

# State Treasures: Bread Trough, Lock Museum

The bread trough at the Lock Museum is one of very few surviving examples of an essential tool in a once widespread industry. The trough did not in fact originate in Lock. It came from Cummins, the nearest town some 70 kilometres away. A similar one used by the local baker, Colin Hanson, was burnt beyond repair when the shop was destroyed by fire.

Mary Beard from the Lock Museum spoke with Leona Gates, Colin Hanson's niece, for information about preparing the bread. The work began at 3 am when the baker, dressed in white including a baker's hat, poured bags of flour into the trough together with bakers' yeast and buckets of water, mixing by hand. After thoroughly mixing the dough, the oven was lit, with wooden logs being used for firing and heating – they had to be heated to 400 degrees. Two hours later the dough was punched down by hand and then left to rise a second time, after which it was taken out and put on big benches to be punched down, shaken into loaves and put into bread tins on wooden trays so that the bread could rise again. It was then placed in the oven to be baked for an hour before being removed, ready for sale in the shop.

At the same time as the bread was being prepared, pies and pasties were made and cooked, ready for sale with the bread when the shop opened at 9 am. Soon after the dough was removed the trough had to be scraped clean and washed out with gallons of hot water and soap

(just the thing for the apprentice!) - ready for baking the next day. The trough was used from the 1930s to the 1950s.

## Why is the bread trough a 'State Treasure'?

The trough is a rare surviving example of an item that was once fairly commonplace; and illustrating an important aspect of everyday life. It is both rare, and representative, and is therefore of historical interest. It is in very good condition, allowing for the minor damage which occurred over its working life. The research by Mary Beard does not relate specifically to this bread trough but to one which is directly comparable, and which came from the same region. However the fact that the trough was not used in Lock diminishes its significance somewhat. On the other hand it is worth noting that there is not a museum in Cummins. We have reliable information about the techniques of production in using the trough, and its period of use. The trough also has considerable interpretive potential, being large, well constructed and both interesting and familiar in appearance.

I'd be interested to know of any other bread troughs around the State. Write and let me know – I'll pass the information on to Lock Museum.

*Geoff Speirs*

**Left:** Bread Trough, Lock Museum  
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photograph courtesy of Geoff Speirs