

WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS 2014
 Issue 07 July 1, 2014
THE KANT MEDAL FROM 1784

Author: Wolf Ruecker

www.plumbbobcollectors.info

Dear Fellow Collector,
 Dear reader of the PLUMB BOB NEWS,
 As always, I am searching for new material and information associated with plumb bobs.
 Please feel free to share new photos, catalogs, articles or stories of a personal nature.
 I welcome input from fellow collectors!
 Wolf

THE KANT MEDAL FROM 1784
with the Leaning Tower of Pisa and a plumb bob.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This history of the Immanuel KANT medal from 1784 was held as a Powerpoint presentation on the Collectors Meeting in Pisa, Italy in June 2014. (report will follow in the next newsletter, poster see right)

In preparing the meeting in 2013 I was looking for something in combination of the Leaning Tower in Pisa and a plumb bob. The only photos that I had in my archive where the photos of Riccardo and me in front of the Tower of Pisa with a plumb bob in the year 2003. But they are not worth enough to talk about it ☺.

Finally I found a photo of this medal:



and I talked about it on our meeting in Pisa.



Riccardo Chetoni 2003 Wolfgang Ruecker



plumbbobwolf@t-online.de

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE MEDAL



Front:

- Portrait of Immanuel Kant. He was a German philosopher, born April 22, 1724 in Königsberg, Prussia. † Febr. 12, 1804 in Königsberg. He is known for his "Kritik der reinen Vernunft" (Critique of Pure Reason) 1781.
- Text: EMANUEL KANT
- Mark A/S for the maker Abraham Abramson from Berlin, Germany
- Diameter: 41 mm
- Weight in gold: ca. 60 grams
- Weight in bronze ca. 25 grams

Reverse of the medal:



- Text:
PERSCRUTATIS FUNDAMENTIS
STABILITUR VERITAS = careful
examination of the bottom secures
the truth. (first version was: the tower
threatens to fall, but does not.)
- NAT MDCCXXIII =born 1723
- The picture shows the leaning tower
of Pisa with 8 floors and about 55 m
height
- In front of the tower hangs a plumb
line down to the 4th floor (first
version: down to the bottom)
- The ground beneath the tower is
uneven and churned
- In front of the tower is laying a
Sphinx

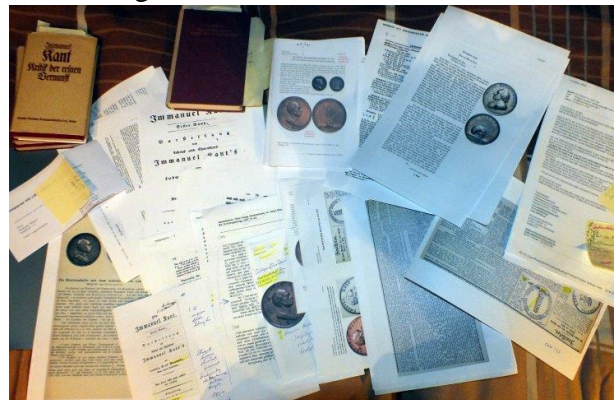
That are the FACTS that I saw at these photos.

3. SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

Now I had to find ANSWERS to the following QUESTIONS:

- What kind of medal is it?
- **Who** made it **when** and **for what reason**?
- **What is shown** on the both sides of the medal?
- What will the picture tell us (**symbolic**)?
- **Where** is this medal now?
- **Are there stories** around this medal?
- Etc.

This is the (paper) result after some months searching:



Because the involved people were famous and changed a lot of letters about this theme, we got a variety and good quality of our information on this medal.

