

ENGLISH PLUMB BOBS Part 2

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CONTINUATION OF PART 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Fellow Collector,
in "THE TOOL SHED" number 86 April 1995¹, published by CRAFTS of New Jersey Peter Habicht wrote about BRITISH TOOLS (not only plumb bobs): "... more and more we are hearing reference of "English" tools, really we should say "British" tools. Many of us forget, or do not realize, that Scotland is not a part of England. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are a part of Britain, or more correctly the United Kingdom (UK). It was not too long ago that Scotland had its own monarchy. Even today Scotland has its own parliament and bank... England followed by Scotland were the principal manufacturers of woodworking tools in Britain...." I agree with Peter Habicht, but for the PLUMB BOB NEWS I will use the term ENGLAND for the countries of the United Kingdom and in part 2 we will write about the other countries of the BRITISH COMMONWEALTH, as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and India. It is a simplification for all of the foreign collectors.

Peter Habicht's remark about British plumb bobs:." One British tool that has been very popular with the American collector for several years is the brass plumb bob. The British bobs tend to be more ornate and shapely than their American counterparts. The more well-known ones are onion or turnip shaped. Many of these were manufactured by Edward Preston and William Marples, and range in sizes from 00(1 oz) to 12 (4 lbs). For the most part however the British bobs were unmarked, other than being stamped with the owner's initials or name. Another difference between British and American bobs is patented and mechanized plumb bobs. While American ones abound, I know of only fourteen patented or mechanized British plumb bobs. Any of you who have read THE PLUMB LINE² by BRUCE CYNAR are familiar with large numbers of mechanized, American-patented plumb bobs from the late 1800s into the early 1900s....."



¹ http://www.craftsofnj.org/toolshed/The_Tool_Shed.htm

² REMARK: You can read and download the complete THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM on www.plumbbobcollectors.info on the page: THE PLUMB LINE.

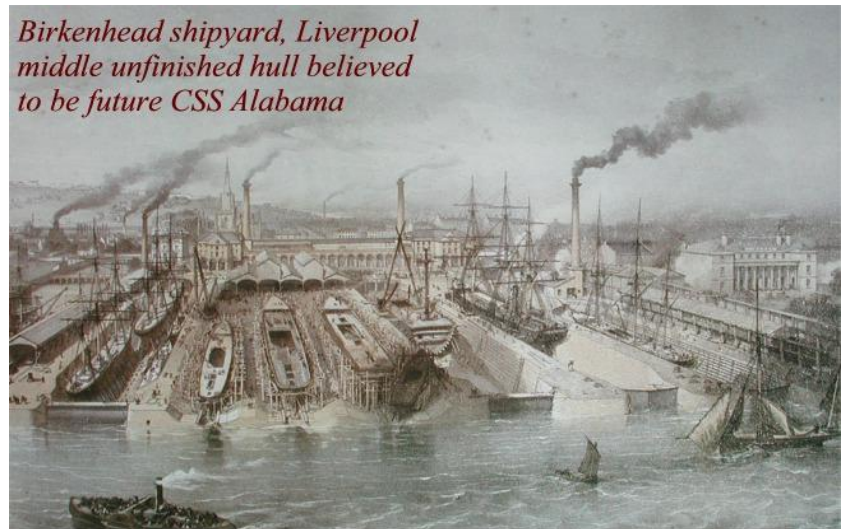
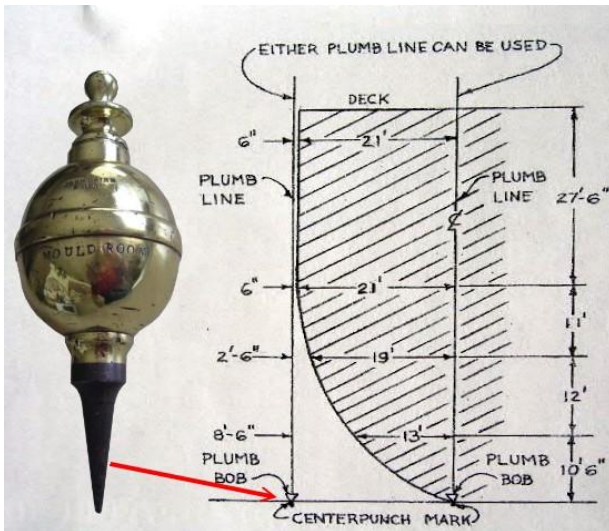
2. LAIRD SHIPYARD

Let's start our tour around the world to the countries of the British Commonwealth by building a ship on a SHIPYARD in Liverpool. As you know from the Part 1, some very interesting plumb bobs were used in the shipbuilding trades.

