WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS 2013

Issue 03 March 1, 2013

WHAT'S THIS? IS IT A PLUMB BOB?

PART I update

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www.plumbbobcollectors.info

Dear Fellow Collector,

Dear reader of the PLUMB BOB NEWS,

Please, as always I am in search of new photos, catalogs, articles or personal stories about any aspect of PLUMB BOBS from you. Any help is appreciated.

If you have any information or pictures for these themes, please let me know.

Thank you, looking forward to hearing from you

Wolf

WHAT'S THIS? IS IT A PLUMB BOB?

PART I update

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1. INTRODUCTION

Regularly I get emails with inquiries from Fellow Collectors or visitors of my web site who ask me: *Could you please help me? What is this? Do you think this is a plumb bob?* Etc.

Today I will present some of these emails from my archives with my answers. The search for the right answers and the result is sometimes very funny, even when it is not that result expected by the questioner. ^(C)

During the research I get in contact to a lot of people who help me to find the answer. And sometimes I find new and very interesting facts about the PLUMB BOB and INSTRUMENTS with a plumb bob as you can read in the first chapter about the building of brick-chimneys by masons.

Remark: I left the different fonts from the emails. To protect the privacy of the questioners I have not mentioned in every case the full name, but only acronyms. If you have any questions, feel free to ask

2. PLUMB LEVEL FOR CHIMNEYS

All began in January 2013 with a short email by a collector from Melbourne, Australia:

Wolfgang First let me congratulate you on such a collection of photos of old tools on your website. Really brings back memories.

The photo of a plumb bob I was looking for is only shown as part of a collection noted as your own (copy attached). As a young tradesman (in Melbourne, Australia) I watched an old bricklayer **build a high chimney** for an industrial boiler in the early 1950s and he used only that type of plumb bob (plumb level). From the adjacent photos it seems that they may have been a very ancient design of tool. Do you know any history of it's use, please? Regards Graham D. Here are some of the PLUMB LEVELS hanging in my floor. This photo Graham found on my web site.



I proposed to visit my web site and to go to the page "download PUBLICATIONS" There he could find all my monthly newsletters. DIRECT LINK TO THIS PAGE: http://www.plumbbobcollectors.info/41328.html Scrolling down on this page you will find: **PLUMB BOB**

NEWS 2009-01 PLUMB LEVELS.

... I rarely visit the area of Melbourne where that chimney was constructed, I would guess, in 1953 when I was an apprentice Plumber on that site. A check of the site (Nazareth House Camberwell, 16 Cornell Street, Camberwell VIC 3124) via Google Maps(screen shot below) shows a shadow of a chimney at



the south end of the site but it seems too small and too far from the main buildings to be the same chimney. However, I have sent an email to their administrator to see if they have any pictures of the chimney. I shall send a copy if I get one. Graham

Some days later we got good photos of the eightsided nice chimney by the maintenance manager (see figure below):



Looking at this nice brick-chimney I remembered that I don't know what instrument was used by the bricklayers **to check the slope of the chimney**. So I called some chimney building companies here in Germany. This was not easy, because actually no big chimneys are built. I was lucky to find some engineers and owners of the companies who were able to tell me something about the tools.

Also I found some drawings in old books. See next page.

We know that the rectangle plumb level was used by the masons to verify the verticality of walls as shown in a drawing from 1515 (Emperor Maximilian of the "Holy Roman Empire of German Nations" as mason apprentice)



Bild 2: Bauhandwerk Architekt, Bildhauer und Maurer. Holzschnitt aus dem "Fürstenleben", 1515.



In my collection I have a postcard from the USA with a (not modified) level showing that these tools had a length up to 4 or 5 inches.

CONCLUSION: To verify the slope of a chimney the builders made their own tool by combining a modified straight edge (board) as shown with a spirit level (or in former times with a plumb bob). The spirit level is fixed at the side or (for better reading) at the top of the board.

The SLOPE (reduction of the radius) is 2cm/m for big chimneys.

