



THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 177

FEBRUARY 2010

VORSPRUNG DURCH TECHNIK: THE INNOVATIVE WORK OF JOHANN GOTTLOB FIEDLER

A commode in the Wallace Collection (Fig. 1) belongs to a group of nine similar commodes all attributed to cabinetmaker Johann Gottlob Fiedler. Little was known about Fiedler until 1961, when the inscription *Fiedler.fec:1785* was discovered on the carcass of a neo-classical commode at Schloss Lossdorf, near Vienna. This finally confirmed this highly-distinctive group of neo-classical commodes as being his work.

Johann Gottlob Fiedler was born in 1735 in Silesia (now part of Poland). He served his apprenticeship during the height of the rococo period in the German-speaking lands. However, his career was interrupted by the Seven Years War (1756–63) which saw the annexation of Silesia by Prussia. During this period Fiedler travelled to England, where he worked for several years. On his eventual return to Europe he settled in Berlin. There, aged 34 he completed his *Meisterstück*. Once active in Berlin he became one of the most prominent advocates of neo-classicism in the German-speaking countries. Fiedler incorporated English fashion and taste into his pieces. He pursued an independent transmission of this new style while still maintaining connections with the work of his more famous German contemporary, David Roentgen. It was during this period that he became cabinetmaker to the court of Friedrich Wilhelm II, who commissioned him in 1786 to carry out many high-profile projects for his royal residences. Johann Fiedler's exact date of death is not known, but according to surviving records, it must have been some time after 1818. His work, although relatively little-known outside Germany and Austria, reveals an extraordinarily high degree of competence and innovation.

Dr Achim Stiegel, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin

Fig. 1 *Commode, Johann Gottlob Fiedler, c.1787. By kind permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection*



During conservation treatment of the commode in the Wallace Collection, two rather unusual features were discovered: dovetail joints used to secure the bottom of the carcass into the sides and the use of wedged dovetail joints.

The drawers are well-constructed using high quality oak, and the corners are dovetailed at the front using lap/half-blind dovetails. On the back the open or common dovetail has been used. Dovetail joints on drawers of this period are very common. They were the preferred choice of all competent cabinetmakers of the time as they offer great resistance to being pulled apart. In a dovetail joint, a series of pins extending from the end of one board interlocks with a series of tails (in the shape of a dove-tail) cut into the end of the other board meeting it. However, on the Wallace commode, further wooden wedges have been inserted, hammered in so as to expand the width of the pins, thereby holding the sides of the drawers in place even should the glue fail (Figs 2 and 3).

The use of wedges in joinery was very common practice, especially when softer woods were used, even on dovetail joints. However, the dovetails here are very well executed and the wedges are nicely put into all pins. They are not occasional wedges to disguise a mistake or bad joinery. I have not noticed wedges on hardwood dovetail joints which are as well made as these. I therefore contacted colleagues, curators, historians, craftsmen and restorers/conservators. Most had never seen wedged dovetails so well made in oak at this period. However, Marc Heincke confirmed that two Fiedler pieces at Schloss Charlottenburg in Berlin used the same technique. It is possible that this technique was quite common and is simply not been recognised or noted by conservators and curators as it can be very difficult to spot the wedge. In *Die Konstruktion alter Möbel* by Erich Klatt (1961) a Kastentisch is drawn in great detail including the wedges in the pins of the dovetail joint. Klatt adds 'wie in früheren Jahrhunderten sind die Zinken verkeilt' [as in previous centuries the pins are wedged].

Surely, the proven durability of this type of dovetail joint offers a valid alternative to the common dovetail? I have asked many cabinetmakers of different generations and regions in Germany and nobody was taught about such dovetail joints during their apprenticeship. Why and when were cabinetmaker apprentices stopped being taught about the wedged dovetail?

Was this form of joint used only in certain countries and in certain periods? I have just recently seen wedged dovetails on an eighteenth-century Swiss commode. However, the



Fig. 2 Detail of wedged dovetail joint on Fiedler commode. By kind permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection



Fig. 3 Reconstruction of a wedged dovetail joint by Elisabeth Andrieux

joinery was far less neat than that by Fiedler and pine was used. Perhaps, wedged dovetails could help to identify country of origin, period, maker or even help to distinguish fakes and forgeries?

To permit easier operation of the drawers, all the Fiedler commodes examined so far have drawer-rollers made of boxwood. One pair of rollers, set into the front drawer-rail of the oak carcass, and invisible when the drawer is in place, is designed to support the drawer when it is pulled out, while another pair towards the back supports the drawer and permits smooth movement when it has been pushed over half its length back into the carcass frame.

Furthermore, another rather unusual constructional detail has been found on Fiedler commodes. The bottom of the carcass is dovetailed into the sides, in a manner I have never seen on any other furniture. The dovetails are left around 4 cms longer, with the consequence that a quite unusual pattern appears. If not properly examined, these can be mistaken for applied wooden glue-blocks (Fig. 4).

