

A Repeat Visit*Another glimpse into the past*

Vine Cottage Tool Museum at Castlereagh, near Penrith, never ceases to amaze me, not just the buildings and the historical items that they house, but also of the determination and resilience of both Bob and Carol Dennis in their quest to educate folk on early European settlement in the Macquarie area, West of Sydney.

Our latest visit was no exception; the Blacksmith's Shop, a work in progress at a previous visit was now complete. The Blacksmith's Shop consists of two rooms, one to house the Blacksmithing and Wheelwright's memorabilia and the other, associated trades such as Saw-doctoring, re-handling, and subsistence equipment.

The collection of subsistence equipment includes as a corn husker, peat shovels and the occasional mystery item to arouse the curiosity of visitors.

Before commenting on some of the tools, I feel that the background on the actual building would be in order. The building was salvaged from Minnaville, a Nepean River property near Penrith, thought to be one of the earliest buildings (c1795) in the district; originally it was a bricked-nogged construction (bricked between the studs) and weather-boards for outside cladding with a split-shingled roof. The timbers were all pit sawn, the frame including roofing timbers were all jointed.

There is not a nail evident in any of frame; during the re-location of the building Bob remained true to the original to the extent of tying the door and window heads to the studs using a through tenon wedged to tie the studs to the heads, the pit-sawn weatherboards were originally secured with blacksmith made nails. The shed's windows are the original, making this construction itself a worthy museum piece; actually when the Council inspectors came out to check on this "new building", they thought that Bob was pulling their leg when directed to this relocated construction sitting on the same footprint in its new location.



Now for the tour

The first thing that catches the eye is the placement of the three anvils, two in line and one at right angles to the others as was the standard layout in a smithies' shop, it was immediately evident that Bob knew his stuff. Beyond the anvils and large conical mandrel, past a swage block on its original cast iron stand was the forge to complete the setting.



Continuing along the back wall was an impressive wheel-wrights bench. This bench came from Deans' Blacksmith's Shop at Windsor which was on the corner of Hawkesbury Way and George Street, apparently the old house is still standing there. The bench was covered with flood water back in the 1867 Flood which gives some indication of its age.

The second room, apart from the tool-handling and the saw doctor's corners is an eclectic mix of tools and equipment as mentioned earlier. The Martin's Reliable corn cracker came from Johnson's Farm in the Penrith area. This machine was purchased in 1878 by the Johnsons from R. Hunt and Co. Leonora, Portland. Peat shovels, not often seen in this country were most likely brought over by early settlers not knowing what to expect on arrival. The heavily cast wall hand-drill, most securely fixed to the wall, was manufactured by The Silver Manufacturing Co. Salem, USA.



The impressive tap on the late Eighteenth Century water pump near the entrance is a good indication of the pump's age and was manufactured by the Crescent Manufacturing Co. Birmingham.

I could go on, however there is so much to see, and so much to absorb and with each visit, there is always something new to discover.



Note: - For information or bookings for a visit, Email; www.vinecottage.com.au
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Tool handling bench above

Blacksmiths' bench below

