



The Traveller

Volume 32, Issue 1

Summer 2023

Western Canadian Wheelwright's Association



WCWA big hit at Aggie Days! See President's Report page 3



The Western Canadian Wheelwright's Association
Serving the interests of Wheelwrights since 1992
www.wcwa.ca



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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

By Diana Matsuda, Editor

There are some exciting indications in this issue of **The Traveller** that interest is growing in the wheelwright trade. Our cover photo and President Carl's report about Aggie Days shows line-ups of children eager to try out tools and learn about the construction of wooden wheels.

Manitoba Director Brian Reynolds is a case in point as he reports that his grandsons are considering becoming wheelwrights. How lucky are they to have Brian as their role model and mentor!

And as Glenn Halvorson suggests in his Alberta Report, there will likely be a resurgence of interest in wooden wheel construction following the recent coronation of King Charles and the magnificent coaches used in this spectacle.

Our UK Correspondent Alan Paulus, always adding an interesting perspective to the trade, has discovered a new and innovative variation on the wooden wheel. See his article on a medieval-inspired potter's wheel on page 21.

And of course, the usual presence of WCWA members at the Calgary Stampede and Pioneer Days in Irricana is a great way to introduce the trade to the public, and especially to youth. US Director Gary Stephenson notes that volunteerism by our members at such events will perhaps generate an interest in younger folk who might be willing to become the next generation of wheelwrights.

But despite hands-on opportunities, we all know that to a certain extent, we are living in an online world, and the WCWA is making strides in this direction as well. In addition to our website and Facebook page, we now have a new YouTube channel which features two of the videos referenced in this issue.

And don't forget about the WCWA Online Auction that is being organized for a second year by Wayne Lenfesty. Right now, we need more members to step up, donate auction items and promote the event to friends and family, all of whom may be potential buyers. This is our only fundraiser of the year, so it is up to our members to get involved and make it successful. See Wayne's article on page 14 for details.

Sadly, we are now faced with wildfires right across Canada. Hopefully this will not impact your summer activities too severely and you will be able to get into your shops and out to parades and demonstrations. Most importantly, stay safe everyone!



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Carl Swartz, WCWA President

For the first time ever, the WCWA was represented at Aggie Days in Calgary at Stampede Park, held from April 19-23. This event has been held for the past 35 years as a way of recognizing the importance of agriculture to Alberta and to Canada.

The purpose of Aggie Days is to teach children about life "out on the farm" and how agriculture impacts their daily lives. The displays and interactive activities, hosted by industry organizations and volunteers, are designed to help children learn more about our agricultural and historical legacy.



At the WCWA booth, Sharon and I demonstrated with a brace and bit to elementary school students, Grades 3-5, explaining that this was the tool used to make holes in wagon wheels for the spokes to go into. We then gave them a "hands-on" opportunity to make holes in wood, and the kids loved it!

[Continued page 4]

[President's Report continued from page 3]



The first three days brought in busloads of students from schools all around the area, while the final two days were family fun days with parents helping to make holes with the brace and bit.

After visiting our station, the students went to John and Jean Lavoie's display of the spoke and shaver bench where they had an opportunity to shave wood with a super sharp knife. What kid doesn't love that!



While trying to be somewhat humble, I have to say that we completely stole the show! Kids were lined up to take their turn. One time, Sharon had four kids holding the top of the brace with a larger kid cranking it – they were having a ball! We heard from some of the students that our display was the only new activity there and everyone wanted to try us out.

With the smallest youngsters, I would hold the brace and the kid would turn it about 10 times, constantly looking underneath to see if it had gone through. When asked if they were tired and wanted to quit, they said, "no way" and wouldn't stop until they had made the hole.

Activities like this certainly help to promote the WCWA and the craft of wheelwrighting to a whole new generation. Our participation at such events is an important part of the mandate of the Association, and our presence at Irricana's Pioneer Acres for their annual show will be another opportunity to blow our own horn.

The WCWA Annual Meeting is at Pioneer Acres in Irricana on August 12, with the annual Pioneer Acres show being held August 11-13. The fee is just \$20, so is affordable for everyone. Hope to see you there.



VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Bonnie McCauley, WCWA Vice-President

I am looking forward to my trip to Ottawa, despite the fact that my mother passed in April at the age of 107 years. It will be a celebration of life rather than our planned celebrations for our birthdays in May. We will celebrate with family members and friends in the Ottawa area, along with family from Nova Scotia, Ontario and Alberta.

While in Ottawa, I can attend an Ottawa Valley Button Club meeting (a group of people with a passion for learning about, preserving and displaying clothing buttons), visit museums and art galleries and yes, do some square dancing! As the strawberries are in season, I plan to devour as many as humanly possible.

