

**INCOMING**



**NEW POWER HAMMER**

October 2011

When I originally contacted Uli the Blacksmith here in the frozen-ass corner of Austria, Waldviertel, I did so because I really only had one thing in mind: I wanted to hit cherry-hot steel and sizzling-orange iron with a hammer. Repeatedly. Over and over BAM BAM BAM in- and ex-haling to the rhythm of my own muscles. I didn't even care what I made. To hit iron into a frenzy while burning coal—to put Hephaestos out of business—that's the story being told!

So I was a little disappointed when I discovered that the forge was closed due to construction upon my arrival. Not just closed, there was a BIG GAPING FUCKIN' HOLE big enough for me to have fun jumping in and out of. This was in preparation for the new 185 kg power hammer to replace the old 25 kg one.



*Getting ready for the concrete pour with rebar.*

This left me (and Terric, the other guy from the US staying at Uli's) to do miscellaneous stuff around the house, mostly involving fixing up. Uli inherited the place from his grandfather and no one had lived in it for about 20 years, so it definitely needed some fixing up. Among other things, we've been working on fixing the attic, building walls, reorganizing materials, cutting stuff with the bandsaw, shooting guns, and cooking plums.



*I came all the way to the blacksmith and he makes me cook plums...*



*With the forge down, we figured we might as well turn it into a shooting range.*



*Working the bandsaw!*



*Just-finished wall.*

The worst part of this whole ordeal was that the concrete, after being poured, had to harden for TWENTY-EIGHT days before the hammer could be used. This meant the forge was to be down for a month! Unnnngghh. After the concrete was poured, waiting commenced whilst the forge remained in a disheveled mess.

Finally the day arrived when the hammer was to come via a crane truck. It was to show up around 2 or 3 in the afternoon and the three of us spent the morning gathering our energy. I gobbled down a bunch of meat, bread, cheese, peanut butter, and chocolate and fell asleep on the floor in the living room to do just that. I wasn't quite sure what the plan was, but I knew it was going to be haphazard at best—something involving a crane, lifting the roof, and removing the roof. You know, generally sound construction principles with safe track records—situations I find myself in often.

The guy driving the truck was about an hour late, but as soon as he arrived everyone was instantly awake. Once he had the truck in place movement began. There are three parts to the power hammer: the engine, the anvil, and the hammer itself. The engine was comparatively small and we were able to move it down to the ground quickly and get it out of the way, but the anvil was a different story. A giant block of pure steel was carefully lifted from the truck via crane and placed right outside the door of the forge, where we had to figure out how to get it into its designated slot.



*One serious fuckin' anvil, comin' up!*

With a few pipes and a few crowbars this didn't end up being so difficult. However, all this meant was now we had to get on to the real deal: the hammer itself. Due to the specific logistical problem of one of the beams of the workshop being too low for the hammer to pass under, the plan was to literally *remove part of the roof* and have the crane come in from there to move the hammer around. A tree outside the forge had the unfortunate role of being in the way of the crane, so Terric was sent up to do a bit of trimming.



*When a chainsaw just isn't doing the trick...*



*The Uli Safety Inspection comes out okay.*

After the tree got a haircut, we commenced with getting the power hammer off the truck and onto the ground. The fun part about this was that our power hammer weighed in at *four tons*. That's 4000 kg. That's 8800 lbs. The ropes that the truck driver brought with him could hold two tons each, and he had two.

