



**Photo.1: Jim Carroll and Irene Brook**

Some customers refer to the store at Carroll's Woodcraft Supplies as an Aladdin's Cave. This may be due to its relative isolation, low ceiling height or array of woodworking 'goodies' — or a combination of all three.

Jim Carroll and Irene Brook did not intentionally set up their business as it is today. It evolved over a period of time and from other enterprises and this has contributed to its unique character.

### The Beginning

Jim traces his interest in woodworking back to his school days. However an introduction to electrical machinery changed his focus and he became an electrical fitter after leaving high school.

He was employed by the Victorian Railways and then by a power tool company in Geelong. His work involved repairing and rebuilding electrical motors — he points out that an electrical fitter should not be confused with an electrician nor a fitter and turner.

In the early 90s Jim returned to woodworking when his uncle retired and took up woodturning as a hobby. By then Jim was living in Drysdale, 20km east of Geelong.

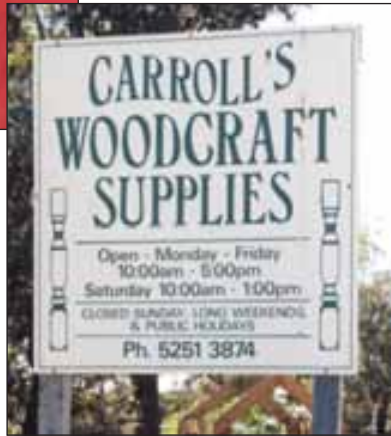
All tools and supplies had to be purchased from Melbourne, a problem faced

**Photo.3: Clock fit-ups, hygrometers, pewter fittings, glass lampshades and tealight candle votives**



# Carroll's Woodcraft Supplies

*Drysdale, Victoria*



**Photo.2: There's a house at the front of the property but a big sign lets you know you're at the right place**

by other woodturners in the region. Jim began to stock items for private resale. Business grew and in 1995 Jim started Carroll's Woodcraft Supplies.

In 1998 Jim moved to new premises adjacent to an industrial area, but still in Drysdale.

The store was only a part-time business. Jim had left the electrical fitting industry and taken up custom woodturning, making one-offs and short runs for special projects, renovations and the like.

In 2000 Jim and Irene developed a range of wooden craft items in the Country style and attended a number of Gift Fairs.

They were also attending woodworking shows. The original range of mostly woodturning items continued to grow and encompass all forms of woodworking.



**Photo.4: Turning and carving blanks and some slabs**

The business had also moved on from being just a local reseller. It was starting to import directly and market its products nationally.

In 2003 the consumer interest in the Country style dropped off rapidly and that side of the enterprise ceased. Jim continued with his professional woodturning, but by 2006 Woodcraft Supplies had grown to the extent that it was now a full-time business.

### The Store

In 1999 Jim and Irene set up their double garage as a showroom. They ran out of space so they walled in and lined the



**Photo.5: Plenty of ceramic tiles on display**

carport at the back of the garage. They ran out of space again and took over the workshop at the back of the carport. The result is one long building that here and there reveals its diverse origins.

In spite of the functional displays, impressive selection of products and steady flow of customers through the front door, the showroom is only a small percentage of the business turnover. Most purchases are mail orders sent in from around Australia.

### Customer Service

Both Jim and Irene are experienced woodworkers. They feel this makes a significant difference to their customers and the level of sales service they can offer.

Jim has worked as a turner and cabinetmaker at a professional level and is a hobbyist carver. His background as an electrical fitter serves him in good stead

**Photo.6: Cutlery fittings and pen kits**



when advising customers on machines and equipment.

Irene is a pyrographer and carver and has an interest in crafts generally.

Through the Gift Fairs, woodworking shows, publications and the Internet, the business has gained considerable exposure and now has a sizeable customer database. Past and present customers receive a bi-monthly newsletter, either posted or emailed.

### The Range

It's always impressive to see Carroll's Woodcraft Supplies set up at a Show. A series of display cases unfold, each with its wares already in place, awaiting to be sold.

The company's strength is in the smaller items that are often hard to source but easy to mail. These include:

- ceramic tiles
- clock fit-ups
- Lazy Susan mechanisms
- CD/DVD storage inserts
- pen kits and blanks
- compac mirrors
- egg timer fittings
- metalware for cutlery
- brassware for walking sticks
- pewter key hangers and potpourri lids
- Microplane tools
- scrollsaw blades
- power carving wheels
- PG Mini motor tool and accessories
- turning and carving blanks
- bandsaw blades
- abrasives
- finishes

They are also a major reseller of Teknatool lathes, chucks and turning accessories.

There are usually a few different makes of lathe in stock in the Drysdale store, for the benefit of 'drop-in' customers. It's possible to see Teknatool, JET, Vicmarc and Woodfast on display together. Jim has

**Photo.7: The store's low ceiling height is evident in this photo**



contacts with the major suppliers and can order in at competitive prices larger machines such as table saws, thicknessers and planers, depending on the customer's requirements.

### Do Drop In

Living and working in Drysdale has been a conscious lifestyle choice for Jim and Irene. Through hard work, customer feedback, an extensive product range and the benefits of mail order and the Internet, they have been able to develop Carroll's Woodcraft Supplies into a major national woodworking supplier.

You don't have to visit the store to become a customer. Simply give them a call on 03 5251 3874 or visit their site at [www.cws.au.com](http://www.cws.au.com) (not .com.au!). However if you are visiting the Bellarine or the Geelong area, do allow time for a visit. You'll be pleasantly surprised by what you will find in Aladdin's Cave. W

**Photo.8: Mostly pen blanks**

