



**A HISTORY OF  
THE  
BRITISH DECORATORS'  
ASSOCIATION**

by  
**Howard W. Binns**

Published by the British Decorators' Association  
Advertising: Heather Saint Publicity  
Printing: Ward Colour Print

OCTOBER 1994



R. J. Collier Esq.  
National President, 1994

## HOW IT STARTED

It occurs to me that the present members of the B.D.A. and others may like to know something of the genesis of the movement. Why it began and how it began.

Over one hundred years ago the association took the form of several local associations of Master Painters, isolated from each other by area. It appears one such area association, probably the first of its kind, met at the house of Mr. J. Mands, The Horse Shoe Inn, Bradford, on February 1st 1865 with Edward Harland presiding. Then on March 8th 1865, the West Riding Association was formed out of representatives from Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Halifax, Keighley and Wakefield.

Wages at this time were different from area to area. Operatives in Leeds wanted twenty six shillings per week, where at Huddersfield lads were happy with twenty four shillings, both for a working week of fifty two and a half hours.

Rules therefore were drafted and those relating to the pay and hours of the workmen were the following:

- No. 3 That a payment by the hour is the most equitable both for summer and winter regardless of how many hours for a week or for a day.
- No. 4 That the rate of wages be five pence farthing per hour for all skilled men. Superior and inferior men to be paid at such a rate of wages as may be decided by the foreman or the employer.
- No. 5 That all time worked after 4 p.m. Saturdays and 9 p.m. on other days be paid at time and one half.

Secretaries in those days went into some detail. The first entry of minutes were as follows:-

*'The meeting was very interesting one to all present. It continued until after nine o'clock having been interrupted for about half an hour by the taking of tea with beef and ham.'*

The Yorkshire Master Painters Association also established a price list in 1866 which was revised in 1868 and 1870.

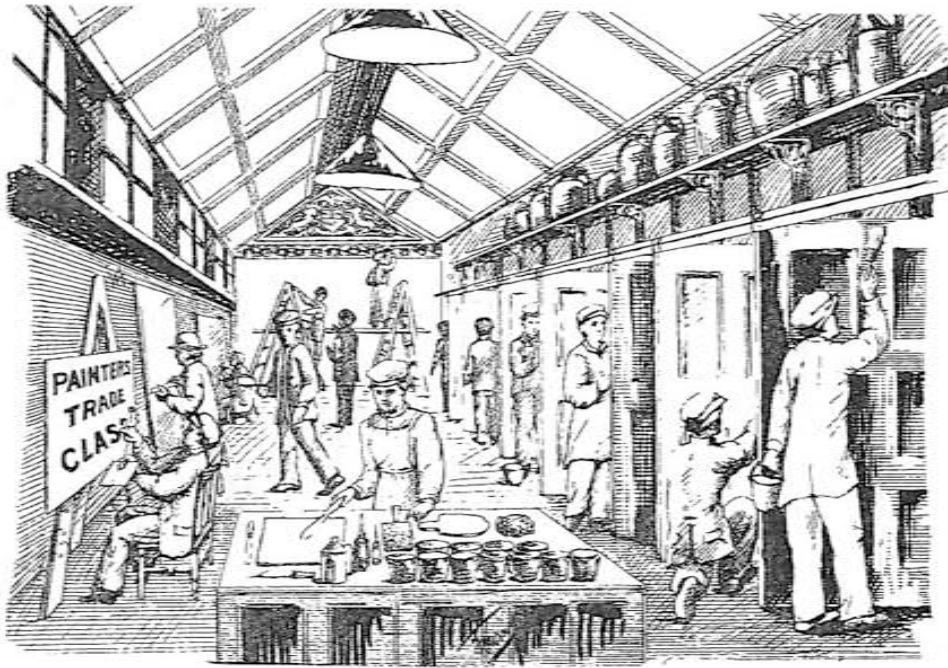
A charge out rate for labour in 1870 according to this list was between ten pennies and one shilling, paint was seven pence per pound and use of brush was an additional charge.

My main object for mentioning this is to demonstrate that organisation amongst Master Painters is not quite so modern a development as we are sometimes apt to suppose.

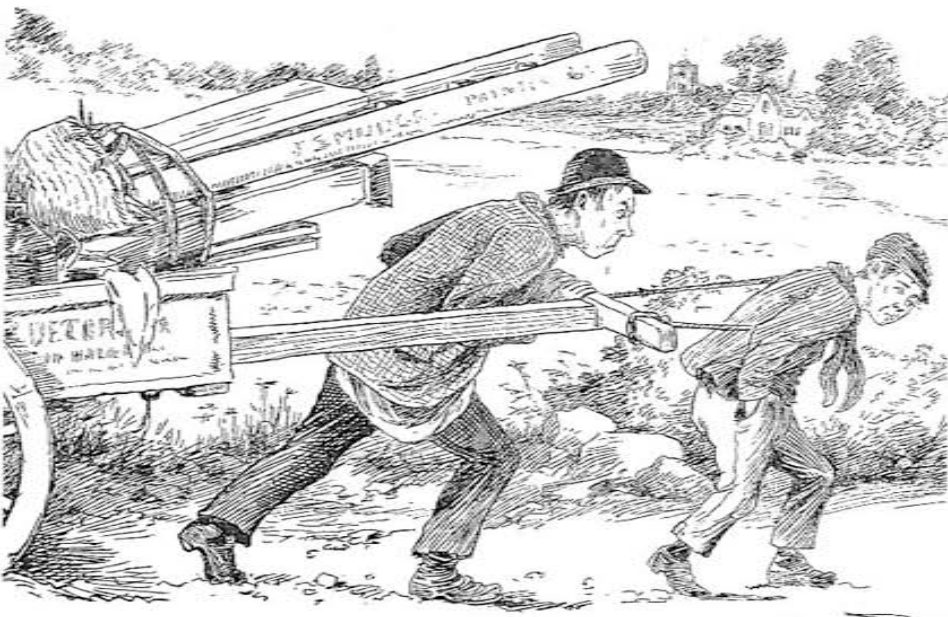
This local association also decided upon an annual dinner at a cost of half a crown for which all members had to pay whether they attended or not, providing a little light social activity for the master amid the year's business.

Other local associations followed in the path of Yorkshire doing similar work but the influence was regional with no co-ordination or contact between them. It was in 1893 that Scotland set up a National Association of individual members and federated a number of existing local associations, it soon becoming clear to a few local associations in England that this was the way forward.

At this time Mr. W. G. Sutherland was an important name in the painting and decorating trade. He was president of the Manchester and Salford Association of Master Plasterers and Painters and editor of the Journal of Decorative Art which he had founded thirteen years earlier. It's thanks to the decorators who never waste anything or throw



Interior, showing suggested arrangements of a painters' trade class, 1894.



The painter's progress.

anything away that I am able to correlate this history, most of which is from the pages of the journal produced by Sutherland Publishing.

The call went out through this magazine to individuals and associations of the painting craft from all over Great Britain and Ireland to an Internal Convention of Master Painters on the 23rd, 24th and 25th of October 1894 held in the Memorial Hall, Manchester which was to become three red letter days for the house painting trade. The convention was a complete success, not one but two societies being established. One to be called 'The National Association of Master Painters of England and Wales' whose aim was to carry out solid useful trade work. The second society to be set up was to be known as 'The Institute of British House Painters and Decorators'. The work of the institute was to lift up the ideal of the trade and concentrate on the art and craft side of it. The Institute held the same relationship to the National Association as does the university to the college. Master or man could become a member of the Institute so long as he satisfied the examining authority unlike the National whose membership was to come from Master Painters only. I may return to the Institute and its work in later chapters but the survival of the National Association over the last one hundred years is what I intend to trace.

— — — — —  
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MASTER  
 PAINTERS FOR ENGLAND AND WALES.**  
 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE.

*President:*

GEO. G. LAIDLER.

*Vice-President:*

ALEX. WHITE, JUNR.

*Treasurer:*

THOMAS PRESTON.

*Secretary:*

W. G. SUTHERLAND.

*Committee:*

*T. BOLLAND, Manchester.	J. BINNS, Halifax.
J. BENSKIN, Leicester.	G. BRADLEY, Scarborough.
F. COWTAN, London.	W. H. CUNLIFFE, Bl'kburn.
J. GASCOYNE, Nottingham.	J. W. HILL, Middlesbro'.
T. HESKETH, Warrington.	G. POTTER, Derby.
J. T. POLLARD, Leeds.	— RATCLIFFE, Bolton.
G. ROBSON, Malton.	*J. SALMON, Newcastle.
W. SIMPSON, Hull.	— SPENCER, Bradford.
T. SHAW, Oldham.	J. SMITH, Sheffield.
C. VAUGHAN, Hereford.	R. WOODWORTH, Whitchaven

\* The names of Mr. R. G. SALMON, Newcastle, and Mr. THOS. BOLLAND, Manchester, have been added by the Committee.

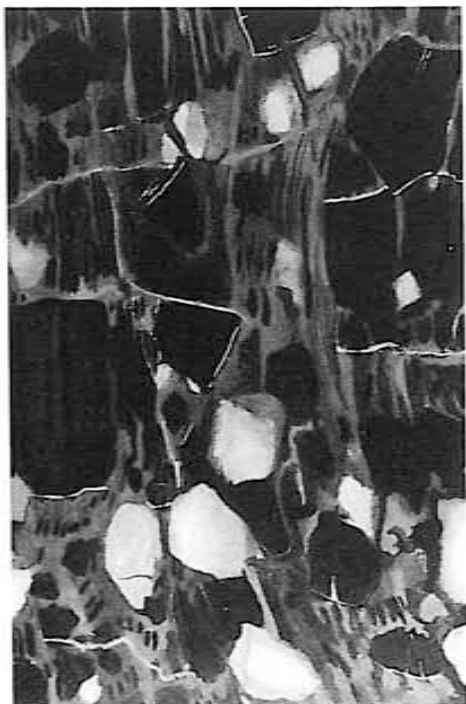
Above is a list of the first officers and council as it was first published in November 1894.

On the morning of the first day of the conference a committee was set up to decide upon the draft rules. Mr. Sutherland gave a welcome address and outlined the objective to the gathering.

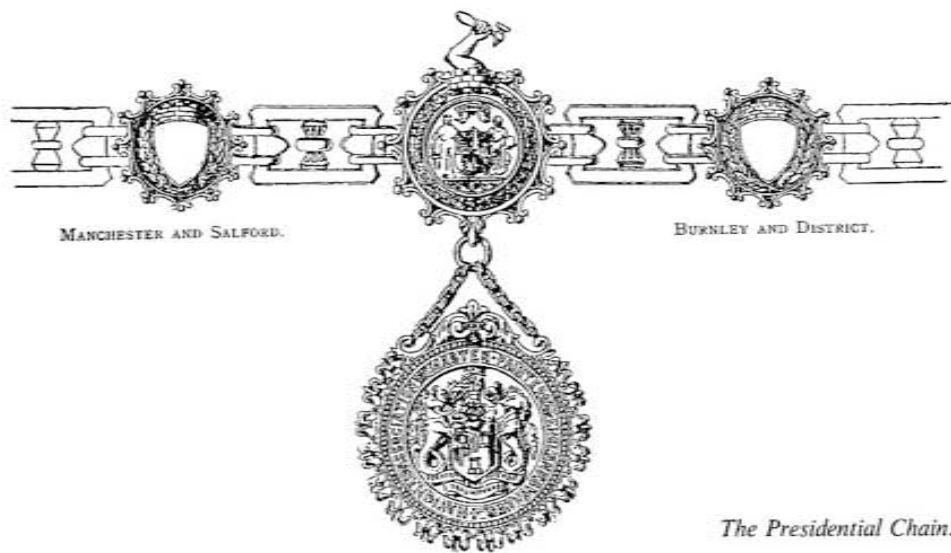
John Cantrill was appointed the convention secretary and the convention committee consisted of ten eminent decorators of the day. Bonner (Edinburgh), Laidler (Newcastle), Heap (Birmingham), Binns (Halifax), Thompson (Belfast), Benskin (Leicester), Preston (Burnley), Cunliffe (Blackburn), Spencer (Bradford) and Windle (Nottingham).



The cover of the Journal, October 1894.



Marble panel of Verd Antique by W. G. Sutherland from a litho published 1895.



The Presidential Chain.

In the afternoon of the first day members took a tour by steamer up the Manchester Ship Canal, a little enjoyment before the evenings business. All the three days were filled with business or activity, morning, afternoon and evenings.

Rules of the societies were formulated and interesting trade topics were discussed. Three of the topics debated still stir passions of most decorators to this day. They were:-

- (1) John Taylor read a paper on 'The Apprenticeship System'.
- (2) W. H. Goodier read a paper on 'Job lots and short lengths in paperhangings'.
- (3) W. G. Sutherland read a paper on 'Technical Education'.

The success of the Conference in 1894 was the fourth success that Manchester had in this year. The first being the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal, the second was a visit by Queen Victoria and the third was the opening of the great water scheme from Thirlmere.

No sooner had the delegates left this lovely Northern City with renewed optimism of the painting craft than the officials and committee set out on the crusade of making the National long lasting.

First job was to appeal for membership and support (still as important today). A subscription was set at seven shillings and sixpence and the first committee meeting was held in February 1895, the treasurer reporting that only seven pounds eighteen shillings and one penny were credited. He complained about this lack of funds as subsequent treasurers have, but this was a small matter for such high spirits and enthusiasm of this first committee.

Nevertheless the subscription was raised to ten shillings and sixpence and early in October 1895 the second conference was held to coincide with the Trade Exhibition at Newcastle upon Tyne. This set a precedent for other conferences that lay ahead.

Mr. John Taylor was President, eight technical papers were read and membership had increased. The treasurer showed a small balance and there was of course a dinner during which there was a great deal of oratory and good fellowship. The presidential chain of office was now in the early stages of construction and during this second year a firm of solicitors was added to the list of officers.

At the third annual conference in Birmingham, Councillor J. Smith of Sheffield was appointed President. The conference concluded in a 'Banquet' with the added brilliancy of 'the electric light'. By the time the Sheffield Conference arrived in October 1897 the treasurer reported an income of over £500 and affiliated associations were thirty three in number and direct members were over the two hundred mark. Alex White was installed as President for 1898 and by the time the conference was held in his home city of Liverpool membership was fifteen hundred and affiliated associations were fifty. The state of the accounts by this time uplifted Mr. Preston so much that during his report he aspired to verse, something the later treasurers have not been able to do.

By 1899 Mr. Vaughan of Herford was in office during which time operatives went on strike for increased wages which the National under its then existing constitution could only intervene by invitation and then only in an advisory capacity.

The Wallpaper Manufacturers Ltd. was born out of the amalgamation of most leading manufacturers of paperhangings and the annual conference was held in Hereford again with a delegate from America. Forty four associations were now affiliated and membership exceeded the fifteen hundred mark.

Thomas Preston was appointed President for 1900 so his treasurer's position was taken on by Mr. Turner of Wakefield.

William George Sutherland was fifty years old in 1900. He was a truly remarkable person, an excellent craftsman, teacher and organiser who devoted his whole life to the painting craft.

His father was William Sutherland, a master craftsman of the City of Birmingham although as the name implies the families origins were Dornoch in Sutherlandshire, migrating to the Midlands in the very early 1800s.

William Sutherland was born in 1819 to the gaelic speaking Angus Sutherland and Janet Chisholm in the Long Millgate area of Manchester where the family had set up home. In his youth it was decided that William should work as a house painter due to his artistic aptitude and so an apprenticeship was found for him with Master Painter Hawksworth.

An apprentice decorator had a merciless existence for seven years in those days. Hours were long, sixty to seventy per week, no overtime pay, no holidays (perhaps half a day), all for a weekly pay of 'a halfpence'. But the passions in the apprentice of those days for learning the skills of the trade and mastering its secrets were very strong within them which led to the burning of a lot of midnight oil mainly practising the art of graining, as this was the only way of learning. A grainer to the trade would protect the secrets of how he reproduced nature by even going to the extent of working behind locked doors, covering windows and stopping up key holes. Only the finished work was seen. So an apprentice with aptitude and natural flair had to look into the finished work and from this and natural samples develop his own method avoiding at all time 'paintiness' in the work.

With this apprenticeship behind him Sutherland the elder worked his way around France. It is not certain how long this period lasted but he finally returned to England to marry and set up home and business in Birmingham about 1847.

It soon became clear to him that Technical Education was the answer to producing tradesmen and he realised that if this was to work he had to break down the barriers of 'Trade Secrets'. His first effort in publishing the techniques of the craft was in 1848 in the form of a brochure. The subject was graining.