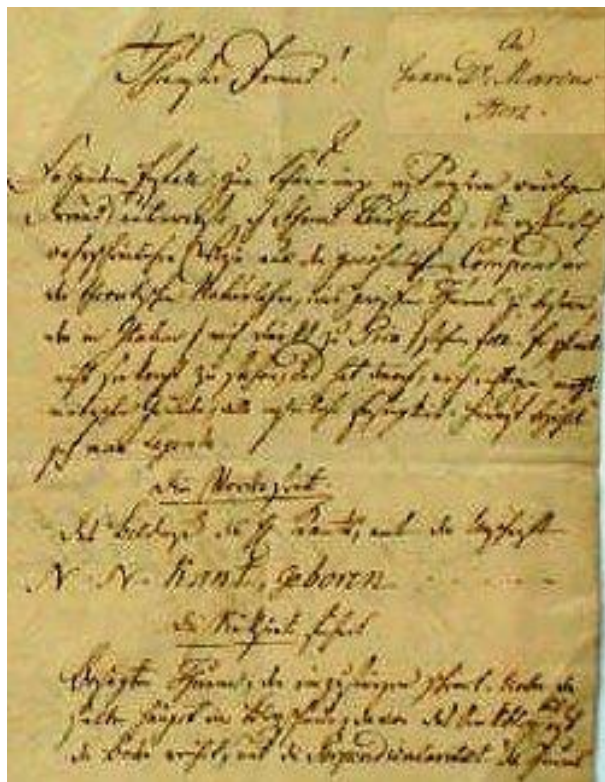
Figure right: a letter from the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn to physician and philosopher Marcus Herz in 1773 with details of the layout of this medal.

Also in newspapers these things were published, for example:

Frankfurter Zeitung, Germany
May 25, 1897

Frankfurter Zeitung

Frankfurter Nachrichten- und Handelsblatt (Neu-Frankfurter Zeitung)



Denkstein.

Die Kant-Medaille mit dem schiefen Thurm zu Pisa.

Von Prof. Dr. Hans Vaihinger (Halle).¹⁾

Die Besitzer und Benützer der Kant-Ausgabe von Rosenkron und Schubert kennen die im XI. Band derselben enthaltene Biographie Kants von Schubert, „mit Bildnis, Facsimile und Medaillen-Abbildung“. Auf der betreffenden Tafel finden sich — in technisch nicht gerade vorzüglicher Reproduktion — 3 Medaillen auf Kant abgebildet, von denen die erste gewiß allen Beschauern auffallend erscheint. Wir geben eine Abbildung derselben nach einem Original.



Der Avers zeigt natürlich Kants Kopf, auf dem Revers ist ein schiefer Thurm mit einem von oben daran herunterhängenden Loth — anscheinend der Thurm von Pisa — abgebildet, an dessen Fuß eine Sphinx

¹⁾ Wir entnehmen obigen Aufsatz mit Autorisation des Herrn Verfassers der von diesem herausgegebenen philosophischen Zeitschrift „Kantstudien“ (Verlag von Leopold Voh in Hamburg) und lenken bei diesem Anlaß die Aufmerksamkeit unserer Leser gern auf dieses bedeutsame wissenschaftliche Unternehmen. Die Zeitschrift, in unregelmäßigen Hefen erscheinend, verfolgt die Absicht, alle neueren Kantforschungen zusammenzufassen, und zählt zu ständigen Mitarbeitern: E. Abdes, E. Boutroux, Edw. Caird, G. Cantoni, J. E. Creighton, W. Dilthey, B. Erdmann, R. Fischer, M. Heinze, R. Heide, A. Kiehl, W. Windelband und andere namhafte Fachgenossen. D. Red.



ruht. Die Umschrift lautet: Perscrutatis fundamentis stabilitur veritas. Der Abschnitt unter dem wagerechten Strich — der Fußlinie des Thurmes — hat die Inschrift: Nat. MDCCXXIII.

Das Auffallende daran ist für uns nicht das falsche Geburtsjahr in dem Kreissegment unten, (Kant ist 1724 geboren, nicht 1723. D. Red.), obgleich Kant gerade darüber besonders getränkt gewesen sein soll, sondern das Bild selbst nebst seiner Umschrift. Die Umschrift für sich ist ja durchaus verständlich und verständig, und für Kant's Thätigkeit auch sehr bezeichnend: „die kritische Untersuchung der Fundamente hat die Wahrheit — natürlich die echte — nicht geschädigt, sondern im Gegentheil neu befestigt“. Aber welche Beziehung hat daraus der schiefe Thurm von Pisa? Weder Vorowski (Leben Kants S. 95) noch Schubert (a. a. O. 205) noch Winden (Porträts und Abbildungen Kants, Königsberg 1868) geben darüber Auskunft. Wenn sie die Beziehung zwischen Bild und Umschrift gekannt haben, mußten sie es sagen, da dieselbe doch nicht auf der Hand liegt; wenn sie sie nicht kannten, mußten sie es auch sagen. Aber es geht bei solchen Dingen ja meistens so, daß Einer sich auf den Andern verläßt, Keiner die Sache weiß und Jeder durch das Zugeständniß davon sich bloßzustellen glaubt.

