

Londoner 99

Chapter 99. Wheelbarrows

Once he was done with the drawing, Kivamus pointed at the relevant parts of the drawing, and explained, "It will only have a single wooden wheel at the front, and a big iron tray in the middle where we can keep the load, as well as two strong wooden handles for pushing them - which will support the iron tray from the bottom as well. This design allows most of the weight to be transferred to the wheel when lifting the tray and pushing it, which makes it easy for even a single worker to lift and transport what would normally take two or three workers."

Seeing others' nod, he added, "Another benefit is that it can carry a variety of loads and can easily travel over uneven terrain. So it will be very helpful in many situations, such as when moving a small amount of coal - for example, when the servants are taking coal to refill all the braziers in the village. Using a wheelbarrow, a single servant can easily transport a full sack of grain as well, when taking it from the grain barns to the servants hall - which needs a cart and a horse right now. Later on, it'll also be helpful in carrying seeds for sowing as well as the harvested grain when we start farming next year."

He continued, "For now, it will help in speeding up the construction of buildings, since a single worker can easily carry a lot of planks and other supplies like nails and hammers wherever needed in a single trip, instead of moving back and forth multiple times, or needing one of our limited number of horses to pull a cart."

Duvas nodded slowly. "That does sound very helpful, if it can really work like that..." He asked, "Can't we also give such a wheelbarrow to the guards when the hunting groups go into the forests? Because as you said, it will allow them to easily transport the animals over the uneven terrain in the forests."

"That's certainly another way it can be used," Kivamus replied, "and it does work like I said, trust me on that." He added, "We can also make a two-wheel version of it if needed later, which will be more stable on level ground. But for now, we will only make the one-wheel version, which will have better maneuverability on the uneven ground in the village. A one-wheel design also helps the workers to unload it accurately - in case of a bulk load like coal or grain, which wouldn't be possible with a two wheel version."

He looked at the blacksmith. "As for you, you just need to make half of the parts - namely the load tray in the middle - which will be quite similar to the water trough you made earlier, but a little bigger and deeper. Other than that," he added while pointing at the bottom of the drawing, "you only have to make the simple iron supports for the trough here, as well as for the wheel here. I will tell Taniok to tell his apprentice to make the wheel and the wooden handles, which are simple enough that he doesn't have to work on them himself."

Cedoron gazed at the simple drawing for a while before he nodded. "I can do it, since it looks simple enough. If I have any confusion about it, I will have to ask you again, but I don't think that there would be any problem. But I still don't see how it will allow the worker to lift thrice as much as he could normally lift."

Kivamus gave a smile. "You'll see it when it is completed. Try to work on it alongside your other tasks, so that we can get one such wheelbarrow up and running before Taniok starts working with planks in the longhouse blocks. I know it will take a lot of iron, but at least we don't have any shortage of that right now." He added, "I think you will need to make around half a dozen such wheelbarrows eventually, but don't start on the second one until we have tested the first one properly to see if there is any problem in it."

Cedoron nodded. "Of course, milord."

Remembering that all the tools here were just primitive iron tools instead of the long-lasting modern steel tools found on Earth, Kivamus continued, "It will take time for you to provide enough iron nails and make all the wheelbarrows, but once it's done, I want you to keep making more axes and saws, since we have a lot of forest to clear and not nearly enough tools for that."

He explained, "Once all the longhouse blocks are completed, I will put in those workers to clear the forests as well, for which we will need even more cutting tools. And with the amount of use that those tools are seeing everyday, even the new tools will start breaking down soon, so having a ready supply of more tools will keep the work ongoing instead of slowing it down because of a shortage of usable tools. At that point you will also have to work on repairing those tools which can still be repaired, while the rest might need to be reforged."

"That's true," the blacksmith said. "When the coal mines were working, I had to repair at least a few tools everyday, so I do realize that I will have to start work on repairing some of the tools soon."

Kivamus asked with his eyebrows raised, "But will you be able to handle all that work by yourself?"

Cedoron nodded. "It's true that my workload is much higher now compared to those days, but I'm slowly training my new apprentices in everything related to blacksmithing, so they will soon be able to do most of the repairing work by themselves. So you don't have to worry about our workload, milord, we can handle everything you throw at us."

"Good!" Kivamus added, "Since digging isn't feasible in winter anyway, we don't need any more shovels and picks immediately. The ones we have left over from coal mining will do for now." He finished, "That's all for today. Let me know as soon as the tray for the wheelbarrow is completed."

"I will do as you say, milord," Cedoron replied. Giving a quick nod in respect, he said, "I will take my leave then."

Kivamus nodded and waved him away.

~ Hyola ~

~ The Limestone Quarry, somewhere southwest of Cinran ~

Finally, the pit of the quarry was nearly cleared of water, and from tomorrow they would have to start cutting limestone again. It was evening time now, and after working for the whole day, she was waiting for the bandit chief to tell all the stonecutters that today's work was over, so that they could leave for resting now.

As she kept another bucket of water on the waiting wagon, which was only half full this time, she noticed a commotion towards the sloping entrance of the quarry. Looking there, she saw that a few of the bandits were back. Once the guards at the makeshift barricade waved them inside, the two horses - each with two bandits on them - rode towards Nokoza, who was standing near the stonecutters while yelling at them to work harder.