Searching for this newsletter finally I found two new shapes of plumb levels. One used



3. PENDULUM CLOCK

I was asked by a friend:

Wolf, are you familiar with this type of bob? Bruce

He forwarded me the email below:

Hello Bruce,

I recently bought the pictured plumb bob at a local auction and can't find any information. Have you seen one or know anything about it?

-Spring loaded adjustable -Weighs about 10 oz -Graduated in millimeters I would appreciate any thing you can tell me. Best Regards, Jack Z. U.S.A.



My first answer was: *BRUCE*,

BY CHANCE I HAVE THE SAME ONE IN MY COLLECTION SINCE SEVERAL YEARS. BUT I HAVE PUT IT IN A BOX ASIDE AND NOT HANG IT UP, BECAUSE MINE IS CUT AT THE TOP AND THERE IS NO HOLE TO FIX THE LINE. SEE ATTACHED PICTURE AT THE RIGHT SIDE.

THE UPPER PART OVER THE BODY IS MISSING. UNFORTUNATELY I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE I BOUGHT IT, BUT I THINK IT WAS ON A FLEAMARKET HERE IN GERMANY AND NOT ON EBAY. PERHAPS I FIND SOMETHING IN THE NEXT TIME.

THE SPRING IS NOT TO PROTECT THE TIP AS WE KNOW IT FROM OTHER PLUMB BOBS, BUT IT GIVES ONLY A REACTION FORCE WHEN YOU TURN THE TIP AND SCREW THE ROD IN OR OUT. THE THREAD IS VERY FINE. ONE COMPLETE TURN OF THE TIP MOVES THE ROD LESS THAN 1

MILLIMETER.

I AGREE WITH JACK THAT THE SCALE IS IN MILLIMETER AND NOT IN INCH. LENGTH OF THE SCALE MARKINGS IS 22 MILLIMETER.

I THINK IT IS NOT A BORN PLUMB BOB, BUT A PART OF A LAMP; A MEASURING INSTRUMENT OR SOMETHING ELSE. I THINK THE HOLE FOR THE LINE IN THE ROD OF JACK'S PLUMB BOB IS NOT ORIGINAL BECAUSE THIS PART ON MY PLUMB BOB IS A LITTLE BIT LONGER THAN THE ROD OF JACK'S AND THERE I FIND NOTHING TO FIX THE LINE..

IT LOOKS VERY PROFESSIONAL MADE. WOLF

Now the research in the www began. One week later I got the original item:



BRUCE, JACK,

FINALLY I FOUND THE ORIGINAL PART: VINTAGE 1960s, 1970s GERMAN WALL PENDULUM CLOCK AUGUST SCHATZ ELEXACTA. YOU CAN BUY THE CLOCK FOR 183 EURO © IT IS A CLOCK PENDULUM WITH REGULATION OF THE LENGTH TO ADAPT THE PENDULUM TO GET THE CORRECT TIME. THE COMPLET CLOCK IS SWINGING ON THE WALL! HERE ARE TWO LINKS TO A VIDEO ON YOUTUBE WITH A SCHATZ PENDULUM CLOCK. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MwzGffOthU AND ANOTHER VIDEO: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRq9tC9XPmQ ENJOY IT

HOPE I COULD HELP YOU WOLFGANG



4. WALLPAPER PLUMB BOB

Short email:

What do you make of this? Found at estate sale in FL this week.

I looked thru your newsletter and did not find any like it. Any info appreciated. Kathy



Kathy,

thank you for the question from Cape Canaveral.

You are right I did not mention often this kind of flat iron plumb bobs.

They were used **for** wallpapering.

More you can read in my newsletter

2012-09 WALLPAPERING and NEWS 2012-03 WOODEN PLUMB BOBS on my web site. Usually they are a part of wallpaper tools in a wooden box. See attached picture.





Hope I could help you Wolf

And I am happy when I get a final email like this:

Wolf

Tks for your prompt reply. I said a great big "Oooohhhhh..." when I read your email, as it was suddenly obvious.

I found your website on google when I was searching for flat plumb bobs.