Wayne Robbins from Oregon, USA told me in Dec 2008 about a very interesting plumb bob from his collection: "... pertaining to John Laird and the plumb bob that was possibly used to help build one of the most famous ships of history, the CSS Alabama during our Civil War."

Wayne, thank you for the pictures and the story.

The plumb bob (see page 59) is marked JOHN LAIRD B'HEAD and MOULD ROOM. It is from brass, weights 8 lbs and is 8 ¾ in high.



Some information that Wayne found about his plumb bob are used in an article written by Herb Kean in September 2008³: John Laird was **the** John Laird of Laird Company of Birkenhead, one of the most famous shipbuilding yards in all England.

Figure above left: drawing, how the plumb bob was used to build the ships of the 1800s.

Figure above right: Birkenhead shipyard

“Plumb bobs on shipyards are used for: aligning the hull to the center of the building ways; and for checking structures within the hull to dimensions placed on the floor of the ways, such as the centers of the rudder, shaft line, length of vessel, beam of hull, and checking structures for vertical, such as the mast. Some masts are deliberately set with a rearward angle for increased speed. This is done by offsetting the plumbed distance from the top of the mast to the base of the mast. ... It will become clear that the plumb bob was an important tool in shipbuilding. This bob is stamped MOULD ROOM, as that is where it was used. The mould room, or mould loft as it was more commonly referred to, was one of the first steps in shipbuilding. It was a large building or sheltered area in a shipyard for laying off full-sized templates (or moulds) of the hull structure components from the construction drawings. The moulds, which were made out of thin wood, were used to shape the actual ship's timbers.”

For the story about the CSS ALABAMA (figure right from Wikipedia) and the CIVIL WAR see WIKIPEDIA:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CSS_Alabama



³ THE PLUMB BOB THAT WAS INVOLVED IN THE CIVIL WAR CONSPIRACY by Herb Kean with research by Wayne Robbins. Published in THE TOOL SHED number 153 September 2008 by CRAFTS of New Jersey.

3. PLUMB BOBS IN AUSTRALIA



I got a list of Australian plumb bob makers or distributors.

Unfortunately, I am only able to illustrate some from my own files. ☹ More pictures of these “brands” would be greatly appreciated

- BAWYA
- DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE
- ERECTORS INC. PTY
- HERGA & CO. (Brisbane?)
- JAMES WATT TOOLS
- MHW



LUKE MURAS LTD (marked: WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF LUKE MURAS Ltd)



PHI



ESDAILE



TELSTAR

- **CARTER TOOLS** (logo: C overlaying T) Parramatta, NSW 1945 - 1955

Carter Brothers started manufacture in Sydney after the WW II and continued on as Carter Tools Pty Ltd, the company ceased manufacturing operations in 1960.

Different shape found with CT identification



A lot of plumb bobs sold in Australia are produced in Germany by GAMPPER and marked with the distributor's logo, like BOKER, FHP, BODMANN, KAUFMANN etc. see WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS 2008-01.



- **W.H.PLUMB**
Sidney



- **PAUL CALL** (PAUL'S MERCHANTS Pty Ltd⁴) Sydney, NSW



HERE IS ENOUGH PAPER FREE
FOR YOUR INFORMATION
ABOUT AUSTRALIAN PLUMB BOBS. ☺

⁴ PTY LTD Propriety Limited (*company structure in Australia*)

Some unmarked plumb bobs from my collection bought in AUS. I am not sure if they are all products of Australia.

A homemade “plumb bob”, a brass body filled with lead. I am not sure if it was used as a plumb bob or had another use.



A very heavy lead plumb bob with a long iron tip. It seems to be factory made. Unfortunately, it has a broken neck. ☹️ But it works, because it has an iron rod cast through the body.