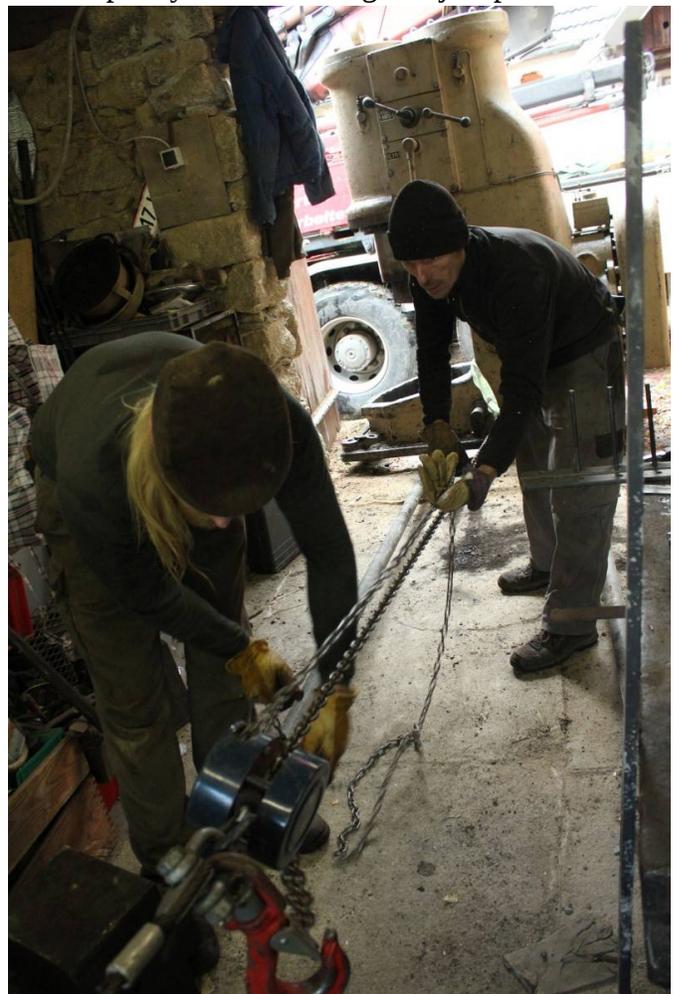


I'll let you do the math and cringe.

As I'm able to relate this story, it would be safe to assume that the straps held and we were able to safely get the power hammer to the ground outside the workshop on top of the pipes it was to be rolled on.



The problem now was that, unlike the anvil, the power hammer was way too big to even think about moving with crowbars. The answer to this? Tie up a chain with a pulley to the Unimog and just pull it in!



*Oddly enough it was easier to use the pulley than the wench on the Unimog.*

Having gotten the hammer inside the workshop, it was now a question of how we were going to move it over to its final resting place. Once again the pulley was employed, but this time with the help of crowbars. When we got the hammer right in front of its spot, the worst of our fears were realized: as it was, the hammer was low enough to get under the beam. However, it had to be lifted over the bolts in the floor and be set down exactly on target, which put the beam in the way by about 4 inches. A long discussion took place between Uli and the truck driver in German when Uli finally turned to me and told me to climb into the attic and start removing shingles from the roof from underneath. We were to bring the crane in through the roof and lift the hammer under the ceiling beam onto its floor bolts.



*Starting to slide the hammer over using pipes and a pulley.*

After about twenty concrete shingles and several gouges in my hands later, it became apparent that the actual boards holding up the shingles were in the way and were going to have to be removed. Uli tossed me up a Japanese carpenter's saw and I made short work of them. Unfortunately, as I was the one who was taking the pictures up until this point, no one got any pictures of me doing it.

With the roof freshly holed, the truck driver brought the crane over, I fed the ropes down through to the workshop, and they were attached to the power hammer. The crane began to lift when the top of the hammer hit the beam—it was still too low. The following scared me more than anything else we did during the job:



*You don't really see it here, but the crane is coming through the roof to hold the power hammer up.*

Uli's workshop is some sort of 100 year-old rock building with what looks like original wood holding up its roof. Not exactly the strong young timber it once was. Uli had a pipe-jack-like thing that he decided to use to prop up the beam just enough to get the hammer underneath it. Instead of raising the side of the beam in question, he set the jack right in the middle of the room, and thus right in the middle of the beam. This meant the beam would be taking all the weight of the roof at its weakest point! Uli started cranking the jack, and Terric and I, a bit more wide-eyed than a few moments before,

began to edge our way toward the exit. The beam made a loud cracking sound followed by dust falling in from the ceiling, but Uli kept on cranking. Terric was all the way out of the door by now and I was barely poking my head in, waiting for the entire ceiling (which was holding up hundreds of pounds of various pipes, wooden boards, concrete shingles, and other various heavy things you find in attics in addition to the roof itself) to come down on Uli's head.

The roof didn't cave in and eventually Uli seemed satisfied with the height, and had Terric stick a board in between the beam and the wall. For the moment we were safe(ish). I had never known such a

sigh of relief.

