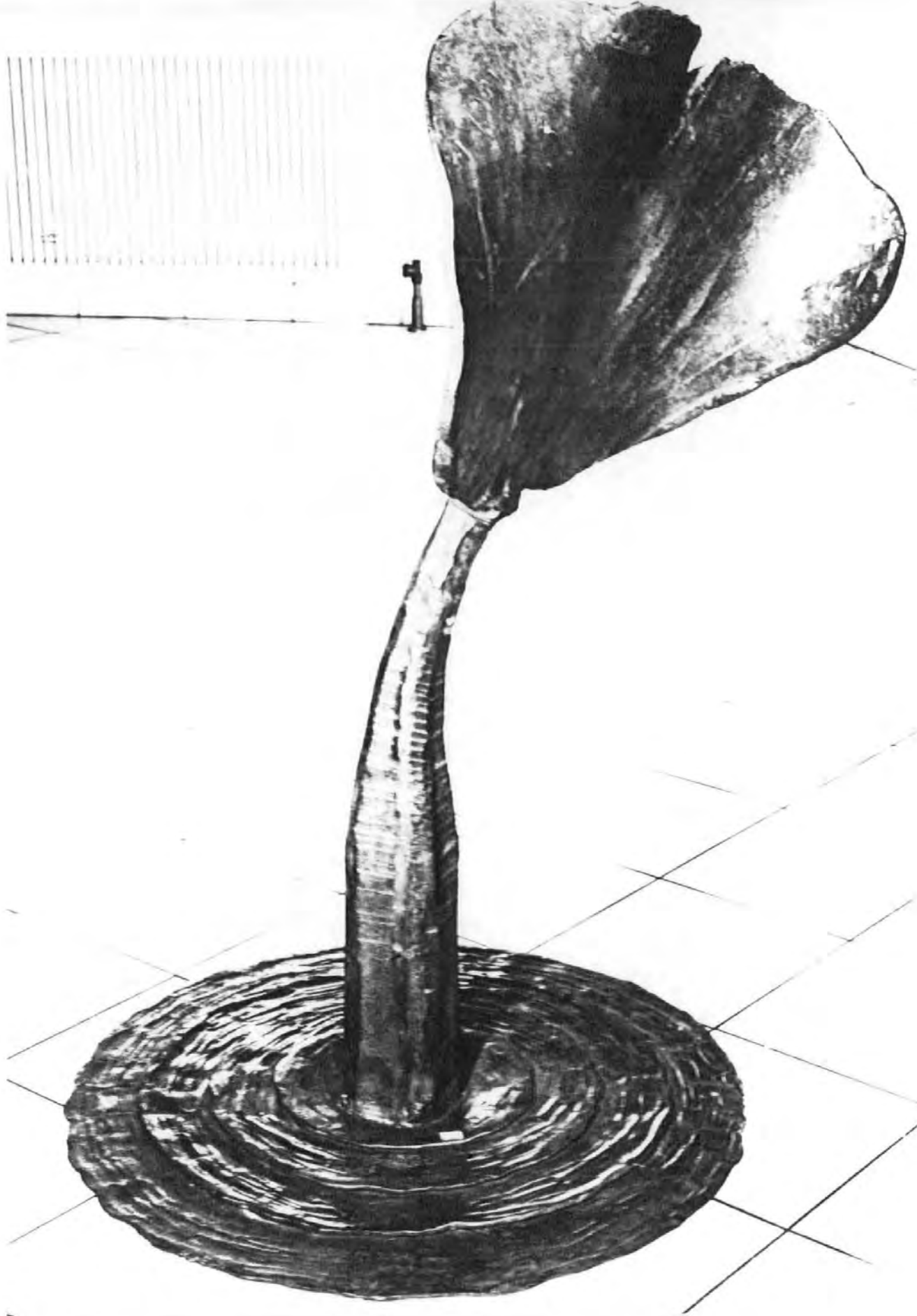


Figure 47. Sculptural piece by Manfred Bredohl of Aachen, 1987, power-hammered mild steel, approx. 700mm tall.⁸

It is possible when using larger sections to make a virtue out of any variations produced and the textural effects of working them, such as with Giuseppe Lund's Victoria Plaza Gates. (figure 48)⁹ The fixed points in the design were the positions of the heels of the gate in relation to the pillars and the ground; the width between the pillars; the point at which the gates meet in the middle; and, less critically, the fixing points for the hinges. Relative to the bottom rail of the gates, the ground slopes up towards the building, so that the height above the ground is determined by the heel of the gate when fully open, and the requirement for ground clearance. Angling the front rails up from the pillar end towards the centre of the gates to allow for the slope would have adversely affected the overall appearance, which is dominated by vertical and horizontal elements. The outer frames of the gates were drilled to establish their position accurately, so that the tapered horizontal members could be fitted into place. Since they are tapered in most cases towards the centre of the gate, then the first upright which interfaces with them is at the thicker end of the taper, subsequent uprights linking with progressively smaller parts of the taper- adjustments being easier at the thin end of the taper. Once the position of the lowest horizontal element had been decided, holes could be punched or welds made in the uprights to line up with it. Peter Parkinson recalled a conversation with Lund:

... he told me, that although a lot of these [bars] appear to penetrate through each other... in many cases they are simply butted together and welded round and it doesn't matter, but there is a sense of interpenetration ... which holds the whole thing together and gives it a rhythm - whether they do or don't, I think is immaterial - I think a good powerful, 'keep out' piece of work.¹⁰



Figure 48. Site photograph, Giuseppe Lund's Victoria Plaza gates, 1985, forged and fabricated mild steel.

Verticals could be progressively stretched and punched to fit the heights of the horizontals. In a sense, therefore, all of the holes line up exactly, but this is achieved by changing the section of bar at an appropriate point - normally by tapering the bar and so lengthening it. The bars of the gates clearly show the marks of forging, and seem appropriate to the gate aesthetically.

The gate would have been considerably more difficult to make if there were no changes of section of elements between joints, or if the change of section was to be even with no hammer marks showing. The precision in the case of these gates is in the relative fit between the elements. The gates make a virtue out of a necessity and use an appropriate degree of precision.

Charles Normandale's gate, (figure 49)¹¹ based upon an oval linked with a series of flat bars, varies in its use of precision. The verticals have been forged at the ends, in the sections which fall outside of the connecting oval, to give them a surface texture of hammer marks and have ends which are bent over towards the front of the gate by about the thickness of the material. In the section inside the bounds of the oval, the flat bars are left in the form supplied by the stockholder, with no apparent working. The oval ring and verticals were then riveted together using solid rivets. Gates using material in this orientation - on the flat - normally exhibit considerable flexion in use, but the use of fairly heavy section and closely spaced large diameter rivets counteract this. The excessive flexion which might otherwise

occur in the upper and lower sections of the two outside uprights is counteracted by the positioning of four links, one near each corner of the gate, two of which are used for the attachment of hinges. The overall effect of the gate is of a balance between the straight and forged portions of the uprights, and of the strong oval shape superimposed upon the uprights and providing the frame and boundary for the unforged sections. The gate seems at first to be accurately made, but upon closer inspection it is clear that there is some inconsistency in the spacing of bars and positioning of rivets. Uprights have been slightly adjusted to balance these effects and achieve a pleasing appearance overall. This process of constructing *fairly* precisely and then making slight adjustments is very typical of craft production generally and blacksmithing in particular. This is part of what is often described as the *character* of hand made goods. It is possible to deduce how the item was made, and what the difficulties of making and constructing it were, as well as getting some idea of the skill of the maker; in this sense there is a narrative quality to the work which mechanised mass production tends not to exhibit. This narrative quality is one of the most important selling points for all craft work.



Figure 49. Garden gate by Charles Normandale, which was entered in the 1987 Friedrichshafen exhibition.

Working in a traditional style, with most of the changes in section occurring at the ends of the bars is no guarantee of greater accuracy than in the case of contemporary work. Traditionally styled pieces, often made by highly skilled smiths, exhibit variations and adjustments in manufacture and construction of a very similar nature to the Normandale gate. The scroll patterns of 17th- and 18th-century styles probably make variations and inconsistencies more difficult to detect, but they are present nevertheless.

In a sense, the traditional attitude didn't allow that it was possible to control texture with an equal degree of skill to the achievement of a smooth surface. Normandale's gate, in contrasting textured and smooth surfaces, shows both to good effect. Alan Evan's work for the Public Record Office at Kew exhibits a similar contrast, where the upper sections of the heavy upright bars have been chamfered to enhance lighting effects and to therefore reduce the 'visual weight' of these sections, in contrast to the lower parts which have not been chamfered. The lower sections appear heavier, giving the railings a more balanced appearance, since there is a commonsense expectation that weight and stability are related to the design and construction of the base of a structure. Evans used this texturing because it also provides additional visual interest when the railings are viewed close-up, or at an angle when the upper portions of the bars appear to vary more in dimension. In general terms, his training as a silversmith gave him a regard for surface, so that he would only add texture to work if the job required it, not just to pander to a general notion that

textured bars have more personality than smooth ones. The work can then be visually satisfying at a number of distances: the overall shape is seen to be sympathetic to the surroundings and the site; details and construction start to provide interest at medium distances; forms and textures provide interest when viewed at close quarters and have a tactile role.

It is popular in contemporary work to exploit the narrative and tactile functions of texture. Steel in particular exhibits much of the plasticity associated with clay - the obvious difference being that metal is heated in order to become more plastic and clay is heated to make it become less so.

Terrence Clark's gates and railings for Dalham Hall Stud¹² (figures 50, 51) demonstrate the use of real and apparent precision. It is necessary, for example, that they fit the entrance, that the hinges work, they don't sag or scrape along the ground, and that design elements are constructed well enough to maximise their intended effect. The uprights of the gates are dog-legged, or rather horse-legged, at either end to achieve the three dimensional effect, but have to line up precisely only with the bottom, horizontal rails, where they locate into punched holes. Horizontal elements higher up the gate are welded in place, permitting a degree of imprecision and simpler construction. The gate is, however, quite accurately constructed vertically, as adjustments could be made by appropriate changes of section which would shorten or lengthen that part of the bar.



Figure 50. Dalham Hall Stud gates by Terrence Clark, 1993.

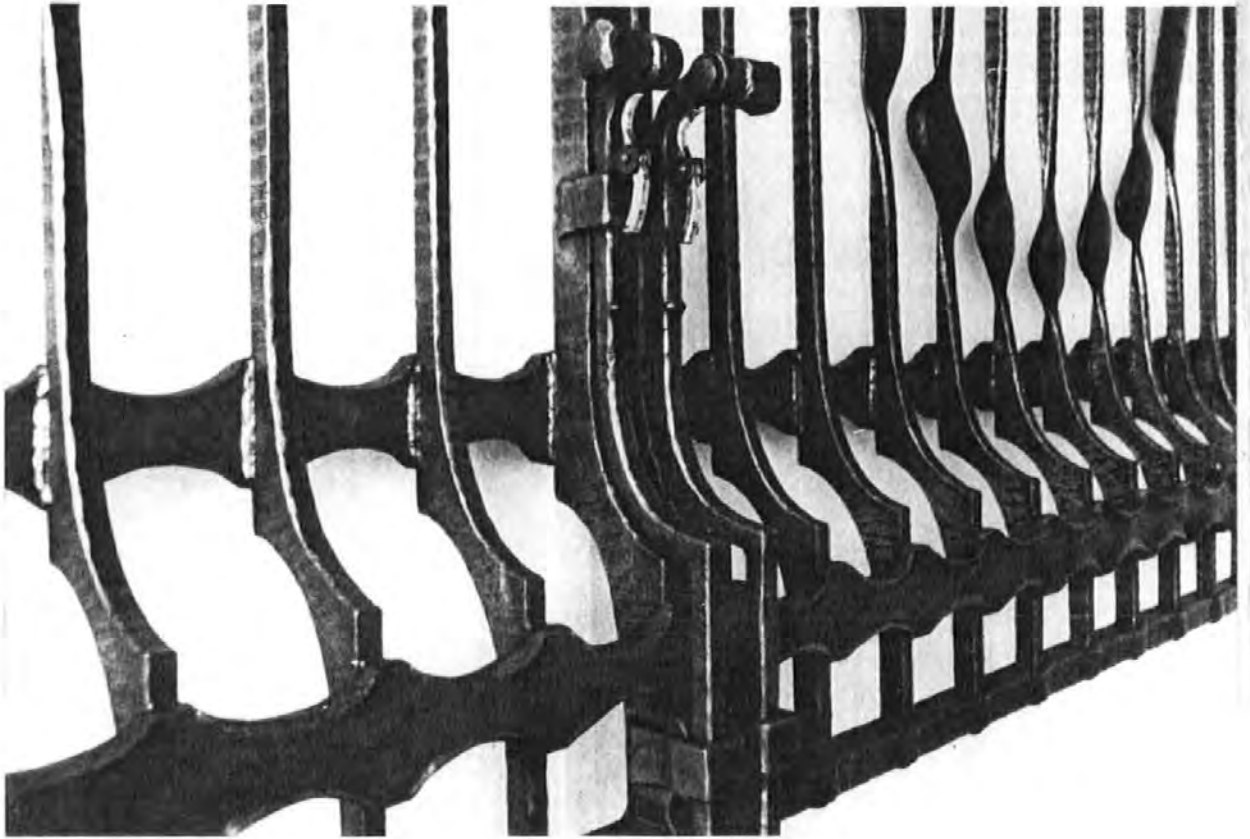
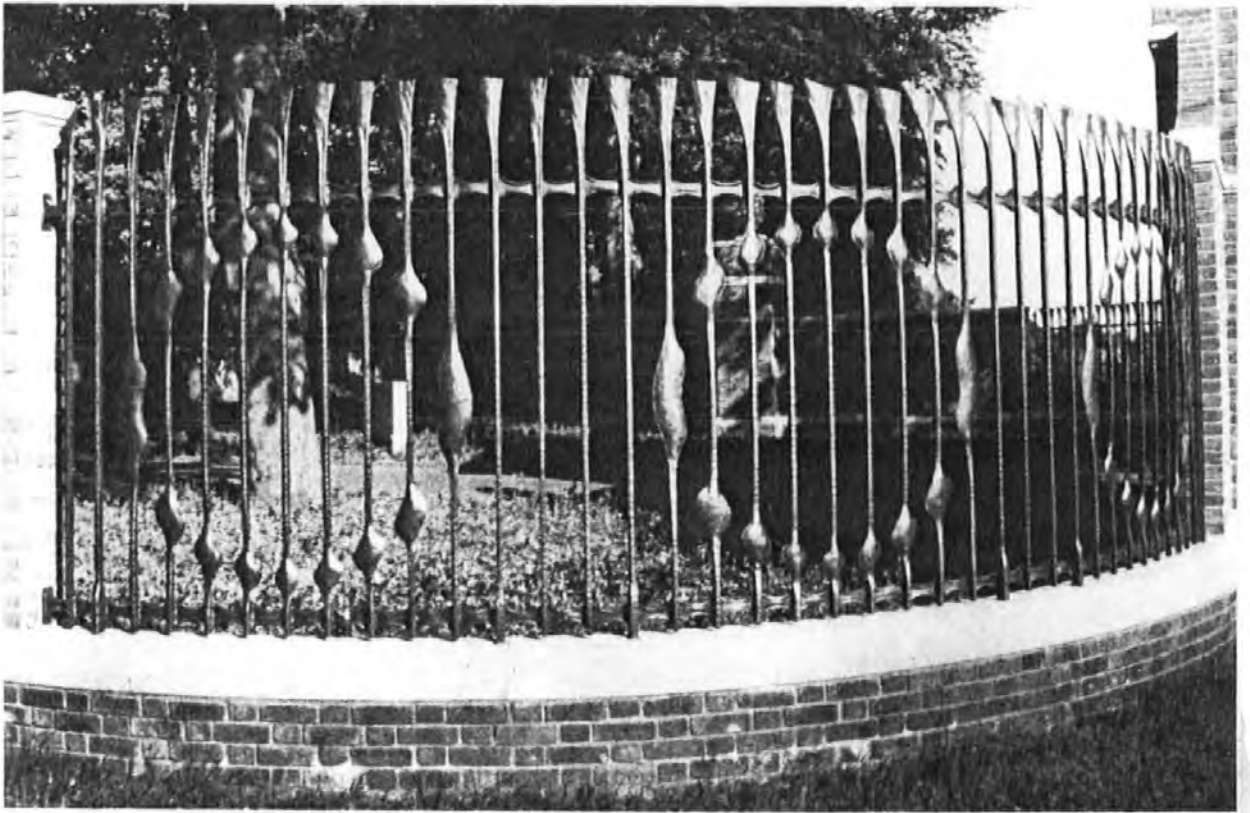


Figure 51. Dalham Hall Stud ironwork by Terry Clark.

Because the gates are constructed from a relatively heavy section of material, the upright bars were first profile cut from steel plate, as this reduced the forging work considerably. As the horse-legs are profile cut, they are quite consistent in dimension, making assembly of the gate simpler, and the appearance more precise.

Terry Clarke adopts the late Fritz Kühn's attitude that bars should be personalised by texturing them throughout their length - this has the effect of improving the appearance of profile-cut sections in particular. In the case of the curved railing section, it is clear that the bottom part where the connection is made with the masonry is accurately produced, but at the top ends of the vertical bar heights vary, as do the shape and orientation of the finial elements. Sections of a number of the verticals have been forged into irregular dish shapes, orientated to give the effect of a circle when viewed at a distance. The circular form is seen, as the viewer has a tendency, as described extensively in the literature relating to Gestalt psychology, to look for 'goodness of form' or completeness in visual phenomena. Although the dish shapes have been formed irregularly, a clear circle form is seen, and so the verticals could be said to have been forged with an appropriate degree of precision. The gates and rails were produced in a pragmatic manner, with an acceptance of the way in which forged forms work, and using both traditional and modern methods as appropriate. The results are pleasing constructions with visual interest at various distances ranging from the overall shape, and the three dimensional character of the gates, through to the

inconsistencies and evidence of hand working.