Last year when visiting Ottawa, we experienced a derecho or strong wind. This wind caused severe damage and even death to people and livestock.

[Continued page 5]

[Vice-President's Report continued from page 4]

I will be visiting some of the sites that experienced this disaster to see how they have recovered.

In April, I helped out at Aggie Days, along with John and Jean Lavoie and Carl and Sharon Swartz. We showed children how to use a hand drill and how to make spokes.

It was a delightful experience, and the kids loved the hands-on opportunity to try out the tools.



Calgary Stampede is July 7-16, 2023, and we will be there demonstrating how wheels are made and speaking to the public about the process.

Pioneer Acres has their Annual Show from August 11-13. Again, we will work on projects, demonstrate the process of making wheels, and speak to the public about the wheelwright trade and the WCWA.

The Association's AGM will be held on August 12 at Pioneer Acres. Please see the information later in this newsletter and plan to join us.

Participating at these venues is a very important and rewarding experience. I encourage more of our members to attend these events.



BC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Dwayne Danley, BC Director

Hello everyone ... I can hardly believe how quickly summer has crept up on us.

We have just recently rototilled the garden and I don't remember such a dry year. It looks like flour afterward. Oh well, I'll just have to get the old garden hose out sooner. I can't wait until August when the heat really hits, yikes!

Speaking of dry conditions, I was talking to Randy Kirschner the other day and he said that the fires in northern BC and Alberta are threatening lots of homes, including his own.

Randy said he was on evacuation alert with fires less than half a mile away. Our thoughts and prayers go out to keep him and his family safe, as well as all the other folks affected by this.

It's been one of my busiest years so far, with over five units in for repairs at one time. Now why couldn't this have happened when I was 30 instead of 62?

I want to slow down a little - I'm getting too old for this! The following are some photos showing the work at hand.



This Vis-à-vis is in for full rebuild due to an accident and frame cracking issue. It will also get new upholstery.

[Continued page 6]

[BC Report continued from page 5]



This Hitch Wagon was in for a panel repaint, new panels, rear brake repair and new wheel seals.



The Brougham is in for a full rebuild.



This Leon is in for complete re-upholstery and miscellaneous repairs.

I am starting a new project this week and I've purchased an old metal-working lathe. It's a 13" South Bend, a 1973 model with a 6-foot bed.

It's a little nature-coated (some people call it rust), but it's in good condition and should clean up nicely. Like I need another project, but it's a lot of fun bringing something back to life that was destined for the scrapper's torch.



ALBERTA DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Glenn Halvorson, Alberta Director

Well, spring has sprung almost everywhere, and I suspect that like me, many of you have left your shops in an attempt to keep up with your yard work.

Most times when I mention wheelwrighting, people are surprised that wheelwrights still exist. It is almost often referred to as a dying art.

Wheelwrighting isn't really in the forefront of most people's lives, but millions of people around the world were privileged to see the Royal Family in the fanciest coaches of all time at the coronation of King Charles on May 6.

The Gold State Coach was built in 1762, weighs 4 tonnes and is pulled by 8 white horses. The rear wheel on that coach is taller than the liveryman walking beside it!

And if you look at the wheels, the spokes are very detailed turnings, and the felloes are carved all around.

[Continued page 7]

[Alberta Report continued from page 6]

The Diamond Jubilee Coach is much smaller by comparison but is an impressive vehicle as well, with turned spokes and carved felloes.

With any luck, there will be renewed interest in wheelwrighting and coach building generated from the coronation. I would like to see both coaches in person at the Royal Mews.

We all have an excellent opportunity to showcase our trade to the world at the upcoming Calgary Stampede this July 7-16. I have found that a large percentage of the people who stop by to chat are visiting from many other countries. I think I learn more from them than they do from me.

Also, just a reminder to attend Pioneer Acres in Irricana August 11-13 and the WCWA AGM on August 12. I look forward to seeing you at these events down the road.



SASKATCHEWAN DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Jean Lavoie, Saskatchewan Director

We have had a really busy spring this year. John has now built two shaving benches as we saw how popular this tool was at our AGM at Heritage Park last year. It provides a fun way to draw in a crowd and we then explain how it was used to shape spokes and other tools in past times.

We will keep one for our own demonstrations, and the other one will go to the schoolhouse in Draft Horse Town.

The Western Agricultural Heritage Committee is a big part of Aggie Days in April at the Calgary Stampede and this year we were asked as wheelwrights to participate. We were crazy busy, but we had fun.

I'm hoping for a couple of extra passes to the Calgary Stampede this year, so if you let me know when you'll be there, we can make arrangements to meet at the gate.

Once inside, you don't have to hang out with us, but we'd sure appreciate if you did. We can always use more help!

