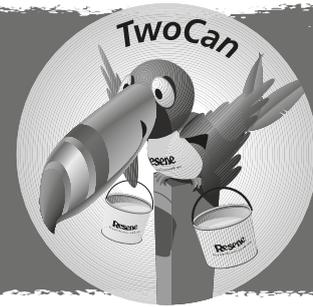


“ When you’re busy with one project after another it seems like nothing really much changes. But when you look back over the years, you can see the enormous progress that has been made and just how far the products and techniques we use today have evolved. Even products such as waterborne enamels, which are so commonly used now, have only been available for a relatively short time. This issue we have a quick look back into painting and paint over the last century, a quick reminder of just how far things have come... ”



## Top productivity tips

**1** Rainy days are great days for wallpapering. After all if, you’re stuck inside you may as well be busy.

Here’s some top tips from professional decorators that might make that next wallpapering job faster and easier...

When placing a length of wallpaper into a corner which is not plumb and has an uneven overhang down this corner simply use a plastic fold out ruler, but leave it folded up and run it down the corner trimming as you go. This will leave a perfect under trim for the next sheet of wallpaper to go over.

*Thanks to White Dove Painting.*

**2** Old wallpaper is often easily removed, even dry-strippable, but when it’s stuck fast it can be tedious, tiring and very labour intensive to strip.

If the wallpaper is nonporous, you must roughen or perforate the surface so that the remover solution (or steam) can penetrate and dissolve the adhesive. To roughen the surface, try using a drywall sander with a 40 grit (very abrasive) sanding disc. This usually sands enough of the surface off to expose the porous paper backing underneath. It is much quicker and

far less tiring than doing it by hand. Drywall sanders can be hired fairly inexpensively for a day or half day if needed.

*Thanks to Mark Loveday Decorating.*

**3** And if you don’t have any wallpaper jobs on your to do list, here’s some handy painting tips to help you make the most of your painting time...

Put a rubberband around the bottom of the can and over the opening on the top. Use it to wipe or tap your brush – it saves paint going down the tin.

*Thanks to Aaron.*

**4** When using a roller put the metal U on the edge of the roller tray thus putting the roller in ‘neutral’, avoiding a wet bit on the bottom. If you can get into this habit it will afford you savings in time and elbow greasing the wet bit out.

*Thanks to Brett.*

**5** If you fill a container with the amount of paint that will cover only half of the bristles on the brush, it ensures you don’t get paint up into the ferrule of the brush so the bristles don’t get damaged.

*Thanks to John Schischka.*

## Paint and painting – it’s come a long way



The associations of Master Painters in New Zealand happened at much the same time that the Master Painters Association were also forming in Great Britain. They marked the difference between the business of painting from the trade of painting.

The first association was incorporated in Dunedin in around 1894, followed by Auckland and Wanganui, just after the turn of the century. Associations formed throughout New Zealand and the Master Painters became a national organisation in 1917.

Dunedin had the benefits of the wealth of gold in Otago, Auckland quickly established as a harbour (both Waitemata and Manukau) and Wanganui was one of the earliest New Zealand company settlements.

The trade included Painting, Decorating, Signwriting and Glazing. The concept of decorating was because our trade dominated the use of colour (there were very few ‘factory’ colour offers) and wallpapers dominated interior work - not so much because of fashion, but because of the timber construction; using timber (because it was cheap) and wallpaper provided a simple method of draught exclusion as well as decoration. In fact the two best markets for wallpaper were Canada and New Zealand because of the availability of timber suited to building. Wallpapers themselves were an imitation of wall tapestries and curtains found in rich homes and castles in Europe.

The early business of Painting Associations focused on agreeing (on a regional basis) the rates for pay for tradespeople, ensuring members provided customers with reasonable prices (to provide members with some decent returns). This was seen as important and at the beginning prices given to customers were frequently tabled for discussion among members, the idea being that by sharing information between people, the benefits were for everyone.



The early industrial and social legislations in New Zealand were, by world standards very progressive and socialistic in that there were some world leading changes - the vote for women, a defined working week (40 hours) and old age pensions. As these were introduced the Master Painters Association (as employers) had to become involved in industry employment negotiations as trade unions became organised.

At about this time oil and colour merchants became dominant as a 'stand alone' industry and the Master Painters Association were able to negotiate trade discounts for members. This was particularly important in regard to wallpaper – only members could obtain a discount – there was no discounting to the public.