Saraj Guha's mirrors contrast with Mike Crummy's 1992 railings, in that they rely upon shape, proportion and carefully controlled texture for their visual effect. (Figure 52) The mirrors are batch-produced and utilise straightforward jigs and fixtures in their manufacture. In contrast Crummy's piece is more of a one-off expression of forging processes. Crummy and Guha's works demonstrate some of the wide range of approaches in contemporary work to the use of texture and precision.

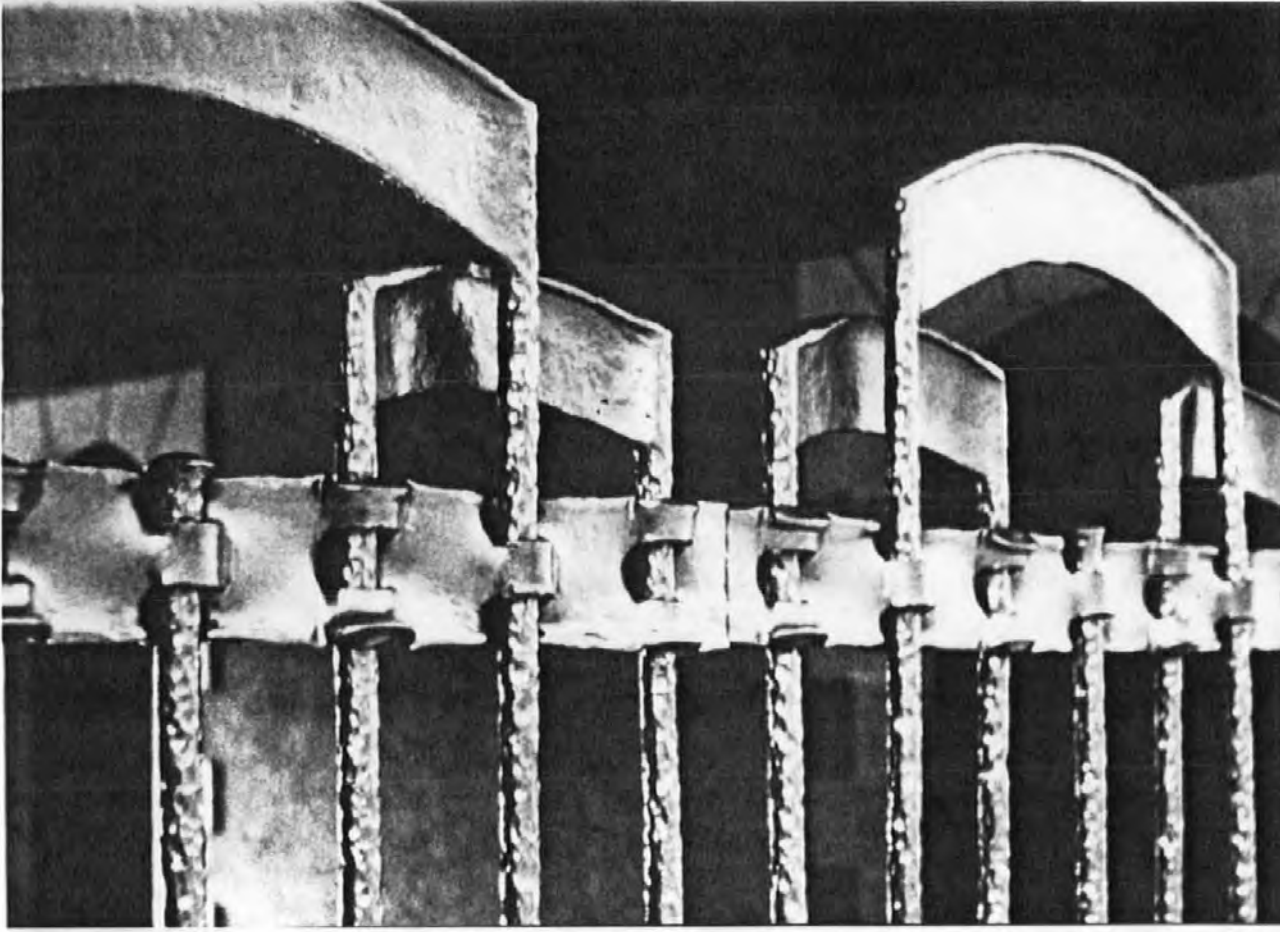


Figure 52. Mike Crummy's railings, 1991 (above) and mirrors by Saraj Guha, 1990.

¹ The reasons for setting tolerances in industrial practice relate to: the need to fit components or sub-systems together to achieve an overall dimension or kind of fit, e.g. a seal, interference fit, or mechanical joint; the control of cost by measured use of materials and the minimisation of waste; the performance of the product (in terms of strength, for example, depends upon the precise character and treatment of the material and its exact shape and size); the need to meet externally set quality standards relating to contracts or legislation.

² Evans, Alan. Interview, Stroud, 1.2.96

³ Ibid.

⁴ A brightly lit shop would make judging the temperature of the metal - which is done by colour - more difficult.

⁵ Especially true of the work of, and derivative of, 17th- and 18th-century styles. In earlier times there seems to have been more of an involvement with the plastic, except for a period of time when the styles and methods of woodwork were emulated and the locksmiths' ideals were dominant.

⁶ These machines are capable of rolling, sometimes applying texture, splitting and squashing. While the work produced on these machines is inferior to the hand made version it is far better than the cold bent work with thin material available previously, so has found a ready market.

⁷ Actually a perfectly smooth surface produced by hammering, much favoured by smithing instructors from the RDC and the judges of horse shoemaking competitions.

⁸ He has trained a number of British smiths in his International Teaching Centre in Aachen, and made many friends and contacts in the UK and in other countries during his frequent visits.

⁹ Site photograph, Victoria Plaza Gates, London (gates designed and made by Guiseppe Lund).

¹⁰ Parkinson, Peter. *Design Themes in Contemporary Ironwork*. Lecture at the V & A Ironwork Symposium, 29.10.94.

¹¹ Normandale, Charles. Back Cover illustration, *British Blacksmith* No.41 December 1986.

¹² Clark, Terrence. Dalham Hall Stud Gates. *British Blacksmith* December 1985, pp 12-13.

7. Conclusions.

The evidence shows that a conservative, declining, industrial and rural craft has been transformed into a confident and innovative movement of artist craftspeople. Owing something to the arts and crafts traditions and the campaign for rural reconstruction, the artist blacksmith has now become more closely identified with new technologies and commercial expansion.

After the rural decline of the early 20th century, the move of the city firms to rural locations marked the beginning of a revival in blacksmithing. Rather than being only part of a local service, its market became national, with urban outlets and architectural commissions. Alongside this development was the association of the crafts from the 1960s, with alternative philosophies of everyday living, a growing sense of tradition through heritage, and notions of 'Green' living allied to a cynicism towards technology. Contemporary practices underline the growing importance of the relationship between the method and the product and the extent to which the product is indicative of the working philosophy. The distinguishing feature of the work of the artist-blacksmith lies in the intention, not the use of machinery, so that making a distinction between hand and machine working becomes less relevant.

The post-modern context in architecture, with attention to the importance of defensible space and applied decoration, allowed a

market expansion during the 1980s in particular, assisted by an increased interest in craft, or one-off metalwork through the work of those such as Tom Dixon and Ron Arad. This did much to stimulate an awareness that blacksmithing was no longer exclusively a rural skill or industry. The creation, or development, of a personal working philosophy or ideology related to a vision or notion of self through work, and a relationship with the material and traditions of working, has become important to the artist blacksmiths, contributing to an understanding of its position between art and architecture. In turn this has increasingly distinguished the practices from those who continue to operate as traditional smiths.

Fitness for purpose has been shown to be an important issue, in terms of both decorative and practical functionalism. There is a new notion of site specificity, borrowed to an extent from the concerns of architecture and art, but linked in a new way to the economics of production. Work may be designed to fit the place, rather than the place adapted to fit the object, which is often the case when using mass produced products. Apart from any aesthetic considerations, this is a process that can be more cost effective, because of the artist blacksmith's capacity to make purpose-built, high quality, site-specific work more cheaply than the mass-produced alternative, thereby representing a new economic pattern.

The majority of blacksmithing businesses, if artist blacksmiths are included within the wider context, are still strongly influenced by the

conservative attitudes of national organisations. This is most noticeable with the preservation of processes, styles and techniques. However, the weight of traditionalism has been countered by the Crafts Council, V&A, and the influential formation of BABA. Indeed BABA has been the single most important factor in the development of the artist blacksmith, providing a collective identity which has enabled both ideas and work to reach a wider audience, and secure its critical foundations.

Networking and group projects have become common, taking advantage of the latest technology, including Fax, computer, email, powered equipment and welders, hoists, etc. This equipment has enabled the smith, often working alone or in a small team, to undertake work on a scale which previously would have been impossible outside of a heavy industry context. It is the association of these new technologies with traditional techniques within the context of design, that produces the unique quality of the artist blacksmith's work. They regard the tradition as being in the skills, the relationship with the material, and in innovation, rather than in a particular style.

Modern manufacturing methods, such as the use of efficient power hammers and presses, have enabled new styles of working to emerge alongside the traditional techniques, and have made it possible for smiths to undertake larger work, using heavier sections than would have been the case otherwise. Frequent changes of section, the use of relatively heavy bars and an awareness both of design and the

traditions of the craft characterise modern British work. The artist blacksmith has evolved as one who operates within a set of values and a working culture, rather than a worker in a given style or specific commercial context, perhaps best illustrated by the wide variety of styles in the work they have produced.

It is interesting to speculate on how the work of the artist-blacksmith will develop. At the moment its strength is in its association with art and architecture, tradition and new technologies. In the immediate future it would seem that the current creative and commercial position will be consolidated. Further diversification and specialisation will only be achieved with new approaches to other types of practice, such as interior design, jewellery or multi-material work, and a more detailed study of the underlying philosophy of practice.

At this stage, this research has opened the debate and set the foundation for developing a continuing programme of enquiry into the work and philosophy of individual practitioners. In this way it will be possible to look more closely at such issues as international influence and markets, the developing role of women, and the wider application of new technologies.

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[note: underlined numbers indicate the volume of the periodical, and precede the issue number. * indicates primary source material.]

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* A substantial amount of, mainly primary, material has been collected in addition to that noted above. Although it gave valuable information, it wasn't central to the arguments of this thesis. It has been collected in an archive and includes documents, organisational papers, photos, slides and drawings too numerous to list in this bibliography.

Appendices.

Appendix one. Notes on exhibition of practical work and additional material.

Appendix two. Examples of RDC Catalogue drawings.

Appendix three. Transcript of an interview with Richard Quinnell.

Appendix four. Victoria and Albert Museum, metalwork Collecting Plan.

Appendix five. Supplementary interview transcripts.

Appendix six. Additional Alan Evans computer drawings.

Appendix seven. Paper given at Rome conference, *Designing in Public*.

Appendix eight. Paper given at the Aberystwyth conference, *Telling Tales with Technology*.

Appendix One.

Notes on the exhibition of practical work and additional material.

The exhibition has the following functions:

- to illustrate an involvement in the process of designing and making, both speculative and commissioned, which has informed judgments and observations made in the thesis;
- to show the wealth of primary and secondary research material which has been gathered as part of this investigation;
- to demonstrate, using practical examples, the relationship between the making process, commercial considerations, and design;
- to show the results of investigations of design and technique, including work on surface textures and hammered finishes.

Supplementary material available included :-

Slides and photographs of work from experienced makers and students, architectural sites, museums, collections. Work was photographed in a number of countries by a number of individuals, but the majority are by the author of work in the UK, France, Germany and Italy. Archival material, including letters, memos and other documents from relevant sources, which has informed judgments made in the thesis. Tape recorded material.

Printed material, including interview transcripts, brochures, exhibition catalogues, books, monographs, etc.

Exhibition contents.

Location: Exeter School of Arts and Design, Foyer Gallery, July 1996.

(Figures are located at the end of this appendix.)

Figure 1. Agricultural and Seasonal Work.

For centuries the work of the village blacksmith has been determined by the cycle of agricultural production (Spring tilling, harvesting, ploughing, Winter work).

Tools for farm workers were made and mended throughout the year.

Examples shown are a leg- and neck-crook used by a shepherd.

Farriery work involved producing shoes of various sizes ranging from shire horse down to small riding pony types. Surgical horse-shoes were produced to correct foot and leg ailments, aid recovery - such as the Rest Shoe and shoe for Dropped Sole shown - or to alter the balance of a horse's running action. Shoes were made for agricultural show competitions in a fixed time and to fit horses provided by the competition organisers on the day. Speed, accuracy and finish were desired characteristics of shoes and shoeing in these competitions - shoes marked with numbers and centre-punch marks were shown from competitions held during the 1950s, when there were still substantial numbers of working farm horses, and therefore keener competition in the shoeing classes at shows.

The bootscraper shown illustrated the traditional techniques of punching, riveting, tapering and chiselling. Work of this kind, for domestic use was largely carried out during the winter as were pieces for architectural purposes. This decorative work was almost entirely in 17th- and 18th-century styles , as illustrated by the sampler scroll,

used to illustrate scroll-ends and forge-welding to clients.

The shackle shown was a sample of the type of product which rural blacksmiths were encouraged to produce by the RDC during the 1950s as a means to supplement declining income from the shoeing of the agricultural horses rapidly being replaced by tractors at the time.

Leg and neck crooks, Neil Hawkins, ca. 1987, polished mild steel, lacquered finish, approx. 200mm long.

Selection of horse-shoes, Neil Hawkins, mild steel and wrought iron, 1947-75, ranging from approx. 100 to 200mm wide.

Bootscraper, Neil Hawkins, 1994, mild steel, hot-dip galvanised finish, approx. 400mm high, legs from 25mm square section.

Shackle, by Neil Hawkins, mild steel, approx. 100mm wide, from 25 round section, matt black paint finish.

Sampler scroll, by Neil Hawkins, mild steel, approx. 150mm wide from 20 x 6mm section, black eggshell paint finish.

Figure 2. Garden Gate.

Garden gate. Neil Hawkins, 1990, to a design by David Hawkins, mild steel, approx. 1200 x 2500mm overall, black painted hot-dip galvanised finish. Inspired by a wallpaper design by C. A. Voysey. Designed for a garden entrance, sited within a masonry archway. It uses both traditional and modern techniques and includes extensive changes of section. It is technically difficult to produce, each side being a mirror image of the other. Joining methods used are arc and forge-welding, riveting, clipping.

Figure 3. Three bowls and a large fire grate.

Left bowl: Neil Hawkins, mild steel, 1992. Wire-brushed and lacquered finish. Bowl made from square and rectangular sections welded into a grid and then flattened and formed using a Blacker power hammer. Legs are forged and welded mild steel plate.

Centre bowl: Keith Thomas, from 50 x 25mm mild steel section, power hammered (Kühn air hammer) until splits began to show in the bowl section. Base produced by chiselling and forging 25 x 6mm mild steel section, subsequently forge-welded to make the ring base. Finish, rubbed matt black paint.

Right bowl: made by Neil and David Hawkins, hand forged from 6mm mild steel plate, using bolster, fuller and sledge hammer, approx. 200mm wide, burnt linseed oil finish.

Fire-grate: Neil Hawkins and David Hawkins (striker). Hand-forged from mild steel, approx. 600mm wide, horizontal bars are from 50 x 50mm square section.

Fire related products such as irons, andirons, grates, screens, etc. have been the subject of much experimentation since the 1970s. The function of these products has remained identical to those in more traditional styles, but the fact of their being made by a blacksmith tends to allow purchasers to associate them with the past, despite the new styles.

Figure 4. Candlesticks.

Left candlestick. Neil Hawkins, part of altar set, 1967, mild steel, chrome plated, 350mm tall. Produced for the Devon Guild of

Craftsmen's annual Summer Exhibition at the Dartington Cider Press Centre. Part of a pair, matched with a cross, it was designed in a deliberately modern style.

Right candlestick. Neil Hawkins, 1994, mild steel, painted in satin black paint. Simple candlestick designed to be batch produced and sold at a reasonable price in craft shops and galleries. The base was formed around a jig, the top section forged from a triangular piece of 3mm mild steel plate, first tack welded, then forge-welded onto the shaft. The shaft, in 8mm round mild steel is forged square for a short length below the cone and twisted while hot. Each similar candlestick takes around five minutes to produce, before painting and retails at approximately £14.

Figure 5. Candlesticks.

Left candlestick. Neil Hawkins, 1995, mild steel, black painted, approx. 350mm tall. A slightly more elaborate version of the batch-produced candlestick shown in Figure 4. A larger, flatter twist in the shaft, a small additional scroll on the base and a slightly larger cone justify a higher selling price for a small amount of extra work.

Right candlestick. David Hawkins, 1993, mild steel, wire brushed and lacquered finish. Forged from 20mm square mild steel into a series of irregular forms and twisted to emphasise the plastic nature of steel when hot.

Figure 6. Recycled candlesticks.

Left candlestick. Neil Hawkins, recycled steel, 1993, approx. 400mm tall. Base from part of a suspension spring from a motor car; shaft from an Austin Mini starter ring, both cut and forged. Cone forged from 3mm thick mild steel. This was intended by my father as a humorous symbolic act of revenge upon the motor car, which had taken away much of the horse-shoeing trade from the blacksmith in former times.

Right candlestick. Neil Hawkins, 1995, mild steel and copper, 350mm tall. This was made to answer the demand from gallery managers for unusual items. It contains elements of traditional forging and welded fabrication.

Figure 7. Animal forms.