Call me at (403) 566-2448; 793-1366 (c) or email: hippies2@telusplanet.net



MANITOBA DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Brian Reynolds, Manitoba Director

Spring has made a belated entrance here in Manitoba after a seemingly very long winter. There were times this winter when I questioned the wisdom of moving to a location that often gets colder than the deep freeze! However, it made working in the shop next to the woodstove quite attractive, so I did get a few wheels built.

In the previous edition of **The Traveller**, I mentioned a pair of heavy wheels that I am rebuilding for a First World War canon.

There were a few surprises such as the tires and felloes being finished at an angle which made the tire sizing quite exciting. There was yet another surprise when the spokes were removed to make new hubs.



As you can see from the photo, the spoke mortises and tenons are tapered. I have given this lot of thought but cannot arrive at a reason as to why they would be like this? Any ideas Dr Hub? I have never encountered this previously so I am hoping one of my fellow wheelwrights might enlighten me.

[Continued page 8]

[Manitoba Report continued from page 7]

I am in the process of laminating oak blocks to make new hubs, but obviously it is far more involved to make the mortices and tenons tapered as in the original.

One part of me thinks I should spend the time making a suitable jig (which would be quite involved).

The other part of me thinks that unless I can come up with a good reason to do this, the time-honoured method of parallel mortices would work just as well and be far easier to do. All suggestions considered!

Canon wheels aside, it was almost a welcome relief to have a pair of "ordinary" wagon wheels come into the shop from a show wagon.



Although the wheels appeared to be in reasonable condition, it was obvious there was some movement in the felloes with slight gaps at the spoke ends.

Whoever had worked on them previously had used ordinary hardware bolts, now corroded and broken, to secure the tires. Removal of the tires immediately highlighted the problem.



The spoke tenons were too long which meant the tires were pressing on the spoke ends rather than the felloes. An easy fix was accomplished by making a cut at the felloe ends to allow the felloes to tighten onto the spoke shoulders, and shortening the spoke tenons. Re-sizing the tires highlighted another problem which I am sure we have all encountered.



When the tire had been cut, the stresses within the steel caused it to spring closed. On a light buggy tire, this is not a problem. Simply set it in the tire roller and roll it to the size required, or even just bend it by hand.

[Continued page 9]

The general PROBLEM WITH 100-YEAR OLD vehicles is, they are 100 years old!

It's not just the wood that wears, metal parts wear out too!

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[Manitoba Report continued from page 8]

When it comes to the heavier tires, this is not so easy. In the past, I have tried securing one end of the tire under something heavy and physically trying to spring the tire back into shape. Invariably this works to some degree, but it does deform the tire so it is no longer a circle.

I thought about building a much heavier tire roller so I could effectively "unroll" the tire to the correct diameter, but this would mean a lot of work to design and build (by the way, if anyone has a heavy tire roller for sale, any condition, I would be very interested).

In this case, I was on a tight time frame as the wagon was due to be shown soon. The answer was surprisingly easy.



I set each tire on the forks of a forklift, then just rotated it and gave it a good hit with a heavy hammer at about every 6-10 inches.

It only took one rotation to bring the tire back into shape with the ends just meeting and forming a good circle.



So, a theoretical question for all of you ... where do our skills as wheelwrights end?

One of my other hobbies is restoring vintage motorcycles. I was busy rebuilding the spoked wheels for one of them and it occurred to me that this was also another form of wheelwrighting, especially as there are many lightweight buggy and racing carts with spoked wheels.



[Continued page 10]

[Manitoba Report continued from page 9]

The difference is that there is no room for error with motorcycle wheels. If a buggy wheel has a slight wobble, it is not a huge issue, but with a bike capable of well over 100 mph, a wheel wobble is definitely not desirable!

One part of wheelwrighting never gets old and that is shrinking tires. I only have to mention that I have shrinking to do, and I immediately have volunteers. We have all done this many times, but I still derive a lot of satisfaction from having willing grandkids enthusiastically assisting.

Now that they are teenagers, they are asking more in-depth questions on sizing the tires and so on. Two of them want to become wheelwrights so I expect the shop to get a little crowded this summer.



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U.S.A. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Gary Stephenson, U.S.A. Director

As we head out to Wyoming this spring, I'm reminded that a good portion (if not most) of the trip will be dedicated to volunteer work for the Museum of the Mountain Man. This will involve not only the seemingly never-ending sheep wagon work, but possibly helping set up a blacksmith shop for them.

Also, just before we left New York, I was approached about volunteering at a Mohawk Valley farm museum to catalogue their wheelwright equipment and give wheel-making demonstrations. They are also asking for help in cultivating a closer relationship with the local Amish wheelwright.