Kathy in CC

5. SPINNING TOP + TURN PIN

Hello,

I was reading your article and viewing your pictures on the internet and I now have a question that I am wondering whether you can and will answer for me.

I found the item (pictured attached) in my father's basement when we cleaned it out maybe 15 or so years

ago. Is this part of a plumb bob? And if so, what is missing from it as there is no way to attach a string from what I can tell. Sure would

appreciate



knowing if this is something or just a piece of finished wood of some sort. Thank you in advance for any information you can give me. J. F.

Usually we know as material for the plumb bobs stone, lead, iron, brass, etc., or possibly even filled with lead or mercury, a material with a high density. The plumb bob is supposed to provide resistance to wind forces and keep the line tight. There is also a material that we not know at the first



view, namely WOOD. However, the use of wood plumb bobs is limited (no wind), but they are there. In addition, there are wooden plumb bobs, which are specially made for collectors or for ceremonial use. On the other hand, many pieces are made of wood and offered (and sold/bought) as a plumb bob. But they are not "born" plumb bobs but SPINNING TOPS, which we know from our childhood. Today I would like to add some information about the "wooden plumb bob family". I am sure every collector has some of these in his collection.

First I thought it was a spinning top, but by the help of Bruce I learned that there was another tool in the U.S.A. called TURN PIN used by plumbers. See newsletter 2012-03 WOODEN PLUMB BOBS

Fig. 213¹ is a tampion - **generally called turn-pin** by plumbers, because it is turned after each stroke of the hammer, so as to insure swelling the end of the pipe

uniformly. The turning is necessary because the pins become somewhat oval while seasoning. The heart of the wood is seldom in the center of the pin, and the shrinkage therefore is not only quite unequal but varies as the center of the timber is eccentric to that of the pin. These pins are made of boxwood, with various tapers according to the work for which they are designed.



Fig. 213. Tampion or "Turn-Pin."

¹ from the 1916 book "<u>A Working Manual Of American Plumbing</u> <u>Practice</u>"

There is only one plumb bob made of WOOD used by workers. It is made for wallpapering and it is shaped like a plumb bob cut in half. Here, the hole for the cord is positioned so that it still hangs exactly vertical. Purpose is that there is no damage to the by the material tiles (wood), if it falls down accidently. Secondly the cord is close to the wall. You can draw an accurate marker along the line. In a bath or a room usually you have no big influence of the wind \odot



Often, especially in the U.S., **spinning tops** (whip or throwing tops) are offered as a plumb bob. They have the shape of a conical plumb bob, but they do not have an essential part, namely the attachment point for the cord. The spinning top requires the string "around the waist" and not on top of the head. Sometimes an eye or hook is attached later, sometimes it is not even available and sometimes there is an existing patented portion that was converted to attach the string.

Fig. 213. Tampion or "Turn-Pin."Why are offered spinning tops as plumb bobs? The sellers expect more money for a plumb bob. But sometimes it is incognizance of the tool. Some of the patented spinning

tops, especially in the U.S. have a piece/part above where a line can be mounted. But it is not to hang it on



a string, but that it can be kept in his position under control of the child while playing and does not "run away".

Your "plumb bob" is definitely a TURN PIN. More you can read in my newsletter 2012-03 WOODEN PLUMB BOBS Hope I could help you. Wolf

6. NUGENT OILING DEVICE

On Ebay was offered in 2010: ANTIQUE NUGENT DATED 1899 3 1/4 POUND IRON PLUMB BOB

With the markings on the tool I searched for the patent and



emailed the seller: Jon.