Snail. Neil Hawkins, mild steel, 1994, 75mm long, wire-brushed and lacquered finish. It uses traditional hand-forging techniques such as chiselling, fire-welding, bending and drawing down to produce a snail-like form. Batch produced as a low-priced, saleable curio for craft galleries, they retail at around half the price of small candlesticks and are 'impulse-buys' or low priced gifts for the tourist trade.

Elephant. Anon, Rhode Island, USA, 1995, mild steel. This small forged elephant serves the same purpose as the snail but in a different location.

Figure 8. Forged pieces.

Top right, sculptural chain. Neil Hawkins, 1992, mild steel and recycled wrought iron. A chain composed of larger links made from recycled wrought iron ballusters, forge-welded to form loops, joined by smaller mild steel links. Its design was influenced by a glass sculpture by Elizabeth Swinburne.

Spiral-ended poker. Neil Hawkins, 1994, forged mild steel, 900mm long. A batch production item which makes a feature of the forge welded basket-twist handle.

Lamp hook. Neil Hawkins (forged mild steel) and Peter Tysoe (glass), 1982, 400mm long. One of a series of experimental pieces made during the 1970s and early 1980s combining glass and forged metal.

Experimental forged pieces. David Hawkins, 1992-1996, mild steel and wrought iron, various sizes. A sample of a series of pieces investigating surface, precision, change of section and forging processes; including hand and power hammer forging, forge-welding and cold forming.

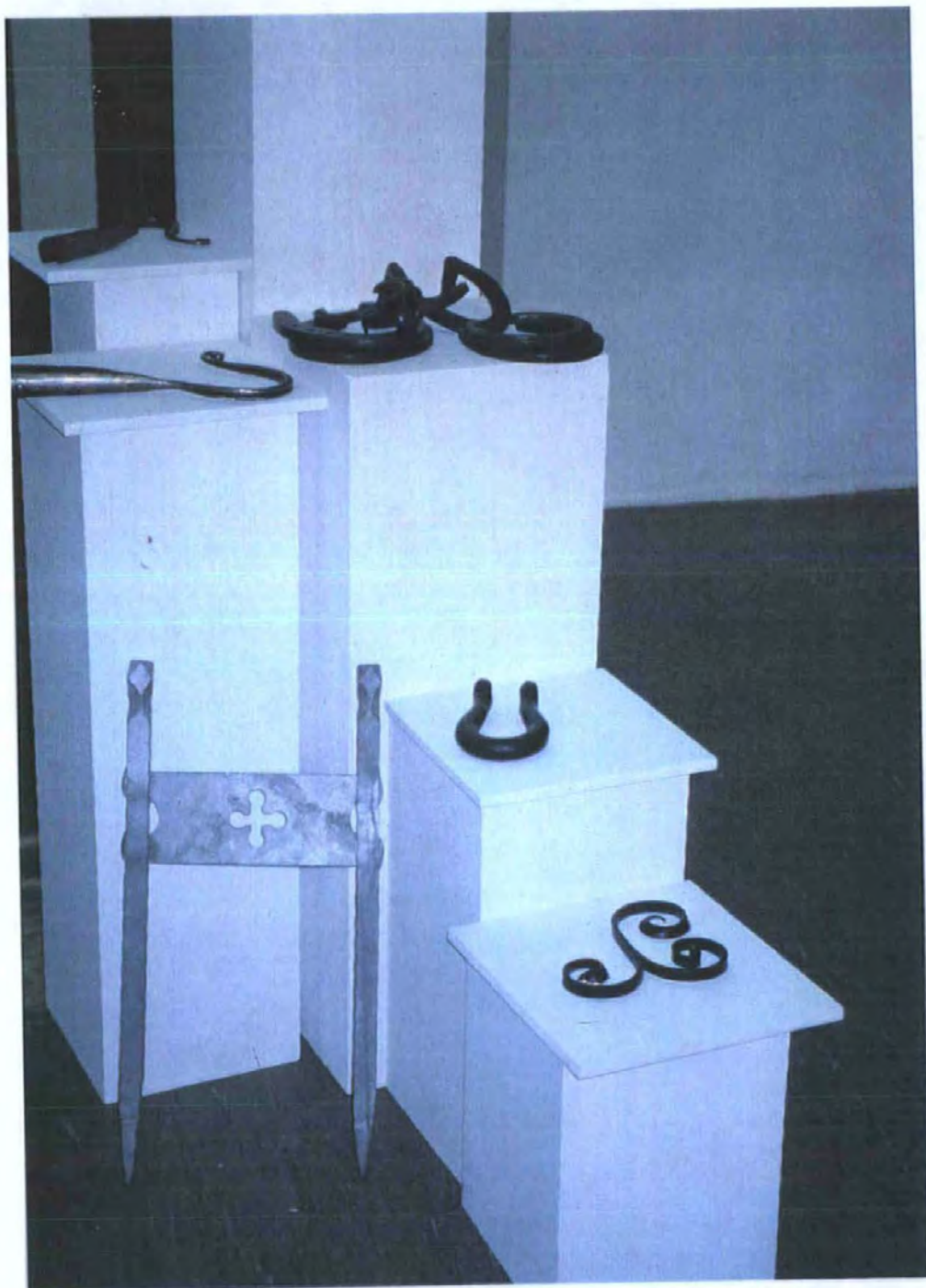


Figure 1. Agricultural and seasonal work.



Figure 2. Garden gate.



Figure 3. Three bowls and a fire grate.

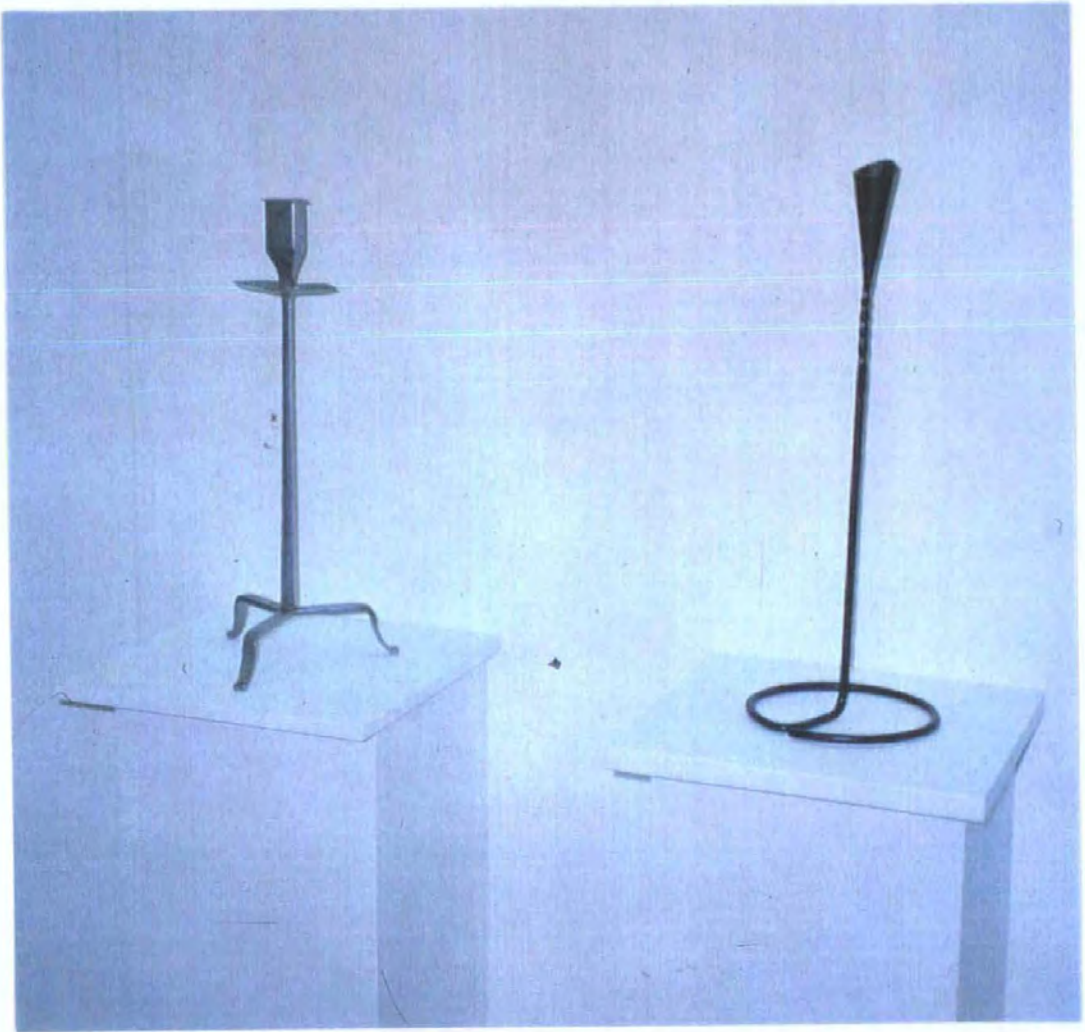


Figure 4. Candlesticks.



Figure 5. Candlesticks.

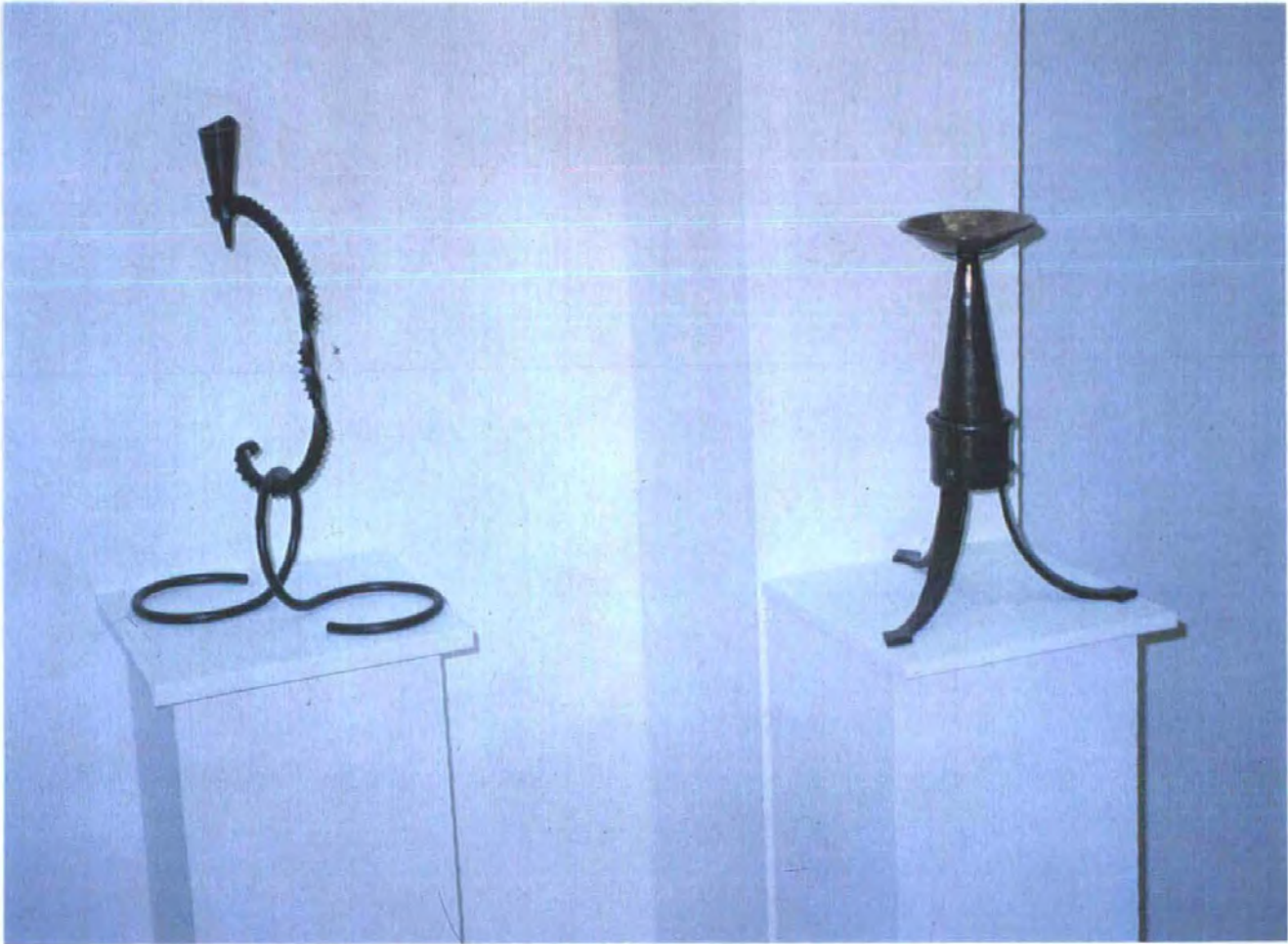


Figure 6. Candlesticks.