All this, I'm seeing, adds up to new adventures and new experiences. Certainly, in Wyoming we have seen things, gone places and tried things we never would have if I was not here volunteering for the Museum. Especially, we wouldn't be able to participate as much in the WCWA AGM without the closer jumping off point Wyoming affords.

And, of course, attending these meetings (as a volunteer of course) has led to a whole new set of adventures, new friends and new places, all in another country no less. Just the anticipation of new adventures with the history museum adds to the experience as well.

So, I guess my point in all this is that volunteering is a wonderful thing, not only for the individual but for the institution as well.

[Continued page 11]

Buggy Builder's Bulletin

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[U.S.A. Report continued from page 10]

Clearly, much of the WCWA knows this, with member participation in the Calgary Stampede, Pioneer Acres, Remington Museum, Western Development Museum, Heritage Park, and I'm sure at a host of other places that I have no clue about. This, I'm convinced, is what makes for a strong organization ... something the participants enjoy while benefiting various institutions.

The other aspect of volunteering that may not be as straightforward is preservation of the craft. The fact that we as wheelwrights are sharing our knowledge with an institution guarantees that at least some of it will be preserved.

But the very best outcome is fostering an interest in younger folk who might be willing to become the next generation of wheelwrights. We certainly saw this last year at Heritage Park, and we now need to multiply that result. Maybe this is something we can explicitly work on for this year's AGM at Pioneer Acres. Thinking of how our volunteer efforts could result in perpetuation of the craft would truly be a win-win.



ITS YOUR AGM!

Let's face it – members usually approach a yearly Annual General Meeting with a sigh and a “ho-hum” attitude. To many, it is a necessary evil and one that must be endured.

So this year, we are asking for **YOUR** input to make this a lively and relevant discussion. In your mind, what are the burning issues that face the WCWA in its efforts to remain viable and attract new members.

Here are a few thoughts to get you started:

[Continued page 12]

Wheelwrighting: A Modern Introduction – Volumes I and II

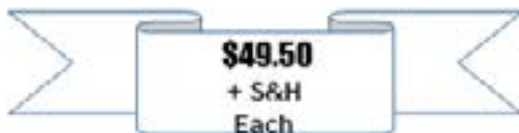
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[It's Your AGM continued from page 11]

- Our Bylaws – do they need to be re-vamped? Are we using them as our guideline?
- Communication – how do we get our members talking to one another? What about Board meetings by Zoom?
- Training and mentoring – how do we get potential new members interested and engaged?
- Marketing – how about a brainstorming session to generate some new ideas?
- Website – suggestions for improvement? Is the online **Traveller** accessible to all?
- Succession planning – how do we mentor new people to take over events and Board positions?

Now it's your turn to add your "two cents". Please contact our President, Carl Swartz, with your ideas and suggestions. He can be reached at sharone47@hotmail.ca or 403-601-3613.

Because our financial situation is a standard agenda item at the AGM, our Treasurer's Report and financial statements have been moved from the Directors' Reports and appear immediately following this article.

As always, the Pioneer Acres Annual Show features three days (August 11-13) of unique displays and demonstrations, including a special focus this year on John Deere.

The wheelwright shop is listed in the annual show program, so we should have a good crowd out to see our demonstrations and learn about the trade. For a full list of events: [Pioneer Acres - Annual Show](#)

[Click here](#) for a link for directions from Airdrie to Pioneer Acres, along with information on accommodations, gas stations and restaurants in the area.

If guests have a camper, dry parking is available on Pioneer Acres land for just \$20 for the entire weekend, and there are shuttles back and forth all day.

[Continued page 13]



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The advertisement also features several circular inset images showing various carriage restoration projects, including wheels, upholstery, and painted carriages.

[It's Your AGM continued from page 12]

There are many hotels available in Airdrie, and great shopping only 23 minutes away.

Food services include regular concessions throughout the day along with pancake breakfasts and a steak supper on Friday and Saturday nights.

As an added attraction, Irricana usually has a town-wide parade of garage sales on the Saturday of the Show (August 12).

Please get your ideas for agenda items to Carl as soon as possible so we can look forward to a lively discussion and some positive directions for the WCWA.



TREASURER'S REPORT

By WCWA Treasurer, Debra Johnson

Greetings to all. Please welcome a new member – Gordan Shepherd from Hamden, Connecticut.

We have received a few more 2023 memberships. Thank you to those who have sent in their membership fees. If anyone needs an Invoice for this year's membership fees, please let me know.

Paying for your membership is so very important to our organization, helping to keep it operating in these difficult times. Please support your **MOST FAVORITE ASSOCIATION!**

Memberships as of June 21, 2023:

- 2023 Memberships – 11 + 5 Family (7 more memberships since last newsletter)
- 2024 Memberships - 1

****REMINDER**** Send in your membership fees via e-transfer or through PayPal – just send it to Wheelwright.Assoc.Treas@gmail.com (e-transfer preferred – no fees attached).

