

# The Olympics of Craftsmen

by C A Thompson

1966?

Each year now about 30 apprentices, representing some of the best of young British craftsmen, carry the flag of this country into the International Apprentice Competition.

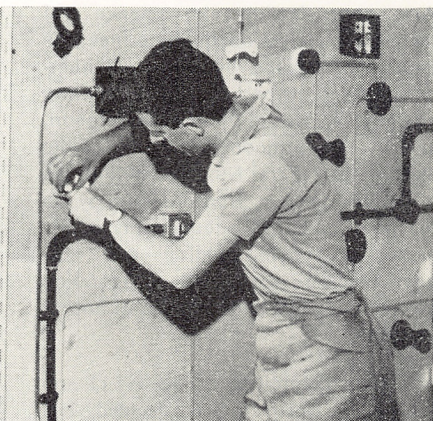
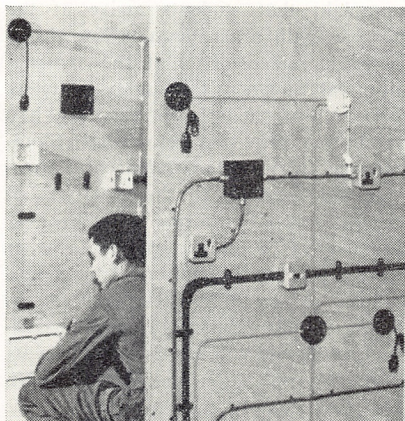
## Individual initiative

The competition had its beginnings at a National Competition held by Spain in 1947. In 1950, Portugal was invited to compete and in 1953, invitations were sent to France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Morocco, Portugal and Switzerland. All except Great Britain and Italy accepted officially.

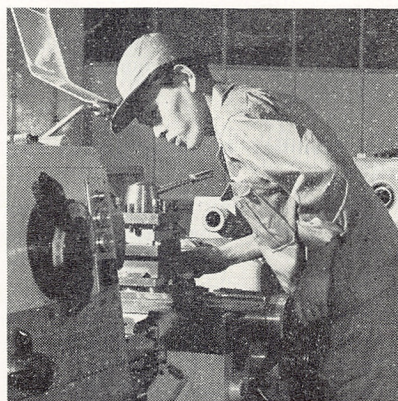
As is so often the case in this country, it was left to an individual to get to know about the competition indirectly, and to do something about it. This was Mr F D Hill, founder of a Canterbury Craft Centre. Mr Hill received details of entry only ten days before the commencement of the competition and found that the only apprentice he had within the correct age group was his own son, Douglas, who was under 18 and had to be accompanied by a guardian. Such was his interest that father and son travelled at their own expense to Madrid. To quote Mr Hill, 'I arrived in Madrid fully expecting to join the British team only to find that my son and I were the British team.' For his efforts Douglas Hill was presented with a silver medal.

For two years Mr Hill pursued his interest in the competition and sought to obtain official recognition for the competition in this country. This he did through the press, by contacting bodies such as BACIE, the BIF, the LCC and Ministry of Education, but with little response. He also wrote to some three to four hundred firms selected from a Trade Directory.

Ultimately contact was made, through Mr A R Emerson of the LCC Central



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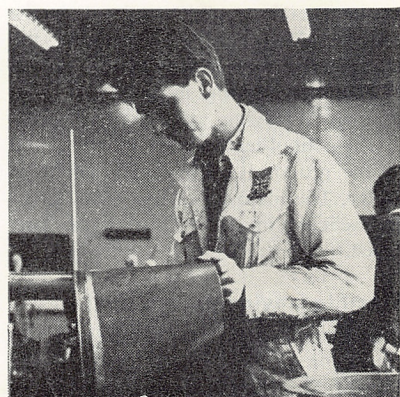


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School of Arts and Crafts, with the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths.

## Efforts rewarded

In 1956, Mr Hill's efforts were rewarded and he was able to take six apprentices to Madrid; between them they gained one first, one second, one third, and two fourth prizes. At this time the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths helped with the organising of the team, the Metal Box Company gave assistance, and the City and Guilds of London Institute were showing an interest. The



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press and the BBC too were beginning to take notice.

## Official Support

So far, Mr Hill had personally borne the expenses of organising the competition, but after the 1956 competition a meeting was held at the Goldsmith's Hall. The CGLI offered secretarial and office facilities, and a British Organising Committee was formed at this meeting. The committee's constitution was revised in 1960 and again in 1966.



## British record

The table gives a summary of the British record for the last five years

Place Year	Gijon 1962	Dublin 1963	Lisbon 1964	Glasgow 1965	Utrecht 1966
Number of countries competing	10	13	12	10	11
Number of individual competitors	156	222	193	198	213
Number in British Team	28	31	28	28	25
Awards First (Gold)	3	4	8	9	4
Second (Silver)	8	6	5	5	5
Third (Bronze)	7	6	2	5	3
Totals	18	16	15	19	12
+ one commendation					

It will be seen that much has been accomplished in ten years. During these years the initial British entries have grown to something over 1100. Much more ought to be achieved by tapping the greater potential of the country. It is of interest to note that other countries such as Spain organise preliminary National Competitions covering some 20,000 apprentices. It is hoped that ultimately every apprentice/trainee in this country too could be considered for selection. In the meantime, though much good publicity emanates from the Secretary to the Committee, more might be achieved by local effort.

## How colleges can help

Over the last two years 52 out of the 53 competitors representing this country in the International Competition have attended technical colleges or colleges of art. Although one would not want to exclude an apprentice who for one reason or another has not attended a

college, these figures indicate that the colleges can play a significant part in the selection of the team. Many are already doing so by offering facilities in accommodation and staff participation for regional tests.

## The categories of the competition include:—

Brickwork	Joinery
Cabinet Making	Milling
Carpentry	Painting
Control Panel	and Decorating
Wiring	Panel Beating
Electric Welding	Plasterwork
Electricians' Work	Plumbing
Engineering	Press Tool Making
Drawing	Radio and Tele-
Fabrication	vision Servicing
of Steelwork	Sheet Metal Work
Fitting	Silversmithing
Foundry Moulding	Stone Masonry
Gas Welding	Turning
Instrument Making	Wood
Jewellery	Patternmaking

Publicity for the 1967 competition has recently been circulated to firms and colleges. It has been found useful for colleges to contact firms in their area with the object of bringing to their attention the names of possible entries for the competition. The procedure I have adopted is to circulate the announcement of the competition to the Heads of Departments and specialist staff, asking for the names of possible entries. I then write a personal note to the appropriate officer of the firm commending the student in his work and suggesting that the firm might be willing to send an entry forward to the Secretary of the United Kingdom Committee for the International Apprentice Competition, City and Guilds of London Institute, 76 Portland Place, London, WC1.

In 1965, the competition was organised by the British Committee and was held in Glasgow. HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh graciously accepted patronage of this event. In his message to the competition he said—

'I am certain that British Industry will wish to support this Competition to the fullest possible extent.'

I am convinced that we in the colleges can assist greatly in advising industry of suitable apprentices and appropriate standards.

1 *Far from home, but the job is familiar. An apprentice competitor concentrates on a test task.\**

2 *Getting to know the test equipment. A Japanese apprentice at one of the familiarisation sessions before the actual tests.\**

3 *An award-winning British apprentice in the sheet-metal work section.\**

\*City and Guilds of London Institute photograph