Life in the Midlands lasted twelve years. The family was now quite large and returned to Manchester where William Sutherland again set up a business as Grainer to the trade.

William George Sutherland assisted his father from a very early age and easily absorbed information and skill from his journeyman father, working together at graining. They were earning £20 per week in the early 1860s. (Very good money could be earned at graining in those days if you were good at it. Thomas Kershaw made even more money!).

Sutherland, like Kershaw, grained and marbled panels for exhibition purposes. They were of very fine quality but his were never to equal the work of Kershaw. Therefore Sutherland began to excel at technical writing. In 1863 he published 'A Handbook of Graining and Signwriting' which impressed Passmore Edwards of the 'Building News' who subsequently approached Sutherland and commissioned him to write articles on house painting and decorating. This he did under the *nom de plume* 'An experienced Workman'. It was these trade descriptions based on his own experience that were his greatest achievement which were to stimulate and motivate apprentices of the 1870s. Unfortunately these were cribbed by rival publications which forced the issue of copyright.



*The Sutherland family.*



*William George Sutherland in his early teens.*

Father Sutherland at this time was not a well man, in fact he suffered illness for twenty five years causing W.G. his son to take a more active role in what was now a prestigious decorating business and also to take on the editorship of *The Journal of Decorative Art*. The first issue was published in January 1881 in order to safeguard the technical writings.

This monthly journal was continuously produced for nearly one hundred years eventually succumbing to modern printing costs and lack of subscribers from the trade in and around 1980. The first issue contained eight pages of technical writing, some advertising and illustrations. From the very beginning the education of the apprentices, the journeymen, the masters and the public in that order was the aim of this journal.

From the articles written by father and son several books were published. 'The Art of Graining' and 'Signwriting and Glass Embossing' were the work of father. 'Church Decoration', 'The Dining Room' and 'The Drawing Room' followed and later 'Stencilling for Craftsmen' by W.G.S.

So you see how easy it was for W. G. Sutherland to create the British Decorators Association as we know it one hundred years on, devoting twenty two years of his life to it and using the pages of the journal to get the Association's message out to the decorator. I am afraid his decorating business in Manchester was sacrificed in order to build up the National Association of Painters and Decorators.

W. G. Sutherland died in 1915. His son, also called W. G. Sutherland followed in his father's footsteps and became editor of the journal and secretary of the National Association.

I return now to masters of the National Association in the 20th Century with Mr. Preston from Burnley in office. During this year the President visited many branches of the association and even found time to attend an American conference in Washington. Rossendale branch was formed and the annual conference was held at Blackpool so that the Trade Exhibition could be accommodated. It was opened by the then Home Secretary, the Rt. Hon. Sir Mathew White Ridley.

Four important decisions were taken at the conference. One was that the Association should apply for incorporation, making it a legal entity. The second was the formation of the International Travelling Scholarship. The third was that the Hon. Sec. Mr. Sutherland having now served seven years without remuneration should in future enjoy a salary. The fourth and final decision was indeed very good as even today all decorators know how difficult it is to keep clothes free from paint. It appears that one of the Burnley members keen to help the exhibitors had a can of paint spilled over him. A special grant from funds was therefore made to provide him with a new pair of trousers.

The President for 1901 was Mr. J. W. Barker of Leicester who developed with indefatigable energy the policy of education of the apprentices which resulted in a record number of entries for the competition founded the previous year.

Before we leave the year 1901 I must tell the story of Thomas Kershaw, Master Grainer and Decorator who died in this year.

### IN PRAISE OF A MASTER GRAINER AND DECORATOR

Thomas Kershaw was born in April 1819 at Standish near Wigan. His early education was non-existent compared to the education available today but, nevertheless, he learnt what he could when he could.

During his very early years he showed an ability to paint, so his father found him an apprenticeship with a firm of painters and decorators in Old Hall Street, Bolton. The owner of the firm was a man named John Platt, with the reputation of having the largest and best business in the North of England. He was also said to be a very exacting master and stern disciplinarian.

It was 1831, Thomas Kershaw was 12 years old and at the start of his nine year apprenticeship. George Kershaw, his father, worked on the land as a farmer in Standish and although wages were low he somehow managed to find the £23 required to apprentice his son to the house painting trade. Mr. Platt received this sum in return for instructing Thomas in all aspects, mysteries and skills of the painting trade as it was in those days. He was also expected to clothe and feed the boy. Indeed it was more like a nine year adoption contract which both parties signed and was certainly a foolproof system of one to one training, ensuring the secrets of the trade be kept and more importantly passed on to those learning the trade.

The young apprentices of those days were assured of two things from their indenture; no wages as we know today and a full, complete knowledge of their chosen trade or craft.

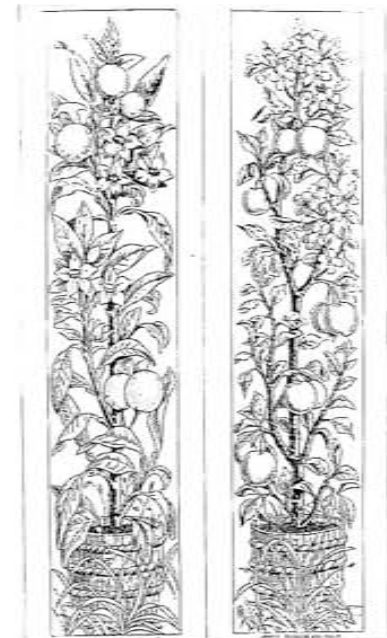
Kershaw's master demanded hard work and there was little any employee at Platts could do about it. The working days were ten hours long including Saturdays with up to four hours extra overtime each day. A sixty five hour week was a short week then. There were many mundane jobs to be done; grinding paint with mular and slab, limewashing walls and ceilings and pushing the handcart full of materials and equipment many miles to the jobs that the firm had undertaken. After twelve months of this continual drudgery Thomas qualified for one half days holiday to visit the Annual Fair. He was also to receive



*A quartet of Knights of the Brush, 1894.*



*The Sutherland Family, 1892.*



*Panels for decoration of dining room door.*



*The cover of the first copy of Journal of Decorative Art 1881.*

one penny from his master for this visit. It was at this time that he became determined to be more than just an ordinary painter. So when the working day was over, he practiced the skills of the higher branches of the trade, determined to be top man. With this in mind he increased his working day to an incredible sixteen, eighteen or even twenty hours. This is the dedication that distinguishes an artist, grainer, ornamentalist and signwriter from that of a mere plain painter.

He also painted very good pictures which began to sell well, in fact he did think that he might study art in Rome except that he spent the money earned from selling these paintings on graining tools and brushes. He began to copy oak direct from nature paying sixpence for each Wainscot oak sample from the local wheelwright. As he neared the end of his apprenticeship he was being recognised as the top man in his trade in the area around Bolton and was teaching those who had once taught him.

When he had served his time at Platts despite many tempting offers coming his way, he left the old firm and with his sights set firmly on London, travelled to Manchester and found a job with a firm of painters called West and Slade of Oxford Street. Here he became what was termed 'Grainer to the Trade', a form of sub-contractor travelling from job to job after the plain painter had ground up the work. The painter would take instructions from the grainer as to the requirements for the final coat only and the grainers duty was to strictly imitate the specified woods, oak being the most popular as it is today.

Colour for grounds was made up from white lead ground in oil and tinted with Yellow Ochre, Venetian Red and Burnt Umber. It was important that this colour was laid on smoothly by the painter. The process of graining that Kershaw adopted is not really all that clear but it is known that he did the work with amazing speed and the likeness to the real wood was remarkable. As I understand it there were two methods of mixing graining colour; in oil or in distemper. Oil graining colour was ground in boiled linseed oil and turpentine and often a little soap or whiting was added to resist flow out. Distemper graining colour was ground in ale, stale beer, vinegar or whisky. The theory was that stale ale was normally used but in cold weather whisky was the best.

After working for twelve months in the Manchester area Kershaw moved to York and worked for a while with a certain Mr. Walker of Stoegate and then for a painter in Hull called Jefferson. Both these tradesmen offered partnerships to Kershaw but this was part of his plan for prosperity. In 1845 he took off to London, a staggering journey in those days, and found employment with a firm of builders run by William Cubitt of the Greys Inn Road, later to become Sir William Cubitt, Builder. It was a sizeable firm employing eight grainers including one Scotsman who had the reputation of being known as the best grainer in the country. His name was McPherson.

It took Kershaw twelve months to knock McPherson off the number one spot and secure the crown of Prince of Grainers for himself. He now felt he could go it alone, a sole entrepreneur with no intention of working for anybody other than himself. He began to work on his own as a grainer, marbler and decorator.

He started to grain a few sample panels copied from nature, making regular visits to the timber and veneer merchants and marble yards of London. These panels gained high commendations from the Royal Commissioners of Guyder House, Whitehall and in 1851 the opportunity Kershaw had been waiting for came along. Now he could show the world his skill at the first Great International Exhibition of Art Works. The site for this exhibition was situated near the South Kensington Museum and covered some 799,000 square feet.

A vast range of products, crafts and skills were represented, all of which were administered by the Royal Commissioners under the presidency of the Prince Consort. Kershaw had a few problems as several master decorators tried to prevent his work from being shown. Eventually however the sample panels measuring sixty inches by twenty one inches found a prominent place to be exhibited mainly thanks to Professor Anstred, one of the commissioners and to the chagrin of the clique of master painters and decorators.

The next major exhibition took place in 1855 in Paris and it was here that Kershaw was truly acclaimed for his skill of imitating wood. However there was trouble once again, this time in the form of criticism from a French master painter. He said of the work that 'the panels have been executed by a new means of transfer'. This meant that Kershaw had to agree to demonstrate his skills in the exhibition hall to disprove the statement. Later the French Master Painters Journal, The Journal de Mannell de Peinturere, published the following statement in their September 15th 1855 copy:- "We regret that our inferiority to the Englishman is incontestable and have to acknowledge that his work must be regarded as masterpieces." Many offers of work poured in but as these would have meant working in foreign parts they were all declined. He also declined offers to write down the process he had adopted to imitate wood, marble, embossed leathers and damask silks.

After the triumph of the Paris exhibition he bought a house in Baker Street and in 1857 set up a specialist decorators business. He also found time that same year to marry a certain Miss Atkinson but suffered many domestic sorrows over the next forty years. The final accolade came in 1860 when the Painters Stainers Company marked their appreciation of his talents by making him a member of their livery and a freeman of the City of London. This has to be recognised as the height of his career. A description of Kershaw's graining written at this time said, "Each door that was grained by him took over one hour to complete, each door grained consisted of not too much grain or too little, no colour in excess or too low, each door grained was a true copy of nature's handiwork."

In 1862 yet another international exhibition was held in London and was erected close to the 1851 site. A report in the Art Journal Catalogue of that year wrote the following statement on the decorative imitation work exhibited there:- "Kershaw's imitations of silk is not unworthy of notice and the principle adopted here could be worked into the most gorgeous effects. What that principle is has not been stated but it looks like the result of 'combing' on a silver or metal ground. In the imitation of woods there has been no healthy progress since 1851, if, indeed, there has not been manifest declension, for labour has now taken the place of genius and the one is invariably inferior to the other. A man may spend more time over copying a piece of marble than what would buy the real material."

Kershaw continued working as a master grainer and decorator for many more years ending his brilliant career at his Baker Street home at the age of eight two.

---

The most important places where Kershaw worked include:-

- Buckingham Palace in 1858, Emperor's Room and others.
- Baron Lionel de Rothschild's Manions.
- Great Western Hotel, Paddington.
- Dorchester House, Park Lane.
- Manley Hall, Manchester.



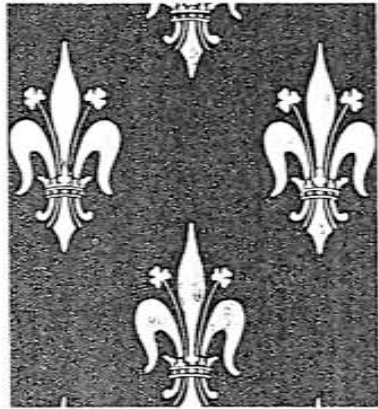
Mr. J. W. Barker,  
Past President 1901.



Mr. John Gregory Crace.



Mr. John Diblee Crace,  
first President Institute of  
British Decorators who had  
life tenure of the office.



A Pugin design,  
produced by  
Samuel Scott  
circa 1848.  
It was gold on  
a green ground.



Thomas Kershaw's study in Baker Street, London.



Mr. Vigurs Harris.

Mr. J. G. Cole served as President during 1902. The committee list was impressive: Education numbered 23, Executive 16 and Paper Hanging 31 persons. You see wallpapers have always been very much an integral and sometimes controversial subject within the craft and the association.

The annual conference was held at Newcastle upon Tyne and the first scholarship winner was George M. Atkins of Bradford and the exhibition was opened by John Diblee Crace of London, the eminent decorator and first president of the 'Institute of British House Painters and Decorators for Great Britain and Ireland' which later became 'The Institute of British Decorators'. J. D. Crace was 65 years old and retired from business. It would be impossible to pass such a name without looking at the 'House of Crace' a little closer.

The 'House of Crace'	1743-1899
Edward Crace	1725-1799
John Crace	1754-1819
Frederick Crace	1779-1859
John Gregory Crace	1809-1890
John Diblee Crace	1837-?

Edward Crace was an artist who turned his attention to house decorating and paperstaining. (In those days the two arts were combined). In 1780 Mr. Crace was appointed to Curator of Pictures at the Royal Palaces and around the same time his son John joined the firm to carry on the business after his father's death a few years later. He was employed by all the well known architects of the day and carried out work for George III and for the Prince of Wales decorating Carlton House for him. Amongst his public works were the Opera House, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. After his death his son completed the work in hand and went on to decorate Brighton Pavilion for George IV and extensively at Windsor Castle.

The next head of the firm was John Gregory Crace who established the firm in Wigmore Street. It was in 1848 when the government chose him to carry out the decoration work in the new Houses of Parliament, the wallpaper designs by Augustus Welby Pugin were cut and printed by Samuel Scott later to become Scott, Cuthbertson & Co.

J. C. Crace wrote a history of paperhangings and delivered this in the form of a lecture on the 4th and 18th February 1839 to the Royal Institute of British Architects. These were to become known as 'The Crace Papers' and he was the first real historian of the art of paperstaining.

The principal rooms of Longleat, Chatsworth, Taymouth Castle, Chiswick House and many other important buildings were decorated by this firm. It was John Diblee Crace who was the last active head of the firm. He simply transferred the use of all private designs of paperhangings to Messrs. Cowton and Sons in 1899 whom the Crace business was later acquired.

*A happy and mellow eventide which the night shall  
linger long to disturb.*

In 1903 affiliated associations numbered fifty with a total membership of sixteen hundred employers. John Riley of Nottingham was President and of course the annual convention was held in his home town.

We now come to a very notable year. James Higson of Salford became President, a relatively young man at the time but he had already served on the municipal council and was also appointed to the Commission of the Peace. He was head of a large painting and



plastering business in which he was third generation. Throughout his year of office his ability to dominate meetings and his power as a clear forceful speaker proved to be successful and by the time the conference was held in St. James Hall, Manchester it was obvious that it was going to be the biggest and best to date. It lasted for a whole week generating a tremendous amount of interest from crowds of people from many different walks of life.

At this time relationships between the employers and operatives were just about bearable. There was unrest, long hours and low wages for the operatives with very little cooperation from the employer.

Higson was one employer who could understand the conditions of his men and proposed that the association members should work towards an understanding of the operatives work in order that the trade be elevated. He suggested that Manchester was exemplary (which it was, no stoppages for many years had occurred).

Consequently a very unusual event happened on the Saturday evening of the conference week. A procession of seven hundred strong men, members of the operatives painters society, headed by their official banners and brass band converged on the exhibition hall. In an effort of goodwill the employers invited the men to join them at tea and there were several speeches.

The second decade of the Association's life began with Mr. H. Vigurs Harris of Plymouth as President for 1905. Now Mr. Harris was a prominent member of the Society of Friends, an abstainer and non-smoker. I mention this because painting employers were, in general, smokers and drinkers in the early part of the 20th Century. Many members therefore thought that Vigurs Harris would impart an austere tone to the proceedings throughout his year of office but they were quite wrong, in fact he was one of the most distinguished presidents.

Harris & Sons, Plymouth, had been established for well over one hundred years by the time Vigurs Harris became President. He was a caring employer showing deepest concern for his operatives and the welfare of their families and in spite of the long journeys he attended most meetings, always calling for a high ethical standard of conduct in the trade.