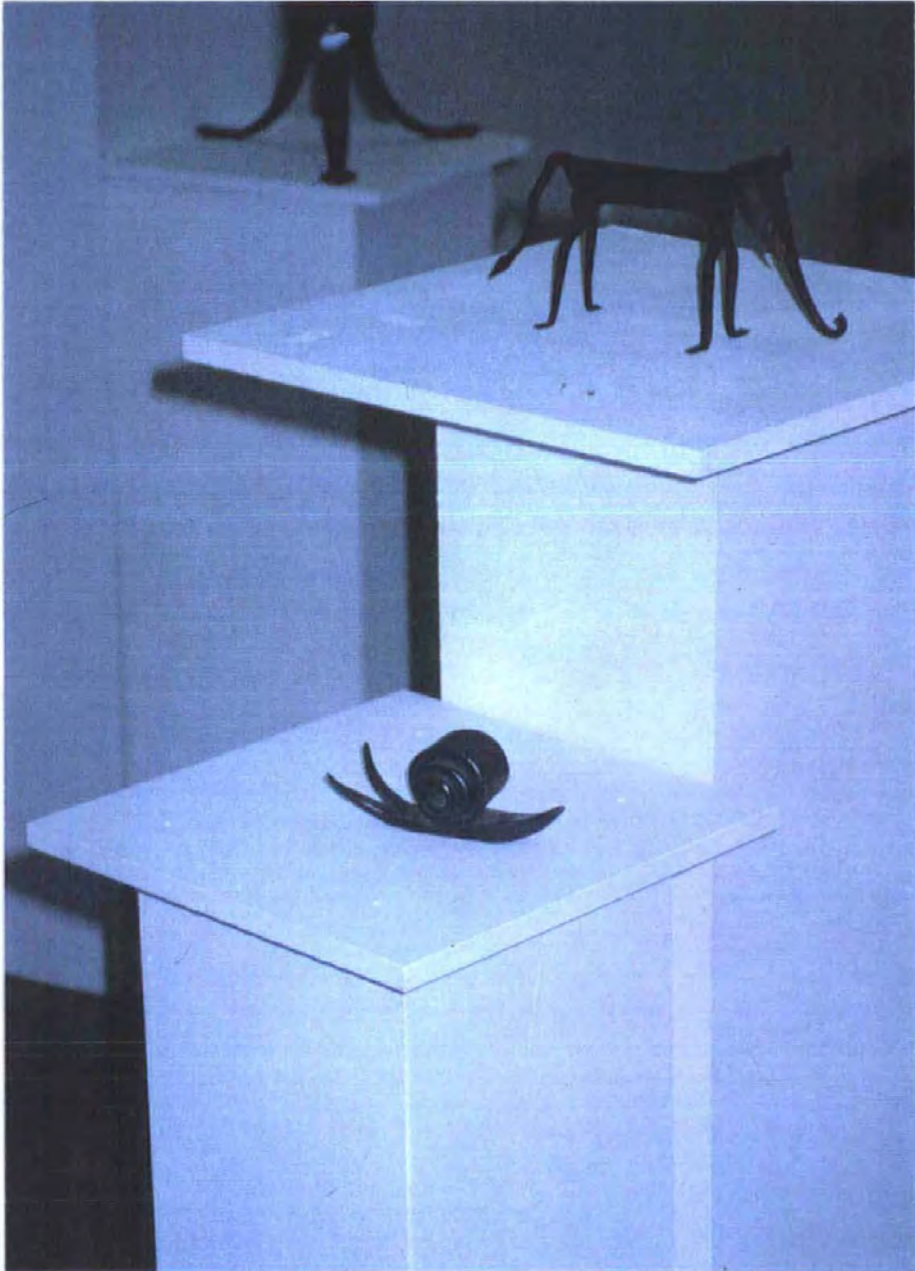


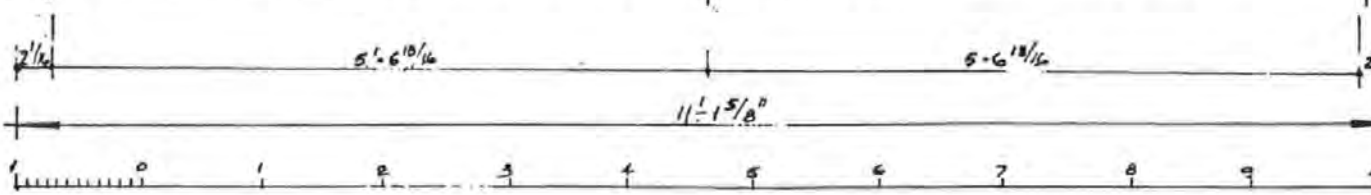
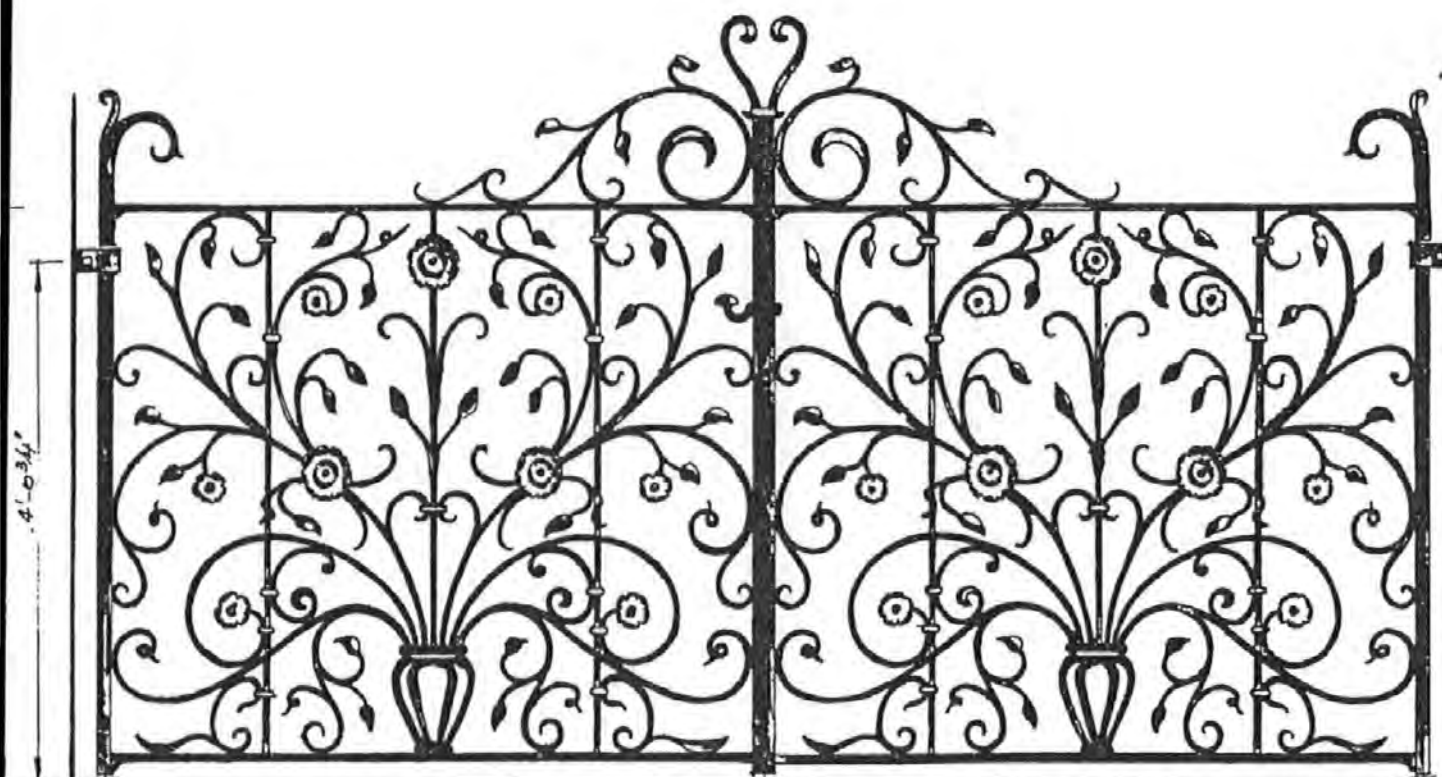
Figure 7. Animal forms.



Figure 8. Forged pieces.

Appendix Two.

A series of drawings produced by the RDC Drawing service are included to show the typical approach taken to design.



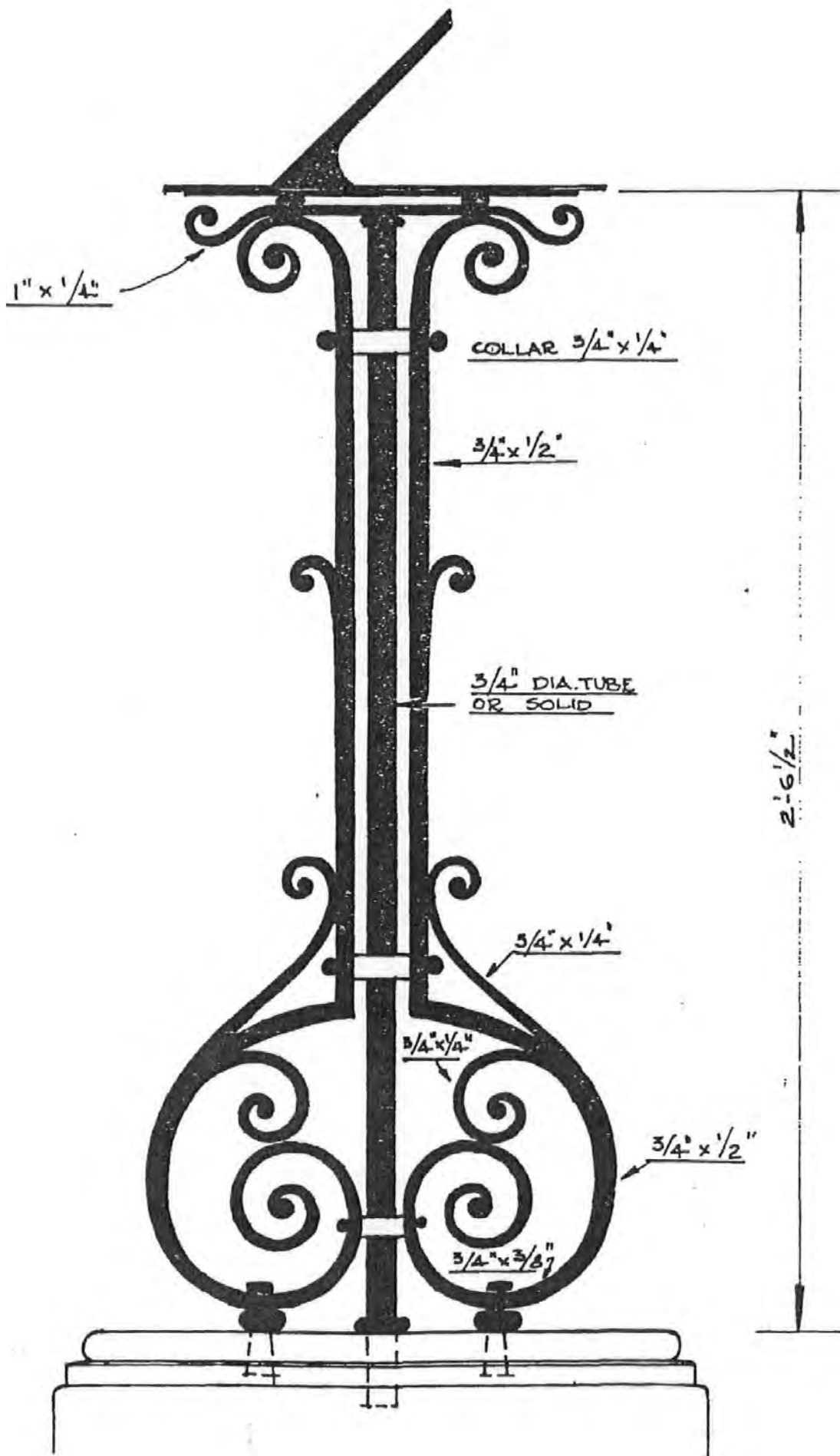
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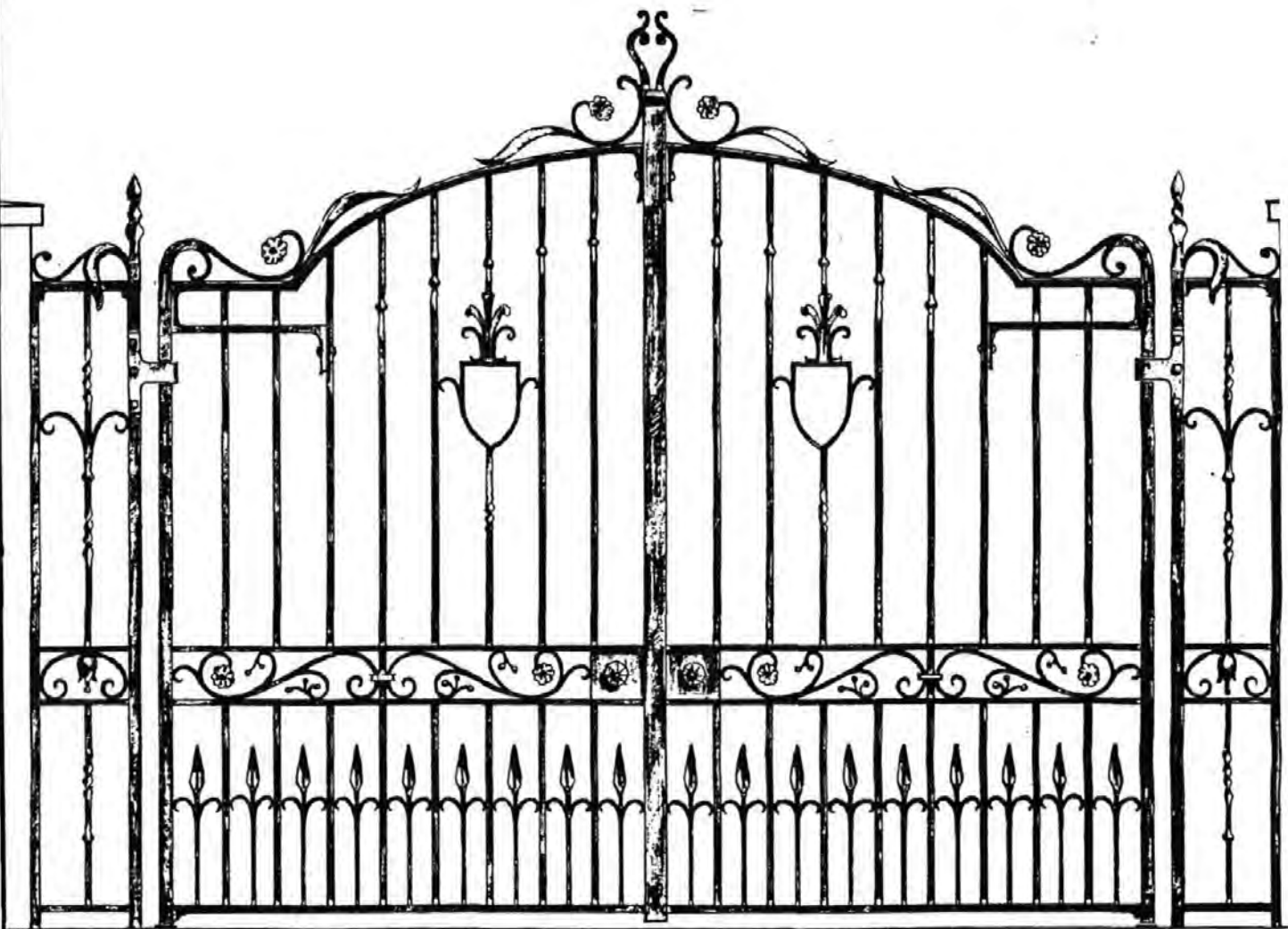
CoSIRA

Council for Small Industries
35 Camp Road, LONDON,





DOOR KNOCKER.



Appendix Three.

Transcript of an interview by David Hawkins (DH) with Richard Quinnell (RQ), at the Rowhurst Forge, Leatherhead, Surrey, 31.8.95.

Introduction.

Richard Quinnell, in starting the British Artist Blacksmiths Association, through his work with the Crafts Council, the products of his company, his gallery and by making international contacts has been an important figure in the development of art blacksmithing in the UK in the last twenty years.

Transcript.

"I am very much an amateur in blacksmithing as far as the actual craft goes. ... I know how to do everything, but I only do it badly. Because I don't do it for my living - I employ people who do it for their living. It is an important distinction, I don't claim to be a skilled blacksmith. However I do earn my living very much from the craft. And I see myself as a kind of entrepreneur."

"It started by my father who had an electrical wholesaling business in London before the war - he needed somebody to make light brackets, wall light fittings and chandeliers for him for his showroom, and he met a blacksmith in a pub and set him up, more or less part time in a shed in the garden here. And then the war came along and they were both off for six years, and at the end of the six years my father came back and he had no business in London any more and he decided that what he would do for a living was to make objects of ironwork for the gift trade. and so he sought out John Donnelly who was the blacksmith he had been employing and they employed another chap who was a welder and they started off making small objects which they could make in batches and could sell to shops. My father was involved in this purely as the entrepreneur, the businessman. And they then decided quite rapidly that they could get the backing of the Government to set up a workshop and employ people, so they built a huge workshop here. They started to recruit young guys - they distinguished between smiths and welders. They were making things with scrolls and little basket twists and things like this and welding them together using a lot of Landons' leaves, brazed on, and this kind of thing. After a couple of years they blew the building up with an acetylene explosion, luckily nobody was hurt, but the building was destroyed and they built a new one and that is what is now Fire and Iron Gallery - it looks old, but in fact it dates from 1949. They

continued to recruit young people and train them up, so there was quite a young workforce producing this stuff which was sold through gift fairs, British Industries fair and the Harrogate Gift Fair and so on, and we had reps who went round and we sold stuff all over. A little later on he got very interested in the idea of porcelain decoration aswell, in parallel he had a business decorating finger plates and tiles and door handles and this kind of thing which developed very well. One of the reasons he liked that was he could employ pretty young women - he had twelve very gorgeous young girls painting in fact we had quite a number of marriages occur due to the juxtaposition of the young blacksmiths and the young paintresses. In 1953 when I was 13 he died quite quickly of cancer and my mother who had been running a farm quite separately had to give that up and take on the business because that was where the living was coming from. She did really quite well, because she expanded it - in some ways she was more businesslike than my father. in particular she expanded the ceramic side, but also the iron side - really to some extent the ceramic side was subsidising the iron and she developed a big export business, invested heavily in a new building for stores and workshops for the ceramic side. Meanwhile I'm doing science at school and then at Cambridge with an eye to doing that as a profession - I wasn't absolutely gobsmacked by the stuff we were making, and you know I just wanted to get out of it really. Then when I came to graduate the options open to me where not wonderful in the science, and at the same time my mother came up against an appalling recession in Australia which killed her export market overnight, which had been very important. Suddenly she was faced with a financial crisis - we had to make six people redundant in the week that I joined the company. So really I was brought in just to help to try to keep the thing afloat.

Previously we had been in touch with CoSIRA - CoSIRA had begun to give us training, we had begun to use what is now the NETS course and Tommy Tucker came around and gave a certain amount of help. But when I joined, around '63 I realised that the situation we were in was that we had a maturing workforce they required more money, they were getting married, they were taking on mortgages - they needed more money, they were becoming more skilled. The kind of work we were doing was becoming less fashionable and it really wasn't saleable at the sorts of prices that were needed to finance these guys' wages, so I moved into one-off work and restoration. restoration has never been a big money earner - it's very interesting and teaches you a lot. And in that Tommy was absolutely crucial because he taught how to make rolled eye scrolls, he taught us how to make water leaves, he taught us how to make repoussé leaf work, and I actually went on a course to do repoussé leaf work with Tom at

Wimbledon. ... So we started doing much more architectural things - we had done a bit before, but we became much more involved in one-offs, and today, we really do just only one-offs, we've got one or two standard lines, but very few really. Our workforce matured, people came and went we took on apprentices and trained them and an awful lot of people have been through.

In 1975 I was 35 years old, I thought well, I'm half way through, what am I doing with my life? One must appreciate that one's design horizons were rather limited by the CoSIRA design book and historic examples - we didn't really know anything much about anything else. Out of the blue I got an invitation to go to the United States to a conference of the Artist Blacksmiths Association of North America (ABANA) - whom I'd never heard of, and I thought 'what are they talking about, Artist Blacksmiths? very 'high falutin'. And I thought they said, would you or one of your most skilled men come and demonstrate? Well, as I said, I'm not particularly skilled, and this filled me with a certain amount of dread, but I thought, to hell with it, I'm going to go and do it. I thought I'm half way through my life, I've nothing to lose. I was really under the impression like a lot of people were at that time, that they were sort of the last one doing it the right way. One thing that I think CoSIRA can be censured for is that they very much kept people in isolation from each other, I knew that Tommy had other clients, but I didn't know who they were - he did mention one or two, but it really wasn't - to some extent I feel a kind of 'divide and rule' policy, it may have been quite unconscious on their part, but we were, in spite of all the support of CoSIRA, Rural industries bureau at that time we were very much under the impression that we were in isolation.

I received my invitation to America from Ivan Bailey, who was a young student blacksmith, and I believe he might have done some training in Germany, in Aachen - a lot of young Americans did, with Fritz Ulrich. They had founded the association in 1972, I believe, in 1974 they had had Fritz Ulrich over to demonstrate and he subsequently had died, of the effects of Mercury gilding in his youth. Ivan was then looking around for another European Master, heavily inverted commas in my case, to demonstrate to them, and he got my name from somewhere - I don't think it was through the CAC, I'm pretty certain it wasn't. I don't know quite, and I've always said he got me out of Yellow Pages which is almost the case I think.

(DH) When looking for names of people through official channels in Germany they tended to direct through official bodies.