Just FYI: It is unfortunately NOT A BORN PLUMB BOB, but a MODIFIED WEIGHT of a (patented) OILER. 1899 patent US626291 NUGENT 1899 GRAVITY CENTER OILER

Good luck for your auction Wolf

Hello Wolf,

Thanks for the info, I will post it as an amendment to the eBay selling page. Before I do, have you ever seen another one of these refitted in this manner? Was wondering if it was a home made example or an after market factory retooling. Thanks

Jon

Jon,

I never saw this piece from NUGENT on the "plumb bob market". I have contact to more than 100 fellow collectors around the world, most in the USA and "scan" the ebay market since 5+ years. But we know other parts of oiling systems, modified to plumb bobs. All are home made. I think they used these parts, because they were

- often from brass
- well adapted for the use as a plumb bob. Plumb bobs are nothing else as a weight in a special shape.
- often marked with a patent information/number . (That rises the price.....)
- simple to modify (add a tip or add a hook)
- cheap to get (system out of use or broken)

If you go to my web site on page WHAT'S IT?

Direct link: http://www.plumbbob.de/60864.html and scroll down a little bit, you will find an oiler NATHAN & DREYFUS N.Y. DESIGN PATD MARCH 30 modified to a plumb bob. Even if it is not a "born plumb bob" it is a good piece for a collection.

Good luck Wolf

In the patent drawing US626291 NUGENT 1899 GRAVITY CENTER OILER the "PLUMB BOB" is shown as a WEIGHT with another shape:

But in a book from 1904 (see figure at the right side) it has exactly the shape of "our plumb bob"



Hi Wolf,

Thank you again for the kind help and information, it's truly appreciated. Have a great day, Jon

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carelessness on the part of the operatives is considerable.

As a general thing an employee when filling his oil can will allow it to overflow, then wipe the surplus oil off with a bunch of waste; and in a works



Fig. 46.

where there are several hundred employees using oil, the amount of oil lost in this way will amount to a good many gallons in the course of a month.



Fig. 46.

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7. FRENCH CARPENTER PLUMB BOB

By chance I found a web site of a university in Texas with a French carpenter plumb bob that was unknown to the university team. Below some emails that we changed about this very old – dated 1686 by the sunken shipwreck - French carpenter plumb bob.

Click on the links to see the web sites.

HELLO TO THE TEAM,

MY NAME IS WOLF RUECKER. I AM COLLECTOR OF PLUMB BOBS AND I PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEM IN MY MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS ON MY WEB SITE. SEE BELOW www.plumbbobcollectors.info

I SAW YOUR WEB SITE ON PAGE

http://nautarch.tamu.edu/CRL/Report5/Chest.htm THERE YOU ASKED FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS ITEM:



Photography (left) by J. Swanson and (right) by M. West.

"The conservation of a wooden chest found on the Belle is presented in this report. The Belle, one of the ships of French explorer Robert Cavelier, Sieur (Lord) de La Salle, was lost in Matagorda Bay, Texas, in **1686**.

The chest was excavated by the Texas Historical Commission.

Another mysterious lead piece consists of a heavy disc with three arms that join in the middle, at which point there is a tiny hole. Might this have been part of a small hand pump, or possibly a drain sieve?"

HERE COMES THE SOLUTION:

THESE TOOLS ARE FRENCH LEAD CARPENTER PLUMB BOBS. YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT IT IN MY NEWSLETTER 2009-11 LEAD AS MATERIAL FOR Plumb Bobs ON DIRECT LINK: http://www.plumbbobcollectors.info/media//DIR 42117/D IR 42128/5c754c9777108eb5ffff914aac144220.pdf ON PP 178-180 OR IN MY REPORT ABOUT THE COLLECTORS MEETING IN PARIS FRANCE IN 2008

http://www.plumbbobcollectors.info/media//DIR_42117/D IR_42126/27370a50d48b95cdffff8684ac14422e.pdf

THERE YOU FIND ALSO ON PAGE 8/11 AN INSTRUCTION DRAWING FROM ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE MUSEUM (DRAWING ATTACHED) YOU CAN GO TO MY WEB SITE WITH THE DOWNLOADS OF THE NEWLETTERS WITH:

http://www.plumbbobcollectors.info/41328.html

ALSO ATTACHED TWO PUBLICATIONS ABOUT THIS SPECIAL TYPE OF FRENCH CARPENTER PLUMB BOBS.