The Plymouth conference was a very happy one. Mr. Turner, the treasurer announced that funds had reached £1,000. He had to step down from this appointment as he was to become the next President. The treasurer's job was taken by J. W. Bellamy of Birmingham at this time.

The winner of the International Scholarship was W. W. Davidson, a very accomplished decorator who was to achieve much more notoriety with his practical skills and journalism in later years.

In 1906 the Sheffield Association started a new fashion by inviting ladies to the annual dinner and shortly afterwards Burnley held a social evening instead of a dinner. This was to become established as the normal sequence of events at branch dinners.

The President for 1907 was another Liverpool decorator, G. H. Morton. During this year the Hull Association withdrew from the National because of a policy disagreement. Also some associations became defunct but even so membership held. Mr. Higson was chairman of the Executive, still doing sterling work. The conference and exhibition was held in the magnificent St. Georges Hall in Liverpool where the members elected Mr. Teall of Birmingham as President for 1908.

At this time there was a great deal of industrial unrest. Many localised disputes

occurred where men were looking for pence, halfpence or even farthings more per hour. These were settled either by arbitration or by intervention from Mr. Sunley, secretary of the Operatives Society or Mr. Sutherland, secretary of the National Association.

*"It is good do the hard job,  
It is good to play the man,  
For the hard job gives us courage,  
Where the easy never can.  
It needs hard work to accomplish,  
And it means a brighter smile,  
For it brings the joy of having done  
A thing worth while."*

Also at this time 'The Great White Lead Debate' began to raise its head as the first award for lead poisoning was made under the new Workmans Compensation Act. Bingley Hall, Birmingham was the choice venue for the conference and Mr. Puttrell of Sheffield was appointed President for 1909, a year in which the only prominent issue was the matter of white lead poisoning. The government of the day announced its intention to set up a committee of enquiry, which actually took the next eighteen years to get settled bearing in mind that to all decorators of this time white lead based paints were everything to all men and nothing could possibly ever replace it.

In 1910, the year that King Edward died, our President was Mr. John Brown of Newcastle. At this time painting, the painter and public health was looming large. A strong plea went out to making stripping of wallpaper before repapering compulsory, probably to eliminate mould and bacteria forming due to the use of flour paste.

*"The use of arsenic in the printing of wallpapers did in fact cause distress to people. In one case doctors attributed the illness of the occupant of a particular bedroom to the green print in the wallpaper. After stripping and repapering the person became well again. Even today the tour guides at Powderham Castle, Devon will not enter one particular passage due to as they say "The print of the wallpaper causes a kind of distress to them"."*

Also the danger of lead paint was brought to the front by the French Government prohibiting its use after 1915. Here in Britain it was to prove more difficult to restrict or prohibit the use of lead paint to which I will return.

Frederick Grundy of Loughborough took office in 1911 when Lloyd George introduced his Health and Unemployment Insurance Scheme which became law in 1912 when Mr. T. N. Richards was President. The commotion and hullabaloo of this bright promise of ninepence for fourpence did not pacify everybody.

Before we move on from the years 1911, 1912 with Mr. M. T. N. Richards of Chester in office, a brief word on the education of the decorator which was still a high priority of the association. Stencilled decoration was gaining popularity due to the efforts of tradesmen and designers of the day, W. G. Sutherland Jnr., William Fourniss and George R. Rigby to name just three exponents of this craft. At the Derby conference Mr. Rigby read a very comprehensive paper on the subject. I show you two examples of his stencils to illustrate his lecture. Notice how lines in design form ties to produce a beautiful effect, quite different to what we find in today's designs.

I like the following brief explanation of the art of stencil work which is mainly the ideas and thoughts on the subject of W. G. Sutherland Jnr.



Beautiful stencil design by G. R. Rigby showing how lines in design form ties.



### Stencils and stencilling

Stencilling owes its effect almost entirely to 'a hard silhouette form'. The craftsman designer of 80, 90, 100 years ago soon developed an ability to express his ideas in these definitely shaped pieces. Even though efforts of broken colour or wipe out stencils were made.

The stencil's beauty lies in its simplicity, all unnecessary items being abolished or combined into broader flat areas. This was stencil designing at its best. Another feature of good design were the 'ties'. These held the shaped pieces together and had to form a feature of the pattern, so that a conclusive, simple story was told across a frieze, on a panel or along walls.

At this point I include how W. G. Sutherland illustrates the point of good and bad design of stencils in his book 'Stencilling for Craftsmen'.



Ties which do not form part of the design.



The same piece of ornament, showing the ties forming part of the design.

I quote what William George says about the craft of stencilling from the same book:

"Stencilling is a handy and entirely practicable means by which the decorator may apply his own ornamental detail. It is not merely a cheap substitute for hand painting, or a short cut, but a craft in itself capable of decorative effects of its own, effects not available by other means, and capable also of unlimited development in the hands of an artist who studies its possibilities."

So the stencil plate became a mask or shield through which pattern was worked and no attempt was made to disguise the 'ties' the plates were made from; parchment, laminated lead or zinc, waterproof paper called Willesden paper and even wallpaper but cartridge paper was most popular and successful. The reason: drawing and designing was easily done on it, the water-proofing could quite efficiently be done on it and so too the cutting out.

The good workman would prepare all this in the evening when his days work was done. His cutting knife was perhaps a favourite penknife, kitchen knife or he may have preferred one of a variety of proprietary stencil knives, kept constantly sharp on an oil stone.

Mechanical aids in cutting out were not used, straight lines were cut by a free hand, this sorted out the fact that there was no mechanical repetition in size, shape or detail, but at most a general resemblance to natural facts. "Nature abhors repetition."

*'First follow nature, and your judgement frame from her just standard.'*

It is painfully obvious that by stencilling we cannot exactly reproduce the petals of a flower or the leaves of a tree, therefore not attempt was made, but the decorator devised forms that would be acceptable as ornament when repeated over and over. He did this in two ways; plates with "cut out" pattern or plates with "cut out" background.

Decorators could also buy from catalogues. Wrights of Lymm for instance employed stencil cutters producing stencils from diapers for churches to spots and borders for domestic use.

Application of the design was by single or several plates – most decorators could stencil several colours on one plate but some divided the master plate into colours and produced smaller, single colour plates. Whatever, the paint, stain or dye was applied by the movement of the stencil brush known as stippling or dabbing. Rubbing the paint in resulted in disaster – paint on the underside of the stencil, causing 'wooly' edges or smearing. My theory is that most stencil work was done from one plate and the gradual merging of pigment gave a further quality to the design. The colour of the palette was a pure tint of red, Venetian Red, Lemon, Ultramarine Blue, White or Black.

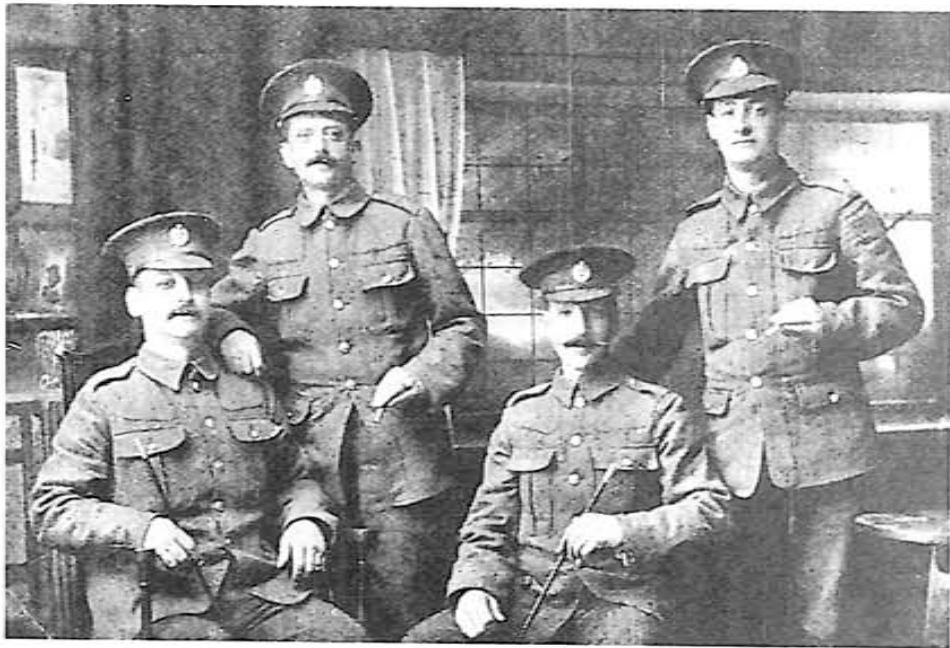
W. W. Davidson, another educationalist of decorating and a famous stenciller, said of the Art, quote:- "In its very limitations lie its strength".

Our return to the History of the B.D.A. finds us in the year 1913 with Mr. Sharp of Leamington as President. It was the 20th annual dinner at the Regent Hotel in Leamington on September 24th when for the first time ladies graced the proceedings with their presence. The Trade Exhibition did not take place due to the new attitude of expanding social and educational activity. During this year numerous wages disputes, strikes and arbitrations occurred all over the country.

In his report the National secretary referred to these disputes emphasising the fact that the "National Association" had not intervened in any of them even when its help had been invited. They could only tender advice as an incorporated association is debarred from doing anything that, if done, would constitute it a trades union.

For the year 1914, there was only one nomination for President, that of James Higson J.P., Manchester who had already held office in 1904. He was elected which produced the second precedent of this conference.

At this time whilst the employer was charging out one shilling for labour and seven



Sapper J. Fahey (John Cantrill & Son)  
Sapper J. Fisher (Messrs. Kendal, Milne & Co.)

Sapper E. O'Brian (Mr. O. Heggs)  
Sapper R. Severn (W. G. Sutherland)



Mr. Higson and his four vice-presidents in office over the period of the First World War.

pence per pound for paint thus producing a fair profit after covering his overheads. I venture to assert that the position of the painting operative was near the line of chronic poverty earning an average of nine pence per hour for a fifty hour week. This gave him a weekly wage of £1-17-6d with the incidence of 'lay offs' reducing this further to £1-15s per week. So you can see how easily an ever increasing attitude of suspicion developed over the last few years between employers and the men of our trade and for that matter kindred trades.

Now before the days of Trade Unions and Employer Associations there existed a mutual respect between the employer and the workman which was in fact killed off by Trade Societies. We can now look back on the employer as a person who thought labour was a thing merely to be bought and sold and the operative as a man out, through his trade union, to improve his status and pay, without much regard to his own well being.

By 1914 relationships had become strained to breaking point. It was a year that began placidly and ended in catastrophe. For many weeks a dispute involving stoppage of work had been in progress in the London building trade, demands for more wages and alterations to the working rules spread throughout the country and there was the added problem of getting union members to work amicably alongside non union members.

It was men like Mr. Higson and a few more enlightened employers and workmen that had been conscious of the need for a more intimate relationship between the different parties. It's thanks to the great London Building Trades Strike of 1914 that one such London employer, Mr. Malcolm Sparkes was greatly oppressed by the futility of the method of dealing with disputes. He studied the issues and saw the only way to avoid conflict was to make both employers and men jointly responsible for good government of trade suggesting the establishment of a Joint Council of employers and workmen in the building trade for which support grew steadily over the next couple of years.

Returning to the work of the association, forthcoming conference arrangements and quarterly meetings were going ahead. Exhibition spaces were let as early as January 1914 due mainly to the trading possibilities that the densely populated Manchester venue could bring. Then, upon a world aghast, came the avalanche of World War. Internal strife was abandoned for the time being, the national lock out was called off as men faced much greater issues. The brightest and best of our youth and many good men flocked to the colours, so many of them never to return.

The Association had to rethink. The hire of the exhibition hall was legal and binding and enforceable but nearly all the exhibitors soon found it impossible to take part. An enormous financial loss to the association was looming but at the last minute the leasees of the building and the exhibitors agreed on postponement to the following year. At the same time the National Executive requested that Mr. Higson and his four vice-presidents, Messrs. Haywood, Stewart-Green, Peter and Butterworth remain in office for another year.

This is definite evidence that the general impression of the war was that it would be over and done with in less than a year making it possible to meet at conference the following year. However as it turned out 1915 was even less practicable than 1914. Fortunately exhibitors consented to contribute towards the expenses incurred and the project was abandoned saving the association from possible financial disaster.

The war strengthened our association when it was expected to finish it and through its duration (four years and three months) Mr. Higson and his vice-presidents remained in office.



Mr. James Brooks.



**ALWAYS READY!**  
THE NEW PATENT  
**KNOTTING BOTTLE.**

The Tin is  
LINED WITH  
GLASS.

NO DECORATOR CAN  
AFFORD TO  
BE WITHOUT IT.

Practically Airtight.

A Great Saving of  
Time and Material.

**PRICE,**  
complete with brush,  
**1s. 9d. each.**

also governing the Knotting  
from running black.

To be had from all Wholesale Houses, or the Maker—  
**JAMES BROOKS,**  
4, Incline Road, HOLLINWOOD.

Always  
Cheerful  
and Bright!

Robbie & Lark  
The Paint & Varnish Co.

**ROBBIALAC**  
PAINT

GOOD STUFF—TYPICAL—EFFECTIVE

Here is a quality of  
Varnish unexcelled



Lt. Norman Lea Sissons,  
killed in action in 1916.

**TYNECASTLE**  
YOU CAN'T USE FLOUR  
**T·T**  
(THE TYNECASTLE)  
**PASTE POWDER**

Takes the place of flour in  
the making of Paste at a less  
cost. In small packets 24/- net  
per gross. Sample packet 2d.  
plus postage. Carriage paid on  
orders of £3 and upwards.

**THE TYNECASTLE CO.,**  
Murieston Road,  
EDINBURGH.

**Adhesive**

**Powder**

MANUFACTURED ONLY  
BY  
LIVERPOOL ADHESIVE PASTE CO.  
HULLS 83 BRIDGE STREET LIVERPOOL.  
HEAD OFFICES OF LONDON 25, MARK

It was in May 1915 that the strength behind the Journal of Decorative Art and the National Association, Mr. W. G. Sutherland died. His loss was felt throughout the trade but W. G. Sutherland Jnr. took up his father's work very successfully for very many years to come.

In 1916 the National Operative Painters Society took the first step after two years of putting into effect Mr. Sparkes proposal of Joint Councils. They suggested to the National Association of Master House Painters and Decorators of England and Wales that the Executive Committees of the two bodies should meet for the purpose of discussing matters of common interest. This meeting was held on December 21st 1916 at the Town Hall, Salford under the presidency and also mayor, Councillor James Higson J.P. The result was the formation of an advisory body known as 'The National Painters and Decorators Joint Council'. Some months later in 1917, the Government Committee on Reconstruction (The Whitley Committee) having considered Mr. Sparkes' memorandum, adopted it and came out in favour of the establishment of Joint Industrial Council in every industry. May I make it therefore quite clear and smile a satisfied smile, that owing to an initiative of the painting operatives with endorsement from the employers, our trade led the way in this matter.

The object in the constitution of the joint council was to promote the continuous and progressive improvement of the industry, to realise its organic unity as a great national service and to advance the well being and status of all connected with it.

Six aims relevant at the time were:-

- (1) Regularisation of wages.
- (2) Prevention of unemployment.
- (3) Employment of partially disabled soldiers.
- (4) Technical training and research.
- (5) Publicity.
- (6) Continuous and progressive improvement.

During the great struggle the painter, decorator and paperhanger at home also had a fight on their hands. Their problem was the continual one of improving wages and conditions, which by 1917 through strikes and arbitration had improved a little. Another problem was the regulation of materials and the use of. The paperhanger used flour paste as adhesive before and during the war. This was for many people a waste of basic foods and a call went out to cease all paperhanging so that all flour could be used for bread alone. Fortunately the manufacturers were one step ahead and proprietary paste powders were being developed by companies like: Wallpaper Manufacturers (W.P.M.), The Tynecastle Co., and the still familiar L.A.P. Therefore if the mind of the paperhanger could be changed he could be as patriotic as he liked and still do his work.

Two other staple commodities that came under control was all lead and all shellac. There was still the on going problem of lead poisoning in operative painters – could restricted use help? Remember this lead paint problem and enquiry into its use had been going on since 1909 delayed until 1911 when Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary set up his committee to investigate the dangers of lead paints. Also remember, lead paint was to the painter what flour was to the paperhanger – irreplaceable.