(RQ) In Germany they would do that. I will ask Ivan, and find out

where he got me from - but I'm pretty sure it was an almost chance thing that somebody mentioned my name to him. I'd never heard of them, and I thought they are going to be a bunch of hobbyists or something and I arrived there and was met by Alex Bealer, who is really the co-founder of the whole revival over there. Basically he wrote a book about the ancient dying craft of blacksmithing which happened to be picked up by a professor of silversmithing, who asked if he could introduce some of his students to some of the dying old blacksmiths and it just took off from there. I went to this meeting of probably about 100 people, at Greenville many of whom are good friends and have been very prominent in the revival of blacksmithing since. I was absolutely amazed because they had, in a typical American way they weren't going to accept that there were any rules about design and they had broken all the barriers about design there were young people doing amazing things with two inch round bar I'd never seen anything like it, I saw my first Albert Paley piece illustrated, though I didn't meet Albert until the next year, and I suddenly realised that there was something to it, that there was a future, and that it could be very exciting - and I still didn't make the connection that the same thing could ignite over here, and the next year I went over with my wife Ginny to Carbondale, which is always referred to as the Woodstock of American blacksmithing. It was a magical thing, 500 people got together at this place Carbondale in Illinois, it's where the big department of silversmithing is, run by Brent Kington, the co-founder along with Alex Bealer of the whole thing, and it just was magical, it was a lovely place near a lake and woods, it was just the right people demonstrating and talking, there was an excellent exhibition featuring some large pieces by Albert Paley and everybody was completely fired up. On the plane home Ginny said, you know its got to work in the UK, we've got to do something about it, so that is late 1976. And I have to say I didn't really do anything about it, although she kept nagging at me to do something and eventually in 1978 I had applied for a Winston Churchill travel fellowship - because it was there, I received notice of this on a printed thing, you know they send out fliers, and there was this category, crafts, and I thought let's go for it, and I actually applied for six weeks in the States and six weeks in Europe, and I got two weeks in Europe, I shouldn't say this to them, but at the time it was an extraordinarily ungenerous grant because at the time they were sending girls to California for six weeks to do synchronised swimming, however I think they sussed that I could do it, they also sussed that I was going to go back to America whatever happened, so they didn't need to finance me. At the same time as I was preparing for that I was in contact with what I suppose was already the Crafts council by then, I'd been vaguely in contact with the CAC because I knew Sandy McKilligen and Fay Shannon and they were very active in

the CAC, he a furniture maker, she a book binder. But I hadn't really had close contacts with them. The CAC had started, probably in about 1978, they started to get the idea that iron was a sort of Cinderella area of the crafts, they had had an international conference for glass at the Royal College in I think '77 and that had actually revitalised the glass blowing, the craft glass world in this country and they thought let's try the same for iron and so they were looking at possibilities for that and they got in touch with me, I think because of my American connections, I can't really remember what it was all about. I was in touch with Caroline Pearce-Higgins who is a fluent German linguist and in order to plan my itinerary I would have to write to a lot of Germans and she wrote the letters for me, and it became obvious that most of them did not speak English, or at least claimed not to speak English. So in a moment of despair I asked her if she would come with me to translate, and to my great surprise she said that she would, and to her great surprise I think too. She got funding from the British Council and from the Crafts Council who saw it as a great opportunity for her to do some research into European smiths for their forthcoming conference, so she and I went round Europe. Just prior to that, simultaneous with this Winston Churchill application I had been contacting blacksmiths through CoSIRA, I got Tommy to give me a list of people, and we contacted about 50 people and said 'would you be interested in joining an association of British blacksmiths?' We got replies and we invited them to come to a forge-in - so I invented the word 'Forge-in'.

It was something like September 10th 1978 and it was a wonderful sunny weekend and 30 people came I think hardly anybody knew anybody else and by the end of the weekend we were all fast friends and we had an association. We had got a rough constitution, we had got a steering committee and it was absolutely super and it went on from there, we started publishing a newsletter immediately, Stuart Hill started publishing it almost straight away and the result you know. Immediately after that meeting I went off on this trip with Caroline round Europe, and we went, I think, two or three thousand miles in twenty one days, called on twenty five different establishments, we only had one day when we didn't call on a workshop and we were just absolutely gobsmacked, everyday we thought we can't see any more that is new and different and every bloody day we did, it was just extraordinary - and came back from that more or less exhausted, she obviously had a slightly different view of it from me, possibly. As a result, of course she got a terrific list of people. A lot of people at that original meeting, a lot of people who we met on that trip into Europe are now great mates. The Crafts Council also can claim the credit for actually introducing them to each other, because a lot of the European smiths, in Germany particularly,

knew of each other, but didn't know each other, and now they know each other, they regarded themselves very much as competitors, and they weren't going to have anything to do with him thanks. The following year the Crafts Council really got their money together to do this - I helped them with the selection of people to invite from the States, Caroline and I looked at people from Europe, we tried to get people from elsewhere, in general we had very little success in finding people through cultural agencies, either in their embassies in this country or in their own countries, for instance Sweden didn't come up with anybody, Finland with one, and we know damn well that they were all there - having been told in 1978 that there were no blacksmiths in Sweden and now there is an association of 120 of them, some of whom have started since, but generally there was a very vigorous trade going on, but they just weren't known - it wasn't seen as a cultural field particularly, I think that is fairly typical, and understandable and it is only because of CoSIRA, which is not really a cultural organisation that we were able to track down the people that we did, I think if you had asked the Arts Council they wouldn't have had the faintest notion. Even the Crafts Council really wouldn't have had the faintest notion.

In 1979 we had the pilot thing, to which we invited four - we invited one from America, one from Italy, one from Germany and one from France and that was Serge Marechal from France, Herman Gradinger from Germany, Simon Benetton from Italy and Eric Moebius from the United States so they were the token sort of foreign demonstrators and I think 25 Brits, and it worked extremely well, and so they decided to go the whole hog and have the next one to which I think about 150 people came and from Japan and all over the place. but even at that stage they didn't have contact with a tenth of the people they could have, purely because of this actual lack of knowledge by the agencies that they contacted. And since then by word of mouth and so on we have now contacted organised bodies in Switzerland and Belgium and France and Czechoslovakia and Estonia and Poland and Sweden and Norway and Denmark and Finland and Japan and Italy, USA and Canada, and so we can get information disseminated quite quickly throughout the blacksmithing world because most of these associations publish a magazine or a newsletter of some kind. And of course, a lot of their members have travelled to events here and we travel to events there and so on. At the moment Alan Evens has been to Czechoslovakia and is now in Italy I went over to Holland earlier, Pete Oberon was in Poland, Phil Johnson was in Estonia and we are by no means isolated in that way, there are lots of people doing the same kinds of things. Young people going and doing apprenticeships overseas, or journeymanships let's say.

(DH) do you think it has led to an international style?

(RQ) No, that's the interesting thing, I don't think any particular style has arisen, there is a kind of 'wanna be' Albert Paley style that comes out in art college shows, but generally speaking people are being very individual and there isn't a movement of a particular style that I can see. Really it's quite interesting there's an extraordinary individuality in style. So if you look at Jim Horrobin, even if you look at one person's work there is a very severe geometrical style but he also works in a very romantic style. Tony Robinson, almost exclusively very romantic, flowing, highly worked. Alan Evans somewhere in between the two, but again very much his own thing, Alan Dawson again, very much his own thing, it just goes on and on, and Mike Roberts different again. Charlie Normandale again, there's such a variety of style, so there is nothing like say Art nouveau, maybe looking back on it one will be able to see some kind of coherence, but at the moment I can't from inside. There was a lot of stuff in the States in the early days which was known as 'Spaghetti School' which is just round bar, but that really was just a breaking out - an early piece which I admired enormously was a wall piece by Eric Moebius and Bruce Le Page done when they were students - very wild and free and big, since then Eric has been trying to get back into classical, traditional respectability, doing things with vine leaves all over them and beautiful scroll work, Gothic style stuff, and I think that is quite amusing in a way, here we are in the UK breaking out of the tradition and in Germany, breaking out of the kind of Baroque tradition into modernity and there they are sort of doing it the other way around.

(DH) The argument I was given by Paul Allen for the RDC continuing to concentrate on that, was that it is measurable in terms of output, so that you can say whether a person has done a particular design well or not, so that it is a measurement of skill.

(RQ) but from a design view, *degustibus non est disputandum* - there is no arguing about taste, to say if a design is well done, I don't know, if it doesn't fall down it's OK.

(DH) Not exactly, if they have made something to a predetermined standard design, you can tell whether one person has made it better than another one or not.

(RQ) If you have got eyes in your head and you know the craft, you can tell whether the work is good or not, regardless of what it is. We have this polarity very much within the craft, there are those who believe very strongly in the traditional processes, and for whom the process is very important and in extreme cases they regard arc

welding and so on as a sort of blasphemy, I can remember an old Welsh blacksmith saying to me "you BABA people, you use the arc welder don't you" so I said to him, many people do, what's wrong with it? "it's against the rules" he said, so I said "what rules?", I thought Jehovah given rules? "against the rules of the Royal Welsh Show, Boyo!".

(DH) But that is quite important for people in certain places.

(RQ) What happened was that, I fear that, there were a lot of people in blacksmithing, that didn't have, frankly, a very good education, and depended very much upon their ability and their skills within the style that they had been taught for their self respect, and if somebody suddenly says, well I'm not interested in scrolls or water leaves, that's pulling the rug from under that person, so you got the reaction from people that (a) work that they conceived of as being proper work was no good, which then meant that we were stuck with the 250 year old 300 year old tradition.

(DH) Could I put in the example of dog breeders, because they have invented their own rules for what constitutes a nice dog of a particular kind.

(RQ) Quite arbitrary.

(DH) I think it is quite similar in a sense, because a lot of the work which appears in museums - if people go to the V & A what they see is mostly scroll stuff.

(RQ) It is interesting about the dog thing, because my mother used to breed Bassett Hounds, and they are grotesquely dwarfed things, very strange creatures indeed, they have their set of rules about what makes a good Bassett Hound. She started producing long haired puppies and they were shunned, "they all ought to be put down and destroyed" but this was not conforming to the breed, weird. The thing the Americans taught us was freedom. The Germans as far as style was concerned they had a lot of freedom, but what they didn't have was commercial freedom and they still don't. To set up in business you still have to have your Meisterpruffen and that means that you have to train under somebody else. The Americans didn't have that, in a way they had very little discipline, they had this terrific freedom to do whatever you like - nobody has said 'you can't do that'. we fortunately are somewhere in the middle, we have a framework, we understand traditional work, we understand traditional techniques, but we have now been freed from the tyranny of the old design rules, and you are free to do what you like, and it may succeed, or it may

not succeed, whether it does or not is a matter of opinion. I have a problem in that I don't believe in aesthetic absolutes, frankly if something appeals to you, it's good, and it may well not appeal to you in a year's time, and something you don't like now, you may come to like, it is happening at the moment with things like Victorian taste, we are beginning to see something in it, the Victorians couldn't understand Georgian architecture and we do, and no doubt these things will cycle around. We have now got Fifties taste, it created tremendous amusement at the time, but it now seems very very stylish, it's very collectable now, but collectable as Kitsch. One man's Kitsch is another's chic. I think that probably the only absolute in aesthetics is the human female form. You get tremendous changes, so that what is seen to be a good piece of work by one generation may not be by another. But I know that I can look at something and say whether I think that it is good or not, and one can get a consensus on that view, you get blurred edges where some people say that they like a piece and others say that it's shit, but we are now free of the tyranny of the idea that if it isn't made in a particular way it's no good, I think that what we are prepared to do now is judge by the result and see what it looks like.

(DH) Where do you stand on the business of art, craft, design?

(RQ) It is a continuum, there are some things you can say are pure art, abstract expressionism, some things you can say are pure craft like a spade, and there are things which are an indistinguishable mélange of the two, I think everything should be designed - design is common to all forms of art. I suppose that art would be defined as the decorative and useless and craft would be described as the decorative and useful, "let you have nothing in your homes that you know to be useful and believe to be beautiful", William Morris's, I've changed that around, I say "have nothing in your homes that you do not know to be beautiful and believe to be useful" that's the criterion - the usefulness, on the other hand a painting is useful, you can hang it on the wall, it gives you pleasure.

(DH) Art has moved into the area of making philosophical statements.

(DQ) It always has. Your religious painting through the centuries has always had a message as well as being a decorative object that may well mean that a CD is a craft object, it's a useful object in some ways.

(DH) When Richard Hughes was reviewing the *Towards a New Iron Age* Exhibition, he said that the crafts were taking up the space which had been vacated by the Arts, that they weren't involved in decorative things - is that part of the rising popularity of

blacksmithing?

(RQ) It's been a very long process - this isn't something that has happened just like that, there are probably cycles and waves in this - if you look at the William Morris period, the Art Workers Guild and things like this, they saw themselves as applied artists, and now I think there is much more of a tendency for crafts people to call themselves applied artists - the change in the name of the place in Covent Garden from the British Craft Centre to Contemporary Applied Arts. The word craft has come now to be something that people do as a hobby, you know, a thousand things to do with a milk bottle top, and a lot of it is trivial in that people can do it with very little skill, doesn't mean it's bad. You just said was there a style and I said no, I didn't think anything had emerged, and then you were talking about the changes between the perception of craft as a utilitarian thing and an art thing - I think there is no question that manufacturing craft is virtually dead in the sense that we would understand it in the past, although obviously micro electronics requires an awful lot of skill and that crafts these days do fulfil the function that artists fulfilled previously. If you go back to the Renaissance of course, the artist was an artisan who was somebody who would work for you to make for you things you wanted around the place - if you read the artists' manuals. The whole idea of artists being paid huge inflated prices I suspect dates from the 19th century. The position of the artist as a cultural phenomenon, other than just a person who takes your snapshot, I suppose in the 18th century and previously having a portrait painted, for instance, was just purely a matter of record very largely - for status as well to some extent. And that applies when you think of people like Robert Bakewell, who was quite badly treated, even Jean Tijou who charged quite a lot of money for some pieces, but in fact ended his life as a pauper - they weren't viewed as having any particular prestige because they worked with their hands.

(DH) Do you think that has held people back to an extent, the business of blacksmiths being very dirty - potentially very dirty?

(RQ) Blacksmiths may well have been dirty, but in fact if you have a shower at home you don't have to be dirty all day, and the fact that there are a lot of young women coming into it, it may be sexist to say this but women would avoid anything that was particularly filthy - it's certainly no deterrent and frankly the blacksmiths that I know are not dirty people, that's got nothing to do with it, I think in the past it may have been a particularly hazardous and gruelling trade. In the Industrial Revolution blacksmithing was an important part of virtually every process to do with engineering and transport and so on, it's recently really only come to an end, with blacksmiths shops in

railway yards and blacksmiths shops in lorry factories, in the army, all beginning to end, but I think it may have been seen as a fairly menial thing to be doing, certainly a lot of people were exploited - chainmakers and nailmakers and so on.

(DH) I don't know if you agree with this, but David Townsend put it to me that the reason why there had been a revival in blacksmithing is because it has become middle-class.

(DQ) Why not, it has become middle-class, in the sense that the crafts are a middle-class phenomenon, I think that it probably true. I suspect that the market for ironwork is a middle-class market - but of course, David is going to see everything from a Marxist point of view, and he is seeking to find the Class-war aspect of everything, so you need to take that with a pinch of salt, but it's true. Whether that is a bad thing or not I wouldn't like to say, there is a real sense in which we are all middle-class these days anyway. The only definition I know of working class is that if a person says they are working class you have got to take their word for it - if they perceive themselves as being working-class then that is fair enough, but I wouldn't like to try and specify what that means.

The revival came about because it was ready to happen in some way I don't quite know why, but the revival came about in the States because there were a lot of old boys in the Georgia backwoods making little bits and pieces for people, repairing peoples' peanut ploughs, all that kind of stuff. They were a dying generation, they only did it because that was what they had been doing all their lives, they were put in touch with a bunch of, middle class if you like, silversmithing students from Illinois, and in a blinding flash the old boys realised that what they had been doing all their lives wasn't going to die and had a future and they had something to contribute to it and the silversmithing students realised that there was this whole medium of metalworking that they had never heard about and never thought about, and that was how ABANA started and it has had a dramatic influence. An enormous amount of the membership of ABANA is amateur and they do it for the love of it and the fun of it, some of the amateurs are extremely good.

(DH) How do you think that the modern work developed in Germany?

(RQ) That's very interesting, you think that, well, Germany has been squashed flat, but Germany has a much more stable society than we have, in the sense that after the second world war - if you imagine that there were whole cities which were obliterated completely, and for them they had had two total defeats within a few decades, the

first one left them absolutely in a terrible state of poverty and led to the second one, with a bit of sort of prosperity in between. We didn't suffer anything like that, and yet our society is just not the same as it was, we have had an extraordinary amount of urbanisation for instance, we have had a tremendous fluidity, of people moving around the country from place to place and living, not many people live in the same town as their parents, this sort of thing. In Germany, and this may just be a superficial impression, and I know they do have mobility, but they have these institutions where frequently someone will follow their father into the trade that they are in, they have the apprenticeship system, which is unchanged since mediaeval times in many cases, there is the feeling of terrific stability, I don't know, the Heimat?, this feeling of terrific stability. I think that that is totally extraordinary, that they have suffered such total upheaval, but there social structures are still there.

(DH) An argument that Matthias Peters gave me was that they wanted newness, that they wanted to get away from the old, because it was associated with unpleasantness.

(RQ) Could be, that is true, but the novelty, you look at someone like Samuel Yellin in the States who was only 40 I think when he died, maybe a bit older, he did a lot of work in the Gothic and so on, and revised that, but he never got much further. Fritz Kühn, however, who started with the Gothic, he then saw a new injection of natural forms into that style and followed that path, I believe - I may be wrong - but I believe that he made the mistake of working for Adolf on one or two commissions and that really was a problem, and it certainly didn't reflect his political views at all in general. After the war he rehabilitated himself and he began to do some very interesting modern design, which tended to be rather mechanical and machine looking, and so on, but he was still a superlative blacksmith. I'm not clear how it happened in Germany, but, by the time I got there in 1978 you had people using power hammers to produce organic forms and really a lot of experimentation, and no feeling that you had to do it the old way. That came about in a completely different way from the same sort of thing happening in America, because these free form experiments were happening in very traditionally constituted workshops. Matthias Peters, for instance followed his father into his workshop, had, as I did, a hard time with his men, because the men said, here is the young guy coming in, we're going to give him hell - show us what you can do kid, you know, Matthias I think had years of problems, but nevertheless, that is the father and son workshop, typical German institution, and yet he is doing work, and his father was to some extent, which is quite unlike the traditional stuff. They have the great advantage in Germany in that, particularly in the south

that ironwork is seen as an integral part of the house, handmade, one off ironwork, plus the grave-cross phenomenon. About fifty percent of people tend to be buried under a grave-cross in southern Germany.