Please see below the Financials as of June 21, 2023.

If you wish further details on any of the accounts, please send me an email with your questions.

Our bank balance as of June 21, 2023 = \$4171.69.

Happy Travels everyone ☺



WCWA BALANCE SHEET

As at 06/21/2023

ASSET

Current Assets

CIBC Southcentre	<u>4,171.69</u>	
Total Cash		4,171.69

Total Current Assets

4,171.69

Capital Assets

Office Furniture/Equipment	<u>52.49</u>	
Net - Furniture/Equipment		<u>52.49</u>

Total Capital Assets

52.49

Other Non-Current Assets

Computer Software		<u>887.22</u>
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Total Other Non-Current Assets

887.22

TOTAL ASSET

5,111.40

LIABILITY

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable		<u>53.76</u>
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Total Current Liabilities

53.76

TOTAL LIABILITY

53.76

EQUITY

Retained Earnings

Retained Earnings - Previous Year		5,001.26
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Current Earnings		<u>56.38</u>
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Total Retained Earnings

5,057.64

TOTAL EQUITY

5,057.64

LIABILITIES AND EQUITY

5,111.40

WCWA INCOME STATEMENT

01/01/2023 to 06/21/2023

REVENUE

Sales Revenue

Newsletter Advertising		30.00
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Membership Fees		620.00
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Donations		35.87
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Print - Newsletter		<u>150.00</u>
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Net Sales		<u>835.87</u>
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TOTAL REVENUE

835.87

[Continued page 14]

[Treasurer's Report continued from pg 13]

EXPENSE

General & Administrative Expenses

Newsletter Expenses	589.78
Website	146.19
Interest & Bank Charges	29.54
Office Supplies	<u>13.98</u>
Total General & Admin. Expenses	<u>779.49</u>

TOTAL EXPENSE 779.49

NET INCOME 56.38



2023 ONLINE AUCTION

By Wayne Lenfesty, Auction Coordinator

In order to raise funds for the WCWA, a new Facebook page has been created to host an online auction. The name of the page is **Western Canadian Wheelwright Auction 2023**.

If this fundraiser is to be successful, we need all members to get on board, so please consider how you might participate as a seller, a buyer or both.

This site is open to anyone, and you don't have to be a member to join. So please invite your friends and family to participate. We need items to sell on the site. You are invited to donate items and/or solicit items from businesses of any kind. You can add auction items to the site yourself or send the information to me and I will add them. Please do not text the information as we do not have cellular service where we live.

Information needed for each item:

1. A picture or pictures of the item.
2. A written description of the item.
3. The value of the item as well as a starting bid price (reserve bid).
4. The name of the person/business donating the item.
5. Delivery arrangements for the successful bidder. Is it the responsibility of the seller or buyer to cover any shipping costs?

Firearms, weapons, animals, and food items will not be accepted.

The following are some of the items that are currently up on the site. As you can see, there is something of interest for all. But we need more!



The auction will end at 12 noon on July 31, 2023. Items will be accepted up to July 20th, 2023

Anyone can bid by putting their bid price in the comments section of each item. The winning bidder will be notified, and arrangements made for payment and delivery.

Payment is to be made to the WCWA by cheque or e-transfer to Wheelwright.Assoc.Treas@gmail.com

If you have any questions, please call or email: lenfestywd@gmail.com or 403 638-9310.



Shop Talk

A RANT BY DOC HUB

By Dwayne Danley The "Doc", Armstrong, BC

The following picture shows very bad spoke spacing.



The photo below shows how thin and weak the felloe gets when you sand the outside of the wheel to deal with "sprung" felloes.



The felloe thickness should be maintained along its length. A clamp can be used to pull a misshapen felloe into line. DO NOT SAND TO FIT.

Use a circumference strap or clamp to pull into line. You could even pre-set a 1/8" band of steel tire to bring it in, then cut the steel off and re-cut the wood to fit.

I think these pictures speak for themselves.

Those of you who teach, instruct, or otherwise mentor other wheelwrights using the method of marking out spokes where they lay on the felloes ... please stop. Stop making your students build a bad wheel.

As we can see from the pictures, this is not acceptable. When your spoke spacing is about 2" out from the narrowest to the widest, you are doing it wrong.

I've been building quality wheels for over 30 years and this kind of work makes me ill. How anyone can let work like this go out of their shop door is beyond me.

Stop the mistakes. The only place where the "spokes lie" method should be considered is a hand morticed common wagon hub. This is done to avoid putting too much strain on a mortice in the hub by sideways stress on the spoke.

With the US and Canadian Sarven hubs, it is easy to align the spokes at the 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock positions so they line up from each other across the wheel, no matter how you look at the spoke spacing.