Ob Kant selbst die Beziehung zwischen Bild und Umschrift erkannt hat? In Vorowski's von Kant selbst durchgesehener Biographie heißt es a. a. O. von der Medaille, daß sie „auf der anderen Seite einen erhabenen (hier Kants eigenhändiges Marginale: „aber schiefe stehenden“) Thurm zeigt, von dessen Höhe ein Senfblei heruntergelassen wird und dessen Fundament eine Sphinx bewacht. Die Umschrift dieser letztern Seite sagt das bedeutungsvolle und dem, zu dessen Ehre die Medaille geprägt ward, ganz angemessene: Perscrutatis u. s. w.“ Das Marginale

4. HERE COMES THE STORY OF THE KANT MEDAL

The first picture that I found in the www was black/white and of low quality.



An auction house in Leipzig, Germany sold in 2011 this bronze medal for 280 €. Unfortunately I am not the owner of this medal, but I got the permission to use the photo:



The medal shows on one side the famous philosopher Immanuel (wrong: Emanuel) Kant *April 22, 1724 † Feb. 12, 1804 in Königsberg, Prussia and on back the **leaning tower with a plumb bob**, text, a sphinx and a (**WRONG**) date:

NAT MDCCXXIII (1723)

For WHAT REASON was this medal produced?

At the University of Königsberg a group of students (most of them of Jewish faith) had gathered together, attempting to decide what to give their revered professor Immanuel Kant for his 60th birthday on April 22, 1784. One of the students named Isaac Euchel initially came up with the idea to give Kant a medal.

(instead of “singing a song” as it was done usually).

Finally they decided:

“We will give a GOLDEN medal”

Who was THE MAKER of this medal?

The medal was made from the well-known medal maker (punch cutter, engraver).

In German: Stempelschneider. **Abraham**

Abramson in Berlin, Germany.

His mark was A/S



A.S. gewöhnlich $\frac{A}{S}$.

Abraham Abramson, geboren 1752, Stpilschn. in Berlin, 1780. † 1811.

Who proposed (was responsible for) the SYMBOLISM?

The philosopher **Moses Mendelssohn** from Berlin, who exchanged letters with Immanuel Kant, was asked by the students to develop a symbolic theme for the medal.

What is the SYMBOLISM of this medal?

The symbolism of the medal led to many discussions. At an initial glance, the allegorical message intended by the artist is not apparent.

The Latin text PERSCRUTATIS FUNDAMENTIS STABILITUR VERITAS means “careful examination of the reasons ensures the truth”.

= before a building or monument or something else (like metaphysics, one of Kant’s areas of expertise) is constructed, one must verify the stability of the ground beneath the structure.

(otherwise you would get a “leaning” tower)

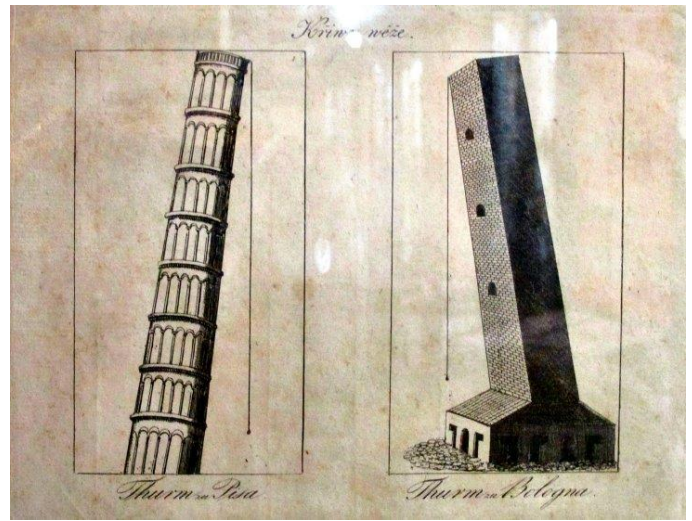
MY CONCLUSION (for the symbolic):