PERHAPS MEANWHILE YOU KNOW IT ALREAD, BUT I HOPE I COULD HELP YOU



Figure above: drawing by Daniel Lesoimier, LADO Bièvres, Paris France.

Figure below is a model of the use of this type in my museum



Very soon I got two emails: *Wolfgang,*

I want to thank you for your recent email. I read it quickly, and will read the attachments and go to the links you provided more thoroughly. I never knew of carpenter's plum bobs like this one, so you have helped us identify one of the unknown artifacts. It does fit in in with the other artifacts found in the chest. http://nautarch.tamu.edu/Theses/pdf-files/West-MA2005.pdf

In case you haven't seen the entire master's thesis on the chest submitter by Michael West, a pdf of it is downloadable on the internet. A direct link to it is: <u>http://nautarch.tamu.edu/Theses/pdf-files/West-</u> <u>MA2005.pdf</u> In fact all the Master's and Doctoral dissertations from our department are downloadable. A complete listing can be found at:

<u>http://nautarch.tamu.edu/academic/alum.htm</u> You may be interested in the contents of another chest from the Brother Johnathan (1865). It had an array of artifacts, including carpentry tools and plumb bobs. Carrie Sowden wrote this thesis.

REMARK: SEE MY NEWSLETTER "2013-02 PACKING"

WHERE I MENTIONED THE SIXPACK OF PLUMB BOBS

FOUND IN THIS SHIPWRECK.

Again, I thank you for taking the time to write to us with the identification of the unidentified object from the Belle. It was very useful. Sincerely,

Donny

Donny L. Hamilton

Director, Conservation Research Laboratory Coordinator, Nautical Archaeology Program Professor of Anthropology Texas A&M University http://nautarch.tamu.edu/academic/FACULTY/hamilton.sht ml

Wolf,

Thank you very much for the email, it was very informative. To be honest with you, we were not sure as to what this artifact was used for, hence the comment – "Might this have been part of a small hand pump, or possibly a drain sieve?" After a quick read of the articles you attached, there is no doubt that we have an early French carpenter's Plumb Bob! Dr. Donny Hamilton, the Director of the Lab, has already passed on your email to Dr. Jim Bruseth, who is the Director of the La Salle Shipwreck Project. He is very excited about the news, and I am sure you will be receiving an email from him in the near future.

Thank you again for the informative email, and your interest in the artifacts. If you have any questions, please let us know - so that we can return a favour! Regards,

Jim J. Jim Jobling Conservation Research Lab (979) 862-7791 Crl@t<u>amu.edu</u>



Above some old and new French carpenter pbs.



This was a win-win-situation. I was happy to help with information about plumb bobs and I got a story and pictures for my newsletter. And the members of the university got information about unknown tools after more than seven years. \odot \odot

8. LEHMAN MILLER FLOUR BAG

On Ebay was offered in the U.S.A. this piece as "OLD PLUMB BOB (I THINK)": Searching with the few information (name LEHMANN) I got the following result:

It is a part of a tin toy "GUSTAV and THE MILL" by the maker of tin toys LEHMANN. This "CLIMBING MILLER" was patented 1889 by the English inventor GEORGE ROYLE in London. (figure right a drawing from the German patent DE49749 ROYLE 1889 GUSTAV MÜHLE





BLECHSPIELZEUG). The miller climbs up to

the mill (pulled by a weight inside) and when he arrived the top, than he gets the sac / bag (the "plumb bob" from Ebay) on his (open) hat and climbs down. (the miller + the sac are heavier than the weight inside). You find information about it by searching on Google for "Lehmann climbing miller". It was a hard work to get these results, but after I knew that it is called CLIMBING MILLER, it was easier.

Lehmann is a famous tin toy maker in Germany. The composition Gustav and the mill was produced between 1890 and 1945 and is sold now for \$750.

We are always learning new things ③

9. BARRACUDA

With this email began the hunting for a BARRACUDA.

Hello Wolf.

Nice web site.

I have attached 2 photos of an item I found while metal detecting today. I am thinking it is a Plumb Bob. It is identical on both sides. It has holes in both ends. It has a number "2" on one side and I cannot read all the letters on the other side but it appears to be "barrac???"