Figure right:
Similar to the item above, but smaller



Figure left:
Full brass with steel tip



Some of the offered plumb bobs on Ebay in the last 6 years



1 Australia flag.jpg



3 pounds Australia.jpg



3215716932 iron long AUSTRALIA.jpg



3228630508 turnip Australia 1.jpg



3228630508 turnip Australia 2.jpg



3765382991 Australian PI 3500 gramms.jpg



6119012585 Australia 100.jpg



6124343412 two plumb boards Australia c.jpg



6133598126 6 cm Australia.jpg



6135679303 Australia 10 665gr.jpg



6135749807 MWST 10 cm Australia a.jpg



6135749807 MWST 10 cm Australia b.jpg



6136725145 Australia 300 grammms 95 mm.jpg



6150863738 Australia timber wood a.jpg



6153332649 Australia lead filled a.jpg



6161265235 Bulbous Australia a.jpg



6161265235 Bulbous Australia b.jpg



6189022558 Australia reversible tip.jpg



6231760379 Australia 2.jpg



6262934296 LUNKENHEIMER Australi...



6284006282 1000gr Australia.jpg



7614497312 Australian gyrostatic pat 163 1908.jpg



7614497312 Australian gyrostatic pat box.jpg



160056865965 Australia 11 in 750 gr DB.jpg



180047782368 10 cm brass Australia.jpg



180066166860 Australia 14 cm 600 gr.bmp



190117218758 AUSTRALIAN home made...



300102273739 Australia 3 in brass.jpg



300172708104 AUSTRALIA 3 cm brass.jpg



330096023241 4 kg lead Australia.jpg



330096023241 4 kg lead ship builders Australia.jpg



Australia 600 gr No5.jpg



AUSTRALIA.jpg



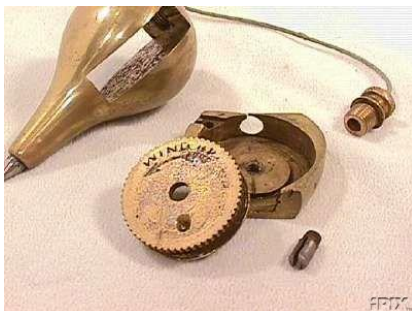
Australian built in reel.jpg



Hans Brunner CT.jpg

4. PATENTED PLUMB BOB FROM AUSTRALIA

The patent GB190719687 from W. G. WIESNER, Sydney AUSTRALIA was already mentioned in part 1 on page 56. Here is some additional information, recently uncovered:



N° 19,687



A. D. 1907

Date of Application, 3rd Sept., 1907—Accepted, 21st Nov., 1907

COMPLETE SPECIFICATION.

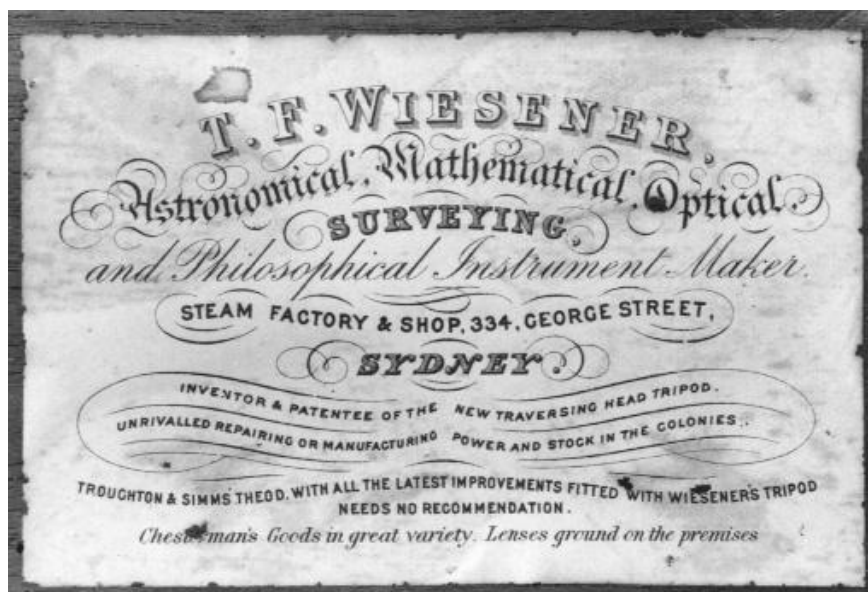
"An Improved Adjustable Plumb Bob".

I, WILLIAM GEORGE WIESENER, of 334 George Street, Sydney, in the State of New South Wales, in the Commonwealth of Australia, Scientific Instrument Maker, do hereby declare the nature of this invention and in what manner the same is to be performed, to be particularly described and ascertained in and by the following statement.