The bulk of painters' needs were manufactured 'pastes' of ground pigment in oil. This was traded in 1/2 hundredweight drums (56 pounds) approx 20 kilos, by today's standards and painters 'knocked up' this paste by adding linseed oils, turps, dryers and tinters for the bulk of their painting. White lead dominated until the end of the 1950s when zinc oxides and titanium dioxide became available as a pigment. Both lead oxides and zinc oxides reacted wonderfully with Rotorua's air, turning black before painters' eyes! This town used lots of dark colours such as red oxide and greens to overcome this.

Undercoats had more turps than oil to provide a flat surface, Red lead powder produced primers, iron and steel was painted with red lead pigmented paints.

### Colour

Until a colour range was launched with about 30 colours in the 50s, painters usually tinted their own colours to suit each job. They used 'stainers', strong tinting pigments, such as:

- Earth pigments:** Ochre, sienna, umber and iron oxide
- Yellow:** Oxide (lead and mercury)
- Greens:** Chrome oxides and copper
- Blues:** Prussian blue (1704), ferris salts/cyanide
- Red:** Vermillion – made from a beetle from South America and from mercury oxide
- Black:** Lampblack
- Coal tar:** Gas works – creosote
- Ready made:** Roof paints red oxide/green/grey  
Doors/sills etc.  
Lead colours etc. (trims)
- Varnishes:** Linseed oil - dryers – knotting – size



### Wallpaper was huge

A tradesperson was someone who could paper well – if they only painted they were a brushhand. The idea of productivity tables came about because painting was made up of mostly the cost of time plus a small cost of materials, because this was what a tradesperson with a paintbrush could attain - commonly four tradespeople were needed to paint a roof, or a ceiling, because of the need to keep a 'wet edge'.



The idea of easily applied and cheaper paints was explored by painters and for areas such as ceilings there were 'distempers', probably the oldest form of painting simply consisting of some unbound pigments (such as 'whiting' – ground chalk), some glue size to bind the pigment, pigments to tint if needed and water to attain the right viscosity to apply. Whitewash is a perfect illustration of distemper.

Modern acrylics are actually possible because of the development of chemistry to make resins from the carbon chain (petrochemical industry) and Resene actually started making plasticisers for concrete using P.V.A resins (Poly Vinyl Acetate), exactly the same resin as joiner's water based glue, and rather accidentally realised that the same plasticisers would also bind painting formulations – a eureka moment!

These coatings caused a painting revolution – slow at first, but as the trade realised the benefits, particularly for painting weatherboards and that they were also much better than oil based products for concrete and compressed sheet (fibrolite etc) the market really took off. The decorating market offered colour and wallpapers eventually fell out of favour. At the same time acrylics began to appear, airless spray equipment also appeared – much more practical than the air/mix spray less that proceeded.

The first airless spray (I saw) was at least two years before rollers became useful for painters, and simpler and simpler products became the norm for painting projects. Of course, the advent of rollers have, more than any other development, completely changed the productivity of the painting trade. They have made working alone actually quite competitive, because the productivity is not constrained by the problems of application that brushing inherently caused. Even left handed painters are now quite common within the industry.

The trade and business for painting is, thankfully, one of the enduring trades – paints are necessary for the decoration and protection of buildings and structures and opportunities abound for painters that keep their eyes and ears open to new ideas, techniques and opportunities.

Probably the greatest handicap is actually, that the trade can be highly conservative when faced with new ideas, product or opportunities.

Just take a minute or two and think about waterborne enamels and the struggle good tradespeople have had to adjust the application from 'laying off' to 'laying on'. Two little words with a heap of angst!

This year the Master Painters NZ celebrate 100 years, pretty impressive when you consider our country's relatively short history.

We should all give thanks to be part of a really great little industry, our jobs are all around the place, and we meet really cool people and provide a lot of pleasure and satisfaction to customers.

Thanks to Peter Edmonds for the reminder of just how far paint and painting has come.

### Brushware was expensive

Labour intensive – 1/2 man's wage per week would buy a high quality 4 inch (100 millimetre) brush in 1960! Because painting was slow and difficult, big areas required a team to keep a 'wet edge' going, and because most people are right handed the jobs worked from right to left – it became impractical to have a left handed painter. Often the first test when interviewing prospective hires for apprentices was to find out if they were right or left handed.

## Perfect for the cold



As the weather turns colder, remember we do have wintergrade paint options available so it may pay to switch to a Resene Wintergrade version – check with our team the best option for your project. And if you're finding the frost is starting to take over your windscreen, grab yourself a free ice scraper from your Resene ColorShop or representative, available while stocks last.



Catch you next month!  
TwoCan, Editor.