I found it on an old land site where river boats landed in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Can you help me identify it? I love finding old artifacts. Please check out my web site. FloridaRob.com

My first idea was: It is a TRAMMEL. ROB,

I THINK IT IS DEFINITLY NOT A "BORN" PLUMB BOB! (BUT PERHAPS A COMBINATION OF A PLUMB BOB AND A TRAMMEL). SAW THOUSANDS OF PLUMB BOBS BUT NOT WITH SUCH А BIG HORIZONTAL HOLE. IN MY OPINION IT IS A PART OF A PAIR OF TRAMMELS: PLEASE SEE SOME ATTACHED PICTURES. USUALLY TRAMMELS HAVE A RECTANGLE HOLE AND ARE FIXED ON Α RECTANGLE BAR, BUT THERE ARE SOME WITH A ROUND HOLE. THE ONLY THING THAT DOES NOT MATCH COMPLETELY IS THAT THE TIP IS NOT FROM STEEL AND NOT VERY SHARP. OR COULD IT BE





THAT THERE IS A THREAD IN THE LOWER HOLE TO SCREW IN A HARDENED TIP? (CAN'T SEE IT ON THE PICTURE). SOMETIMES TRAMMELS ARE MODIFIED TO PLUMB BOBS BY DRILLING A HOLE INTO THE TOP SCREW TO FIX THE LINE. OR THE TRAMMEL IS DESIGNED TO USE IT AS A TRAMMEL AND A PLUMB BOB. WOLF

The additional search and the information from another collector brought the surprising solution:

Wolf,

Sorry for the delay in getting you these pictures. After corresponding with you and reading about plumb bobs I do not think this is a plum bob. After enhancing the images it appears the wording on the item is "**barracuda**". I have sent the pictures to other sources and no luck identifying it as of yet but it is fun trying. Thank you.

Rob Hill



On this photo it looks really like a BARRACUDA. And here is the original tool: TROLLING JIG BARRACUDA for fishing ☺



10.DOOR HANDLE

A collector from Germany, Georg Opdenberg is always looking for sculptures with plumb bobs on buildings. Here is his last find: Door handle with plumb bob in a Church of the Minorites in Cologne, Germany. Thank you, Georg.

From the web site of the church:

The church of the Minorites, Cologne, Germany - Holy Sepulcher of two saints, the scholar loannes Duns Scotus (* c. 1266 Duns, Scotland; † 8th November 1308 Cologne) and the priest Adolph Kolping (* 8th December 1813 Kerpen near Cologne; † 4th December 1865 Cologne) - got a new main entrance in the year 2006. The original wooden doors were replaced by a bronze two-winged door with a total high of 4.25 meters and more than four meters wide. It is designed by the sculptor Paul Nagel from Wesseling (Germany).



The door handle is unusual shaped: plumb bob, compasses, pencil and paper represent the tools of the craftsmen with whom Adolph Kolping founded his journeymen's associations.

By the way: On our collectors meeting in 2010 in Cologne, Germany we had booked in the Kolping Hotel nearby.

11.SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

Watching the auctions on Ebay sometimes I must smile (and sometimes I must cry):



What do you think about this very **common polished brass plumb** bob 5 inch 12 oz. from STANDARD 6491?

Offered on Ebay as "Rare 6491 12 Gold Standard Plumb Bob" for **\$249.00** buy it now.

Really a BARGAIN! Fortunately nobody bought it ©

12.REMARKS

This is an article of the monthly published WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS that is sent on demand as PDF-file attachment by email. FREE. You can see all former publications on the website <u>www.plumbbobcollectors.info</u> on page "download publications". or on page "WHAT'S NEW?"

Remarks and contact by email: <u>plumbbobwolf@t-online.de</u> Enjoy it Wolf Ps. For the members of our group the whole world turns around the plumb bob as shown in our logo right. ©



Logo of the International Plumb Bob Collectors Association IPBCA