During the First World War the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill M.P. was Minister of Munitions and it was he who exercised his powers under the Defence of the Realm Act to take possession of all lead in whatever form. An employer usually stocked lead in oil, dry white lead, red lead and litharge. Its use was now regulated in the painting of houses. In



Wallpaper pattern from the 1920s.



Wife of Celebrating Grandee—  
"FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, GENTLEMEN,  
DON'T BREAK HIS CELEBRATING HAT!"



Mr. James Walsh.



Mr. J. A. Gibson.



Mr. J. H. Cantrill,  
President 1921.

any one job the quantity could not exceed twenty eight pounds and even then the employer had to be a licensed user and send in monthly returns of lead used and lead in stock.

By 1918 wages, conditions and industrial relations were improving almost monthly. The historical struggle of the under privileged and their oppressors from the beginning of the century was now looking as though progress was being made in the right direction. "The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist" makes further reading of the work of the house painter and sign-writer before the war. The manuscripts were written for the book by Robert Tressall (a nom-de-plume) for Robert Noonan in the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century and first published in 1914. It gives a grim account of the humour and pitiless realism the working man endured. Tressall reveals the lives and hearts of his workmates, their opinions of their betters, their political views, their attitude towards socialism, the harshness, browbeatings in amongst the clanging of the whitewash pail and the swishing of the two knot distemper brush. It is a valuable picture of how our trade once was.

Whatever else trade unions have done they have altered for the better the deplorable conditions under which many in the building trade had to work. The book represents the boss as exploiting and driving the men for the sake of greed and profit whilst the men were as diligent then as they have always been.

Organisations like the Operatives Painters Union, the recently formed Master Painters Federation together with the area and joint councils, shaped and uplifted the trade over the years to come in which education and training began to play a major role.

The Great War was also slowly coming towards a victorious end when in June 1918 at a council meeting of the National Association of Master House Painters and Decorators of England & Wales (incorporated) with Mr Higson in the chair, a draft constitution was submitted. It was explained that appointed committees had been legally advised that in order to extend the powers and functions of the Association as desired it would be necessary to wind up the existing association and start *de novo*. The new federation to be registered as a trade union was moved by J. H. Cantill and seconded by Mr. J. Brooks and established by the Autumn. A liquidator was appointed and the necessary 'funeral' arrangements were made.

The last Annual General Meeting of the National Association was held at Milton Hall, Manchester on the morning of Thursday October 24th 1918. Mr Higson was not present due to ill health. Mr. Butterworth took the chair. The usual business was attended to: Treasurer's report, apprentice competitions, Education and wages of men which had risen by an unprecedented scale (1s-5pence + 12½% war bonus).

Two reasons were given:-

*Scarcity and value of the operative and the purchasing power of the sovereign.*

The National Association had started its life twenty three years before in Manchester and by the end of the morning it died in Manchester. It did not fail in its work, it was strong and healthy but limited in what it could do. It has practically no funds in hand but it did have enthusiastic hard working members with high ideals.

They had looked around the chaos of the painting craft industry and had set out on a journey to produce a finer conception of what our trade should be. They had achieved this and also produced a good foundation upon which to build a new Federation.



The Commission on White Lead appointed by the Geneva Conference.



Mr. Will Mellor, Secretary of the National Joint Education Committee and Master Decorator and Signwriter.



The Quadrangle—Buckingham Palace.

**In good condition after 26 years!**

*The Report of the Departmental Committee on Industrial Paints (April 1923) shows: "Mr. de Ruyt Hon. Sir Henry Thomas, Bt., M.P., writes—"*

**W**e are satisfied that for outside painting, and for certain kinds of internal painting, there is at present no efficient substitute for lead paint.

Evidence was given by H.M. Office of Works that White Lead Paint applied to the Quadrangle of Buckingham Palace in 1897 was found in 1923 (that is 26 years after) to be "in a remarkably good condition, its protective qualities remaining unimpaired." "Various leadless paints applied to other parts of the Quadrangle in 1913 were found in 1923 to have "almost entirely disappeared." "The surface has been covered only by the lead paint applied in 1897."

**White Lead Paints**



Mr. G. E. Topham, Past President 1922.



L/r: Mr. Selbywood, Mr. Clive Cookson and Mr. A. John Hugh Smith.



Mr. & Mrs. Cecil E. Campbell, President National Federation of Master Painters 1923.

**The manufacturing processes of white lead**

The stack process – the oldest method of producing white lead. Its capacity was of one hundred tons, in thirteen 'heights' in each of which were 147 dozen pots of acetic acid resting upon spent tan bark. 23,000 in all. Three months was required for corrosion by this method. Each leadstrap or wicket weighed five pounds. There were 17,250 to each stack.



◀ The chamber process was put into practice about 1902 but the process was originally used in 1749.

In each of the chambers strap lead was hung over wooden bars and acetic acid, water vapour and carbon dioxide was conducted to the chamber underground. Temperatures of 70°C was established and the whole reaction took about eight weeks.



Mr. J. W. Alder, Sunderland, President 1924.

The inaugural general meeting was held in the afternoon of Thursday October 24th 1918, Milton Hall, Deansgate, Manchester. Mr. Butterworth presided over the meeting. Secretary, *pro tem* Mr. W. G. Sutherland Jnr. opened the meeting and the following motion was put forward, quote:- "That the Rules registered with the registrar of Friendly Societies on the 1st October 1918 and now produced, be confirmed and adopted as the Rules of the Federation." The resolution was put and passed unanimously.

When it came to the election of President for this first year there was only one nomination. Yes you guessed it. It was that of Mr. James Higson J.P. who placed himself entirely at the disposal of the Federation even though he was not at the meeting. It was suggested that he should be notified of his unanimous election by telegram. His vice-presidents stood with him for this ensuing year – Messrs. Butterworth, Peters, Harwood and Stewart-Greene with his team of figure-heads only duly elected, it came time to elect the most important job, that of Secretary. Once again there was only one nomination, that of Mr. Sutherland who thankfully was happy to continue with the work his father had begun.

By January 1919 painters and decorators began to feel free again to run their own business instead of being practically under state supervision. White lead and linseed oil was released and the word 'genuine' began appearing again instead of the word 'substitute'.

Men returning home from the war were filling up the labour exchanges and apprentices were looking to continue their indentures with their employers. To them the impression was of a flourishing trade in this period of reconstruction. Men looked set to earn a living wages for a 46½ hour week and masters a living profit

To go to work  
To earn the cash  
To buy the food  
To gain the strength  
To go to work etc.

At this time an effort was being made to limit Federation membership to *Bona-fide* master painters.

You see, our trade has suffered constantly from the type of 'master painter' whose stock in trade was often limited to two pairs of steps, a plank, a paste board and a couple of flat brushes. The war drove this person to the 'operatives' association and was responsible for the low level to which the trade had sunk and from which it now had to be raised. Yes please, be patient with me! In 1919 there was a real quarrel developing. Not with the worthy master craftsman but with the kind of man (dare I say it) who remains content to run "a one man show".

Mr. Thomas Foster, the idealist, Treasurer – N.F.M.P. in his booklet said and I quote:

"There are far too many small businesses carried on by weak incompetent men, who find their *clientele* among that class of people who want a cheap thing irrespective of quality. Many men now in business on their own account would be far better and more profitably employed as managers or foremen and some even as journeymen."

By the time peace had been secured with Germany, members of the Federation had to choose the next President for 1920. Mr Higson was due to hand over the chain of office to his successor after a period of six years covering the whole length of the Great War and

the completely reorganised association to Federation status. The diversity of Higson's interests was phenomenal. He was prominent in freemasonry, Governor of Manchester Grammar School, Mayor of the Royal Borough of Salford (as was) in 1917 and only poor health stopped this man entering Parliament. He possessed what can be truly termed a 'magnetic personality'.

1920 was to be a critical year, therefore a man of great strength of character had to be found. The search however was not a difficult one. A unanimous call went out for the nomination of Mr. John H. McDermid of Darlington. A fine craftsman, directing a high class decorating business in Darlington. Under his chairmanship the Federation of Associations could grow in size and strength. In fact by January 1920 there were 3,500 members.

'Work and wages' was the predominant feature of this year. By May 1st the working week was negotiated to 44 hours and wages had reached £5-2-6d (approximately 2s4d per hour). Lay offs were non-existent but industrial strife was back with a vengeance. In fact just as bad as in 1914 although the housing schemes were providing quite a lot of work for the building industry.

The painting work done was very basic and left a lot to be desired, washed walls and ceilings and tar derivative treatment to woodwork. Decent good class work was slowly becoming the privilege of the rich. By November/December the high profits of employers and the ever increasing demands from operatives was becoming a menace to our industry. The sale of painting materials to the general public was growing enormously and for 1s6d you could buy an instruction book and do the job yourself. D.I.Y. had arrived, so had counter trade and along with it people who knew little and cared less about the painter.

Unemployment and winter 'lay offs' was knocking at our door once again.

"When the fly dies  
The painter cries  
Who'll buy the ticket of a putty knife?"

Mr. McDermid was actually in office for sixteen months because of a new arrangement by which Presidents of the future take up their duties in January instead of October. Therefore on January 27th 1921 at Milton Hall the chain was transferred to the President-Elect, Mr. John Hewson Cantrill or 'Mr. John' as he was more commonly known around his native Manchester where he carried on the successful business his father had established.

Both were very skilled craftsmen in their own right. Of Mr. Cantrill's many interests, education and training was closest to his heart.

The major debate that the Federation was employed with in this year was the white lead controversy – "Prohibition against Regulation". The materials committee of the Federation led by Secretary Butterworth were involved with the white lead issue for many months to come. I recount only some of the truths and half truths of this saga to you.

### Prohibition

In March 1921 a document was issued by the International Labour Office entitled "Questionnaire on the Prohibition of the use of White Lead in Painting". This paper was in preparation for the next International Labour Conference at Geneva in October 1921. These conferences were held under the terms of the Peace Treaty. This was to be the third,



The 1815 Room in the Palace of Arts.



Another view of the mid-Victorian Room.



Part of a very large scheme of signs in the Palace of Engineering.

the first was in 1919 at Washington, the second in 1920 at Genoa. The matters discussed were then brought to the respective parliaments with a view to legislation.

The Questionnaire actually consisted of a great number of preconceived opinions, one of which I quote:-

*"Whatever may be said to the contrary, lead compounds mixed with oil by hand increase the possibility of poisoning through the skin."*

In other words, the question was put, but the authors knew the answer and were not going to accept anything said to the contrary. It also stated that the number of lead poisonings amongst painters in England in the ten years between 1900 and 1909 inclusive was 1,973, of which 383 were fatal. This information was based on the evidence of Dr. T. M. Legge, H.M. Inspector of Factories but was misrepresented. The total number of deaths is correct but Dr. Legge clearly stated back in 1911 that the 383 fatal cases included the plumbing as well as the painting trade. The medical profession was also quick to diagnose lead poisoning in any patient with abdominal trouble if he stated that his trade was that of painter or plumber.

The prohibition of white lead paints originated in France in 1909. A law was passed on July 20th 1909 prohibiting its use after July 1915 but this law was still not in force in 1921. The campaign in France was of a reckless nature and based on one advocate M. Poirier who stated that there were 15,695 cases of lead poisoning in Paris in a single year. On this statement being checked it was found that it was actually based on his discovery of 43 cases diagnosed in the hospitals of Paris on one day. Msr. Poirier simply multiplied this number by the number of days in a year to arrive at his astounding total. France could possibly have stood to gain by the compulsory use of substitutes for lead.

The statement from the National Amalgamated Society of Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators of Great Britain, which at this time had 70,000 members, gave figures of 560 deaths due to lead poisoning registered with the society in the years 1910 to 1919. They expressed the opinion that nothing short of absolute prohibition could remove the dangers attendant on the use of white lead paint to its members.

The case for the operative was based only upon the principal of previous working rule concession; 'The painting of fixed flagstuffs' to which Master Painters had agreed. This rule was that no flagstaff should be painted unless it could be taken down. The argument was good, better to lose a customer than risk a good man having his neck broken.

Lord Askwith wrote at the time; quote:- "The memorandum and questionnaire put out by the International Labour Office on the prohibition of lead paints was acting in the interests of others and bore the signs of haste and ignorance and it might as well use the propaganda of the rival pigment company which it actually named as being a suitable substitute for lead."

#### The Case for Regulation

The Master Painters argument was a simple one. It was accepted that painters were subjected to occupational diseases: Plumbism, Phthisis and Bright's Disease. The cause of plumbism and phthisis was by absorption of lead into the system almost entirely via the lungs in the form of dust which was created for the most part by one process, that of dry rubbing down. It was thought that Bright's disease was due to volatile thinners.

One of the happiest facts about the decorating trade is that the employer has usually been an apprentice and journeyman and has experienced during this period all practical



processes of the trade so employers were unanimous in the recommendations put out by the Federation. That is that the process of dry rubbing down should be abolished in order to remove the danger of a dust laden atmosphere of lead particles and sharp glass dust from glasspaper whilst the operative was working.

He also advocated that simple regulation should be tried before prohibition which would be costly to an entire industry.

Mr James Edward Butterworth was the Federation's appointed technical advisor, one of six representing the employers delegate at the Geneva conference October 25th to November 19th 1921 along with Mr. J. A. Gibson of the English Operative Painters Society, who was one of the advisors for the workers delegate.

A very busy year for President Cantrill and his executive because by January 1922 Mr. Butterworth had reported back from Geneva and published a report which concluded that:-

Regulations should be made for the use in painting of white lead or mixtures containing it in each participating country based upon the following principles:-

EXTRACT.

- (1) a. Painters should only handle white lead in paste form or paint ready for use.  
b. Avoid applying lead paint in the form of spray.  
c. Avoid the danger of dust arising from dry rubbing down and scraping.
- (2) a. Provision of adequate washing facilities.  
b. Painters to use overalls.  
c. Prevention of soiling outdoor clothes by paint.
- (3) a. Compulsory notification of cases of saturnism.  
b. Medical examinations of workers.
- (4) Distribution of information in regard to hygiene.

It is interesting to note that it was quite possible to obtain 10lbs of metallic lead from 14lbs of white lead.

To explain; White lead  $2PbCO_3Pb(OH)_2$  theoretically contains 80% of metallic lead. White lead in oil contains about 8% linseed oil. 14lbs of white lead ground in oil should therefore contain 10lbs metallic lead.

The safety of the whole of us  
Depend so much on all of us  
It behoves each of us  
To be thoughtful of the rest of us.

At a financial meeting of the National Federation of Master Painters held in Manchester, Monday February 6th 1922, the retiring President Mr. Cantrill placed the chain of office around the shoulders of Mr. George E. Topham of Harrogate, the new President for the ensuing year.

In May of this year The Building Trades Parliament, born as I said earlier in 1918 of idealism and visions of men, died. Killed off by materialism and too much talk. We are now in the 1920's slump period, work was scarce and wages decreased by 6 pence per hour, how was the trade to live through this depression? Faith in the movement perhaps and a belief that the Federation would come through the test with credit.



A painting class in 1925 at the Northern Polytechnic.  
Mr. Eaton in the centre is the Instructor.



Mr. L. Drinkwater, Mr. Charles H. Easton and Mr. W. Contrill, teachers of the painting craft.



Mr. H. S. Manning,  
President 1926

## NATIONAL WORKING RULES.

The following is the text of a bill which is to be passed on their steps by members of the National Federation to-day (January 26th, 1927) —

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MASTER PAINTERS AND DECORATORS OF ENGLAND AND WALES AND PAINTERS' WORKING RULES CONCERNING WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS.**

The National Federation of Master Painters, having failed to obtain the co-operation of the Executive Council of the National Operative Painter, Society to negotiate a working agreement for the painting trade, on the basis of a draft submitted on November 11th, 1925, and having been met with a definite refusal to do so, hereby gives notice to all concerned that on and after the 1st day of January, 1927, the following shall be the working rules and conditions governing all Operative Painters at present or hereafter employed by them and every firm subscribing to this code.

The posting of these Rules in the workshop of any such firm shall be evidence of an undertaking to adhere to the same.

These Rules completely nullify the proposals contained in the draft submitted to the employers' Executive Council, and are as follows:—

### Wages.

(1) Painters' wages shall be fixed in accordance with the rise and fall in the cost of living, according to the index figure published by the Ministry of Labour, taking the points on the present level as being equivalent to a rate of £4 per hour for the standard rate of wages as herein graded "A" on September 21st, 1925.—

Grade Classification	Standard Rate
London (within a 12 miles radius)	4 1/2
Zone 1 (within a 12 1/2 miles radius)	4
Zone 2 (within a 15 miles radius)	3 1/2
Zone 3 (within a 17 1/2 miles radius)	3
A1	2 1/2
A2	2
A3	1 1/2
B1	1 1/2
B2	1 1/4
C1	1 1/4
C2	1 1/4
D	1

All gradings operating on September 21st, 1926, shall apply.