There are lots of good books to learn from, like **"Wheelwrighting: A Modern Introduction"** by Bruce and Joyce Morrison. So please, do it right!!

Any questions or comments: 250-546-9979






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DR. Hub

By Dwayne Danley "The Doc", Armstrong, BC

Dear Dr Hub:

I'm having trouble removing and installing the bearings on a bolted hub. Any suggestions to help?

Bert

Dear Bert:

You can remove the bearing cup using a long punch, working from the opposite side of the hub to catch the inside edge of the bearing cup to drive it out. Make sure you drive it out **EVENLY** to prevent damage to the parent bore.

Once removed, you should be able to find a number on the cup designating the proper replacement part. There will be a number on the cone (bearing) unit to get a replacement for it as well. If you cannot find the numbers on either part, use a quality caliper to measure the inner size of the cone and the outer size of the cup, using these measurements to get the correct replacements.

As for replacing the cup, I just put it in the freezer for two hours. Then, using a tool just slightly smaller than the cup, drive it evenly into the parent bore. I just use an old socket. Any questions, call me at (250) 546-9979.

The Doc



SPREADING THE GOSPEL

By Alan Paulus, UK Correspondent

As your intrepid UK correspondent, I am always on the lookout for wheel-related stories that I can overinflate (is that a wheel joke?) and turn into articles for this august publication.

Some time ago, I became aware of Gospel Wagons and that set me off on a little research journey and the drafting of an article that I have never used because I couldn't support it with pictures.

At the time, I spoke to several caravan restorers, all of whom knew of the existence of Gospel Wagons but had never seen one.

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All the photographs I found were copyright protected, so you were doomed never to know about UK Gospel Wagons.

Taking a break from making yet more cannon wheels, my wife and I decided to take a short break in Birmingham, not somewhere normally thought of as a holiday destination. The nearest comparison I can draw is going on holiday to Detroit.

We had heard that the Black Country Living Museum www.bclm.com was having a night-time event at which they would be steaming their enormous steam hammer, originally used for making ship anchors. Obviously, this was an opportunity too good to miss.

Off we went for a few days, and whilst in the area we went to visit several other niche museums along the way. I suspect my wife will never let me forget taking her to The Coffin Works (www.coffinworks.org); however, I redeemed myself with The Forge Works Needle Museum (www.forgemill.org.uk). But I digress ...

[Continued page 17]

[Spreading the Gospel continued from pg 16]

We went at night to the Black Country Museum to see and feel the steam hammer. It is a truly magnificent experience which enlivens all the senses. It takes seven men to operate and seems to involve throwing white hot blocks of steel across the floor and onto the hammer.

I was told by the foreman of the steam hammer that when it was exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851, the accuracy of control was demonstrated by placing a champagne flute with an egg in the top under the hammer. They would then bring the hammer down and crack the egg into the glass.



They didn't actually make anything but who cares. It was spectacular and with all the steam and plumes of smoke artfully lit, I was a happy bunny.

Time for a cultural reference in England. Chips are deep fried potatoes. I think you call them French Fries. Chips sold from chip shops are cut much thicker than fast food chains would have us believe is normal, and it is worth driving 100 miles to find a shop that cooks in beef drippings (beef fat). The Black Country Living Museum is an open-air re-created town museum with two chip shops.

On a high from this steamy spectacle and clutching my bag of chips cooked in beef drippings, I turned the corner only to find my "white whale", commonly known as a Gospel Wagon. Can life get any better? So good in fact that we had to return the next day to take pictures.

Just to add balance to this narrative and to explain how I suffer in pursuit of the story; I refused another bag of chips when we returned.

A treacle tart at the heritage bakery next door cried out to me to have both!

At last, an opportunity to use my article ...

Like so many of us, I have a regular habit of scouring the pages of a well-known internet auction site, and on one recent visit it started throwing up pictures of Church Army Caravans, something I had never come across before.

My research showed that the Rev Wilson Carlisle, an Anglican curate in St Mary Abbots (a church in one of the nicer parts of London in the 1870s), concerned about the church's lack of engagement with the poor, began to hold Magic Lantern Services in the church hall.

If you have never heard of magic lanterns, they were the forerunners of moving pictures, in this case painted glass slides with religious images which could be projected.

In addition, Rev Carlisle held open-air meetings after 9 pm which attracted large numbers of supporters, but also substantial numbers of protestors keen to break up the meetings. As a result, the vicar of the parish decreed it all must stop.

To cut a long story short, Carlisle didn't agree and in 1882 advertised for "young men full of fire and hard work, ready to give up all for the Lord Jesus".