The Leaning Tower of Pisa with the churned earth and the plumb bob is a symbolic example of the studies that have been carried out by Kant on the foundations of metaphysics (sciences) in order to prevent the collapse of this threatened system before it falls.

Details of the tower of Pisa with the plumb line on the Kant medal.

There is no doubt that this is the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa and not any other leaning tower in the world. But at that time the Tower of Pisa was not so well known as nowadays.

In other drawings when the tower is shown with a plumb line, this line is hanging

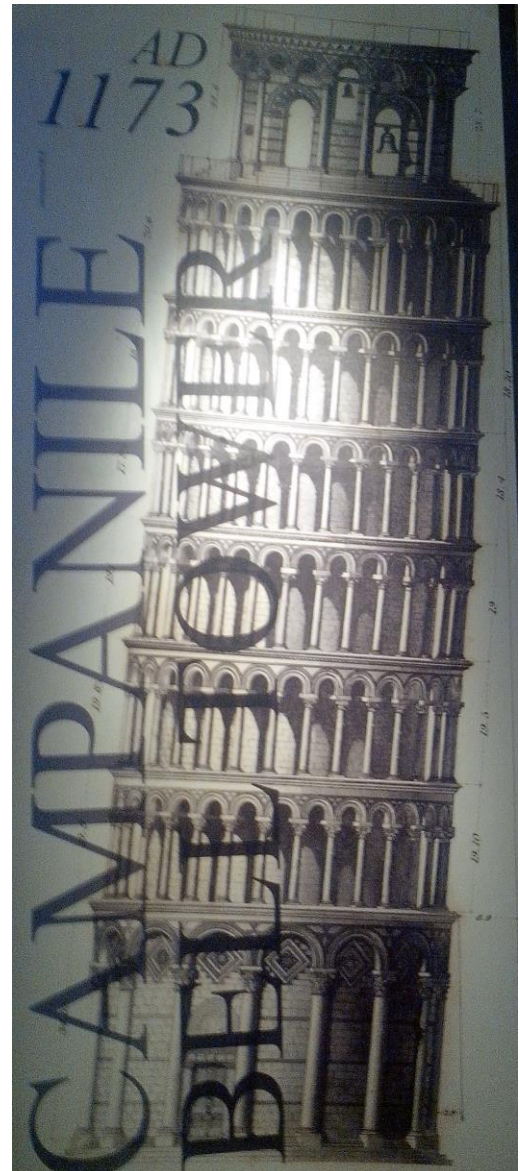


outside, as we can see on a print in the exhibition of Riccardo Chetoni in Pisa (see figure above with the Tower of Pisa and the Tower of Bologna)