Figure right: Wiesener's shop in 1880 (*The Bulletin*, 11 September 1880)

Figure below:

Wiesener's trade label for instrument sales, c. 1890 (Macleay Museum)



Parts from the WIESENER HISTORY⁵:

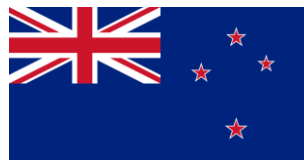
"Theodore Frederick Wiesener was born in Goslar, Hannover, in the north of Germany, about 1845. His father, also Theodore, was possibly a merchant or tradesman. His family must have been in a position to give him a sound education. Mr. Wiesener learnt his business in such houses as Hunt and Roskell, of London, Breguet, of Paris, Fensohn, of Hamburg, and Ceraglia, of Rome.

What made him look to Australia for the right opportunity? German immigration to Australia in the nineteenth century was more significant than it now appears. Whatever his particular reasons for emigrating - an improved climate for the sake of his health may have been a factor as it was for many immigrants - young Theodore Frederick arrived in Sydney on the ship Winifred in 1871. Before long he set up as a watchmaker at 1 Hunter Street and by 1875 had moved to 348 George Street. This presumably provided both larger premises and a more prominent position. He was then living at 106 Phillip Street. As a jeweller and watchmaker also dealing in optical and fancy goods, Wiesener found a responsive market. Wiesener applied for naturalization on 16 February 1876.

*The trade card he had printed to go inside the lid of instrument cases made a comprehensive claim: "Astronomical, Mathematical, Optical, SURVEYING, and Philosophical Instrument Maker". Clearly surveyors were the principal market. Troughton & Simms' theodolites are specifically mentioned and Wiesener's "new traversing head tripod" is particularly highlighted. The English firm of Troughton and Simms were leading makers of surveying instruments in the nineteenth century, the name would have epitomised quality to Wiesener's potential customers. He died on 1 June 1897 and was buried at Rookwood Cemetery two days later. It seems however that it was the younger son, **William George**, who eventually managed the business. It was he who patented an improved adjustable plumb bob in 1908. The firm continued in the name of T.F. Wiesener until 1918 when it was sold to Sidney Watson who began the Precision Instrument Co. in 1920."*

⁵ By Julian Holland. Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, NSW 2006

5. PLUMB BOBS IN NEW ZEALAND



The only plumb bob that I know with a maker mark from New Zealand is:

W&T MARSHALL MAKERS CHCH NZ.
Offered in 2005 on ebay
CHCH stands for CHRISTCHURCH.
No further information known. If you
know more, please let me know.



6. PLUMB BOBS IN CANADA

History (from WIKIPEDIA): **Canada** (*kænədə/*) is a country occupying most of northern North America, extending from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west and northward into the Arctic Ocean. It is the world's second largest country by total area. Canada's common border with the United States to the south and northwest is the longest in the world.



The land occupied by Canada was inhabited for millennia by various groups of Aboriginal people. Beginning in the late 15th century, British and French expeditions explored, and later settled, along the Atlantic coast. France ceded nearly all of its colonies in North America in 1763 after the Seven Years' War. In 1867, with the union of three British North American colonies through Confederation, Canada was formed as a federal dominion of four provinces.^{[81][9]} This began an accretion of provinces and territories and a process of increasing autonomy from the United Kingdom. This widening autonomy was highlighted by the Statute of Westminster of 1931 and culminated in the Canada Act of 1982, which severed the vestiges of legal dependence on the British parliament.

A federation consisting of ten provinces and three territories, Canada is governed as a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as its head of state. It is a bilingual nation with both English and French as official languages at the federal level. One of the world's highly developed countries, Canada has a diversified economy that is reliant upon its abundant natural resources and upon trade—particularly with the United States, with which Canada has had a long and complex relationship.

The only maker commonly distributed in Canada is **HERCULES**.

In my contact with a German maker I know that plumb bobs were manufactured in Germany and sold in Canada under this name. The top and the body of this cylindrical bob are distinctly “checkered.”

WHO KNOWS MORE ABOUT **CANADIAN PLUMB BOBS**? Please let me know.