As the four bandits got down from the tired looking horses, one of them walked to the bandit chief and started to give a report. Being curious about it, she stayed nearby to listen.

"Milord! All four of us are back from the southern road connecting Tiranat and Kirnos," the bandit reported.

Nokozal growled at the bandit, "You are still late! You had left yesterday morning and it took you two full days! Why did you waste so much time!"

The bandit cringed. "I wasn't wasting time, milord! I know that I was on a horse, but it took me some time to search where others were hiding to scout any caravans on that road."

"Forget it!" Nokozal growled.

One of the other bandits who had come from the south asked curiously, "Is it really true that someone spotted a caravan? I couldn't believe it when I heard about it!"

"It is indeed true," Nokozal gloated with a grin. "That village has indeed managed to buy more grain after all! Good for us!"

He gathered other bandits nearby, and once everyone was listening, he said, "We will leave immediately to the east where others have seen a caravan going to Tiranat village."

Another bandit who had just arrived protested, "We have been riding for two days, milord! We don't have enough horses for all of us to ride further, and we are in no position to walk all night!"

"I didn't ask for your opinion!" Nokozal barked.

But another bandit added, "Milord, you will want to take the horses with us to scout that road further, but two of our three horses are also very tired right now, so they won't be able to walk much either."

Seeing Nokozal angry enough that it seemed like steam would start coming from his ear made Hyola hide a laugh, but she kept listening further.

After a while, Nokozal grunted. "It does make sense, so we will leave at dawn tomorrow. There are fourteen of us including the two who have gone to scout on the eastern road, and we also have to leave some men here to keep an eye on all the slaves here. So the four men who just came from the south will stay back, and the rest of us will leave on foot."

"Thank you, Lord Nokoza," one of those bandits who would be staying back replied.

The bandit chief glared at those bandits who would be staying back and barked, "If I find out that even a single slave has escaped, it wouldn't end well for you all." He added, "I will still take all the three horses with me, since you all don't have a use for them here anyway." He looked back at the bandits who would be going to the east. "Our plan is to ambush the caravan on the road going from Cinran to Tiranat."

One of the other bandits interrupted, while pointing at another of them, "But he reported that the caravan had a dozen swordsmen guarding it! Shouldn't we take all of our men with us? It wouldn't be easy even with fourteen of us against the twelve guards of the caravan, but at least we would still have an advantage since we are ambushing them. But if we leave four men here..." he trailed off at the end.

Nokoza just laughed loudly. "It's not possible that the caravan had a dozen guards! And I am not leaving my camp undefended for Torhan's group to steal what little grain we have left as well as our slaves when we are out. Because that bastard will surely do it if he gets even a hint of it!"

Another bandit gave a nod at that. "That's true enough."

"Now get some rest and make sure to water the horses," Nokoza ordered. "And be ready to leave at dawn tomorrow."

After that, the bandits dispersed to their tasks and Nokoza told the slaves that they could stop working now since it was getting too dark for that.

With a tired nod, Hyola and others kept the last of the buckets on the wagon, before some of them left with it to empty the buckets in the forest outside. As she walked back, she couldn't help but worry about Calubo again. Earlier she had thought that Nokoza would give up on the plans to ambush the caravan after he heard that it had a dozen guards protecting it, but it seemed like he was more reckless than what she had expected.

She just prayed to the goddess that the caravan would be really so well protected that Nokoza would give up on ambushing it, since it would mean Calubo would stay safe as well. And in case the bandits did attack the caravan, she prayed that those guards would put these lowlives out of their misery.

~ Kivamus ~

~ Baron's Manor, Tiranat ~

The next day around noon, Kivamus was sitting with others in the manor hall. Lucem and Clarisa were playing something like a game of tag and seemed to be chasing each other all around the hall, while Sryne was trying to make them sit down for eating but to no avail. She looked at him for help, but he just gave a smile with a shrug. He saw no harm in letting the kids play for now. Soon they will stop anyway when they get bored of it or after they smell the food.

Duvas began, "The caravan should reach Cinran by evening today. Hopefully this last trip can be uneventful as well. We have been quite lucky so far, but I don't know how long that luck will last us."

Hudan said, "I did tell Fero to take it easy on the horses this time, since the horses have been completing that three day journey within two days for many times now. If one of those poor beasts breaks a leg because it was too tired to know where to put its feet, it wouldn't feel good to any of us. So hopefully he will take the full duration of three days, at least for one side of the journey."

Duvas replied, "I don't think Pydaso would agree to that, since he is already in a hurry to leave for his home before the snow blocks the road. There is also the risk that if Fero takes an extra day on each side, then the snow might block the road by the time they return here."

"That's true enough," Kivamus said, "but it hasn't started snowing yet, and the weather is fine today as well. I don't think there is much risk of that for now."

"It's true that the sun is still out, but I don't know how long this clear weather will last," Hudan commented. "I just hope they don't push the horses more than they can take it."

Soon, madam Helga entered the hall, and said with a big smile, "My Lord, as you had told me, I have been looking for other edible mushrooms and berries near the village, and today I did find something."