The crane-work resumed and it wasn't long before we got the hammer on its floor bolts. Initially they didn't fit very well, so after much crow-barring, hammer-swinging, and re-craning, we finally got the damn thing to slide on to its bolts.



*If you look closely on the right, you can see the red pipe reaching up to the roof and on the left the board holding up the beam just enough to get the hammer through.*

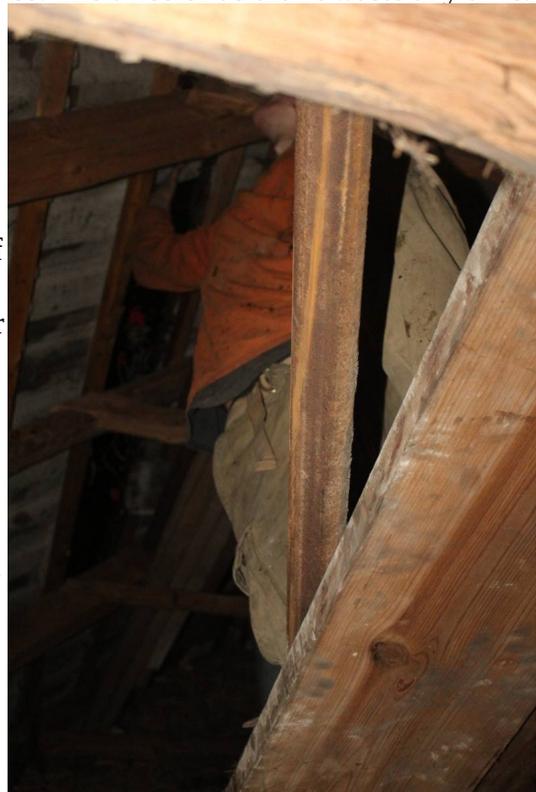
The celebration was short-lived. We still had a roof to repair and a workshop to tidy up as best as we could. I climbed back up to the attic (using the new power hammer as a ladder) and began trimming off pieces of wood that would be in the way. It was getting dark and for whatever reason no one could find (or had the energy to care about finding) a flashlight, so I had to do my construction work in the dark. I sawed off the remaining wood pieces, measured out the lengths of the new ones for Uli to cut, then hammered them in in the dark. I have some carpentry experience, but swinging a hammer at nail in the dark was definitely something new to me.

Once the boards were in I set about figuring just how the hell the shingles were supposed to go back into place, and after putting some up and taking them back



*On the right is the pipe-jack holding up the beam.*

Having gotten the hammer successfully over its floor bolts, we detached the crane and the three of us high-fived and celebrated while the truck driver got his truck ready to leave. Uli went to get four small glasses of schnapps while Terric and I looked over our work, saying, "Whew!" over and over again. We passed out the schnapps for the toast, but the truck driver didn't drink his because semi drivers in Austria have a 0.0% alcohol tolerance. The three of us didn't waste any time.



*"Now where are we going to find a monkey to repair the roof..."  
"Oo! Oo! I know!"*

down three different times (adding a few more gouges in my hands), I figured out what I was doing.

I finished repairing the roof and Uli removed the pipe-jack. If I had been scared before, hiding outside peeping in and expecting imminent doom, this blew it out of the water. An incredible cracking and grinding commenced as Uli loosened the pipe-jack, and I was so stunned I could only stand on the other side of the work table staring, fists clenched and teeth grinding. I didn't realize how terrified I was until Uli let the pipe-jack go all the way. As the pipe slid down and the roof didn't cave in, I unclenched my fists, let my breath out, and nearly burst into tears. After a bit of blinking to keep them back and some stumbling around, I was able to regain my composure, but I could still feel the chemical echo of adrenaline bouncing through my veins.

**[8-11-2012 Additional Note:** Uli has since informed me that the beam in question was not vitally important to the structure of the building and the holding up of the roof. Even if it had broken, nothing would have fallen except the beam itself. This still doesn't take away from me being scared half to death at the time.]

Thus the new power hammer was successfully installed and the forge could be put on the path to be brought back to life.



*If you look on the right, you'll notice the old power hammer looks like a small child who had just gotten in trouble and was sent to the corner.*

*Striking while the iron is hot!*



*Or... something to that effect.*