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Helenswood School

*Below: Drilling Machine,
2nd Year and Lathe,
College Link Course
4th Year*

We frequently hear and read statements about the need for more engineers, the value of 'design education' and the demand for equality for women in the context of practical skills, but seldom are these factors recognised at the grass roots of our society, namely in the schools. There is no shortage of moral support for the school courses that are responding to the challenge of this current thinking: government agencies, Her Majesty's Inspectors and County specialist advisers all react with delight to



C.D.T. at Helenswood School, Hastings

news of innovation in the practical subjects of our schools, but, alas, finance is not forthcoming in support of their approbation

Despite this seemingly contradictory state of affairs, Helenswood School, Hastings (a recently re-organised girls' comprehensive school with 1200 on roll) decided to grasp the nettle and establish a Craft, Design and Technology department with an important role in the curriculum.

The Headmistress views the subject as a prestigious addition to the traditional subjects of the school, believes in providing girls with equality of opportunity, and is enthusiastic about the problem solving approach of CDT.

The Development of the CDT Department

The department is only three years old but has already established itself in the school and set up two multi-material workshops and a design studio. One workshop was equipped by the LEA and the other provided by a self-help programme involving fund-raising by pupils and parents, links with local industries, and generous donations from local charities and one national company. The whole project was given credibility in 1980 when the newly formed department won national recognition in the Royal Society of Art's 'Education for Capability' scheme with the citation.

'The determination of this lively school has ensured that its girls have a fine opportunity to acquire an unusually wide range of skills in technology and design'.

Subsequently the department has received much attention from such bodies as the Schools Council, Equal Opportunities Commission and HMI. It has been a focal point for many CDT teachers in East Sussex, and the venue for a CDT conference in March 1982. Also during the same month the work of the department was the subject of a University of London television film.

At present the staffing of the CDT Department is comprised of the Head of Department, two other specialist teachers and a workshop technician.

The Schools Curriculum:

To illustrate the structure of the school's curriculum, the table on the following page shows the percentage of the timetable enjoyed by each subject area.

All girls in the first three years have CDT for 1 hour 5 minutes per week for the whole year. They spend half the year in the workshop and half in the design studio.

The CDT Department Syllabus

The course is designed to introduce pupils to a variety of materials, the techniques used to work them, the safe use of tools and equipment, communication through the use of graphics, and the

YEARS 1, 2 and 3		YEARS 4 and 5	
English	13.3	CDT	5.0
Mathematics	13.3	Art/Drama	5.0
Combined Humanities	15.0	HE/Nwk	5.0
French	10.0	Music	3.3
Physical Science	10.0	RE	3.3
Biology	5.0	PE	10.0
		Social Education	1.6
		English	15.0
		Mathematics	15.0
		5 option subjects	
		10% each	50.0
		Community Life	10.0
		PE	10.0

(Remedial withdrawal from Eng, Maths and French time. Second language in Year 3 from Eng, Maths, Humanities and PE time)

