

CHIPPIES

I'm sorry to disappoint you, I'm not writing a guide to local chip shops, although I quite fancy researching it. Rather, I mean those who work with wood. Wondering what to write about, I became aware of the noise of a circular saw, and a few other power tools, emanating from the Abbey art room, which is currently being refurbished. I like woodwork, one of my grandfathers was a ship's carpenter, and woodwork seems to run in the family—I had great fun as a child rummaging amongst the curly wood shavings trying to find the longest one.

Over the centuries, the Abbey seems to have been altered by everyone who has owned it. There was a lot of building work before we moved here in 1981. At one point the top floor looked like a turkey the week after Christmas, just a cage of oak timbers. Some of the roofs have so many extra rafters that they are almost a wall of oak. Some of us helped with the demolition work, commuting from Cockfosters, fortunately going in the opposite direction to the rush hour traffic. The white collars that were then always worn with the black work-overalls disappeared very rapidly. Finally all was more or less ready and we moved in. We'd used what is now our Blessed Sacrament chapel as a place to put anything we didn't know what to do with, and we still didn't know what to do with the stuff when we needed to make the room into a chapel, but it all went somewhere.

When John Higgins acquired the property at the end of the eighteenth century he had plenty of ideas for his new estate, including rebuilding his stable block, proudly adding a clock tower. Carved on the main beam in what we call the garage, Mr Higgin's coach house, is the inscription:

WILL^m DALLEY CARPENTER . JOHN WARREN MASON
1800

Thirty years later Mr Higgins sketched some of the people working for him, including William Dalley:



'William Dalley of Turvey, Plough-
wright, Cooper and Carpenter; drawn
from life April 1830'

His tool kit seems a little less sophisticated than his 21st Century counterparts, nothing to plug in, just a lot of muscle power required—and I doubt if it differs much from the tools that Joseph would have taught Jesus how to use.

Anyone who joined us in our chapel at the beginning of August will have been aware of chippies working in the vicinity. There's a prayer to Jesus the Chippy:

O Jesus, Master Carpenter of Nazareth, who on the cross through wood and nails didst work man's whole salvation: wield well thy tools in this thy workshop; that we who come to thee rough hewn, may by thy hand be fashioned to a truer beauty and a greater usefulness, for the honour of thy holy name. Amen

Sr Benedict, Turvey Abbey