

## January 2019 - Rick Lewis - Traditional Oak Carpentry



Last month the members were treated to an excellent talk by Rick Lewis who runs a company called the Traditional Oak Carpentry. His company repairs ancient timber framed buildings. Rick has spent the last 30 years repairing these ancient structures mainly in the Suffolk. At least 60% of his business is restoration work using what is left of the building and 40% of his work is building bespoke new frames. Rick has a large workshop where the original frame work is laid out, numbered and catalogued and from this new wood/frames can be added. Once repaired the completed frames are taken back to the client and the building is reconstructed.

Rick uses the same building methods as his forbears, although a few power tools help.

Timber is sourced locally where possible, and typically from Bradfield Woods where coppicing takes place on trees that are 20-25 years old. Oak is used for the main structure and Hazel for smaller work.

We were shown illustrations of a medieval working yard and although many things were similar it was noticeable that the health and safety has moved on since then.

The frames are set out on and built up on top of one another. The first one acts as a plan for all the other frames. This saves space and keeps the wood dry. The most common joint is a simple mortice and tenon joint which, apparently can take up to 6 tons of pressure. Other joints, such as slip tenon and scarf joints are also used. He explained that repairs are done in keeping with the original and character of the building but must bear in mind the structural needs in today's safety environment.

As old oak is an incredibly hard, he uses a special drill from America to get through the wood. Shrinkage is also a problem which has to be allowed for. Rick still uses a string line as wood is rarely straight. For members who are interested, Rick runs courses which you can look up on his website. It was an excellent talk packed information, hopefully other members did too. Below are just a few tools he uses.



From left to right :  
Early Iron age Socketed Axe Head  
Roman Felling Axe  
Hewing Axe from 12-14<sup>th</sup> Century



From left to right :  
Hewing Dog  
French Broad Axe 18<sup>th</sup> Century  
Broad Axe from Styria, Austria 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century