And so began what is now known as the Church Army, an organisation that still exists in the UK today. Their purpose was to spread the word amongst the poor and in 1892, in order to achieve those ends, Rev Carlisle commissioned a fleet of caravans to assist in this objective.

Records show that by 1914, the numbers had grown to over 70 vehicles, one for every diocese in the UK less 1. The First World War changed things and the numbers were reduced; however, in 1922 there were still 50 in service, some crewed by women and the last one continuing to operate until 1973. If you look at the Church Army's website, they don't mention any in use today but do refer to the canal boats they are still using, so the principles remain in place.

From the outside, the caravans are very similar in design to a showman's wagon which we

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[Spreading the Gospel continued from pg 17]

are used to seeing; however, they all seem to feature a covered balcony, one assumes to provide a pulpit/stage for public meetings. The other feature I have noted is the provision of a "mollycroft roof", a raised section with small windows at the side.

If you have ever tried to make one, you will know what a pain they are to construct and so add considerably to the cost. This was clearly a well-funded organisation.



Where these differ greatly from a showman's wagon is the decoration applied to the outside. A showman's wagon would have intricate carvings and painting as a way of demonstrating the owner's wealth. These caravans instead had plain signs with large biblical sayings - moving billboards - these were made to be seen.

This was the heyday of the public meeting with numbers attending that politicians today could only dream of. But as is the case today, they could turn ugly and without the robust policing we now see, safety was an ever-present concern. Visible on all the pictures I have viewed are large shutters which come down to protect the windows.

There is an account concerning another organisation "The Women's Freedom League" which had a similar wagon built in 1908. For its first outing, it went on a tour of Surrey, one of England's wealthier areas. The local paper gives a detailed account of the violence and harassment endured by these women in their caravan.

If you consider that there wasn't much in the way of other entertainment at the time, these meetings would frequently pull crowds of 2000

and it was interesting to have the police response reported as "policed by 12 officers". I suspect a Boy Scout rally of 2000 today would have more police officers.

If we look at this in the context of the day, venues that could accommodate that many people were very few and far between, probably only churches, the largest opera houses, and I suspect football stadiums. So if you wanted to pull a large crowd, you'd have to travel with your own stage.

I can find very little about the inside of the Church Army caravans. I assume they were a home for its travelling preachers. The roof line shows a chimney so there would have been a wood fired stove.

From accounts written by Marie Carlisle, Rev Carlisle's sister, they would have carried lots of reading material and a magic lantern. Their meetings featured lots of music so there would have been instruments as well ... really not much room for 2-3 men to live in.

The postscript of this article is that I posted these pictures on my Instagram page at **Tom_green_craft**, and was subsequently contacted by the signwriter at the Black Country Museum who has promised me a look inside the caravan when I go back in the fall to see their new development, try the other chip shop, and take home a treacle tart.



THE "R" FILES

By Jeremy Masterson, Head of Restoration Services, Remington Carriage Museum

An update on the English Coach project:

A captioned slide show of this restoration is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGNhixToA_k, created as a presentation to visitors of the Remington Carriage Museum.

It shows the step-by-step process of taking a remarkably well-preserved road coach from 1889 and returning it to a safe, usable condition.

As I have outlined in past articles for **The Traveller**, this has taken a massive amount of work. Although it was in much better condition than

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[The "R" Files continued from page 18]

most of the restoration projects the Museum has been responsible for, to return it to roadworthy condition while preserving as much of its history as possible, has been daunting.

There are a couple of months of work left to finish the remaining details. This includes installing the upholstery and pin striping as well as numerous other details.

Our intent is to create a photo-op (and to prove everything works as intended) by hitching it to a foursome of Remington horses and making a few circuits of our grounds. Still pictures and perhaps videos of this event may feature in future issues of **The Traveller**.



FULL CIRCLE

By Chris Jenson, Doc's Buggy Shop, Creston, BC

Several years ago, I was contacted by Ken Crompton from Princeton, BC who located me through the WCWA website. Ken needed some wheels rebuilt and the story was reported in the Fall 2021 issue of **The Traveller**.

Ken and his wife had operated a hardwood flooring store in Vancouver, so they knew wood. When he retired, he bought near Princeton where he undertook the reconstruction of a wagon and came to me for the wheels.

He made two trips – 6 hours each way - one to deliver the necrotic wheels and discuss the process and options, and one to pick up the completed wheels.

I began the rebuild with the original hubs as shown below. When removing them, I asked Ken to mark them so they could be returned to the appropriate axle in the correct size.



After examining the hubs, they were cleaned up and treated with a boiled linseed oil turpentine mix. And the reconstruction continued ...



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[Full Circle continued from page 19]

With wildfires raging, resulting in fire bans across the country, I thought the members might be interested in looking at the following photos again.