(2) Local variations of these rules, recognised and accepted prior to September 21st, 1926, shall be maintained.

(3) Adjustments in rates of pay shall not take place at intervals less than twelve months.

(4) Should the Ministry of Labour index figures for the cost of living show that there has been an average variation of not less than six and a half pence, there shall be an adjusted read of the rate of wages of one halfpenny per hour in respect of such complete variation of six and a half pence.

(5) Any such adjustments shall take place on and after the first Saturday in February in each year, and be based on the average of the cost of living figures for the previous twelve months (January to December inclusive).

(6) Time worked between leaving off tools on Saturday and 4 p.m. time on a fully observance shall starting from the Monday morning, 1926, time.

(7) Any variation in the rate which do not conform with the principle and which have been agreed to locally shall be controlled by the National Federation.

(8) On average work men shall be allowed to work not more than five extra hours per day at ordinary rates.

(9) Men shall be allowed to commence work before the usual starting time, but in no case before 6 a.m., unless so working to be paid for at time and a quarter rate.

### 4. Holidays.

(1) Holiday periods and rates shall be varied locally. As a guiding principle it is recommended that those worked on local holiday periods—fixed by and for the painter's trade shall be paid for at time and half rate for the normal working day.

All overtime during a recognised local holiday period shall be paid for at ordinary time and a half rate during the first four hours, and double ordinary time thereafter.

(2) All local holiday arrangements shall be notified with the National body.

### 5. Extra Rates.

Men working on hazardous contracts and trades shall be paid one penny per hour extra.

### 6. Night Gains.

The ordinary working conditions shall apply, but extra rates more than those of week during the day shall be employed, and therefore per hour above the ordinary rates shall be paid.

### 7. Walking and Travelling Allowances:

(1) Where time shall be for the time lost by the Employer at the rate of three miles per hour from an agreed boundary on the outward journey, up to a distance of 10 miles from work boundary. The man to walk back in three hours shall be guaranteed that on pay days, at the wages he is not paid on the job, he shall be allowed to that the man may be at the day time at the regular pay time. All distances between points shall be reckoned on a straight line.

(2) The Employer to be paid locally.

(3) At the option of the Employer, the Overtimes may be increased to such limit as may be agreed to by the Employer, and the time actually travelling there to the job from the agreed boundary to be paid for.

(4) All the jobs except at the Employer's discretion, men shall commence work on the job at ordinary starting time.

(5) Time spent in walking or travelling shall be not be included as part of the working day, and be paid for one way at one-half time rate.

(6) Walking and travelling expenses shall not apply to men on all of the job, but a man being finished on one job shall be allowed time and travelling expenses to go from that job to another job when engaged by the Employer.

(7) Local variations of these rules, recognised and accepted prior to September 21st, 1926, shall be maintained.

### 8. Country Work and Lodging Allowances.

(1) All men sent to jobs beyond five miles and up to 20 miles from the agreed boundary shall be allowed train fares or be conveyed to and from the job every week, if more than

Due to the pressure brought about by President Cantrill in 1921 education of apprentices was becoming established in the form of Technical classes. The craft teachers formed its own Painting Craft Teachers Association and formulated a curriculum for the classes to follow for the years ahead.

On Thursday February 15th 1923 at the Y.M.C.A. Hall, Leicester, President G. E. Topham invested Mr. C. E. Campbell of London as his successor. It is interesting to note that in this year whilst painters and decorators were struggling with the wet rubbing of paintwork with pumice stone and English manufacturers were struggling to find an alternative waterproof sandpaper, an American firm, The Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Co. were experimenting with just such a material, independently of our white lead controversy. These experiments produced good results just when demand here had become acute.

This new sandpaper was handled in this country by Messrs. R. W. Greef & Co. Ltd., London. The sandpaper was given the name 'Wet or Dry'. By 1924 when John W. Alder of Sunderland was in office it was the year of The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. Admission was 1s6d. Our trade was admirably represented particularly at The Palace of Art and The Palace of Industry. The pictures tell the story of the exhilarating sensation visitors received during their visit.

Also in this year, June 20th to be exact, the 'Lead Paint (Protection against Poisoning) Bill' came in for its second reading in the House of Commons. I have discussed this before but I return to it because as you recall The Master Painters and The Operative Painters supported ratification. Other interested parties proposed that clause 1 of the Bill which was prohibition should be dropped but regulation should be imposed from the outcome of the discussions. It became evident that there was considerable opposition to clause 1 and that if it were pressed to a division, the Bill would be lost.

The Home Secretary therefore urged that the House should grant the second reading of the Bill and send it to Committee where the fate of clause 1 was to be decided. Should the clause survive the whole Bill would become law. If defeated the Government undertook to proceed with the remainder of the Bill. There we must leave lead paint for the time being.

I now come to the year 1925 when J. E. Butterworth became our President in February. It was a year when the education of painters and decorators was a very important issue with the Federation both at national and branch level, due to the emergence of a new school of craft teacher, developing good quality original teaching material for the apprentices in the Technical classes.

One such man from Bolton but teaching at Bradford Technical Institution was Ernest Sanderson who published at this time his teaching aids for the setting out and spacing of letter shapes, Antique Roman and Antique Block. He also produced a sheet on the graining of oak, his theory being: "If you can grain figured oak you can grain any variety of wood." When I was an apprentice in Bradford in the 1950s this method was referred to as the five nightmares. All these sheets are still referred to and used in our colleges today.

W. W. Davidson was another great Decorative Painter with education in his heart. James Lawrence had a deep interest in the technical side of painting and paint chemistry and many others too numerous to mention were writing about our trade and publishing in the form of technical books.

The Annual National Competitions for Apprentices and Craftsmen was now becoming very strong. Actual entries for 1925 totalled 5,089. This caused considerable expense in prizes and organisation which was shared by our National Federation and The National Operatives Painters Society. Never was a portion of our subscription expended in a better cause.

The National Joint Education Committee consisted of seven employers and seven operatives with an alternative employer and operative elected Chairman each year, whose work was never more important during this time.

The exhibition of apprentice educational work was usually held at the same time as the conference which in 1925 was at Manchester, Tuesday November 17th to Monday November 23rd.

It was on Tuesday January 12th 1926 at the Council meeting in Bedford that Mr. Butterworth's year of office ended. For him it was a strenuous year. Trade depression being the root cause. He handed the chain to Henry Manning who also believed that technical education was the great hope for the future of our craft.

On May 23rd 1926 the great strike was declared by the Trade Union Council. It was not a general strike as such but it was sufficiently big and widespread to cause inconvenience and financial loss. It was at this time that the 'Flying Scotsman' was wrecked by striking men, along with other acts of hooliganism and sabotage. It was not the rights or wrongs of the miners or railwaymen in question but the fact that the T.U.C. ordered agreements made prior to 1926 by organisations of employers and operatives to be broken.

It was at a conference of Trade Union Executives, held at The Memorial Hall, London, on May 1st that Mr. Bevin made a statement upon policy decided upon by the T.U.C. Mr. Bevin is reported by The Manchester Guardian to have said: "No argument as to who is to remain in and who is to come out must be raised. You must take your orders and obey them."

This claimed that a small group of men possessed the right to order millions of other men to work or refrain from work at any time or place, who dare issue such an order? A trade union leader did and many thousands of British men obeyed him.

Members of the building trade were also ordered to cease work with the exception of those working on: subsidy housing, hospitals, public health service, ship building and engineering. So with regards to painters the term subsidy housing it was felt covered many forms of domestic buildings and taking the country as a whole the call out of painters fizzled out and the majority remained peaceably at work. The T.U.C. called off the strike on Wednesday May 12th 1926.

Our President of 1926 was a great one for quoting poetry in the speeches he made throughout his term of office. At the 1926 conference in Bedford Mr. Manning quoted a poem after the dinner which had been used before and perhaps had been used since but I quote because it sums up this period of the Federation's work and the importance it put on the Education Committee and Materials Committee.

*An old man trudging a lone highway,  
Came at evening cold and grey,  
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,  
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,  
The sullen stream had no fear to him,  
But he turned when safe on the other side.*

**The DEVON & CORNWALL PAINT CO. LTD.**  
 POOLE-DORSET  
 Manufacturers of the ONLY PERFECT WHITE LEAD SUBSTITUTE

**THE RAPID GROWTH**

**40% per cent**

**40% per cent**

**CFA THRIVING INDUSTRY**

## Lead Paint Act, 1926.

### REGULATIONS.

The Home Office has recently expressed concern at the non-observance of these Regulations and has stated that unless they be better observed other and more drastic steps will need to be taken.

Little reflection is needed for realisation by Master Painters of their interest and duty to observe these Regulations for the safeguarding of the health of workers in the house-painting industry. The main points for remembrance are—

- 1.—The Master Painters' Federation was impetuously consulted while the Regulations were being framed.
- 2.—The operative painter also took part in these discussions.
- 3.—The Regulations are of the simplest possible character.

Their effect is that—

- (1) Dry rubbing down is prohibited.
- (2) Precautions for personal cleanliness of house-painters, e.g., provision of washing accommodations, provision of overalls, and prohibition of meal taking in workrooms.
- (3) Medical inspection and notification of cases of lead poisoning.

The Regulations are set out in full in the accompanying sheet, which may be used for pasting up in the workshop as is required by the Act.

Issued by the Progress of the House of Commons Act, 1926.

**THE NATIONAL MASTER PAINTER**

VOL. 1  
ISS. 2

1930

**THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MASTER PAINTERS & DECORATORS, ENGLAND & WALES**



*Councillor  
R. J. Richardson,  
and Mrs.  
Richardson,  
President and  
Lady, 1931*



*And built a bridge to span the tide,  
 "Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,  
 "You are wasting your strength with building here,  
 Your journey will end with the ending day,  
 You never again will pass this way,  
 You have crossed the chasm deep and wide,  
 Why build this bridge at eventide?"  
 The builder lifted his old grey head,  
 "Good friend, in the path I have come" he said  
 There followed after me to-day,  
 A youth whose feet must pass this way,  
 This chasm that is as nought to me,  
 To that fair haired youth may a pitfall be,  
 He too must cross in the twilight dim,  
 Good friend, I am building this bridge for him."*

The first of January 1927 was important for two things:-

- (1) The Lead Paint (Protection against Poisoning) Act of 1926 came into force.
- (2) The Painters National Working rules governing wages and working conditions came into force (which I produce in full on another page).

It is interesting to note that the Lead Paint Bill passed through The House of Lords in September of 1926 but did not fully ratify the Geneva Convention, which provided for limited prohibition of white lead on interiors and the application of regulations to the external painting of buildings, to which the National Federation of Master Painters put their support.

The new act imposed regulation only. It included no actual prohibition of its use and it referred only to the painting of buildings. All the controversy (and there was a lot) over many years raged around the question of whether there should be:-

- (1) An absolute prohibition of white lead in painting buildings as proposed by the Hatch committee of 1911.
- (2) A measure of internal prohibition and external regulation on painting buildings as proposed by The Geneva Convention 1921 and the abortive Bill introduced by the Labour Government in 1924.

How could lead poisoning be eradicated so long as the reference was to the painting of buildings only? Was the next vexed question to be asked by Federationists. They also regretted the seriously modified regulations compared with the original into which the Federation had put so much effort.

On January 15th 1927, at the council meeting of The National Federation of Master Painters at Leicester, Mr. George H. Biscoe was formally installed as President for 1927.

By March the Federation had to consider the New Factories Bill which would affect all industries and was looked upon as further regulation along with the scaffolding regulations which it was thought would necessitate a large increase in the ranks of Factory Inspectors. Therefore our Federation made it their business to keenly scrutinise both of these proposed bills.

The long awaited Lead Paint Act was fully published at Conference and Trade Exhibition time which was held at Leicester. I produce this in full later in the text as it was issued on September 6th 1927.



*The Duresco stand (King of water paints) at the Newcastle Conference and Exhibition 1931.*

*Just visible along the side are several decorative panels which was the work of students and craftsmen using Duresco as a medium.*

*1st prize of six guineas, second of four guineas and a third prize of three guineas were awarded.*



*1st Prize.*



*2nd Prize.*



*Third Prize.*

At the conference an old friend of Federation work was nominated President for 1928. He was Thomas Foster and was installed as President in January 1928. He was a good man, able to boost the morale of decorators struggling to keep working in these very difficult times. Many decorators saw education as the big development and the path to take to improve the status of the craft. Opportunities for apprentices were looking good. Competition work was interesting to do. Duresco was worth £6-6-0d first prize and Lewis Berger & Sons offered a prize of £60 tenable at The Royal College or other approved art schools. The City and Guilds certificate was also worked hard for by apprentices but only a handful obtained first class awards in what was a very difficult examination by today's standards.

Although our President was a Bolton man he chose to have the Conference at St. Annes-on-Sea on September 24th to 29th. Here references were still being made in speeches to the long drawn out depression and the lack of painters work but the Federation stayed successful and looked to the future with Mr. Forster proposing that Mr. John R. Chappell of Leeds be our President for the year 1929.

Again the work of the Education Committee featured as being of the greatest importance producing the syllabus of work for the competitions for young hopeful craftsmen. The Butterworth prize was open to employers and journeymen, the subject being Business Management and worth two guineas. The Sutherland prize, in memory of our founder, was awarded for essays on Craft Hygiene, all of which were presented at an exhibition of manufacturers and student work at the Leeds Conference held in October at Leeds Hall. This was still seen as the most important method of advertising our craft to the public.

In January 1930 our Federation launched with some trepidation the 'Federation official organ' called The National Master Painter. This was to be published monthly at Federation H.Q., Brazenose Street, Manchester. Therefore with Education, materials, wages and conditions and a new monthly journal to produce, the work of the Federationists was mapped out for the thirties. Certainly work was becoming more available and employers were looking towards a more prosperous century.

Mr. A. Andrews of London was our President for 1930 followed in 1931 by Councillor Richardson of Newcastle upon Tyne. The Annual Conference was held at Newcastle upon Tyne on Tuesday September 22nd and in connection with this conference the usual exhibition was held in St. Georges Drill Hall, St. Marys Place. The usual trade stands were there but it was the work of apprentices that stole the show. 6,000 specimens of work were submitted, the young painter of the 30's having to survive tests of: Drawing, Design, Lettering, Graining, Varnishing, Stencilling, Colour schemes, Marbling, Heraldic devices, Water-colour sketches and Nature studies. Mr. Edwin Lett was then chairman of the National Joint Education Committee who along with The National Federation of Master Painters had made major endeavours to educate not only the painting apprentice of that time but also the public.

Our President for 1932 was A. Ratcliffe M.P. and in 1933 J. Wigley. In 1934 J. W. Boanson J.P. presided over business.

Regular manufacturers that took exhibition stands at the Conferences and also at Olympia were:-

#### Lewis Berger & Sons

Earliest records show that Lewis Berger began manufacturing at Homerton in the year 1760. He must have established what is surely the oldest dry colour factory in Britain. As a



The House of Lewis Berger built in the late 1700s as it was in 1863 in the grounds of his Homerton Dry Colour Works. The bow window was the office of Lewis Berger.

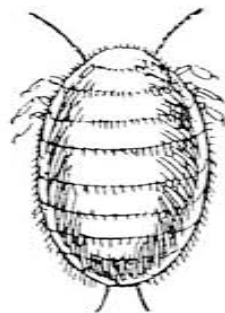
Lewis Berger & Sons, Ltd.,  
Makes of Paints, Colours & Varnishes  
HOMERTON, LONDON, N.E.



"The Berger" with his cane in London in 1760 and shortly after Paris on the way home.



THE FIRST HEAD OF  
THE HOUSE OF BERGER.



The  
Cochineal  
Insect.

paint chemist he developed a secret process for making Vermilion (the sulphide of Mercury), hence the trade mark which the company adopted. They also made Crimson from the cochineal insect which also turned orange red by adding acids and violet by adding alkalis. Prussian Blue was also produced. The company Lewis Berger and Sons Ltd. lasted for 134 years with a member of the Berger family upholding the Berger name. In the 1920's it was a busier factory with the age old methods still surviving in one shed along side much more up to date paint making methods. The rest we know!

