

USER REPORT

Pro-Edge by Robert Sorby

by Andrew MacDougall

It was a Thursday morning when the editor rang me about writing this USER report. I was due to drive close to *The Australian Woodworker* office the next day and said I'd take the opportunity to call in so we could talk about what I should concentrate on when testing the Sorby Pro Edge.

The machine itself had been sent from Sheffield (UK) by FedEx on the previous Monday so I thought I'd pick it up on my return trip late the following week. Instead, I found it waiting for me at lunchtime on Friday — Sheffield to Lawson in less than five days. Impressive!

Steven and I talked for a while, then I went to pick up the box to take it out to my car. I registered a quick shock as I discovered its unforeseen weight. At around 14 kilos, it's not the sort of thing that you tuck under one wing and trot away.

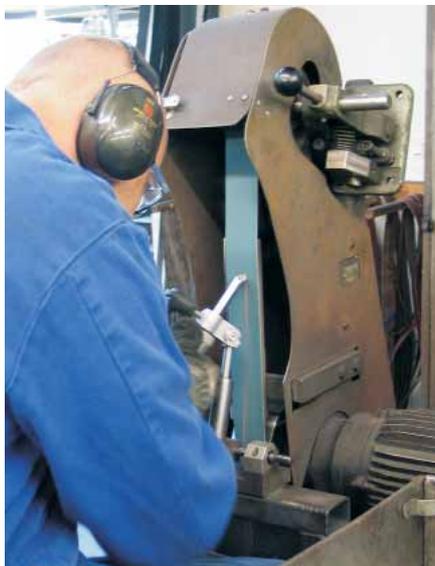
Arriving back in the workshop, I decided I'd be smart and open the bottom of the box so I could slip it up and leave the machine standing on the bench. That worked OK except that as I pulled the box up a dozen or so bits of packing cardboard fell out.

I immediately thought of having to pack it all up again to ship it back to *The Australian Woodworker*. Fortunately, you are unlikely to worry about that since I doubt you will want to part with your Pro Edge once you've used it.

At First Glance

I confess that my first impression of the Pro Edge (Photo.1) was that it is an odd

Photo.2: One of the machines used in Robert Sorby's Sheffield factory to shape the bevels on their tools



looking machine. It lacks the glossy, smooth contours of many of the tools and machines produced today. Instead, it looks rather like something one might encounter in a factory.

By the time I'd caught up on my reading and watched the video that came with the Pro Edge, I discovered there's a good reason for that. The Sorby Pro Edge was developed from the machines that are used to sharpen their tools in the factory (Photo.2).

The Pro Edge bears some similarity to a finisher, but as I found while writing this USER Report, it is no more than a similarity.

Setting Up

The Instructions caution that the machine should be bolted to the leading edge of the bench or other support on which it is placed. Securing the machine is essential, particularly when the column is inclined towards the back (see later). Since I couldn't justify actually bolting it down for testing, I settled for a couple of clamps (which were removed for the photos).

The Pro Edge machine I received still had an English 3-pin plug and an admonishment in the Manual not to change this, but to fit a new outlet if required. I assume this is to discourage the dangerous use of a 2-pin (unearthed) plug.

Another thing that needed to be done before running the machine was to re-set the belt adjustment. A lever at the top of the column (Photo.3) had been rotated towards the back to slacken the abrasive belt for transport and had to be rotated to the front again to re-tighten the belt.

Before doing that, however, I wanted to see how easy it is to replace the belts. The machine I'd received was a Pro Edge Plus — exactly the same as the standard Pro Edge but with a few extras. These included a Skew Jig, Standard Gouge Jig, a Fingernail Profiler and three belts — a 60grit Zirconium and both a 120 and 240grit Aluminium Oxide. Incidentally, all of the belts are butt-joined (Photo.4) so there is no thickening of the belt as there is when belts are spliced.

To replace the belt, two T-shaped thumb screws are removed so as to release the right hand cover (Photo.5). The lever is operated to slacken the belt which



allows it to be easily slid off the drums (also Photo.5), then the new belt is pushed into position.

When the cover is replaced and the thumb screws tightened, the belt is tensioned using the lever and the machine is ready to begin work again, (though the belt may need to be realigned — see below).

The whole process takes well under a minute. This speed is important since after using the Pro Edge for a while, you realise that a large part of its versatility and ease of use comes from being able to select and install belts to do precisely the job required.

(The belts currently available and the many other jigs which can be purchased as options are listed later in this Report.)

With the 240grit Aluminium Oxide belt in place, I pressed the switch and watched to see if the belt would track correctly.

There's a note about this in the Instructions saying that the belt tracking is set at the factory but must be checked before use in case the adjustment has altered in transit.

If the belt is not correctly aligned with the right hand edge of the backing plate, the tracking must be adjusted. This is done while the machine is running, using the two tracking adjustment bars supplied