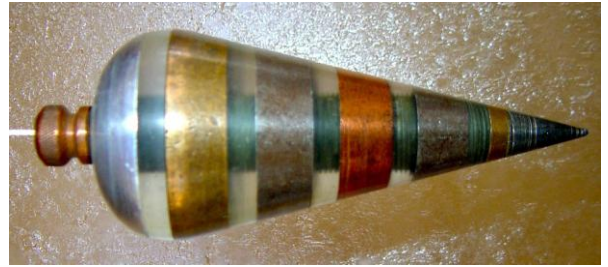
A Fellow Collector from Quebec (in the French speaking part of Canada) sent me some information and pictures:

“Attached you get some photos of plumb bobs (see next page) made in the region of Quebec by artists. I would be glad to tell you more, but collecting since more than 30

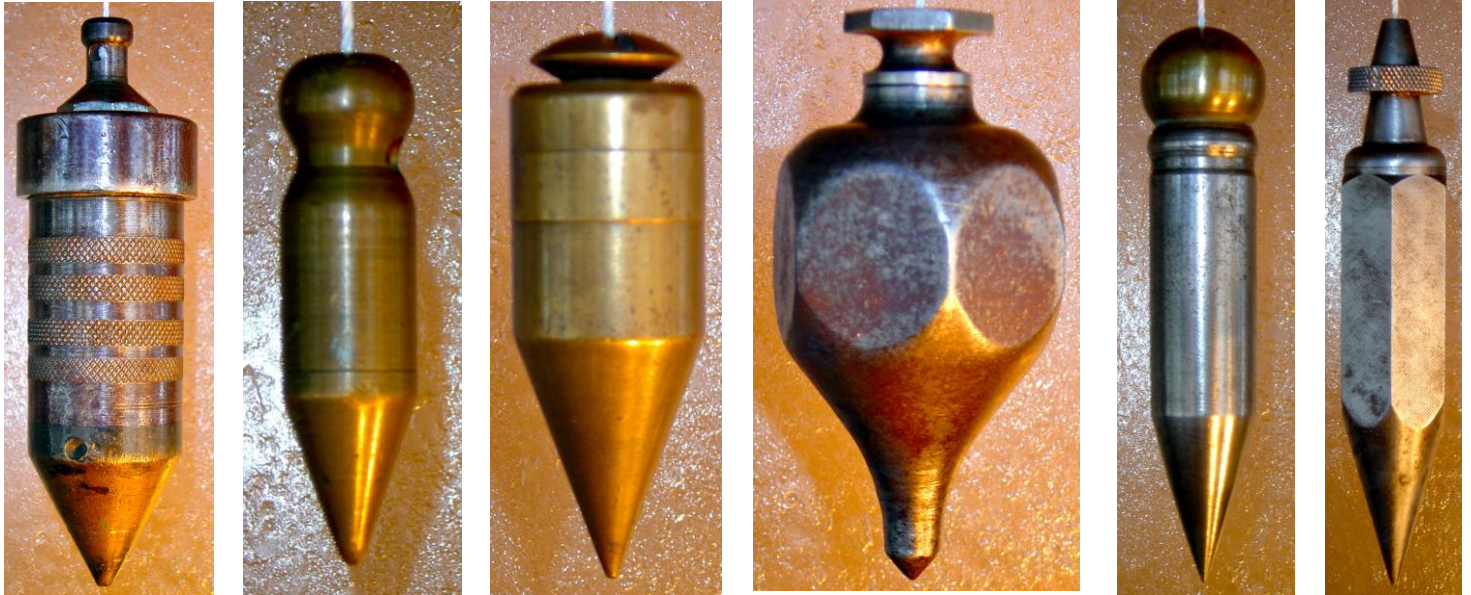


years I could not find a special “Canadian shape”.

Figure right: an interesting plumb bob made by an artist from different materials as plexiglas, aluminum, copper, brass, iron etc.



Plumb bobs made in the region of Quebec, Canada.



7. PLUMB BOBS IN INDIA



HISTORY: (from WIKIPEDIA)

From the 16th century, European powers such as Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom established trading posts and later took advantage of internal conflicts to establish colonies in the country. By 1856, most of India was under the control of the British East India Company.[34] A year later, a nationwide insurrection of rebelling military units and kingdoms, known as India's First War of Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny, seriously challenged the Company's control but eventually failed. As a result of the instability, India was brought under the direct rule of the British Crown. In the 20th century, a nationwide struggle for independence was launched by the Indian National Congress and other political organisations.[35] Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi led millions of people in several national campaigns of nonviolent civil disobedience.[19] On 15 August 1947, India gained independence from British rule, but at the same time the Muslim-majority areas were partitioned to form a separate state of Pakistan.[36] On 26 January 1950, India became a republic and a new constitution came into effect.[37]

If we see this history, we find also two different periods for plumb bobs.