#### Arthur Sanderson and Sons Ltd.

Another trade stand very often present was that of Arthur Sanderson and Sons Ltd. established in 1860 as an agency for French Paperhangings in Soho Square. Arthur Sanderson the founder, soon created a large business from this connection with Parisian manufacturers. Within five years he had transferred operations to 52 Berners Street and by 1879 he had decided to go into manufacturing wallpapers and proceeded to erect a factory for this purpose in Chiswick. Sadly, before the factory could produce wallpapers Arthur Sanderson died in 1882. He left behind three very able successors in his sons, Messrs. John, Arthur and Harold under whose management the business grew and prospered.

John Sanderson died in 1915 but it was Arthur Burgough Sanderson in control of Berners Street from 1881 until 1932 and Harold Sanderson in control at Chiswick and Perivale who were the commercial giants. With outstanding foresight they produced what is now quite simply an institution of quality and design to all who have in the past and today worked with Sanderson's materials.

#### Sissons Brothers and Company Ltd.

Thomas Sissons commenced business in the old town of Hull in 1800 as a partner in the firm of Sissons, Weddell and Company but withdrew in 1803 to form his own company with his brother Richard Jennison to be known as Sissons Brothers and Company located on the banks of the River Humber eventually covering 19 acres. During the history of this firm it saw the great evolution in painting products through the whole range of varnishes, enamels, water paints, plastic emulsion paint and synthetic coatings.

When Sissons is mentioned amongst painters one remarkable material comes to mind, Hall's Distemper, one the earliest washable water paints and certainly the most famous. Or was it just good advertising? Who has not seen the two painters carrying a plank bearing the name Hall's Distemper? The original patent belonged to Mr. Allan T. Hall, a relative of the Sissons family.

In 1926 The Prince of Wales made a visit to the factory and throughout the life of the firm it showed continued expansion specialising in the 1950's in the rapid advance of plastic emulsions and always with a Sissons on the Board of Directors until modern commerce swallowed it up.

#### The Ripolin Poster

When it came to advertising of paint materials of yesteryear, the Ripolin poster (reproduced) is probably the most remarkable well architected poster ever produced. The elegant foot, the lively character, the accessories and whole range of colour. Sadly I cannot reproduce these colours but even in monochrome what this French poster artist captured is a delight. Also we decorators are still juggling with our colours, materials and work to this day.



Thomas Sissons, founder of the great paint firm Sissons Brothers and Company Ltd.



The Prince of Wales escorted by Mr. J. A. Dew.

How Hall's Distemper opens a new era of good profits for Decorators.

Due to the great profits desired for Hall's Distemper Decorating, it is of less importance to the decorating trade to know that—

the large advertising of Hall's Distemper is being more than ever directed to assist the trade in obtaining the highest prices for their work.

**HALL'S DISTEMPER**

is a scientific and higher form of decoration than wallpaper, and the demand we make for stipped walls, picture rails, stencilled friezes, white enamelled woodwork, and painted Hall's Distemper work for the walls, commands a higher price.

The change to this form of decorative work is necessitated by the assurance of better, and in such a measure as to quickly meet the local situation.

It pays to push Hall's Distemper Decorations. 20 shillings.—All one price.

SISSONS BROTHERS & CO., LTD. LONDON.

London Office: 20, Abchurch Lane, E.C. 4.  
 Bristol Office: 11, Broad Street, S.E.  
 Glasgow Office: 111, Bath Street.  
 Reading Office: 4, Gros Street.

NOTE.—Hall's Distemper should not be confused with the more so-called washable distempers now offered for sale, one with the claim of material which requires an elaborate preparation of walls.

**RIPOLIN**

The Ripolin Poster.

### Geo. M. Whiley, Gold Beaters

Established in 1783 Geo. M. Whiley, Gold Beaters trade stand was often seen at our Trade Exhibitions throughout these early years of Federation work.

The protection of gold leaf was essentially a British industry with English beaters unrivalled throughout the world.

Machines play a small part. A long narrow bar 12x1x½" was cast and rolled into a thin ribbon about 525 feet long by 1 inch wide. It was then cut into one inch squares.

The gold beater took 150 of these squares which he interleaved with as many parchment leaves. This bundle was called a 'cutch'. The cutch was then beaten on a smooth marble block with a 15lb hammer for 20 minutes by which time the gold had thinned and extended to the edges. It is then taken from the cutch and each piece is quartered; the 150 become 600 pieces. These were then interleaved with gold beaters 'skin'. This bundle is called a 'shoder' and is 4½ inches square. Another beating takes place with a 12lb hammer, more careful, more delicate, more precise than the last.

After two hours the gold has expanded as far as the slider will allow. Each piece is once again quartered, 600 becoming 2,400. These are again interleaved with gold beaters skin to form three packets, each containing 800 pieces called the 'Mould' which is 5¼ inches square. The third and last beating takes place with a 7lb hammer for 5 hours. The leaf is now so thin that even a change in the weather could affect it. 25 of these leaves were then placed in a book of tissue paper, the leaves of which had been covered with rouge to prevent the thin leaves of gold from adhering to the paper. One ounce of gold in leaf form will cover 250 square feet.

### The House of Williamson, Est. 1775

Ripon is a place where varnish was first made in England and all because of an old-world banker who could speak a little French. Many French refugees came to England in the 1770s and one found his way to Ripon market place. No-one could speak French except Mr. Daniel Williamson the banker who took the frightened refugee home with him.

In return for this hospitality the Frenchman told the secret of varnish making to Williamson and so in his leisure time Mr. Williamson made varnish.

When private bankers were ousted out by the stock banks Williamson began to sell varnish for profit. The earliest records show that in 1775 varnish sold at £3-10-0d per gallon. In 1924 it was 19 shillings per gallon. It was Daniel Williamson who adopted the trade mark "as true steel as Ripon Rowels" which is a phrase indicative of sterling worth and integrity.

Returning to the work of the National Federation of Master Painters and Decorators in the year 1935. Alderman Douglas Gosling O.B.E., J.P. was President that year followed by Mr. D. Green in 1936, F. Robinson in 1937 and E. Hoyle in 1938.

It was Mr. J. W. Brett who found himself in the unfortunate position of President in 1939, the year the second world war broke out. Little did Mr. Brett realise that seven presidential conference after dinner speeches lay ahead of him. These years again were very difficult for the decorators and the Federation. Sad and bitter experiences of the war years are still with us to this day. The Federation once again losing a number of its members by death during this war.



Mr. Arthur Sanderson, founder.

Mr. Arthur Burgough Sanderson.



The Berners Street premises of Messrs. A. Sanderson & Sons Ltd.

**A. SANDERSON & SONS** LTD. 52-55 BERNERS ST. LONDON W.

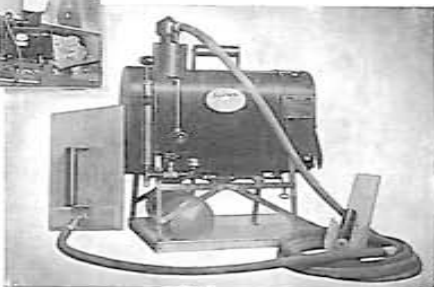


MANUFACTURERS OF WALLPAPERS PRINTED IN EAST-TO-LIGHT COLOURS SUPPLIED ONLY THROUGH THE TRADE

SEE OUR No. 6 BOOK.



This BRITISH STRIPPER will save its cost in a week!



Save your money! Buy the only reliable "Lightning" Wallpaper Stripper... The "Lightning" Wallpaper Stripper is made of all-steel... (1) No wall covering can withstand it... (2) No wall covering can withstand it...

...best corner, straight or not after opening... (3) Leave the wall clean, smooth and finished... (4) No wet work, no dust, no mess, no material waste... (5) No wet work, no dust, no mess, no material waste... (6) Can strip without stain... (7) Can strip without stain... (8) Can strip without stain... (9) Can strip without stain... (10) Can strip without stain...

"LIGHTNING" WALLPAPER STRIPPER

ARTHUR SANDERSON AND SONS LTD. 52-55, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.1

Sanderson developed the steam stripper - this is the 1930's model.

During these war years the Annual General meetings were held in Leeds and by the September of 1945 at the A.G.M. held at the Art Gallery, Mr. Brett delivered his final address. Normal working conditions were far from being normal and Federation members were voting on a reorganisation scheme. Therefore as far as the Federation's history is concerned Mr. Brett must be another prominent Presidential figure for his work over these years.

Decorative skills did not suffer at all during this period in fact stencilling had reached its pinnacle as my illustration shows. Unfortunately from this time on stencilling became a lost art to our trade, so too, attempts to imitate real wood and marble were being abandoned, but grain effects survived a little longer. It was relief decoration that was now in vogue at first using plaster mixed with distemper (Gesso relief), until the innovation of 'plastic paint' under the brand name of Marb-le-cote which later became the Artex we know today.

Also the development in paint at this time was 'Dulux', 'Dulite' and 'Beldec', products of I.C.I. (Paints) Ltd. which was formerly Nobel Chemical Finishes Ltd.

To take the Federation into the 1950s Mr. Brett handed the chain of office over to Lt. Col. R. Stuart Sisterson of Newcastle for the year 1946. Capt. F. P. Wallsgrove M.C. took office for 1947, James Dearden 1948 and another of Manchester's sons Mr. E. Walter Webster was our President for 1949 followed by W. S. Barrett in 1950.

In 1950 the National Joint Educational Council brought into use for the first time funds bequeathed to it by the late Mr. W. J. Cummings which provided two Annual Scholarships valued at £20 each. It was given to the student with the highest aggregate mark over a five or six year period.

The first award went to Mr. Ronald Lippiatt of Leamington. He chose to have extra and concentrated tuition with the great Mr. Zeph Carr of Sheffield. Ron became a craft teacher in later years at Coventry and was a boss of mine when I took on my first teaching post there.

It was about 1950 that the technical advance in our industry began. Emulsion paints were in their infancy, so too was roller application and spraying decorative paints. Schools as well as parents were giving advice to boys; "to get a trade" or "with a trade behind you, you are never without work or a bob or two in your pocket" was being said over and over again.

Jobs were available in the painting craft but it was up to federated and also non-federated members to attract these school leavers into the job which our President for 1950 had made a priority for his year in office. The number of apprentices registered as indentured apprentices was smaller than expected for the year. Craft education under the banner of the National Joint Education Council (N.J.E.C.) was never more important so that our trade could make the most of the opportunities that lay ahead of it. Therefore our Federation set out to ensure an increasing number of suitably trained personnel was made available each year.

It is true to say, the technical training during the 50s was good, carried out by the new breed of craft teacher and it continued to be good for the next 25/30 years. An apprenticeship in decorating was something a lad could be proud of, attending evening classes three times a week plus a day release if you happened to work for an enlightened employer. Five years working towards the City & Guilds final examinations and making sure that the indenture agreement was not broken enabled you to defer your National Service from the age of 18 to the age of 21 when the apprenticeship was complete and you were "out of your time".





At the Warden's Stand Down Parade, London, August 1945: Her Majesty the Queen spoke to Councillor Douglas Gosling, O.B.E., J.P., President of the Manchester and District Federation of Master Painters.

(Daily Sketch photograph)



Work produced in stencil by W. W. Davidson in 1941. This art is now lost to our trade.



Seek protection from the raiders... blend your factory into its surroundings; conceal the clean, intricate lines of roof and chimney with a patchwork of paint—HOLDENS CAMOUFLAGE PAINT. Available in all the special shades of green, brown, grey, etc. Suitable for every camouflage scheme—and approved by the Government. Further particulars sent on application.

**IMPERMEATION PAINTS**

Also surface, brick or green paint, for external application to buildings and roof tiles. Prevents any water from getting through, so essential if you require waterproofing.

**ARTHUR HOLDEN & SONS LTD.**  
LONDON



Mr. Zeph Carr with his pupil, Mr. Ronald Lippiatt.

All this behind you, you were then stuck in the forces for two years National Service. After this break in your working life it was usual to return to the old shop where your job would be waiting for you, as a tradesman of course, not an apprentice.

Before leaving 1950 and Craft Education, one of our finest craft teachers, Charles H. Eaton retired in the summer of this year after 30 years at the Northern Polytechnic having devoted a life's work to raising the standard of painting and decorating. He was one of a small group of craft teachers who in the 1930s founded the Painting Craft Teachers Association and who also collaborated with W. H. Cantrill in establishing the Institute of British Decorators Examinations. It was teachers such as Charles Eaton, Randall Whittaker, William Cantrill, James Lawrence and others who were responsible for ensuring that the future "skib" carried on the traditions of his calling but also made sure that he was sent out into the trade with the knowledge that work was serious and time valuable.

Our President for 1950, Mr. W. S. Barrett, F.I.B.D., with a background in decorating going back to the 18th Century, held the Annual Conference in Bath during the first week in October. The following officers were appointed for 1951:- President: Mr. W. J. Brooker, London. Vice-President: Coun. Ellis Whatley, M.B.E., Middlesbrough. Junior Vice-President: Mr. E. Haley, Bradford. The Treasurer at this time was Mr. H. R. McDermid of Guiseley.

The annual installation of the President of the N.F.M.P. for 1951 took place at Frascati's Restaurant, London during a social evening on December 12th 1950. Mr. Brooker then began his year of office. The year was important because of the Festival of Britain taking place that year exactly 100 years after the Great Exhibition of 1851 which had led to the birth of technical education. How the Festival of Britain would affect the future was in the thoughts of many people and the effect it would have on their lives.

Exhibitions were popular in 1951 and Mr. Brooker's Annual Conference saw a return of the "Trade Exhibition" alongside the usual National Joint Educational Council Exhibition of student work. This after a gap of 13 years. (Caused by a member of our profession - not a skilled man!, judging by the devastation he left behind.)

This conference was held in Brighton during the first week of October 1951. All the work produced by the student craftsmen was of superior quality but the general painting industry was still suffering from the usual labour problems; no difficulty with quantity but a vast improvement in quality was again appealed for by our President. He quoted: "A coat of size and a coat of gloss paint is not paintin." May I dare to add, I remember this dodge quite well, glue size was an amazing material.

*"Some men of noble stock were made,  
Some glory in the murder blade,  
Some praise a science or an art,  
But I like honorable Trade."*

The December meeting of the National Council of the N.F.M.P. was the occasion when the new Federation officers previously elected at the Annual General Meeting assumed their duties and for 1952 on the 4th December Coun. Ellis Whatley of Middlesbrough was installed. The country had a serious economic problem at this time which meant that the Federation had to yet again weather a storm by instilling optimism and building upon its foundations for future individual and collective prosperity.

The Federation's conference was held in Scarborough from 27th September to 4th October. Mr. Whatley became the only President not to attend his own conference



Mr. E. Walter Webster,  
President N.F.M.P. 1949



Mr. Walter Barrett,  
President N.F.M.P. 1950



Eric Johns from a drawing  
by W. W. Davidson.



Illustration by J. T. Smith.

**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF MASTER HOUSE PAINTERS  
AND DECORATORS OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES.  
INCORPORATED.**  
WAS FOUNDED IN 1894 TO PROMOTE  
AND PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF  
THE TRADE BY SOCIAL INTERCOURSE  
AND EDUCATIONAL WORK.

This example of lettering was executed by Ernest Dinkel.



George Gavin Laidler.



John Cantrill.



Wm. Sutherland.

TIME SHEET For the week ending *Sept 17 1934*

*Herbert N. Bycroft*  
**Herbert N. Bycroft,**  
Decorator, Woodford.

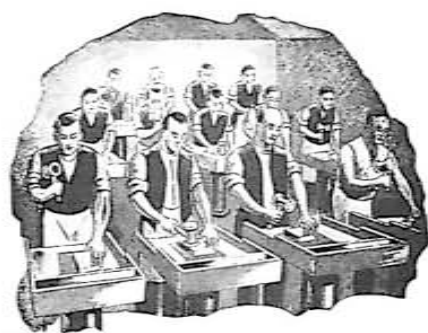
Date	Particulars	Hours	Rate	Total
17/9/34	Decorating	8 1/2		8 1/2
18/9/34	Decorating	7 1/2		7 1/2
19/9/34	Decorating	4 1/2		4 1/2
20/9/34	Decorating	2 1/2		2 1/2
21/9/34	Decorating	0		0
22/9/34	Decorating	7 1/2		7 1/2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>40</b>

NOTE: PAYMENT AND BUSINESS MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE.

Workman's timesheet 1934 showing hourly rate - Manchester area.



Dilemma of a bald headed gilder.