Even back in 2021, the town of Creston did not allow a fire like I had used in Alberta, so I converted my fire pit and designed a method of suspending the metal tires over the pit. More heat was added using two propane tiger torches which allowed us to get sufficient expansion to place them on the wheel.



One of the smaller front wheels required a reheat and considerable effort.



My crew consisted of my youngest daughter, her husband and two Creston residents, one of whom came from Lacombe, Alberta.

The photo below shows the completed wheels just before Ken picked them up.



When I first met Ken, he shared his wife's desire to be able to roll the antique out of the bush and display a piece of history in their front yard. He has gone much further, producing the unit in the photo below. Very well-done Ken!



We have come full circle, and a set of rebuilt wheels are now back where they belong and ready to continue their service.

While I am pleased that Ken did manage to find me through our website, I must add that restricting access of our newsletter to WCWA members only has created a decrease in communication by interested individuals.

While we have now decided to allow public access to one copy of **The Traveller**, the website could still be more user-friendly.

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[Full Circle continued from page 20]

As wheelwrights who are passionate about our craft, we must always strive toward constant improvement, and perhaps that is something for discussion at our AGM in August.



TRANSFORMATION OF A WRECK

By Dwayne Danley, Armstrong, BC

This white vis-à-vis came to me as a wreck. The front wheel was misaligned, and the fenders were torn off the back wheels. The springs were stretched and had to be re-arc'd and rebuilt.

The rubber tire was worn off and the upholstery was damaged, along with road rash on the sides of the seat that had been covered up with white tape. But after many hours of straightening, welding, sanding, and painting I think it turned out OK.

Editor's Note: Judging from the photo below, I think we'd all agree that it turned out more than OK! For those who, like me, aren't aware of the origins of the term "vis-à-vis", the following explanation is enlightening.

Wikipedia defines a vis-à-vis as "a carriage in which the passengers sit face to face with the front passengers facing rearward and the rear passengers facing forward. The term comes from the French vis-à-vis, meaning face to face".

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

By Alan Paulus, UK Correspondent

At a recent public event where I was demonstrating, I got into a conversation with one of the potters who was very keen to have a manual potter's wheel based on a wagon wheel. Always one for a challenge, I asked for details and she then forwarded me several pictures from old manuscripts showing a horizontal wagon wheel at floor level with a central platter.



As can be seen from the medieval picture, the potter crouches down, spinning the wheel with a

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[Reinventing the Wheel continued from page 21]

stick and when it is fast enough, throws a pot on the platter, every now and then stopping to spin the wheel again.

I have now built a 24-inch wheel with much heavier felloes than you would expect. It runs on an axle with needle roller bearings top and bottom of the hub. On top of this is what I can only describe as a very thick wooden washer supporting the platter.



Clare Goodman, the potter who commissioned the wheel, is shown below and she has gone away very happy.



This will now be used when she does public demonstrations throughout the summer, and I can't wait to see how she gets on.

A video of Clare and the wheel in action has been uploaded to YouTube at the following link: <https://youtu.be/wzVZAebsrvw>.



YOU OUGHTA BE IN PICTURES!

By Diana Matsuda, Traveller Editor

Regular readers of **The Traveller** will be only too familiar with my ongoing request to have your cameras at the ready when working on a project, demonstrating at an event, or participating in an activity.

I will now be adding to that request - turn on the video on your phone and send some live-action shots that are sure to generate interest and enthusiasm about your craft.

And we have the perfect way to feature those videos - YouTube. We now have our own channel on this platform, and in this issue you will find two videos linked to YouTube. Check out the Shanks Coach prepared by Jeremy Masterson and the Potter's Wheel filmed by Alan Paulus.

So turn on the video feature on your cell phones and take a step from still photos to footage that will truly serve to educate and entertain. I look forward to seeing our members in action!



JOKE'S ON US

With credit to toonpool.com ...



"I thought I was on to something
but I can't figure out how to
move it."



WCWA WHEELWRIGHT ADVISORS

At one time or another, most of us have come up against a problem that really has us stumped. At such times, we can benefit from talking with someone who has lots of experience; a problem solver. Some of our most experienced WCWA members have agreed to share their expertise and their names and contact information are listed below. **If you have a problem, don't hesitate to share it with one of these experts!**

Everette Burkholder (540) 879-9260

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Field Editor "The Buggy Builder's Bulletin"

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E-mail: br@haventrading.com

Bill Twigg (208) 882-2445

Moscow Carriage Company

3428 Lenvill Road, Moscow, Idaho 83843 USA

E-mail: mcctwigg@turbonet.com

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The WCWA is always looking for Advisors willing to share their knowledge and skills with fellow members. Please let us know if you would like to join the list and support the advancement of the trade. Contact the Editor at dianamatsuda@shaw.ca to request that your name be added.



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