- The Original English shapes as shown in part 1 of this article in the time between the 1850s and 1947 as part of the British Commonwealth. We can call it the “BRASS PERIOD”

Figure right: The largest Edward Preston plumb bob. I bought it from India.



- And an own development of plumb bob shapes in this subcontinent.

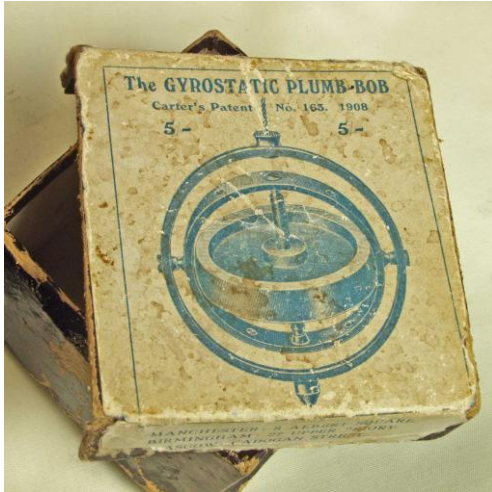
For me it is the "IRON PERIOD"

Some years ago I bought from a German seller a lot of plumb bobs he had purchased in India. More recently, I purchased some that had been sourced in the region of GUJARAT, INDIA.

Figures right: young dealers of plumb bobs



8. A VERY UNIQUE PATENTED PLUMB BOB



N^o 163



A.D. 1908

Date of Application, 3rd Jan., 1908

Complete Specification Left, 2nd July, 1908—Accepted, 17th Sept., 1908

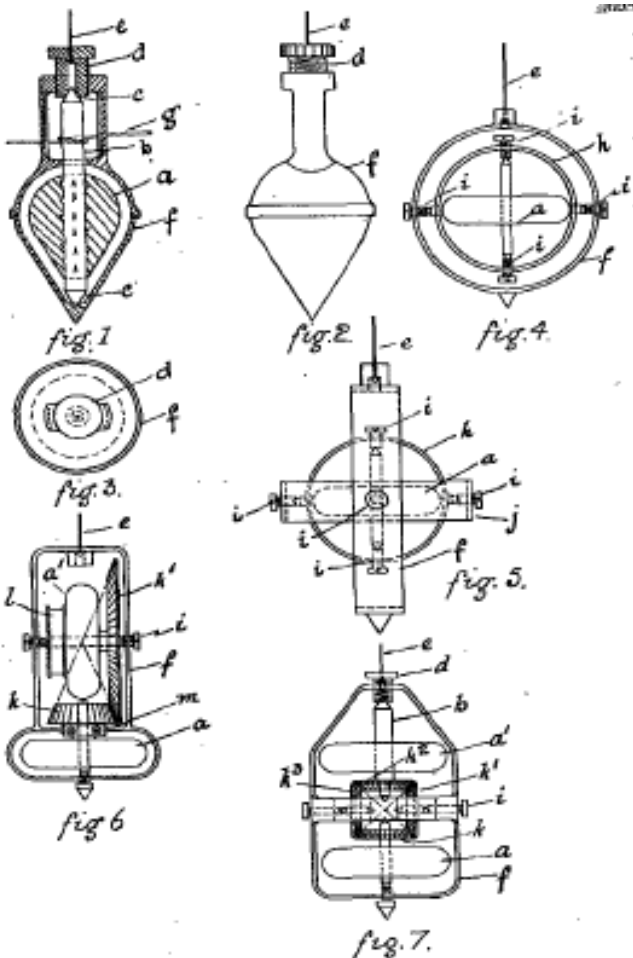
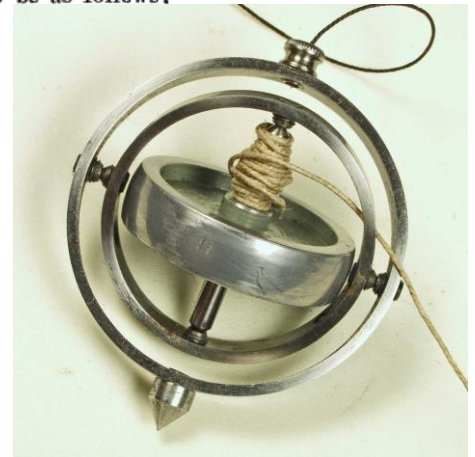
PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION.