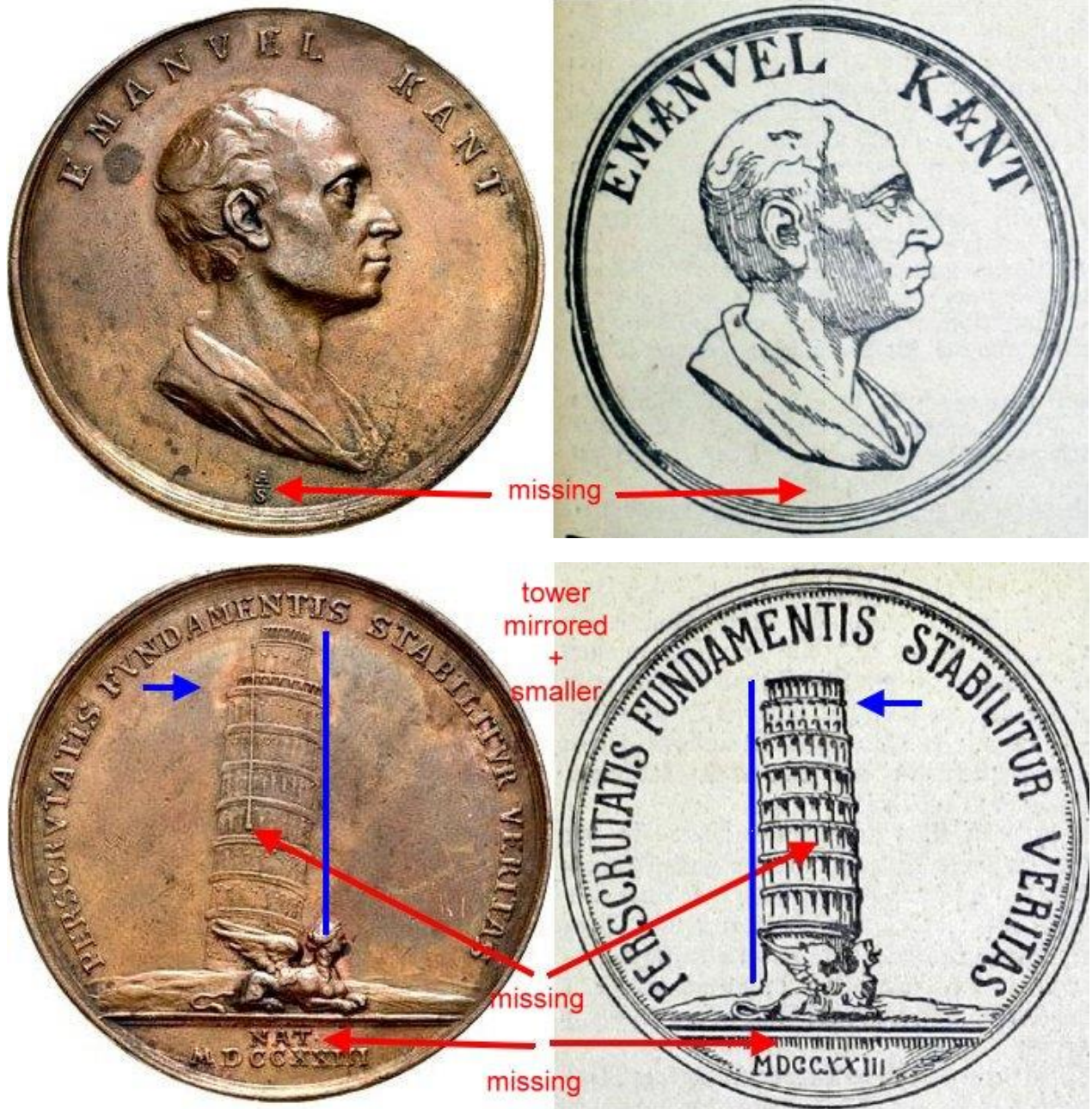
Below a drawing inside of the bell tower for visitors information.



plumbbobwolf@t-online.de



HISTORY OF THE DESIGN



Comparison between planning (see drawing right from a newspaper 1897) and the produced medal (left). There are a lot of differences.

and bronze (4 Florint). Florint was the currency at that time.

WHO PAID FOR THIS MEDAL?

The production costs for this medal were **paid** by some parents / families of the Jewish students and by selling copies of the original golden medal in silver (10 Florint)

Also the **rights** to hold the **speech** on the handover ceremony (Graf Keyserling) and to **handover** the medal on March 3, 1784 (Michael Friedländer) to Kant were bought by the families of these students.

For money you can get everything ©.

REACTION OF IMMANUEL KANT TO THIS GIFT:

- Prof. Immanuel Kant was not a friend of such gifts from others, but was informed too late to stop it (two days before).
- “My name is **Immanuel** now and not **Emanuel**” (as he was called in former times).
- “The date of birth is wrong” 1723 instead of correct 1724.
- “The tower is leaning!” (Kant did not recognize the Tower of Pisa,[not so well known as nowadays] and the symbolic of this at first glance).
- “I am not looking very good on this medal”.