Wright's striking good quality  
English Gold Leaf  
"takes a lot of beating"

For its lasting qualities under all conditions of time and weather none other can compare with our Extra Thick Best "Special" Leaf. Signs done with this 20 years ago are still in first-class order. Wright's Gold Leaf is still the best.

SIGN WRITERS' & DECORATORS' REQUISITES

**William Wright & Sons, Ltd.**  
Manufacturers & Merchants  
**LYMM near Warrington**  
Established 1840.

**HALL'S DISTEMPER**  
THE OIL-BOUND WATER PAINT

Hall's Distemper builds up the reputation of the decorator as assuredly as it beautifies homes. The ease with which it is applied enables a time schedule to be observed.

Drying hard, quickly and with a beautiful surface, it will not flake, fade or rub off.

A satisfied customer means reputation enhanced and goodwill increased. To use Hall's Distemper is to guarantee both.

Made in 60 artistic shades. *Test Book on application.*

Sole Manufacturers: **SINSONS BROTHERS & CO., Ltd. HULL.**  
London: 201, Abchurch Lane, S.E.1.

(unfortunately due to ill health) but by December 2nd he was in good health and able to install Mr. Edward Haley as President for 1953 at the Craiglands Hotel, Ilkley, Mr. Haley being a member of the Bradford Branch of the N.F.M.P.

Mr. Haley had a very colourful year of office ahead due to the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Many new colours for bunting and decoration were developed by the Colour Council who also issued a commemorative colour card of five colours sponsored by Princess Margaret.

Elizabethan Red

Marguerite Green

Beau Blue

Princess Gray

Spun Gold

This card was available to Federation members at a cost of ten shillings (50p).

At this point in our history the working week for the operative was 46½ hours. (8½ hours Monday to Friday and 4 hours Saturday). Yearly subscription to the Federation for employers was 2½ guineas but about to be increased to 3 guineas.

The philosophy of the Annual Conference of the National Trade Federation was designed to bring together as large a number of members as possible with their family and friends, to transact business and take part in social and sporting activities. It was also intended to publicise such a Federation. Mr. Haley's conference at Harrogate met all these criteria with an exhibition of excellent painting work in the Sun Pavilion, Valley Gardens, along with a first class, well supported Trade Exhibition at the Drill Hall in Leeds, terminating in the largest attended dinner and dance since the war.

1954 was Diamond Jubilee Year for the N.F.M.P. with Mr. James E. Littler as President. We were a Federation of great strength at this time. Membership was good but could of course have been better. It's strength at this time came from traditions of its 60 years of history sufficient of which was still known to its members. This was a compelling factor which made the successors of our founders solve the problems just as confusing to them in the 1950s as they are to us in 1994.

In 1954 the Federation had the problem of deferment to deal with. It was felt that this deferment should be compulsory for craft apprentices in order that their training could be completed without interruption. It appeared that this could not be granted due to limiting the apprentices freedom of choice.

Another problem our executive had to deal with was the word "Improver" with regards to an apprentice. The word was an unfortunate choice. It was given to describe a lad who was not apprenticed but who for instance had drifted into the trade after National Service at the age of 18. However it was a word which was often abused. For example a lad who served his apprenticeship, had been deferred, had then completed his National Service and subsequently returned to his old shop was often called an "improver" for a year or so. The Federation actively discouraged its use.

It was in the summer of 1954 that I had my first taste of the decorating trade. I worked for six weeks during the school holidays in my father's firm for which he paid me £1 per week. I remember well the operatives, each covered from head to toe in whites with a painter's apron touching their boot laces, the smells of lead paint, glue size and flat oil paint. The early emulsions were mysterious to me because I was not allowed by the other decorators to do much painting work. I simply 'mugged' after them. I particularly remember the smell that came from a box of Walpamur when it was opened and emptied into a galvanised pail to be beaten up into a consistency for application.



Notabilities at Bath.



The Annual Dinner 1950. Held in the Pump Room, Bath on Wednesday 4th October.



Alderman E. Whatley (Middlesbrough) installing Mr. Edward Haley of Bradford as President for 1953.



Advertisement from John Line for Coronation year.

Mr. Littler was yet another President from Manchester and his choice of venue for the conference was Blackpool. He in turn installed Mr. H. Ray McDermid, F.I.B.D. of Skipton and member of the Wharfedale Branch at the Craiglands Hotel, Ilkley.

1955 is the year in which I started full time working in the decorating trade. I joined my father's firm in the summer. He was proprietor of the firm named Chapman & Oughterson in Keighley, Yorkshire. There were another two Named shops in the town, one of which I remember was called Balderson and Dickenson. (Today they might well be known as C. & O. Decorators or B. & D. Painting Contractors, I wonder!) I think I prefer the 50s more lengthy description of the firms. A more common, name for them was "Green & Cream" and "Brown and Cream" on account of the limited choice of colours they seemed to use at this time.

I went to Bradford Regional College of Art for two afternoons and three evenings per week. Attendance was virtually compulsory because of being able to be deferred at the age of eighteen. I was lucky, my craft teachers were of the new wave of keen and very skilled people.

Ernest Sanderson had left Bradford by then and Reg Wilson was Principal of the decorating section of the college. Charles Hartley and Leonard Smith were teachers there and Mr. Barlow from Ilkley was the man who taught me how to grain. Night after night we had to practice the 'Five Nightmares' of figured oak until it was mastered.

A rubbing of your evening's work was taken on lining paper then the panel was cleaned off ready for the next session. This is how apprentices of the painting trade were taught the skills in the 1950s. Work was still mainly done on panels 21 inches by 42 inches. One side was moulded and used for graining the various woods, the other side was flat for sign work. On this type of panel the young painter practised many skills and he also learnt the dexterity and patience that our craft demanded from them.

When the City & Guilds Craft Examination had to be taken the work was done on a larger panel measuring 8 feet by 4 feet which included a half door. All the preparatory work was done during several weeks attendance at the day release class and when the time came, usually around Cup Final Day, attendance at college on two Saturday afternoons was necessary to sit the practical examination. This discipline was valuable to the apprentice. Day release, evening class attendance together with working one to one on site with skilled tradesmen taught us the trade well.

During Mr. McDermid's busy year of office in 1955 there was a notable occasion and unique event. April 1st saw the inauguration of the W. G. Sutherland Scholarship Fund. It was W. G. Sutherland's father who had launched the National Association and had left no material wealth to his son except "A job to do and a tradition to be carried out". Which is what he did with overwhelming ability mainly as editor of the Journal, now called the Painting and Decorating. He was also secretary of our association for many years. Manufacturers and decorators alike contributed to this fund which in 1955 amounted to £1,100, proof if proof were needed of the high regard and esteem in which Mr. Sutherland was held in the painting and decorating industry. The fund was awarded at a rate of £100 as an annual scholarship to a part-time student of the craft.

The Annual Conference held at the Grand Hotel, Scarborough in 1955 took a big issue as its theme, that of 'Membership'. Yes it was then as it is now. What qualifies membership to the Federation or the Association now? Members in 1955 were reminded that the Federation was not a craft guild therefore the craftsmanship of the employer was

not in question. The Federation was a registered trade union for employers of the painting and decorating craft and as long as the employer was a bona-fide employer then this qualified for membership. The argument remains the same.

President for the 1956 was F. J. Williams and in this year the death of W. G. Sutherland Jnr. occurred after a lifetimes work in our craft. In 1957 Mr. Allan Exley of Colne, Lancashire became President, a post richly deserved. His work for the Federation was untiring. His installation took place in Sheffield which was a very prosperous 'City of Steel' at that time. Ruskin once described Sheffield as "A dark picture set in a golden frame".

Mr. Exley was a prolific writer of craft practices and experiences as well as being National Secretary for many years. The Annual Conference was held at Southport with the Trade Exhibition held earlier at Birmingham.

1958 and so a return to Yorkshire and a special town familiar to decorators. Mr. T. Craven Lightowler, President for this year and in 1959 Councillor E. F. Oddy, F.I.B.D., ex mayor of Harrogate and now President of our Federation. During Mr. Oddy's year of office as National President, my father Mr. W. Binns, William to some, Billy to most and Willy to the rest who knew him became President of the Northern Eastern Region of the N.F.M.P.

During my apprenticeship I produced an example of bleached feathered mahogany on a 42 inch by 22 inch panel. It was no masterpiece but it did enter the N.J.E.C. exhibition of apprentices work in 1959.

The medium or gild used was two parts raw linseed oil and three parts turps plus a spot or two of terebine in a dipper with colours on a palette. I mention this because the transparent oil medium formula was used by a lot of grainers before 1960 although the oil percentage depended a lot on the heat of the room, size of work or speed of craftsman. Proprietary brands of graining colour were available.

Two of the great grainers this trade has known were Zeph Carr practising in the 30s and 40s and Ernest Dobson, F.I.B.D., R.C.A. (Brussels) who I believe was most well known in the 50s and 60s. Ernest Dobson was not just a master grainer but also a teacher of the craft and trade journalist. He was also the only man that I am aware of, although I am sure there are many others, who graduated from the Academy of Painting in Brussels which was widely advertised in the Trade Journals before the First World War.

To this day the Institut Van Der Kelen is still very successful with a two year waiting list of students from all over the world for entry to the yearly six month course in trompe l'oeil. When I visited the school in 1991 I found a fascinating place where you step back in time and learn the skills of 100 years ago. Unfortunately I could not take up the option of a place due to the prohibitive costs involved.

1960 was a time when the National Federation of Master Painters had to make progress by employing new apprentices running the firm more efficiently and attending Branch meetings as often as possible.

It was the time when lightweight tubular scaffold was beginning to replace the timber Rap-Rig scaffold and when high opacity paints and thixotropics were being marketed, the painters classified them as "One coat paints". Luxol from British Paints Ltd. was one such enamel the manufacturers did not describe as a one coat paint but did accept that higher labour costs meant a demand for economy which could be met satisfactorily by using high opacity enamels such as Luxol. I have no doubt that at this time master painters took



Mr. J. E. Littler.



Mr. William Binns.



Mr. Edwin W. Cartledge.



Maurice Waterhouse,  
First President,  
British Decorators  
Association 1973.



Mr. E. D. France, M.B.E., Manpower Consultant, Dept. of  
Employment and Productivity speaking at the Conference in 1969.



advantage of these products. Also the search for brilliant white was on. We used to add a little touch of black to our white at this time in order to stop the yellowing look. It was Jenson and Nickolson Ltd., manufacturers of Robbialac Paints, who came up with the first super white which they called "Della Robbia". This was achieved mainly by high pigmentation using titanium dioxide. It was from the Florentine artist and sculpter Lucadella Robbia whose white glaze has defied emulation that the white emulsion paint took its name. The emulsion paint that was unable to gain popularity was Hadrians, Synflat containing IFCA, a powerful insecticide that kills all known insects. That very expensive advertising dog also appeared in the early 60s.

In the colleges at this time the full pre-apprentice course for intending building apprentices was set to become a vital supplement to the normal education system and a source of recruitment to our trade. The course was intended to provide school leavers with an extended general education as well as a sound introduction to the building industry and the various crafts within it.

Our association once again in its history was fighting for its life after five turbulent years. It went to conference in 1960 at St. Annes-on-Sea with an optimistic note for the next decade. Councillor C. T. Holmes J.P., L.I.B.D. of Cardiff was our President. With unemployment virtually non-existent and plenty of work about, things did look good. In fact labour relations were far from satisfactory. The employers were not taking on enough apprentices to ensure a continuous flow of craftsmen. This was a completely different picture to when the Federation last visited St. Annes in 1938. The employer took advantage of the unemployment situation and diluted the labour force with low paid apprentices and tradesmen. Then dire need drove the public to do their own decorating. In 1960 the decorators faced a do-it-yourself market dangerously glamourised by the media and some paint manufacturers as a fashionable pastime.

*"Little drops of whiskey,  
Little hips of gin  
Makes a feller wonder  
Where the 'ell he's bin"*

At St. Annes Mr. E. W. Cartledge of North Staffordshire branch was nominated for office of President for 1961. His installation dinner took place in Stoke-on-Trent on 7th December 1960. Fortunately in 1961 labour relationships eased a little by the reduction of the working week to 42 hours from 2nd October 1961 and the standard rates were:

(i) Craftsmen and Labourers

	London and Liverpool District		Grade A	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
Craftsmen	5	7½	5	6
Labourers	5	0	4	10½

(ii) Apprentices

Age	% of Craftsman's Rate	London and Liverpool District		Grade A	
		s.	d.	s.	d.
15	25	1	5	1	4½
16	33½	1	10½	1	10
17	50	2	9¼	2	9
18	62½	3	6¼	3	5¼
19	75	4	2¼	4	1½
20	87½	4	11¼	4	9¼

Norris V. Cox, President in 1962 along with his committee, were very concerned about the heavy losses the Federation was suffering due to non payment of subscriptions by members. It was a real problem even though membership was strong, up to 3,100 divided into five regions and ninety six branches. It's strength was still in the North. Yet over the previous five years there remained an overall deficit in funds of £4,524.00.

You see, patient reader, up until the late 50s this painting and decorating employers federation was made up of quite wealthy member firms but it was slowly being infiltrated by 'the small man' (which by now had become as hackneyed a phrase as do-it-yourself). All firms had to pay the same subscription of three guineas. At the time, therefore, the little fella felt he was paying for the big fella, so a huge case for graduated subscription was staring the committee in the face because the small man now accounted for three quarters of the membership.

"The small man did not then aspire to high office" (this also applies today), indeed he could not afford such aspirations. The small man was just content to belong and made to feel that he belonged (this too applies in today's association).

In 1963 Mr. Donald H. Gow became President and in 1964 Mr. L. Millen and by the time Harold Haley of Bradford became National President in 1965 following his late brother in the honour of high office of the National Federation of Master Painters of England and Wales there was a grave crisis within the ranks. Producing the journal was a major problem, the secretary resigned and the National Office would have ground to a halt if it hadn't been for Mr. Douglas, the Assistant Secretary and other loyal staff. A Director of the Federation had to be appointed and he was Mr. John F. C. Morris who was followed in the appointment by Mr. Ken A. C. Blease in 1969.

It was Harold and his lady Rene who were of great strength of character who brought this association through a critical and very troubled year. Indeed he was re-elected to serve a second term of office and along with the director and committee produced a stronger and more virile Federation after his two years were over.

We were once again represented on the National Joint Council for the Building Industry and were in close contact with the Construction Industry Training Board and other Governmental bodies. We now had National and Worldwide recognition.

Mr. Frederick A. Wilby of North Staffordshire branch was installed National President in December 1966 by Mr. Haley. A lot of work lay ahead of Mr. Wilby and the committee members to ensure that the Federation's re-organisation, development and financial stability be achieved. In order to stabilise costs the offices of the N.F.M.P. moved in this year from Manchester to Harrogate and members were asked to subscribe by way of a supplementary subscription to provide up to date financing - 'A bitter pill to swallow!'. In October of 1967 decorators were asked to gather together in conference in a "Beautiful Heaven of Peace" - "Hardd Hafan Hedd", Llandudno town's motto. Then in 1968, Mr. H. S. Forshaw took office and Mr. G. F. Humphreys, Treasurer had the unenviable task of asking for yet higher and higher subscriptions.

On a personal note, by this time I had studied for the Full Technological Certificate in Painting and Decorating at Leeds Technical College where I met up with the great master John E. Deady. I also obtained a Certificate of Education, Leeds University, studied for at Huddersfield Technical Teaching Training College. My first teaching post was at Coventry, Warwickshire during which time I met many dynamic personalities of our trade. Painting and Deocrating departments began to lose their attachment to Art

Colleges and became part of Building Departments. Dramatic changes were also set in motion in the education of our apprentices, indeed the whole apprenticeship scheme was about to change. I met Peter Fisher, a lecturer at Brighton Technical College, leader and supporter of the C.I.T.B. new pattern of training. He was very scornful of the methods of teaching apprentices on the 42 inches by 22 inches panel and the 4 foot by 8 foot screen.

Imperfect though the system may have been it did produce good craftsmen as replied by Mr. John Butterworth, F.R.S.A., F.I.B.D., editor, Journal of Painting and Decorating. Clearly Mr. Fisher needed reminding that the Federation of Master Painters pioneered craft classes for apprentices, therefore if changes were taking place, the Federation would play a vital part in its development even though some of us instinctively work towards the glories of the past.

Perhaps the case of:-

*"He is right and you are right,  
All is right as right can be."*

Heraldry, Graining or free hand ornament. It was a good discipline if nothing else which seems to me to be lacking in today's training.

