

Chapter 43: Practical skills

Grandad continued to do a wide variety of practical “handyman” tasks at home, at work and for others. I don’t know if he had his own workshop separate from work. Given that he was living where he worked, I suspect he probably used the facilities in the work workshop when he needed them. I certainly recall that, in later life, he had a very well-equipped workshop in a garage-like building¹ behind the house in Drayton.

Grandad made various things for mum during this period including, in 1948, a bookcase which he made from a shop showcase that he no longer needed. Mum kept this bookcase throughout her life and it passed to me on her death. Other things he made included a frame, lamp holder and case for an electric clock; a music case; a leather binoculars case; a corner bracket for the telephone; a cooker cover; a gate; a fence; and a gadget for “reaching sloes”. Other people who benefited from his handiwork were Annie Holmes, grandma, grandad’s nephew Len, and the tenants of grandad’s houses in Victoria Road.

Grandad loved woodworking tools and added more to a growing collection. Over Christmas 1947, he spent considerable time and effort setting up a new circular saw.² In February 1948, he phoned Nuttalls³



Above - bookcase that grandad made for mum in 1948

Below left – examples of Dirndl skirts



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of Mansfield to enquire about buying a “rip saw”. They said they had one but when he got there he found it was cross-cut. He noted that he was a “little annoyed” which is interesting as he rarely, if ever, directly expressed his emotions in his diary. He did in the end get both a 10 inch and a 14 inch rip saw. Other tools he bought or made during this period included a sander; a bench drill; and a power plane.

Mum followed in his footsteps to some extent. Sometimes, she helped him with different jobs. Mum had a wide variety of practical skills, including knitting and sewing. During this period, items she made or knitted included a dressing gown; chair covers; a jumper; a “derndalled”⁴ skirt; a handbag and a nightdress. Where things were too difficult for her, she got other family members to help her.

Both mum and grandad were keen gardeners. During this period, they noted acquiring plants from Jim and Renie and from Verlie Purvis (nee Deakin).

¹ Which he referred to as a cabin

² See Chapter 36.

³ I have found some adverts for this shop from the Nottingham Evening Post. It seems that it was in Albert Street.

⁴ Presumably Dirndl.