(DH) We saw masses of them in Oscar Hafén's place.

(RQ) Oscar, and people like that, his brother, I think is a stone mason. Oscar and a number of other people, Manfred Bergmeister and various other people, even Paul Zimmerman, have said, when I have arrived, look the light is still good let's go over to the cemetery and look at some of my work, since you were here last and you will see five new memorials, and very often they are particularly personal to the person, and it is a terrific phenomenon, but because it not only provides them with work and some creative steam, but it also of course slots them very firmly into their community, because they are providing a service which is seen as very valuable. So they get to know everybody, and it's a fascinating phenomenon, very nice phenomenon.

(DH) On a slightly different point, do you think that during the 1950s and 60s that modern architecture did for blacksmithing?

(RQ) It had no space for blacksmithing, but it did no harm to blacksmithing, because blacksmithing was already moribund. The blacksmith was seen as the little man down the road who will do something for you for a fiver and tug his forelock and say yes sir, no sir. and i always remember, this is a private comment, but I always remember Bill Poirier referring to "Miss Reckett" and being very surprised when I called her Rachel.

Getting back to this middle class thing, I suppose if you are middle class you have more confidence, these are terrible stereotypes, you possibly have more confidence in doing something different, I don't know, maybe that is a totally wrong thing to say. But, the American phenomenon, the fact of the amateurism has brought in people who are enormously varied - there are aerospace engineers, there urologists, there is a particular friend of mine who is a professor of psychiatry, retired now, people who have been in the film industry and all kinds of things, who had decided to take it up, either full time in some cases, or just as a hobby, or in retirement. And the fact the these guys are there has lent an immense richness to the whole thing, and so this is not something people do because their father apprenticed them to a blacksmith - I have to say there are people in this country who are extremely good who are exactly the product of that, people in my own workshop, who came here because it was a job available to them as a kid leaving school - can't do anything

except work with his hands so he'll do, you know.

(DH) I think there was a thing just after the war where lots of people went into fabrication and agricultural engineering as well as doing blacksmithing, perhaps because they had done farm horses and the horses were dying out ...

(RQ) If you are a decorative smith and you've got good technical skills and somebody gives you a full size working drawing, like the CoSIRA drawings were and you work to that you never actually need to draw yourself. This brings you back to the applied arts side, the best people I know in this country as artist blacksmiths are also very good draftsmen or women, they can draw, and a lot of them spend a lot of time drawing, and there are a few I can think of who actually carry a drawing pad with them most of the time, and they sketch ideas, they sketch things from nature, they have ideas and so on. Certainly, in that sense, if you are going to produce new design, you have to be able to design and draw, and design in the sense of draw, in that literal sense. And of course it helps you to look, the forms that were being used traditionally were the forms that Tijou had brought in and Lamour, that they had brought over from the baroque tradition on the continent, which were basically based on observations of nature. We just took them on wholesale and didn't have any fresh ideas from then on - but the iron founders had fresh ideas. So really, this worship of the 18th-century was really a crutch which was supporting people who had no design education. But now that blacksmithing has a design education attached to it, which may be what David means by being middle class - but if he suggests that design education isn't available to those who are working class, he is barking up the wrong tree.

(DH) Do you have a philosophy which overarches the business or do you just run it as well as you can at the time and does that affect the size of the business and how you run it, the profile, and where do you think it is going?

(RQ) Where I've come from is getting into a business almost by chance and having to make it survive, I had CoSIRA's help with that - they helped me to rescue the business through their accountancy service, which was wonderful, they taught me all I know about budgeting, cost accounting. So I saw it initially as a way of preserving my family's assets because my mother was mortgaged up to here and the business just had to survive, or she was going to lose everything. Later I saw it as a way of earning a living. It has been enormously important to me in terms of friendship, because I feel that I have made so many super friends through this and it is very encouraging that I've felt that I have been part of the growth of it and so on, which has changed

peoples' lives. I don't see it as a way of life because the way I've had to run my business and make it survive has been stressful and is stressful and if i had my choice I would have less responsibility and have more fun. It is interesting that i was just looking the other day at one of the very early editions of the Anvil's Ring which reports on the conference when I first went to the States in 1975, and it reports on a forum discussion that we had where I am admonishing them for not being businesslike - and they are saying that well it's just a lifestyle that we like, we go and we fish and we dry the fish for the winter and all this, back to the soil, and the blacksmithing is sort of part of that hippy scene, and I said that I earn my living how I live it and if you want to do important work that is what you have to do.

(DH) At the BABA events there is more to do with folk music than rave music isn't there?

(RQ) I don't know, a simile, or metaphor that I often say is that style in blacksmithing is like music, and if you stick with the CoSIRA pattern book you are condemning yourself to playing Bach and nothing later. Bach, you know, it's perfectly permissible and pleasant to play folk music and jazz and rave, whatever you like, and then go and play Bach aswell, why the hell not, if that's what suits you, there are no rights and wrongs in this. Folk music, well God, getting a bit out of date now, as far as music goes I've extremely eclectic taste, I wouldn't like to say what kind of music that I'm into. I know what you are saying, it's seen as a kind of hippy way of life.

(DH) You were talking earlier about the blacksmithing purists, do you think they are the same kind of people who are into fish drying and folk music and so on?

(RQ) No, I don't, you see you have got somebody like Brian Russell, who is extraordinarily businesslike and energetic, who is the last person the the world to be a laid back hippy type person, but he believes strongly in the purity of particular craft methods - because he is bloody good at them, there is no ulterior motive at all, it just appeals to him, but it doesn't make him a laid back hippy. I have to say that there are people who rely on this idea of technical purity to mask an actual degree of incompetence, they say, ah well i did it this way, and you look at the work and it's bloody awful, and that's the one thing I really couldn't forgive some of the CoSIRA people for, this idea that if it's Tijou-style it's alright, however badly bodged and nasty it was, and there were people producing this horrible travesty of 18th-century work, but it was forge welded, so it must be alright, and winning prizes.

(DH) As far as I can see, from looking at the real stuff, there was an awful lot more in terms of changes of section, in scrolls, just as an example, than you see - people will do a copy of it at the Wessex guild and you look at it and think, well, they've lost it.

(RQ) A lot of it is very poor - why spend hundreds of hours working on a piece of repoussé work, it has really no particular relevance to us - and the guys who did that did nothing else, they were repoussé smiths, they were trained from childhood to beat out those things, and they were good draftsmen too, they could draw the work out. You see this thing with engravers, there are people with supernatural powers, to think that you are a smith and you can beat iron that you can take a piece of sheet and beat a water leaf out of it that is beautiful is a gross misconception, it takes a long long time to train for that, and the only people that I know of that are doing leaf work to a terrific standard are the Metalliers Champenois in Reims, or down that way, Serge Pascal, because they do nothing else. They don't answer their letters - I tried to get some prices out of them. This idea of what is right and wrong in smithing I think it is a misplaced one, in my book there is just work, and there is good work and there is bad work. I don't know any way of defining except by what I like and what I don't like at this time and it may change in time, it may be different for somebody else, but as a very subjective thing there is work that I see that is good, and there is work that I see that is bad, and I can't predict who will make it.

(DH) I have heard that there were disputes within BABA at some point between what you might regard as traditionalists and modernists.

(RQ) Yes, that is true, I don't think the modernists have ever been particularly hostile to the traditionalists - I think the traditionalists have been hostile to the modernists, and they illustrate a sort of natural polarity that appears to arise, certainly in this country, I haven't seen it really arise anywhere else. There are those who want to make forms and they don't really mind how those forms get there and as long as the thing is durable and works and everything else, and the form is right they will do whatever is necessary and I think a good example of that would be Albert Paley - he said "If I could do it in fibreglass, I would do it in fibreglass, I'm not committed to this material and these methods - I invent methods to do what I want to do." At the other extreme there are people who are dedicated to what they conceive of as correct technique, basically, the basic techniques, the seven operations. So that, for instance, you always punch a hole, you don't drill it, you always forge weld if you can, you don't arc weld, you probably use sledge hammers rather than a power hammer, though I think that that is probably not such a hard and fast thing,

and generally you do things the way it has always been done. so I suppose that because of particular conditions in this country it has got muddled up with the idea that this particular style that came into this country in the late 17th-century is the correct style. Now, it is quite possible to make work using traditional techniques that is not traditional, as Brian Russell shows, he uses entirely those kind of techniques and yet his work is extraordinarily different. But this being stuck, because Tijou's work was seen as marvellous in its day it has stayed that way and nobody else followed on with anything very interesting.

(DH) The Shakespeare of ironwork?

(RQ) Yes, we got stuck with it, and it needed somebody to say, well that's great, but let's do something different now. but even people like, I think Peter Walker would exemplify someone who has crossed the divide - I hear he is very ill, possibly dead now, I'm not sure if he was in a hospice, just last week - but I think at an early stage he was quite anti what he saw as these grotesque modern designs, and then he gradually got to the point where he began to appreciate what was going on and started to do some work himself which was very interesting. I think, really, that as people see that this work is really appropriate to where it's going we begin to understand that there is no - if people aren't threatened by anything they are free to expand their horizons.

(DH) Roy Strong said that he made the change over during the '70s to realising that new work could look good in an older place, and that was quite a revelation for him.

(RQ) We have a very bad situation in this country where we don't believe that anything new is worth as much as an antique. So young furniture makers for instance, are starved of commissions, while people go out and buy tatty old stuff which is really not wonderful, just because it is old.

(DH) Where do you think it is all going at the moment?

(RQ) Very early on, I began to think every year, when is it all going to end? This thing could peter out, it hasn't, it is very strong, I don't know, you know, movements of all kinds disappear, any organisation will have a period of youth, a period of maturity and a period of senescence and what you hope that will happen is that in a period of senescence that splinter groups will part off. Having said that things like the Art Workers Guild has survived whether it has survived in the form that it was originally conceived is another thing - where is it

all going? I don't know, where is the whole craft culture going? The whole idea of a craft culture in this country is quite recent - I really wouldn't like to say, you would have to look at it in hindsight in a hundred years time and say what had happened. Anything at the time is very hard to see subjectively what is going on. But the thing has now lasted for over 20 years, 21 years, the Anglo American revival and its consequences. I put the German revival outside that, because the German revival had already sort of happened in its way. But you see still you have got groups like the Swiss group, and more recently the Dutch group, Belgian and Luxembourg people have been beginning to come into this now, the Japanese, and so there are people who are being fired up even now by this new realisation - the international connections are terrific, there is so much going on, quite apart from the blacksmithing, the actual friendships.

(DH) There is blacksmithing on the Internet now, isn't there?

(RQ) Really?

(DH) And people doing designs using Autocad and things.

(RQ) I think that is a terrible waste of time, of course Alan Evans does it, and when he does it it produces some beautiful perspective presentations to show people. You want something you can just sketch and scribble on and it will just organise it for you - it's coming but it's not here yet.

(DH) Why did you choose to open a gallery, and not a shop?

(RQ) Well, it was a shop, it was a showroom, it is a shop. We call it a gallery because it expresses more what it is, because we put on exhibitions. Gallery sounds posher. A shop, a wrought iron shop, generally speaking we would probably have to be in a high street - well ours is a shop, people come in and buy stuff, that's how we make our living - it's how Lucy makes a living, she will reveal more at the AGM she is giving a talk.

Appendix Four.

A copy is included of the 1993 Collecting policy of the Metalwork Department of the V&A.

THE COLLECTING PLAN OF THE METALWORK COLLECTION

(Abstract from the Metalwork's Collecting Plan relating specifically to Ironwork).

1	<u>Summary</u>	
	1.1 Aims	3
	1.2 Active Areas	3
	3.3 Base Metals:	
	3.3.1 Iron and Steel	8

1 SUMMARY

1.1 AIMS

Metalwork follows the principle laid down by Henry Cole in 1863

"The best works of all periods and countries should be obtained Where the taste of an age or country has been low, few specimens only would be necessary ... where the art is excellent ... the specimens may be more valued and numerous"

tempered with the recognition that this comprehensive exhortation sets an impossible target. The Collection centres on the Art of Living in all its aspects. Our aim is to play to the strengths of the Collection, building the internationally acknowledged areas of excellence, both English and European, from the early Middle ages to the present and continuing the concerted campaign to acquire important contemporary or recent work. Metalwork assesses all potential acquisitions by the following criteria:

- beauty of design
- quality of execution
- significance for the study of metalwork
- provenance
- authenticity
- condition
- relevance to the displays and to the permanent collection
- value for money

1.2 ACTIVE AREAS

- 1 To collect outstanding documented examples of historic metalwork, English, European and Near Eastern.
- 2 To seek out both outstanding and representative examples of 20th century metalwork in the Western tradition worldwide, including commissioning where appropriate.
- 3 To seek out documentary examples of 19th century Continental metalwork.
- 4 To devote at least half of the Metalwork purchase grant

towards 20th century objects.

To display, study and publish acquisitions.

3.3 BASE METALS

3.3.1 Iron and Steel

The collection of wrought iron and steel comes from many areas of Europe and ranges in date from the 12th to the 20th century. It is one of the most comprehensive in the world, particularly strong in pieces from architectural contexts, locks and keys, gates and grilles, and also includes jewellery (Berlin iron and cut steel), caskets, candlesticks and door fittings. Iron which has been cast - that is mass-produced by means of pouring molten metal into preformed moulds - has been, and continues to be, only very selectively acquired, to complement particular areas of the collection, such as hearths and hearth furniture. This aspect is documented by the Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron. Cast iron was however commissioned for the Museum buildings and furnishings from such outstanding artists as Alfred Stevens (radiator grilles, restaurant tables) and examples have been retained for the collection. A notable object in situ is Sir Edward Poynter's cast iron grill in the Dutch Kitchen.

3.5 20th Century Collection

In the first 50 years of this century, the Metalwork Department conformed to the general Materials Department policy of not acquiring contemporary material. For Metalwork this began to change in the late 1950s; this policy has been completely reversed in the past two decades so that the majority of acquisitions are 20th century and more than half post 1975. The Metalwork Collection benefitted in 1978 from the buying policy of the Circulation Department (see 3.3.5).

Because our 20th century predecessors largely ignored contemporary developments, we now find ourselves forming a representation of early 20th century metalwork retrospectively. Pioneering work in the 1960s and 1970s by colleagues with an interest in this area does mean that our collection of early English 20th century silver is reasonably, if not completely, representative. For example, we probably have the best collection of silver designed by C R Ashbee and made by the Guild of Handicraft of any public collection in the world. But the representation of European 20th century design needs considerable expansion before it can be compared in scope to our collections of historic European silver.

While product design is an important subject within the 20th century context, the Metalwork policy in this area has been to proceed cautiously, concentrating scarce resources of time and money on what are indisputably classics. In recent years, we have had some notable successes such as the acquisition of an ashtray designed by Marianne Brandt and a table lamp designed by Wilhelm Wagenfeld, both made in the Bauhaus workshop in 1924.

4.1.2 The Twentieth Century

Half of the Collection's purchase grant is devoted to objects made since 1920, and since the 1970s more than half of our acquisitions have been twentieth century. In some areas, because of rarity, there is still a reactive element to collecting, but in most collecting fields we can pursue the work of specific artists, designers and firms with the expectation that objects can be secured, if funds are available.

4.1.3 Commissions

Commissioning, in the history of metalwork from whatever country and culture, has played a vital role in the development of the craft. We can only achieve a representative survey of twentieth century developments, nationally and internationally, if we undertake a policy of commissioning prominent artists in their respective fields, many of whom work only to commission. Otherwise we can only expect a patchy and arbitrary representation of their work by relying on whatever emerges on the market in the distant future. The recent Yorke-Radleigh Bequest provides us with an annual income for the 'purchase of one or more works of contemporary applied art with special reference to silver', and it is intended that this money will be used to commission objects from European and other international silversmiths who have earned themselves significant reputations. The original V&A buildings incorporated a good deal of decorative ironwork, executed to commission. The staircase balustrading, ornate radiator panels and the restaurant tables were designed by the sculptor and designer, Alfred Stevens. The wrought iron gates, at the entrance to the back road opposite the Science Museum, were executed in 1885 by the firm of Starkie Gardner. Recently we have revived our predecessors' policy with two commissions; the iron gates to one of the entrances of the Ironwork Gallery by James Horrobin (1981-2) and the remarkable chandelier in steel, coloured with neoprene (1983-4) by David Watkins for the Silver Galleries. Designs, models and method statements are obtained with recent commissions.

4.2.3 Basemetals

Iron and Steel

The Collection's greatest strengths lie in English and Continental work of the 17th and 18th centuries. Areas for potential expansion include early 19th century wrought and cast iron, especially from Germany, Italy and France and fin de siècle pieces (European and English).

Appendix Five.

Two shorter interview transcripts, from Peter Crownshaw, and Stephen Lunn with Ron Phillips, are included.

Ron Phillips and Stephen Lunn
Ironbridge 5.8.94.

Q, What kind of blacksmiths are you?

R.P. Well I'm just an amateur blacksmith, the reason for it is because I'm an engineer really, and it's just sort of a part time hobby.

S.L. Right, well I'm a traditional blacksmith, I'm stuck doing lots of ordinary blacksmithing work, which frustrates us at times, but that's me job.

Q, How did you train, or how did you learn about blacksmithing?

R.P. Well for me, basic training for an engineer in the 1950s and 1960s, you had to do blacksmithing, you also had to do toolmaking, you had to make the things that you were going to use, so it was all in basic training.

S.L. Well I came into it, some would say a bit unfair, my father's business, and he spent a lot of time, put us through all the training courses he could find at the time.

Q, Was that the RDC?

S.L. Yes, went through the welding courses, the farriery courses, the wrought iron courses, which was very good of him.

Q, What kind of work do you do in blacksmithing normally?