WHERE IS THE GOLDEN MEDAL NOW?

Kant gave the golden medal with a letter (to protect his servants of being accused of stealing) in 1801 to Diakonus Wasiansky (his testament administrator), who did not know the story of the medal.

Wasiansky gave it to Medizinalrat Dr. Unger at Königsberg.

After his dead, his widow got it.

Here ends unfortunately the trace of this medal ☹

In auctions houses we only find brass or silver medals offered, but not a golden one.

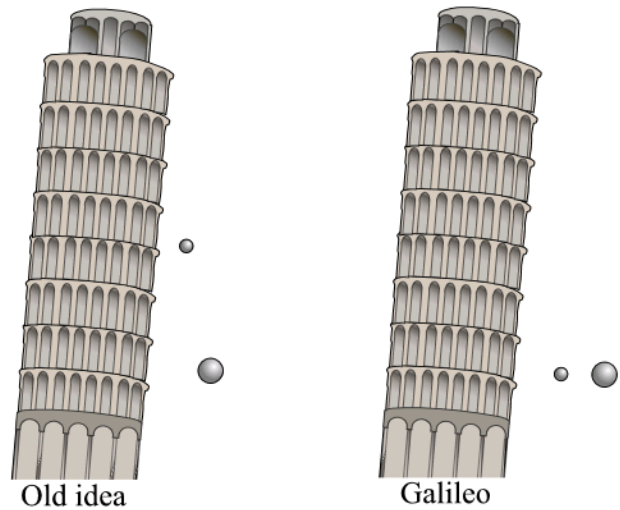
I asked some groups specialised to Kant (University Frankfurt, Germany and “Museum Königsberg” in Duisburg, Germany), where the golden medal could be now, but nobody of the specialists could give me a positive answer. ☹

Do YOU know more?

REMARK:

This Kant medal and the symbolism have **nothing to do** with Galileo’s experiment:

The Falling Bodies



In 1589 the Italian scientist Galileo had dropped two balls of different masses from the Leaning Tower of Pisa to demonstrate that their **time of descent was independent of their masses**.

From **Wikipedia**, the free encyclopedia:

Leaning Tower of Pisa

According to a biography by Galileo's pupil Vincenzo Viviani, in 1589 the Italian scientist Galileo had **dropped two balls of different masses from the Leaning Tower of Pisa to demonstrate that their time of descent was independent of their mass**. Via this method, he supposedly discovered that the objects fell with the same acceleration, proving his prediction true, while at the same time disproving Aristotle's theory of gravity (which states that objects fall at speed relative to their mass). While this story has been retold in popular accounts, there is no account by Galileo himself of such an experiment, and it is accepted by most historians that it was a thought experiment which did not actually take place. An exception is Drake, who argues that it took place, more or less as Viviani described it, as a demonstration for students.

OTHER MEDALS FROM ABRAHAM ABRAMSON:

MOSES MENDELSSOHN (who was later responsible for the symbolic of the KANT medal)

*1729 † 1786

Medal sold for 485 € in an auction.

Made by Abramson 1774



Death of IMMANUEL KANT

Feb. 12, 1804

Medal made by Abramson



I was happy to find so many information about this (for plumb bob collectors) interesting Kant medal from 1784 especially for our collectors meeting in Pisa, Italy. If you will find such a Kant medal anywhere, please let me know.

6. REMARK

DEAR READER OF THE PLUMB BOB NEWS,
DEAR FELLOW COLLECTOR,

This is an article of the monthly published WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS that is sent on demand as PDF-file attachment by email. FREE. You can see all former publications on the web site www.plumbbobcollectors.info on subpage "download publications".

Remarks and contact by email: plumbbobwolf@t-online.de

Enjoy it
Wolf Ruecker

5. SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

Information about plumb bobs for your guests
AT ANY TIME ☺



Newspaper-holder with a "plumb bob news-letter" in my bathroom/toilet for guests.

Remark: Nevertheless provide a toilet-paper-roll!
This paper is for the **head**, and not for the a...!



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For us THE WORLD TURNS AROUND
THE PLUMB BOB