I also met Mr. John Leeming, F.I.B.D. of Poole, a leading craft educationalist and highly successful Master Painter and Decorator who became our President possibly at the most critical stage of a long history of the Federation. He was just the man to hold the office of Presidency in 1969 whilst the development of Craft Training was put on a sound basis under the Industrial Training Boards.

The conference in Bournemouth in October of 1969 was the first held in the South of England for many years and Mr. Blease's first annual conference as our newly appointed director.

It was Ald. John Peace and his good lady Dorothy who took the Federation into the 70s.

At the time in our history when a gallon of paint turned into five litres, Mr. Forshaw was installed President for a second term of office. This was different to his last term of office when there was so much discontentment in the ranks. The regions were now more supportive of the National Office, the category system of paying subscriptions was a success, and we still had a small financial deficit.

The publication of 'The Master Painter' was still a huge financial burden but its retention seemed assured. In 1972 Mr. Frederick E. Wilby also had a second bite of the Presidential cherry and it fell to him to launch the Federation's 'Code of Practice' on the 18th January 1972. This was a new phase that we were entering.

To increase public awareness of its activities was the priority of the master painters since over the last few years pride in craftsmanship had been replaced by sociological, economic and technological changes in which mass production was accepted as a reasonable replacement for skill, integrity and high standards of workmanship.

For the first time the Federation started to look outward and this strength of purpose and energetic drive came from our director at this time, Mr. Ken Blease.

The 70s brought with them wage disputes and the building crafts were not to be left out of any deals that were being made. They negotiated a three year pay settlement taking them from £20 per week to £26 per week initially then to £32 per week in 1974.



Mr. A. S. Broadley, 1983.



Mr. M. Waterhouse, 1988.



Mr. K. Blease.



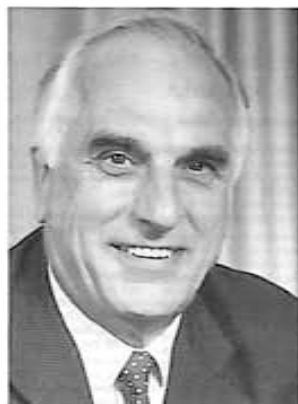
Mr. W. Smith, 1987.



Mr. K. Hunt, 1991.



Mr. G. Ball, 1992.



Mr. S. Broughton.



Mr. G. E. Noble, 1993.

The installation and Annual General Meeting in September 1972 took place at Blackpool. Maurice Waterhouse became President. Soon after in December a special meeting was held at Harrogate out of which came yet another press release from National Office:-

At a Special General Meeting of members of the Federation, held at Harrogate on the 12th December, 1972, it was decided to change the name of the Federation from the National Federation of Master Painters and Decorators of England and Wales to the more concise and equally descriptive one of the "BRITISH DECORATORS ASSOCIATION", the change to be effective on and from 1st January 1973.

Over the last two or three years, the NFMP & D has devoted great effort to improving the generally accepted image of the professional decorator and, through the introduction in 1972 of its Code of Practice, has been able to offer the general public a guarantee of work carried out by its member firms.

Despite the undoubted success achieved in these two fields, the former name of the Association, which has existed for 78 years, tended to convey the impression of an old-fashioned organisation, the name "masterpainter and decorator" being more appropriate to a trade union than to an employers' association.

For this reason, it was felt that a new designation should be adopted, one more modern in concept, concise, brief and descriptive in form and, at the same time, one which would be readily acceptable and which would convey an up-dated image of the trade to the public generally.

The name now chosen, the British Decorators Association, not only meets all these requirements but, at the same time, establishes the national character of the organisation at the time of Britain's entry into the E.E.C.

The British Decorators Association will continue, as it has done since 1894, to promote the continuous and progressive improvement of the painting and decorating industry as a whole and to advance the well being and status of all connected therewith.

Whilst the name of our organisation has been changed, the principles for which the NFMP & D stood will continue to be those of the BDA.

Perhaps this was a bit presumptuous of our Federation as it consisted of members from England and Wales only or was it simple brevity. Why use eleven words in an official designation when three will do or even just three letters. Certainly the Scottish Decorators Federation took objection to the new name even though we offered to them affiliation, thus preserving their Scottish image. It remained a question of Nationalism.

The National Conference held at Buxton, Derbyshire in 1973 included the installation ceremony during the AGM. This combination was to set the future pattern of National Conferences. The Trade Exhibitions were a thing of the past and apprentice work and competitions were now held at the Building Exhibition at Olympia.

Mr. S. Harris became our President in 1974. This was Do-it-Yourself lift off year. As the price of paint soared by about a third due to the oil crisis it seemed that no-one but the very wealthy would ever employ a decorator again.

Only about 5% of the decorators work related to domestic jobs at this time and 'woodchips' cut domestic wallpapering by one third. The dagger was thrust into the decorator by the manufacturer whose raw materials had become very expensive between

# AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF THE FEDERATION

## CONSEQUENT TO INTRODUCTION OF CODE OF PRACTICE

At a Special General Meeting of the Federation, held at the Crown Hotel, Harrogate, on Tuesday, 7th December, 1971, it was resolved that the Code of Practice, as set out hereunder, be incorporated as an Appendix to the Constitution and Rules of the Federation:

### Code of Practice

Each firm in membership of the National Federation of Master Painters and Decorators of England and Wales (hereinafter referred to as "the Federation") shall subscribe to and be bound by the terms of this Code of Practice which establishes standards for the conduct of, and the work undertaken by, such member firms so as to raise the status of painting and decorating contractors and to improve their trade relationships with both private and industrial clients.

1. Each member firm of the Federation shall, in all senses and at all times, observe a high standard of commercial honesty in dealing with its clients.
2. i) A member firm shall be prepared to submit a written quotation for work to be undertaken, unless the work is of such intricate a nature as to preclude the submission of a fair estimate; in such cases, it should be pointed out to the client that it would be to the advantage of both parties if the work were to be carried out on a day work basis.  
ii) In such cases, prior to the commencement of any work, the client should be informed of daywork rates for labour and materials; daywork sheets and/or fully costed time sheets should be presented to the client if so requested.  
iii) A member firm is under no obligation to submit a quotation merely for establishing the value of an insurance or other claim; but if a quotation is submitted for such purpose, a fee may be charged therefor.  
iv) Any quotation submitted shall be fair to both parties and shall be such as to yield a reasonable profit for a fair job.
3. i) A member firm shall so conduct its business that all work shall be executed by competent workmen and apprentices under proper supervision. Employees shall be paid fair wages in accordance with rates agreed between their trade unions and the Federation.  
ii) A member firm shall, if so requested, make recommendations as to the materials to be used, such materials to be of good quality and to be used in accordance with the makers' recommendations.
4. A member firm shall arrange, and at all times maintain, adequate insurance cover in respect of both employers' and public liability risks.
5. i) A member firm shall always recommend to the

client a method of treatment which will give a good and lasting job. When working to a specification, the terms thereof shall be faithfully carried out.

When asked to recommend a specification, a firm shall recommend one which shall be adequate for its purpose.

- ii) The attention of the client or his representative shall be drawn to any apparent shortcomings which exist in a specification, but no responsibility will be accepted for work which the client has requested to be carried out in direct conflict with the firm's professional advice.
- iii) Having complied with Clause 5 (ii), no member firm shall have any responsibility for an inadequate specification prepared by a professional architect or surveyor.

6. A member firm ought not to be expected, without financial compensation, to rectify matters which are not its responsibility.

7. A member firm shall guarantee its work against failures due to its defective workmanship for a period of six months from the date of completion of the work.

8. The Federation undertakes to investigate any unresolved complaints made by clients and to act as arbitrator in such cases.

Additionally, it was also resolved that:-

- (i) The existing Rule 5(Q) be redesignated "5(r)" and that the following be inserted as Rule 5(q):-

"To ensure that all members of the Federation shall subscribe to and be bound by the terms and requirements of the Federation's Code of Practice as set out in the Appendix to the Constitution and Rules."

- (ii) The existing Rule 6(a) be redesignated "6(a)(i)" and that the following be inserted as Rule 6(a)(ii):-

"Admittance to membership shall be conditional on the applicant undertaking to subscribe to and be bound by the terms and requirements of the Federation's Code of Practice."

All members are advised to amend their copies of the Constitution and Rules accordingly and will appreciate that it now becomes mandatory on each member firm to observe the terms of the Federation's Code of Practice. KACB

the years 1973 and 1977 and just at this critical time for our trade it looked as though the goodwill of the paint makers had turned against the trade. It was the madcap era of bonus deals and special discounts in paint and wallpaper. A time when it was often cheaper to buy materials from the local supermarket than even the wholesaler could from the manufacturer! The paint maker pandered to this retail market even though the trade market volume was half as much again.

Mr. W. H. Bonney was our President of the British Decorators Association in 1975, Mr. T. L. Sewell, F.I.B.D. in 1976 and Mr. J. E. Savage, A.C.I.S. our President in 1977. These were several years of trauma, depression, exasperation and frustration. Desperate times these were for the decorator although by 1978 when Frank Pitts, F.I.B.D. became National President, a more optimistic view was taken by our National Director Ken Bleasdale when he said, "This year (1978) should prove significantly better than last - at worst, no worse!". In any case the manufacturers were beginning to be more helpful with exciting new ranges for both interior and exterior use, most declaring an end to the bonus deals and special discounts to the retail market.

By January 1978 Crown Paints had set up some two hundred trade centres in Britain under their Trade Centres - collect concept.

In 1979 Mr. A. Brenchley, F.I.B.D. was installed President and Mr. H. W. Cross took the British Decorators into the 1980s.

Before the concept of Trade Counters the decorator usually had a shop and workshop where stock was held for retail and for the work in hand but at this time in our history wallpaper, paint, tools and scaffold was now being held at trade counters such as Macdougall Rose, Crown Paints, Leyland Paints and Manders. This made life easier for the sole trader. All he required was a van to carry the goods for the immediate task or job. It therefore enabled more self-employed tradesmen to enter the market working from a home base.

The 1980s looked promising for the decorator. The public sector had to start maintaining its buildings sometime and there was a revival of traditional skills in domestic work. Broken colour was back in vogue, painted kitchens, marbling and the stressed look, rags were being rolled over what seemed to be every wardrobe door in the land and Ratchliffes transparent oil glazes were all set for a boom time.

It was in 1981 when Mr. K. L. G. Campbell, F.B.I.D. was President of the B.D.A. that the Journal of Decorative Art which was then called The Painting and Decorating was struggling to continue production due to greatly reduced sales. I do not know why this happened because there were more self-employed painters and painting firms than ever before but it was possibly because the magazine cost money! There were free trade papers being issued at this time by the paint makers and there was of course the bi-monthly British Decorator available to the B.D.A. members after all. So the Painting and Decorating which was first published in 1881 by the Sutherland family ceased being published in the early 1980s. Whether it actually made its centenary is not too clear. One month it was published and the next it was gone.

Unfortunately the opportunity for the tradesmen journalists went with it. It had been somewhat of a tradition of our trade and the policy of consecutive editors of the Journal that craftsmen and craft educators wrote practical articles for practical men in the pages of this monthly journal and very successfully too. To a certain extent the practical talk has been excluded from the pages of the British Decorator also, which prior to 1980 had



always included something practical to read along with more official reports. Likewise at branch meetings and conferences, business matters receive a higher proportion of time than practical trade talks ever do contrary to similar events in the past when the reading of trade processes and demonstrations were given an equal share of the proceedings.

This void in the late 1970s early 1980s was identified by the interior designers who produced glossy book after glossy book all about the decorative processes of our craft. Skills and techniques that we had made our own since 1850 were now in book shops and DIY stores. The craft of stencilling and stencil designing for instance was all ours from 1880 until we lost it in 1980. Then all of a sudden the people practising these skills that our trade pioneered years ago started to call it specialist decorating or special paint effects.

To return to our historical adventure, the B.D.A. National President in 1982 was Mr. D. B. Deighton and in 1983 Mr. E. Gordon. It was in 1984, as members I'm sure will remember, that Mr. A. S. Broadley of Leeds became our President and sadly in July of that year Arthur died. It was the first time that a National President had died in office and it was Mr. Deighton who stepped in and acted President for the remaining part of the year until conference at Blackpool when Wilfred L. Harrison became President for the ensuing year. Our Honorary Treasurer during this period of the association's affairs was Mr. J. E. Savage, A.C.I.S., a post which he held for a number of years.

At the 1985 conference it was proposed that Mr. F. J. Keeble, M.B.E. should be appointed President of the association for the year 1985/6. This was the 90th Annual General Meeting of this association to be held, which means we are now getting close to the Annual General Meeting and Conference which will mark the centenary of same. This also means dear reader, fellow craftsmen and members of the Association that you probably know as much or even more than I do about this period of the British Decorators Association. I will therefore be brief in this the last decade in my attempt to put faces and events to the list of National Presidents of the B.D.A. which always appears in the front pages of the members' yearly reference handbook.

In 1987 when Mr. E. S. Knowles was President, our Director, Ken Blease looked towards his early retirement after 19 years' service at Head Office, Haywra Street, Harrogate. It was to come into effect in February 1988. His one regret was the journal which he had virtually made his, building it into a viable operation in the late 70s was by 1986/7 running up large debts. Therefore it seemed continuity of the Association's business for the newly appointed Director was going to be a challenging one.

The appointment of the new Director, consequent to the retirement of Kenneth Blease on the 29th February 1988 went to Mr. John Young, B.Sc., A.C.I.S., M.B.I.M. taking up his directorship on March 1st 1988. His previous job was Executive Director of the National Association of Funeral Directors.

Our President in 1988 for ten months only due to procedural changes was once again Maurice Waterhouse from Chorley in Lancashire. The following year 1989, the National Director along with the National Executive and the new Forward Development Working Party brought their deliberations for the future of the B.D.A. to the business meeting. It was Walter Smith who was now our National President. Walter, an acquaintance of mine from the 'old days' of the Full Technological Certificate courses at the Jacob Kramer College, Leeds, took all this in his stride, meeting these new challenges and proposals of the F.D.W.P. head on. The B.D.A. was ready for 'change'.

Harry Short was our President for 1990, the year in which the wheels of change and restructuring began to slowly turn, gaining speed in 1992.

We lost Mr. Young through early retirement and gained Stanley Broughton. We lost a Head Office address in Harrogate and gained a Head Office address in Nuneaton. We also gained a higher profile through sponsorship with manufacturers such as Henkel Adhesives and Harris Paint Brushes and when we needed to gain members we lost them due to the demise of Plymouth and District Branch.

It is to the last quartet of National Presidents of the British Decorators Association's first one hundred years existence that I now arrive at. Mr. Kenneth Hunt. Mr. George Ball 1992 (the driving force behind the implementation of restructuring the Association), Mr. Geoffrey Noble 1993 and our President for this centenary year Mr. Robert J. Collier 1994. To all I pay tribute.

Each has contributed endless hours to the high office of National President of the B.D.A., each has travelled hundreds of miles, attended up to 600 functions and lost numerous working hours in the time honoured fashion for this Painting and Decorating craft.

In fact I pay tribute to the work of all great tradesmen Presidents of this Association, each of whom came to us from Regional or Branch Presidents. Also to the hard work of both past and present paid staff and of course to all members of this Association who simply want to belong and take part in its history and its future.

For its future that we now look towards I hope we teach, not tell people about every facet of our craft and our trade association.



*Mr. J. E. Butterworth.*

*Technical Advisor for Employers, Geneva Convention 1921 and Past President 1925.*

The British Decorators Association: I wish it well.



Est. 1894

Finally may I add the following quotation by Mr. J. E. Butterworth, past President under his pseudonym of Eric Johns.

"We are all inclined to think we are very important people, doing great things. But it is well for us sometimes to look back at 'the rock from which we were hewn and the pit from which we were digged'.

It is well for us if only to remind us of the debt we owe to the pioneers of past years, the men who, in even more difficult days than these, laid the foundations upon which we later folk have built.

We may look at the work of the intervening years and consider whether we have gone forward or backward or even sideways and we may perhaps learn something from the survey of the past that will help us in the future."

Eric Johns.

And the very last word comes down to us from about 1910 and is typical of the sardonic wit of the 'skibs' of those days.

*A painter stood at the Golden Gate,  
His head was bended low,  
He meekly asked the man of fate,  
Which way he had to go,  
"What have you done" Saint Peter asked.  
"To gain admittance here?"  
"I've been a painter down on earth,  
For many a weary year".  
Saint Peter opened wide the gate,  
And beaming said "All's well!  
Come right inside and choose your harp,  
You've had your share of hell".*