S.L. Well my work it covers absolutely everything I can get, the villagers coming in with their broken pushchairs and their shears to sharpen, and we feel that if we don't do them we are going to huff the villagers, it's expected and I must admit we are selective of any things which are not really related to blacksmithing, we send it away. Our work is split up, three quarters blacksmithing work and quarter wrought iron work.

R.P. People do come for jobs to be done, making hooks and all sorts of things, you know. But I work for English Heritage as well, and I have got a forge on one of their sites, I do a lot of demonstrations, you know, for the general public, in doing that you get quite a lot of work English Heritage wise anyway.

Q, So why blacksmithing rather than any other kind of activity, Carpenter or doctor or something?

S.L. Like myself, I was chased away from blacksmithing by my father, because at the time, I suppose it hasn't changed a lot now, seven o'clock in the morning to nine at night for very little money and he felt I could get a better career, but it just took my fancy.

R.P. With me, as serving my time as an engineer and doing blacksmithing, you always have a tendency to go back to your roots, so I'm working back to where I started off from, you know, over the years it has just occurred every now and again. Although owning a massive great workshop and doing engineering as well, I turn out a lot of blacksmiths work with it.

Q. Attitudes towards iron, what do you think about iron as a material, is it a special material, or is it just another material that has certain qualities?

R.P. Are you referring to iron as mild steel or (me 'iron, steel, all of those...') yes, it's so plastic when it's hot, you can turn it into all sorts of shapes, sizes, designs, it's hard to make words for this isn't it Stephen.

S.L. Well I love mild steel, it reads your mind, when you bring it out of the fire it sort of half bends itself into shapes, forms itself, it really works with you.

R.P. If you have understood the structure of the steel and what it is going to do, everything works for you.

S.L. I feel a bit that with mild steel you nearly show it a sketch 'that's what I want', it really works for you.

Q. Is there anything about blacksmithing as a lifestyle that appeals?

S.L. It's not a very social lifestyle, because it's seven days a week usually and family and this and that sort of get left aside.

R.P. Now if I was to finish with my full time job as a hospital engineer, I would immediately go straight into blacksmithing and then it would be a lifestyle, because I find that I can do it within reason, what I want to do, not what people want me to do.

S.L. I think that regular customers become more family than your family in your workshop, you get all the local chit chat from this and that and when you get home, it's home to bed usually.

Q. How has your work changed over the years, has it changed in style or quantity?

R.P. Mine particularly has because I started off as a tool maker and I'd got no idea of wrought iron design or anything like that and then I went over to designing sort of art works out of iron, you know, so it changed drastically over the years. I took it as a drudgery to start off with, you know, having to make a tool, but when it comes to do something artistic it becomes something that actually does stretch your mind, it keeps you working, it keeps you interested.

S.L. I find every year your work is totally different from the year

before, because although financial year is April to April I always see the end of the year Christmas time, and starting of the New Year in January. Our work always seems to peter out at Christmas and after that new work comes in, it's always totally new, totally different, the variety that it covers.

R.P. We are changing with the times as well, we see new designs coming through and we are looking at them and thinking 'that's good'.

Q, Are the kind of customers or clients changing at all?

R.P. Yes I think they are changing, because as we are getting older, the people that recognise the blacksmiths trade, they are a lot older than us, say I'm fifty sort of thing, you are going up to people who are in their sixties, they are sort of reminiscing of what was in their time, things are changing slightly aren't they.

S.L. In ironwork I have never dealt with as many architects and interior designers before. They are actually coming and looking for you.

R.P. They want to put wall coverings on now, in the past you would never have seen a piece of ironwork on the wall in a house, it used to be brass or copper, but now it is iron, you see a beautiful piece of ironwork, sculpture.

Q, Do you think that they are starting to value ironwork more?

R.P. Yes, I certainly do, I think that is a definite because I get people coming to the forge saying look at that, how did you make that?

S.L. I think they come with very little knowledge but they know there is something there, they are coming to really tap your mind.

R.P. they hear a blacksmith in the shop and they think he is making horse shoes, that's their first thought, 'oh, he is a farrier' but he isn't, they come into the shop and they see these massive candle holders and all sorts of things that have changed their mind completely.

S.L. They just need to see one little item...

R.P. It's not some stupid old man with an apron on who is banging at a horseshoe, it somebody who is totally different these days, so it has changed.

(me) They weren't all stupid old men in those days..

R.P. One bloke nearly had a poker, cold end first, so he couldn't pull it out, sorry about that.

Q, How would you like to work ideally, what would your ideal working pattern be, what is the sort of work you would like to do given a free choice?

R.P. Well that's obvious for me really, I would just plod away at my English heritage forge, I mean I could just plod away demonstrating all day really, yes, I think that would be nice and ideal, because you get a chance to talk to the public, to see their reaction and what is going on, a small forge, you know, where I could be more artistic than

what I am now.

S.L. I must admit I curse my general blacksmithing but, it's a nice break, it means I'm not total ironwork, so perhaps it is the right sort of balance, because after a big project you like a couple of weeks break.

R.P. Well, yes, if you have to make two or three hundred hooks, or this or that, you start to do something slightly, it makes a big change...

S.L. It makes a big change because when you go back to general blacksmithing you, it's all 'brain-free' you know, you just go in and you do it and ...

Q, So the physical aspect of it is important, actually the hard work aspect of it?

S.L. certainly in the forge, the harder a day it is the more enjoyable it is. as long as you get something at the end of the day that is finished.

R.P. You certainly don't come down with a fuzzy brain, you come down quite..

S.L. I love it best when the furnace is on and the power hammer is going on, but like all jobs it takes a lot of building up to that stage.

Q, If we talk about blacksmithing in general, rather than about yourselves, how do you think it has changed recently, do you think it has changed?

R.P. I do tremendously, I look at all the courses that are available now compared to what there were in 1990, you have got Hereford Art College, doing tremendous courses there and I see more colleges all round the country, deciding to change their basic metalwork course, instead of just doing basic metalwork, copper and brasses and bronzes and stuff like that, they are now incorporating iron, which is rather a change isn't it, because iron is becoming more in vogue than it was isn't it, even more than in 1990. West Dean College are doing the same, they are changing dramatically now, where it was sort of good to be a potter and a silversmith and all the rest of it, they are looking to iron. They used to look down at iron, put it that way, and they are now starting to look up at iron, it is starting to get a nice medium.

S.L. I can't really reflect on the colleges but I know that blacksmiths in themselves, it's on the up and up, because everybody is thinking new thoughts and it's an exciting time, everybody is sort of "oh, I can do this and do that".

R.P. We are together sharing thoughts as well, which makes a big difference. With a thing like this that is on today, everybody is looking at each other's work, not criticising, but we are actually sharing something.

S.L. Definitely a good time to be in blacksmithing.

R.P. Even to four years ago there has been a dramatic change as far as I'm concerned, a lot of people won't give you that impression, but there certainly has.

Q. What about the future, where do you think things are going, do you think that there are any trends that are going to carry on, or new things, any ideas yourselves?

R.P. Honestly, I think it is going to carry on going until a new medium comes in, until something abruptly stops it. Like all trends, it's going on a high at the moment, as far as I'm concerned anyway it started on a high, how long that high is going to last I just couldn't tell, but I know at the moment, and students and everybody are really interested in it. You show somebody some of the work that we do and they are absolutely knocked out, they don't think you can do that kind of thing, they didn't think you could do that kind of work, and make a beautiful hook out of an old nail, a rusty old nail, make a lovely hook to go into a beam, and they think, can you actually do that? they are realising things these days. It's hard, the future, isn't it. I would like to think it could continue for a while, because it keeps getting pushed back and pushed back, there is certainly a revival on there is no two ways about that. America are slightly in front of us, which is for certain and they are still on a high over there, they are doing well over there and it is reflecting over here.

Q. What do you think has been the influence of the various organisations, such as BABA, NAFBAE, Worshipful Companies, any of those things - do you think that any of them have been more influential than others?

R.P. Well BABA certainly has been influential because they produce a magazine which gives you the insight into other people's work. We are not critical of other people's work, but you need to look to see where other people are going. Whereas other factions don't do that, you don't get that with silversmithing, copper smithing or anything like that.

Q. But NAFBAE do a magazine as well don't they.

S.L. It's meant for the blacksmiths but it just reads farriers all the way through all the time, certainly to me BABA is the strongest one of the lot.

R.P. One of the bugbears of BABA is that we gain a hundred members and lose a hundred members every year, if we could do something to keep the members and not lose them you know this swings and roundabouts.

S.L. You say you lose them but I bet they are still keeping an eye on what is happening with this and that.

R.P. I notice the membership changing radically and I talk to Peter King a lot, and he said that we lose a hundred and gain a hundred every year, so we are bouncing around about 402 or something at the moment, and we will get a few more this weekend, there is no doubt about that, but they are sort of passing, they pass through a phase, we are not passing through a phase, we are stuck with it for quite some time, I know I am I am dedicated to it, and I'm also dedicated to trying to get some training going for youngsters, because we are not

pushing it that far. If we could get the kids to learn, as we did in school, I did, I certainly did, I was made to do it, to make my hooks and bang them all out, if they all did this they would have the same insight as we when they turn fifty.

S.L. We take quite a lot of lads on now and again and you have got to show them how to use a hacksaw and the taps and dies.

R.P. The basic thing was chiselling, hammer and chisel in a vice to cut a piece of metal, you tell the kids how to do that (someone else 'you're missing a very good demonstration') Oh are we (ends).

Peter Crownshaw

Ironbridge 5.8.94

Q. What kind of blacksmith are you?

A. I enjoy traditional techniques of forge work, but I do anything that comes through the door.

Q. How did you train and when did you do it?

A. I'm completely self taught, just wanted to be a blacksmith from when I was a child, but I didn't actually get to be a blacksmith until I was about thirty five or thereabouts, although it had been a hobby for some time before that. I did go to Hereford for a fortnight once.

Q. Why is it blacksmithing in particular that appeals?

A. That's a tough one, I've often thought about it, I'm intrigued by the way material goes soft when it gets hot and I think it takes a certain amount of my own energy to form it into the shape, I feel as if part of me has gone into it, I don't really know - I do love it though.

Q. Has it got anything to do with the fact that it can be quite difficult?

A. Yes I think there is, I've always enjoyed a challenge, and the more difficult, the more I've enjoyed it, so maybe it's as perverse as that, that it is the most difficult thing I could think of doing.

Q. Is there anything special about iron or steel as a material?

A. Only in so far that it is beautifully soft when it's hot and then when it is cold, just a few minutes later it's really strong and tough.

Q. Is there anything about the lifestyle of the blacksmith that appeals?

A. Romantically I like to think that there is, but I think that any artisan goes through the same process of a challenge and then thinking about it and then rising to the challenge and getting the job done and the satisfaction of seeing the end product.

Q. Is control of your own life important?

A. Oh yes, certainly, as somebody who spent twenty one years working for British Telecom in a very structured and bureaucratic regime, I really enjoy the freedom and I'm looking forward to the future, because I never know what it is going to bring. This year for example we have done two huge public art commissions, which a few years ago I wouldn't have even contemplated as being possible.

Q. Do you collaborate with other people on these?

A. Yes, I've got a collaboration with an artist and other craftsmen living near by.

Q. How has your work changed over the years?

A. Yes it has changed terrifically. When I started working for myself, we were doing a lot of light fittings made of tin plate and copper sheet, flat work, which was a necessity for keeping the business going, I didn't necessarily enjoy it, I always was pushing the forged metal side, but we were always very busy at that, right from the word go it was a success.

Q. What about the style of work, has that changed?

A. Not really there is still an undercurrent of those classical lantern shapes, that I still do, although I don't personally do them anymore, my assistant has taken over doing those, thank heavens. Really since the recession has come, we started off doing a terrific amount of traditional work, mostly Victorian ironwork copies, railings and gates and a lot of work - last year I got involved in a lot of work and was a sub contractor for the Tower of London, which are very traditional work. Then out of the blue these big public art... although I wasn't the artist involved in the first one, I was just really the maker - a very interesting big project. And then we went straight on to another one where I was much more involved in the design, developed from architects drawings and practical layouts, I got to design a good 70% of the whole thing. I found I really enjoyed that, I'm drawn to big public art work. I just hope we will get some more.

Q. Following on from that, what would your ideal way of working be?

A. Ideal way of working would be a slightly bigger workshop, I enjoy working from home, perhaps another assistant, but keeping it fairly small and bringing in extra staff if ever we get a biggish job, which I would enjoy doing, that. I like being involved in the design stage, although basically I enjoy working, I enjoy hard work.

Q. On to the last couple now - how do you think that blacksmithing has changed recently, over the last ten years?

A. I think there is a lot more interest in public art and building adornments, architectural features. And I think that is a good thing because it spins off right down the scale. That's how it has changed for

me. I think it is a lot more challenging these days, there seems to be a lot of work about at the moment, which is quite good.

Q, Where do you think the future lies, for everyone, any ideas at the moment?

A. I try not to think of the future too much, I just hope it carries on developing. But Britain has got a history of ornamentation going in troughs and heights, we are obviously on the crest of a wave now, it would be nice to think that that would be an enduring feature, but the chances are that it will start to slide soon into some abyss.

Q, What do you think has been the role of the various organisations, you know, BABA, NAFBAE, Worshipful Companies?

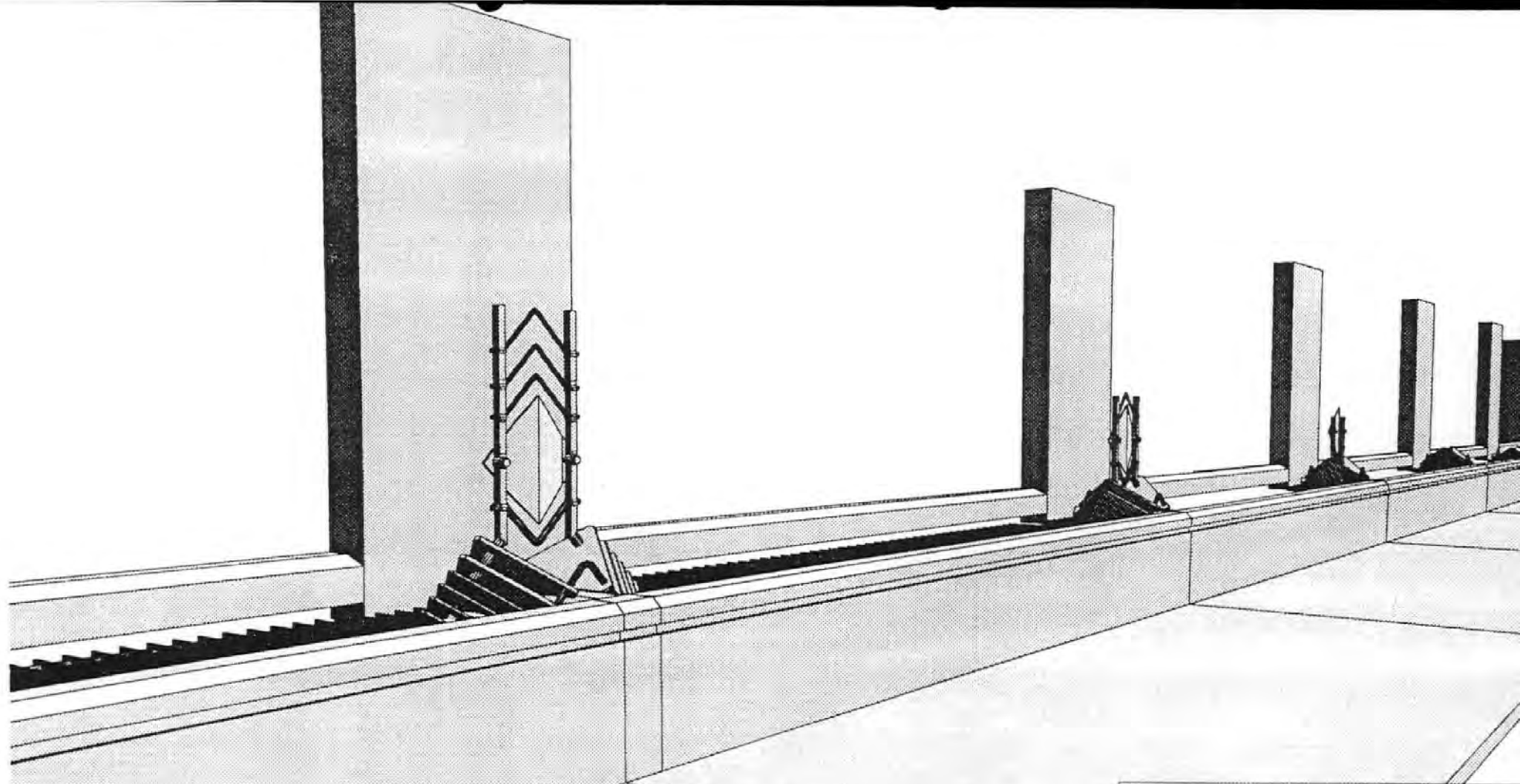
A. From a personal point of view BABA has been a most effective catalyst, if that is the way to put it, it has given me so much confidence, in a mental way more than a physical way. Just merely coming to conferences and speaking to other smiths that have taken on things, it has encouraged me to take on more difficult work, which I enjoy really, the more difficult it is, the more I enjoy it eventually. after I have been through the hardships on the way.

Q, Have you had any dealings with NAFBAE or the Blacksmiths Company at all?

A. No hardly any connection whatsoever with any of those, purely a BABA man. Thank you very much, I've just been presented with a key ring - Uri it says, from Israel.

Appendix Six

Some additional computer drawings by Alan Evans for recent projects are included.