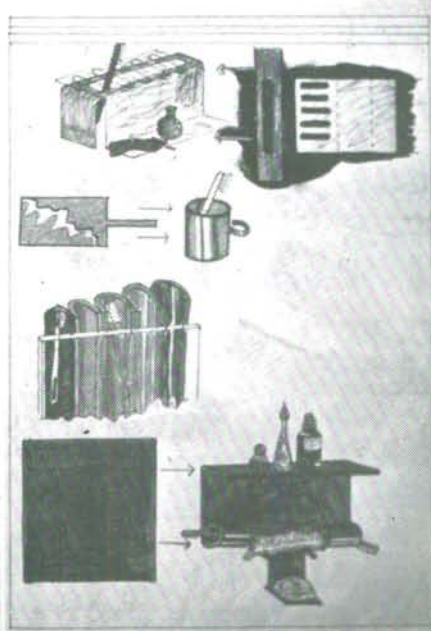
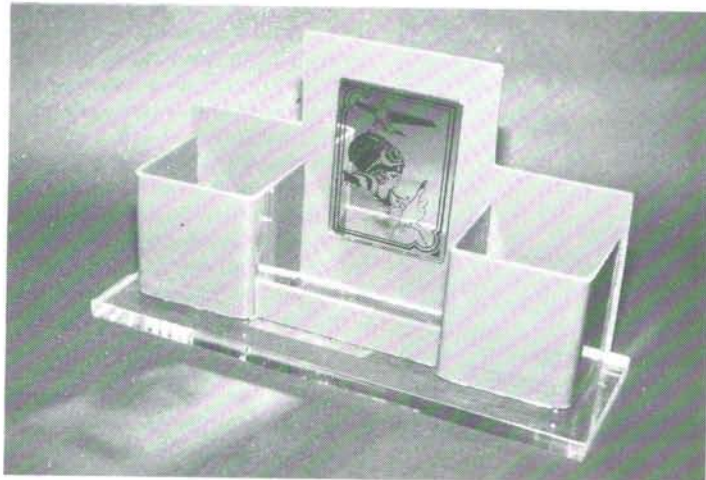
Figure 1:
The School Council

design process as a method of practical problem solving. Emphasis is placed on the identification and analysis of problems, the development and presentation of a range of ideas, and the production of a solution to a problem in appropriate materials. In the first three years work is selected from a range of topics to give pupils experience of:

- design problems involving a range of materials;
- various aesthetic concepts;
- foundation 'graphic communication' work to develop drawing skills;
- 'introductory technology' on such topics as flight, mechanisms, structures, vehicles, energy sources, etc.;
- the use of computers in design activities;
- 'practical thinking' involved in such topics as packaging, games, product evaluation, materials testing, etc.

Cosmetic Tidy.
Emma Burleigh 4th Year

Below: Toothbrush rack
sketches, Emily Samuelson



Each practical project is accompanied by a self-contained design folder containing all graphic work associated with the project. Each week pupils are set a homework assignment related to the project in hand.

In the 4th and 5th Years there are option courses for CDT leading to GCE 'O' Level (AEB 'Craftwork - Design, Communication and Application') and CSE Mode III examinations. There is also a 'Graphic Communication' course leading to 'O' Level and CSE examinations.

In the 6th Form some students undertake work in the department as part of their General Studies course. It is envisaged that 'A' Level examination courses will be developed with the growth of the department.

In the past two years twenty six girls have achieved excellent 'O' Level results following a two year course started in the Fourth Year after no previous CDT experience. This shows the ability of girls to achieve success in this subject even when it is embarked upon at a late stage in their education when sex stereotyping has usually taken place. The experience at Helenswood has shown that girls readily and enthusiastically accept that they are capable of working in a practical environment which has traditionally been the preserve of boys. Indeed girls frequently prove to be more careful and creative than boys, and certainly the standard of their graphic and practical work is very high.

The results of the past three years have been very satisfying, but we have only really scratched the surface of this developing subject. We have begun to create links with various other subjects, especially science and computer studies, with the local Technical College and local industry, but we still have a long way to go.

Conclusion

I consider designing to be the central activity of my department. We aim to give all pupils the opportunity for creative practical work, and try to capitalise on children's desire to invent and make things. We aim to expand their experience, knowledge and skills in the areas of materials, tools, techniques and technology.

We live in the most advanced technological age ever, yet I believe that the majority of people are becoming less practical and skilled. This may be due to many factors such as increased automation, the remoteness of parents' jobs from children, less creative hobbies and the low status of practical as against academic pursuits. But we have an increasing need for people with more practical and technological awareness: for industry, for the creative use of extra leisure time, for the need to be more self-sufficient and to increase individuals' identity and personal skills. So I see the role of CDT as becoming increasingly important in the school curriculum as a means of placing 'practicality' alongside literacy and numeracy as educational essentials.