“Improvements in Plumb-bobs.”

I, FREDERICK SAMUEL CARTER, of 13, Milton Grove, Gorton Manchester, in the County of Lancaster, Mechanical and Electrical Engineer, do hereby declare the nature of this invention to be as follows:—

In summer 2006 I found on ebay in AUSTRALIA an offer of a Gyrostatic PLUMB BOB. Nelson Denny won the auction. It was the only we ever saw on the market. If YOU know others, please let me know.

The shape on the picture right is not the only one that Carter proposed in his patent. More shapes see in the picture below.



I described this plumb bob already detailed in my PATENT NEWS 2007- 47

The final conclusion by Nelson Denny after his tests with this very unique item:

“THE BOB SEEMS TO BE IN FINE BALNACE AND I HAVE LUBRICATED IT WITH SOME LIGHT MACHINE OIL. I’VE CRANKED IT UP IN EVERY WAY AND ORIENTATION I CAN THINK OF... NOW I EXPECTED THAT THE GYROSCOPIC ACTION WAS INTENDED TO DAMPEN IF NOT TOTALLY STABILIZE THE SWING OF THE BOB ON THE PLUMB LINE... RATHER; IT SWINGS AROUND JUST LIKE ANY OTHER PLUMB BOB OF THE SAME WEIGHT. WHAT AM I MISSING ...? THE PATENT DRAWINGS SHOW SOME VERY SOPHISTICATED VERSIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE, USING WEIGHTES REVOLVING SIMULTANEOUSLY IN BOTH HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL PLANE ... I WOULD SAY THIS IDEA IS VERY THEORETICAL: I CAN’T IMAGINE THAT A SPRING OR A PULL CHORD COULD EVER POWER IT LONG ENOUGH, FOR THE BOB TO COME TO REST ... **IT LOOKS GREAT THOUGH!**”

9. CONCLUSION

By Nelson Denny from the American point of view.

The English in the British Isles and by their influence in the British Empire, produced an array of simple but distinctive, utilitarian plumb bobs found mostly in the English speaking world in the 19th and 20th centuries. English design influence is most certainly discernable in early American made plumb bobs.

Perhaps, more distinctly English, is a proliferation of plumb bobs of a defiantly non-utilitarian sort, that are most common to the English island domain. These examples tend to a high degree of ornamentation, the use of rare and unusual materials such as ivory, exotic hardwoods, or sterling silver, and seem to have a purpose seemingly more ceremonial in intent, than simple working tools. There can be identified a whole genre of decorative plumb bobs, vertical in their aspect, referred to as “clock maker plumb bobs.” There is also a proliferation of plumb bobs that have been made with specifically fit, detailed boxes or cases to house their ornamented bobs. A term that is frequently used in English auction vernacular, and by English tool sellers to identify this somewhat unusual phenomenon is “gentleman’s tools.” This implies that in the transition in English society in the 19th and 20th century of “common workers” to the status of “gentlemen”, that real working tools might have been replaced by “symbolic tools”, a lingering affection for their former status. Similarly, the Masons, and other working trade affiliated organizations, no doubt used the plumb bob, along with the tri-square and compass, as symbols in their rituals. This may in part, account for many of these decorative un-utilitarian examples.

To confirm his point of view, below and on the next page some English plumb bobs from his collection:





IVORY PLUMB BOB, "ROSE BUD" CAP
UNITED KINGDOM



EBONY, IVORY & BRASS
UNITED KINGDOM



STERLING SILVER ACORN WITH HALLMARK
UNITED KINGDOM



"CUE BALL" IVORY PLUMB BOB
UNITED KINGDOM



10. RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Further information about English plumb bobs you can also find in:

- THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM
- WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS 2008-03, 2008-09, 2008-10, 2008-11 and 2009-03
- WR PATENT NEWS 2007-13.pdf (WIESENER)
- WIESENER history.doc (on demand by the author)
- WR Patent News 2007-47.pdf (CARTER)

All publications are available on
www.plumbbobcollectors.info

REMARK:

This is an article of the monthly published WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS that is sent on demand as PDF-file attachment by email. FREE.

You can see all former and future publications on my website

www.plumbbobcollectors.info

Remarks and contact by email:

plumbbobwolf@t-online.de

Thank you for your interest!
Wolf Ruecker



The largest English bridge builders plumb bob from my collection. 11 in, 8+ lbs (28 cm 3,7 kg)