Health Authority Headquarters, Cardiff

View of Pierhead Street from main entrance

© 1993



ALAN EVANS

MAKINS, WHITEWAY

STROUD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

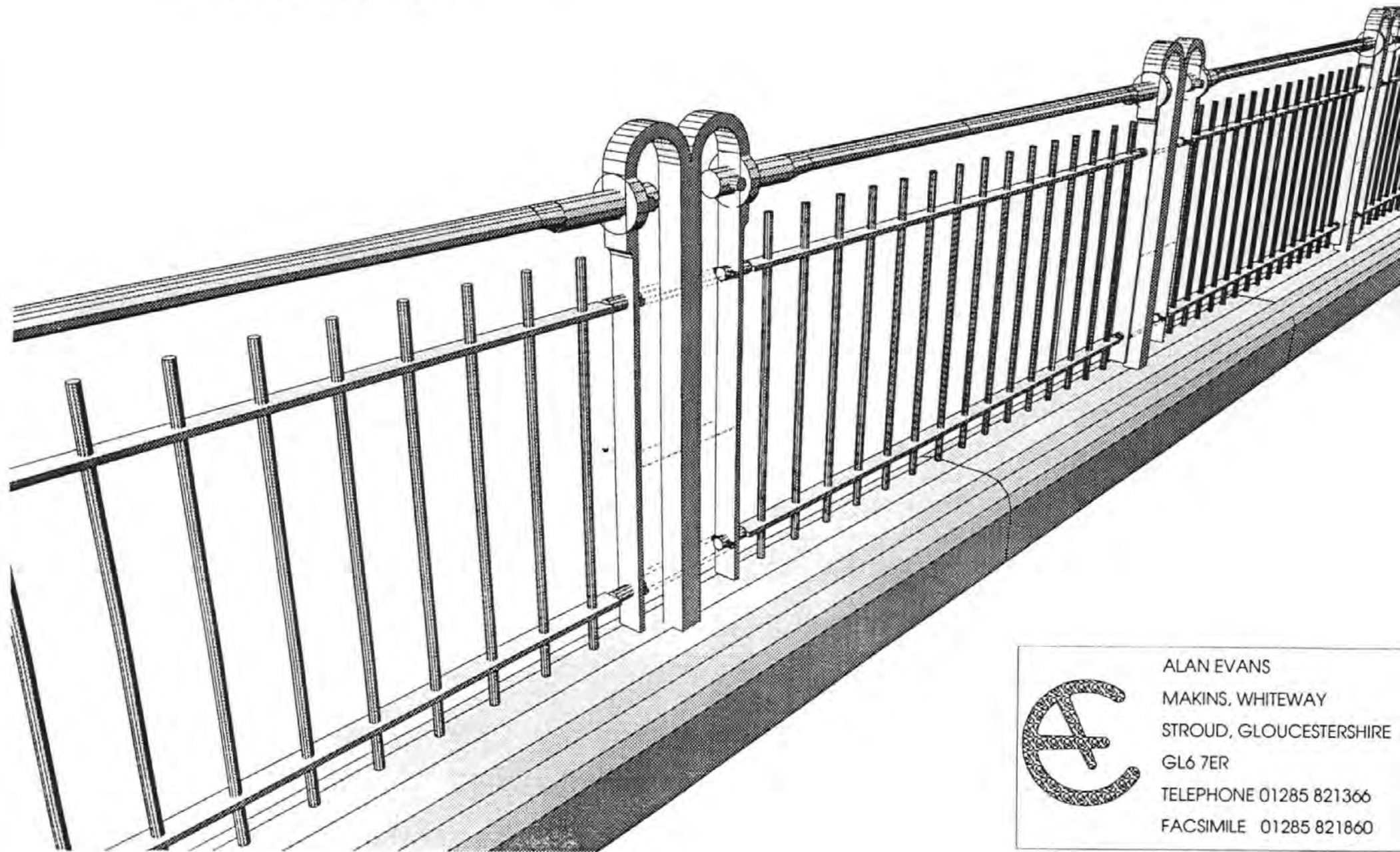
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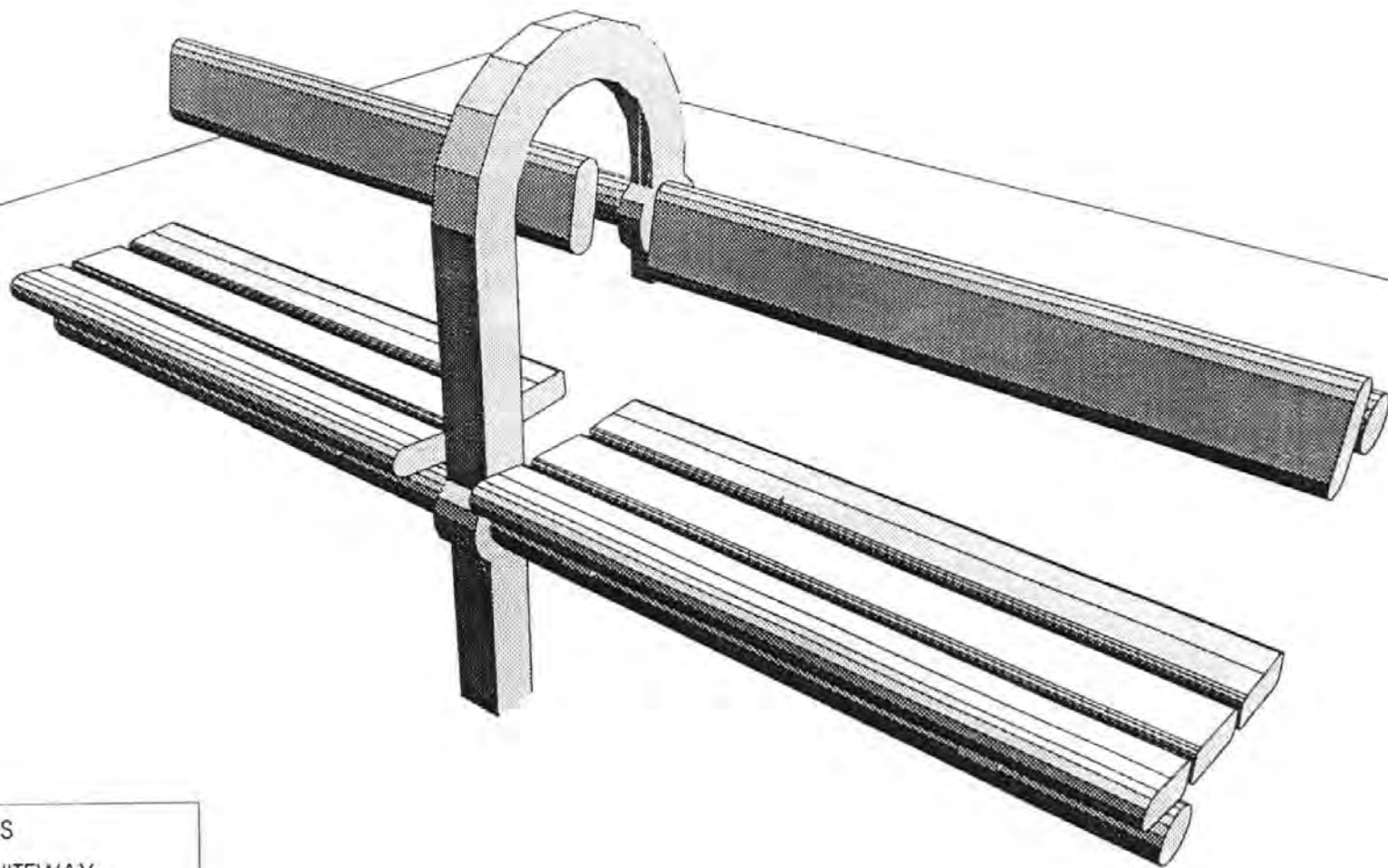
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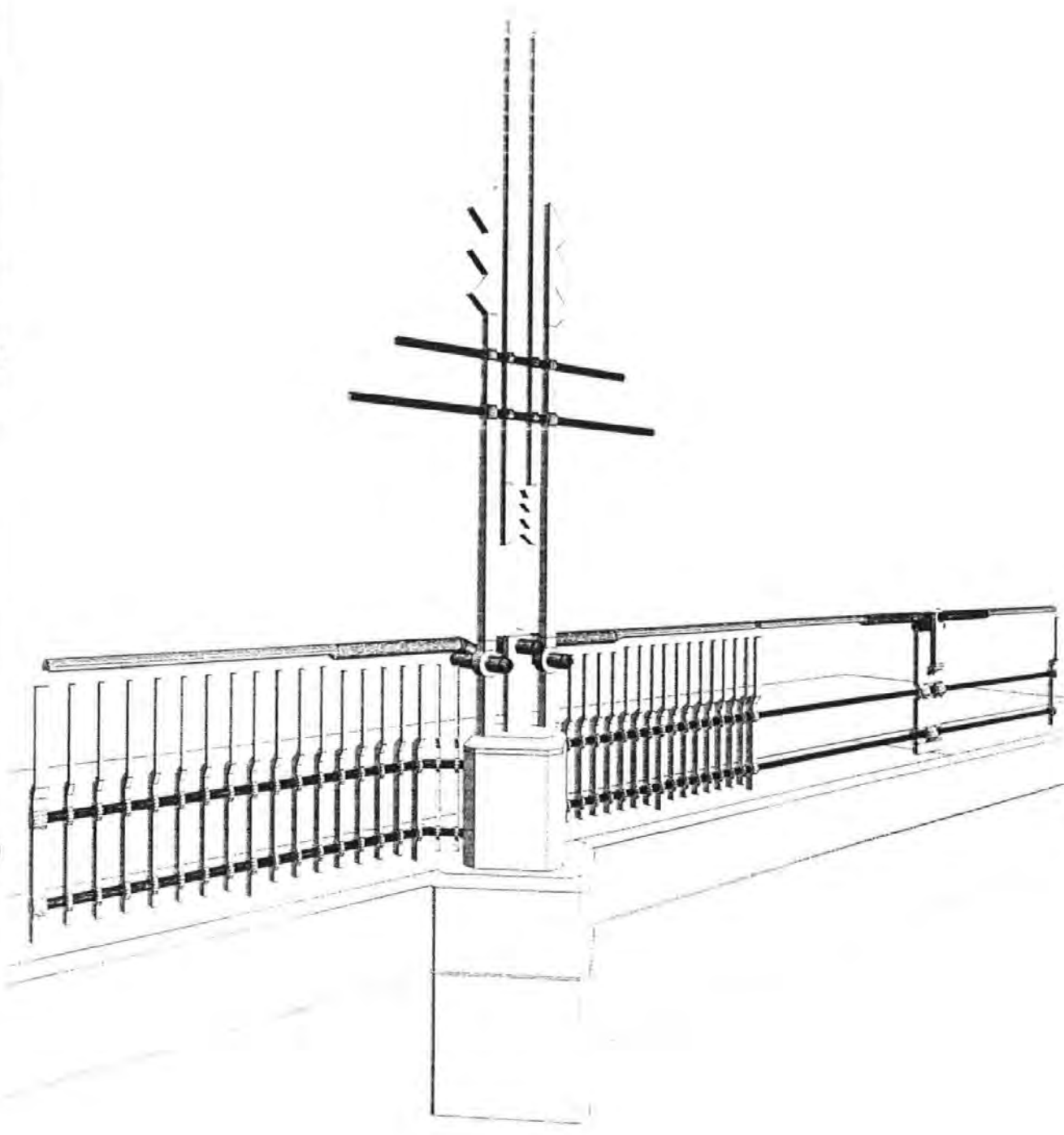
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Appendix Seven.

Text of a paper given to the conference *Designing in Public*, 29.3.96-1.3.96, Campidoglio, Rome. This paper summarises some of the main conclusions of this study.

David Hawkins.

The European Dimension. The new Blacksmiths Work in the Public Arena.

Summary of a paper given on 1.3.96. at the conference 'Designing in Public,' Campidoglio, Rome.

Blacksmithing in the UK has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last 20 years from an inward looking, unselfconscious tradition of mostly rural craftwork, to a dynamic and important part of the international metalworking scene. The change has resulted from a shift in the culture of the crafts generally, and most importantly from increased international links and communication. These links began in the 1970s through events organised by the Crafts Council and the formation of the British Artist Blacksmiths Association.

The influence of government support and educational structures before this time was to train smiths in traditional methods, with no involvement in design. They worked to pattern books or the designs of others.

Because of the move away from minimal modernist architecture and increased awareness, architects and town planners increasingly use blacksmiths as site-specific artists. An example is the pair of gates for Winchester Great Hall by Antony Robinson. New designs use traditional methods and modern equipment.

It is often more cost effective to involve custom building from the start of the project than to use factory built standard components. The

objects are adjusted to fit the place; not as before, adjusting the place to fit the objects. Alan Evan's bicycle racks were designed using CAD and used 1/4 of the number of holes that factory bought racks did. They were cheaper to fit, more functional and site specific.

Purpose built and site-specific work made with modern equipment by individuals or networks of small businesses introduces a new economic pattern. This work is art, design, craft and industry all at once. Work can be practical, decorative and functional aswell as symbolic.

The work of many smiths is forward looking and practical, but with a high regard for craft values. there is a new sense of the unity of practice, so that it is inappropriate to judge this work either from industrial or craft viewpoints. Its commercial appropriateness, artistic integrity, truth to craft basics, response to the client, and intention, all matter.

Giusseppe Lund's gates at Hyde Park, London are not typical of good new blacksmithing, but they are fun. They use modern and traditional styles and don't care if they show it.

Site-specific, custom-made work can enhance public spaces, exceed minimum quality standards and cost less than potentially boring standard products which make them all look the same. Landmarks and individual identities are important.

Appendix Eight.

Text of a paper given at the conference *Telling Tales With Technology*, University College, Aberystwyth. July 1996. This paper examines and describes some of the advantages and drawbacks of various kinds of interview and recording techniques and equipment used in this study.

Dialogues With The New Blacksmiths.

David Hawkins
Senior Lecturer
Exeter School of Arts and Design
University of Plymouth

Telling Tales With Technology
Conference, University College, Aberystwyth, 12-13.7.96.

Nature and Scope of Study.

“Trade Manufacture and Design of English Blacksmithing in the Post War Period.”

Looking at: Post war decline and reemergence as Artist Blacksmithing after the late 1970s when international communication began to be more frequent; Crafts Council and the V&A were persuaded to help; and the move to post-modern architecture mad it possible. There was new work and international communication before this, but it was ‘before its time’.

Blacksmithing had remained useful and industrially relevant until the 1970s, and had incorporated many technological advances, but it was stagnant in terms of design and ideology for the best part of 250 years (metal sculpture wasn’t an influence until the 1970s).

Styles were reinforced by training, and organisations - notably the Rural Development Commission (CoSIRA) and the rules of agricultural shows.

The new Artist Blacksmiths are from a variety of backgrounds, but are concerned with expression, commercial pragmatism and the tradition of hot forging.

They are designer makers or art-craftspeople, but also involved in industrial fabrication - this variety of practice is poorly addressed by existing critical approaches.

There has been a huge renaissance in forged metalwork through ‘official’ patronage, public art and the efforts of the British Artist Blacksmiths Association. (Selection of slides and overheads of images of ironwork shown at this point)

As part of the study it was necessary to record information of a biographical nature by a variety of means. These methods, along with their relative advantages are compared.

Tape recording - Analogue:

sound quality is adequate with a good microphone; easy to play on many machines; relatively cheap; in person; transcribing can be time-consuming.

Digital Recording (DAT, DCC, Mini-disc):

better sound quality; easier editing; expensive; in person; transcribing may be difficult (perhaps good quality voice recognition software will improve this in future).

Electronic Mail - directed:

personal, but detached due to time lag (normally replies are next day); time to reflect; more incentive to reply than a questionnaire; typing can influence the views expressed; no sound-coded information (pace, accent, emphasis, irony, etc.).

Electronic Mail - list shot:

impersonal, it goes directly to individuals, but because it is general, there is no 'reply imperative'; time to reflect; people may contact others before they reply; if people reply to the list, there is a forum where issues may be 'thrashed out'; email is expensive to set up.

Handwritten - on paper:

immediate and personal; instant editing, saves time; fairly easy to transcribe; cheap (could be scanned if neat); no sound coded information.

Handwritten on a PDA:

same editing advantages as paper; writing is a little slower to ensure recognition; if recognition is turned off there may be too much memory used; no scanning needed; no sound-coded information.

Later From Memory:

less reliable, but more convenient; editing with reflection - overall impression can help; less waffle; cheap; no sound-coded information.

The Questioning Process.

Structured interviews can involve a checklist, be constraining, order effects might be a problem and piloting is needed. Unstructured interviews have room for branching; an agenda is required; it could take a longer time; a repeat session may be required to ensure coverage; the unexpected is often more important or interesting than

that which is on the agenda.

Effect of timing on responses

Immediate questions can 'probe' more effectively; spontaneous answers may or may not be accurate; the interpersonal relationship is important in creating a dynamic; a time lag permits reflection on the construction of a formal or official response.

Effect of the recording equipment and process.

'TV' culture makes recording into an event; interviewees can be more nervous/stilted; recorded interviews take a while to warm up; you become a different, detached person with a microphone in your hand (the 'tourist camera' syndrome).

Effect of Personality.

Negotiation about the status of the individuals and the recording is important in terms of what it means and what will be done with it.

Parents and Friends.

Possible to ask a lot of questions that there wasn't time for before - they are seen in a different light; less about rights and privileges and more about an outside view; maybe some questions that you already know the answers to; some subjects may be taboo and are avoided; more conspiratorial; discretion has to be used to avoid gossip.

Strangers.

Public facts become the 'hook' for questioning; take on an appropriate manner and persona = acting; effect of perceived status or intention (wary, open, willingness to spend time, usefulness of process).

Conclusions

Pros and cons for all techniques, best to combine methods and combine them as some suit some people and not others. Standard questions often give rise to standard answers. You can be probing in your questioning and smile at the same time. Recording is probably the only way the information becomes available - there may be no reason for the person to say these things normally; being interviewed can cause or aid reflection upon practice and events, etc.

David Hawkins

13.7.96

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