

Test of time

It is very rare to find hand tools that can withstand the tests of time. In a brief tour around the country, *PE* identifies one particular brand of tool which has consistently maintained quality performance after years of professional use, even passing down from father to son.

Many of the electricians I meet on a day to day basis have grown up in this arena, with either fathers or even grandfathers also working in the industry. It's funny, even with all the leaps in technology we are surrounded with, many of us still look back with affection at simpler times in their lives when, from a practical point of view, all they had to worry about was sockets, lights and the occasional thermostat for the heating. Electricians are now faced with a myriad of devices to include, even in a simple wiring scheme.

Chatting to several groups of contractors on a recent tour of the UK, I came across a phenomena that I thought was unique. Fathers handing down their tools through the generations. I'm not talking about a rusty tool box, containing

a few battered spanners. I am talking about kit still being used 30 or 40 years after it was originally purchased.

Like father, like son

Two stories stood out for me, the first was from a contractor called Jimmy, from just outside of Bradford. His father was at the top of his game and was well-respected throughout the region for the quality of this work. Jimmy worked alongside his father for many years,

ultimately taking over the family firm. "Dad set the bar high in everything he did, in both his work and family life, he is still a big part of my life even though he passed away a few years ago. I still ride his motorbike most weekends and I use his tool kit nearly every day. I learnt many lessons from Dad, with regards to tools, his statement was simple; buy cheap, buy twice. It's as simple as that."

After hearing Jimmy's story I was very



intrigued to see what was actually in his tool kit. It was actually a slightly dented red metal tool box with the manufacturer's logo still just about visible on the side. I could not wait to open this chest of treasure! Inside you simply had a pair of pliers, a pair of snips and a couple of screwdrivers, all from the same manufacturer, something you would be unlikely to find today.

Lasting quality

My second story was from the other end of the country, Worthing to be precise. Several elements linked both stories.



TOOLS & EQUIPMENT



Jimmy inherited a set of Klein Tools from his dad.

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Adam, like Jimmy, had worked with his father for many years and ultimately inherited the business from his father. Again, Adam's father was recognised as being at the top of his game, undertaking many prestigious contracts in the area over many years. Reputation was key to the family's success, with a high focus on the quality of their work.

Adam put it in very simple terms: "To carry out quality work you need quality tools, my dad taught me this from day one. I asked him the question, "So, why with all the advances in technology, are you still using your dad's old tools after all this time, is it nostalgia?" I asked.

His reply was short and sharp to the

point "It's the best bit of kit out there, the snips are as sharp today as they were when I first used them, which was a few years back I can tell you."

So for the second time that week I was bursting to see what kit could have lasted the test of time. I could not believe my eyes when I recognised that distinctive yellow handle on the screwdriver with that solid rubber grip. All of the kit was the same as Jimmy's fathers I had seen previously in the week.

Family ties

So, who makes these tools that last so well? Well, first I found that the manufacturer in question been making

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Mathias Klein, the founder of Klein Tools.

tools solely for electricians since 1857 - that's 50 years before the Titanic set sail! They are the number one choice for professional electricians in the US and have held that position for many years. Their customers love the products so much, that several contractors have even had the company logo tattooed on themselves. Even their branded clothing has reached iconic status, with many items becoming collector's items. So, the question is, who is behind this brand?

It is in fact, another family business. I mentioned earlier in this article the company started in 1857. To this day it is still run by the same family. They have a total of nine manufacturing units across the US and a worldwide customer base. The family is Klein, and the company is Klein Tools. While their products aren't currently on sale in the UK, I would definitely recommend keeping your eye on PE over the next few months.

Visit www.kleintools.co.uk for more information.