I would like to thank Elisabeth Andrieux, Ulli Freyer and Stefanie von Wuellen

Jurgen Huber, Senior Furniture Conservator, The Wallace Collection,
Jurgen.huber@wallacecollection.org



Fig. 4 Detail showing the bottom of the carcass dovetailed into the sides of Fiedler commode. By kind permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection

OWEN JONES TABLE DISCOVERED

FHS member and dealer, Paul L. Shutler has recently discovered an occasional table made by Jackson & Graham and designed by Owen Jones for James Mason's Eynsham Hall in Oxfordshire (Fig. 5). The commission was one of Jones's last and was completed in 1872, two years before the architect's death.

Just six other pieces from this commission are known today and they are all in the Victoria & Albert Museum. They were acquired by the museum in the 1950s when Eynsham Hall was a police college. The table is depicted in Jones's watercolour designs for the interiors of Eynsham Hall (Fig. 6). It is visible alongside the chairs now in the V&A. The designs were donated to Reading University's Library Archive by descendants of the Mason family.



Fig. 5 Occasional table, Jackson & Graham after a design by Owen Jones, 1872. Paul A. Shutler

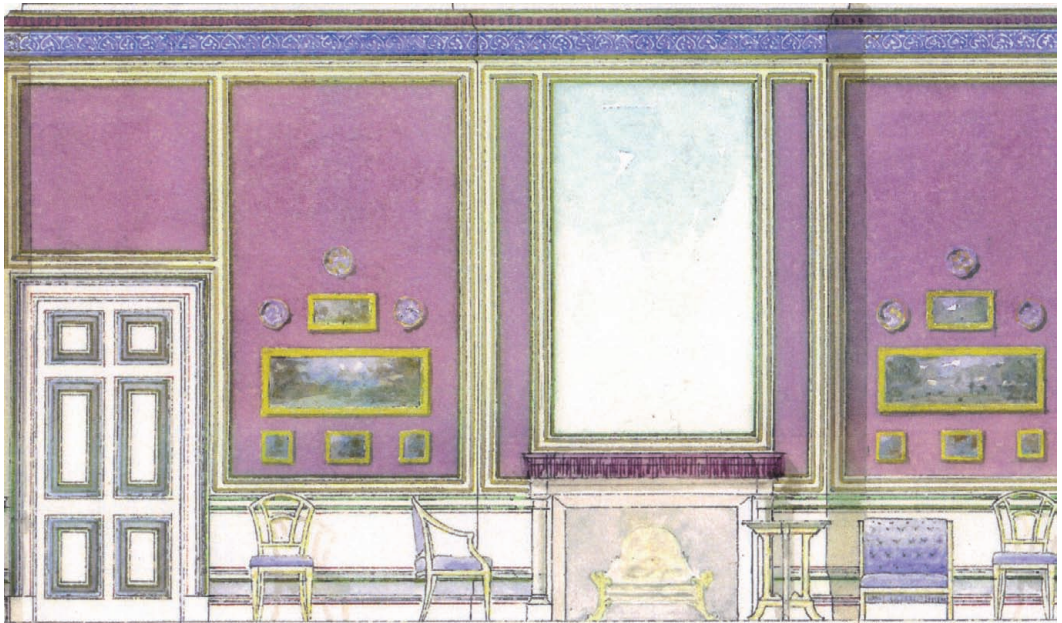


Fig. 6 Owen Jones's design for the Drawing Room at Eynsham Hall, 1872. By kind permission of the Special Collections Service, University of Reading

MAJOR ACCESSIONS TO ARCHIVE REPOSITORIES IN 2008 RELATING TO FURNITURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN

LOCAL

Essex Record Office, Chelmsford: John William Chipperfield, carpenter and decorator, Widdington: records 1891-1998 (D/F 303).

Nottinghamshire Archives, Nottingham: S. Goodacre Ltd, furniture manufacturers, Nottingham: directors' minutes and misc papers 1899-1967 (7468).

Pembrokeshire Record Office, Haverfordwest: Pembrokeshire Crafts Ltd, furniture designers and manufacturers, Newport: records 1978-92 (DB/65).

West Yorkshire Archive Service, Halifax: Thomas Simpson & Sons, cabinet manufacturers, upholsterers and carpet warehousemen, Halifax: stock books 1882-1954 (WYC:1422).

NATIONAL

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast: Koninklijke Nederlandse Meubelfabriek H.P. Mutters en Zoon, furniture manufacturers, The Hague: copy records relating to furnishing of Harland & Wolff ships including the Titanic 1907-13 (T3903).

Victoria & Albert Museum, Archive of Art and Design, London: Margaret MacDonald Casson, architect and designer: papers 1897-2004 (AAD/2008/3).

SPECIAL

Royal Institute of British Architects, British Architectural Library, Drawings and Archives Collections, Victoria & Albert Museum, London: Finn Juhl, furniture designer: drawings of exhibition c.1950-1959 (2008.2); William Kent, painter, sculptor and architect: annotated design for ceiling of the Saloon at 44 Berkley Square London c.1744 (2008.12).

UNIVERSITY

Birmingham University Information Services, Special Collections Department: Monumental Brass Society: minutes, annual reports and accounts, notebooks, transactions and other publications 1887-2003 (MBS).

Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: John Alder Knowles, glass painter and historian of stained glass: notes and papers relating to Price family, glass painters 1938-1952 (KNOWLES).

Oxford University: Griffith Institute, Sackler Library: Walter Segal, architect, furniture designer, archaeological surveyor: notes, drawings, negatives and photographs of furniture from the tomb of Tutankhamun 1934-35 (Segal MSS).

Alex Ritchie, The National Archives

FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS

BOOKINGS

For places on all visits, please apply to the Activities Secretary, Clarissa Ward, 25 Wardo Avenue, London, SW6 6RA, tel. /fax 020 7384 4458, enclosing a separate cheque and separate stamped addressed envelope for each event *using the enclosed booking form*. Applications should only be made by members who intend to take part in the whole programme.

No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting list please enclose a telephone number where you can be reached. Please note that a closing date for applications for all visits is printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available.

CANCELLATIONS

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for occasional visits costing £10.00 or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted up to seven days before the date of a visit, but refunds will be subject to a £5.00 deduction for administrative costs. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

N.B. PLEASE REMEMBER TO SEND SUFFICIENT STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPES FOR ALL APPLICATIONS, INCLUDING REQUESTS FOR DETAILS OF FOREIGN TOURS AND STUDY WEEKENDS.

FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY 34TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum

FURNITURE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY – NEW PERSPECTIVES

Saturday 6 March 2010, 10.30 am – 4.30 pm

The Hochhauser Auditorium, Victoria and Albert Museum, London SW7

Christopher Wilk, Keeper of the Furniture, Textiles & Fashion Department, V&A, has organised the programme and will chair this conference which will survey major twentieth-century designers and centres of furniture design and production. Speakers will approach seemingly well-known topics such as Bauhaus furniture and Post-War Italian design from entirely new perspectives, based on new research. They will also re-evaluate the roles of major figures such as Marcel Breuer, Gio Ponti, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, as well as bringing to light lesser known but significant work from turn-of-the-century Netherlands, early twentieth-century Hungary and 1930s Turkey.

Please note revised programme to that printed in November 2009 newsletter

- 10.30–10.35 Simon Swynfen Jarvis (Chairman of the FHS)
Welcome
- 10.40–11.00 Christopher Wilk (Victoria and Albert Museum)
Same or Different? Studying Twentieth-century Furniture
- 11.05–11.40 Dr Marjan Groot (Leiden University)
Between Arts and Crafts and Aestheticism: Theo Nieuwenhuis 1898–1920
- 11.45–12.20 Juliet Kinchin (Museum of Modern Art, New York)
In and Out of the Canon – Hungarian Modern 1900–1939
- 12.25–1.00 Dr Gulname Turan (Istanbul Technical University)
Turkish Furniture Design in the 1930s: Responses to Art Deco in the Early Republican Era
- 1.00–2.15 Lunch (not included in ticket price)

- 2.15–2.50 Greg Castillo (University of California, Berkeley)
Free Radicals: The Unstable Politics of Bauhaus Furniture 1927–1960
- 2.55–3.30 Catharine Rossi (V&A/RCA)
Gio Ponti's Superleggera Chair: Design and Craft in Post-War Italy
- 3.35–4.10 Glenn Adamson (Head of Graduate Studies, V&A)
Substance Abuse: Crafting Postmodern Furniture
- 4.10–4.25 Christopher Wilk
Closing comments from the Chair followed by Question & Answer session with the panel of speakers
- 4.30 Tea

AS THIS EVENT IS BEING RUN JOINTLY WITH THE MUSEUM ALL TICKET BOOKINGS MUST BE MADE THROUGH THE MUSEUM TICKET BOOKING OFFICE, tel. 0207 942 2211 or visit www.vam.ac.uk/tickets. Alternatively cheques payable to 'Victoria and Albert Museum' with request of number of tickets and sae may be sent to the Bookings Office, V&A, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL.

Tickets are available at £36 for FHS members/V&A Friends, £5 for students and £45 general public, to include morning coffee & afternoon tea. Lunch is not included in the ticket price. NO BOOKINGS CAN BE MADE THROUGH THE FHS ACTIVITIES SECRETARY.

STUDY WEEKENDS

FHS AUTUMN STUDY WEEKEND, THE FURNITURE COLLECTIONS OF GLASGOW

Friday 17 to Sunday 19 September 2010

This study weekend, kindly organised by Robert Wenley, Curator of European Art 1600-1800, Culture and Sport Glasgow (Glasgow Museums) will offer intensive study sessions of the famous furniture collections both on display and in store of the institutional holdings of Glasgow and talks on current research projects relating to these collections and other local furniture/heritage related subjects. Visits will be led by local academics and curators including Robert Wenley, Dr Sally Rush, Dr David Jones, Ian Gow, Patricia Collins and Lindsay Gordon, with contributions from Dr Adam Bowett and Christopher Rowell.

The itinerary will include Friday at Kelvingrove and Pollok House, and Saturday at the Burrell Collection and its stores. On Sunday there will be a private visit and lunch at Ardgowan, by very kind invitation of Lady Shaw-Stewart. This is a stunning eighteenth-century Palladian house on the Firth of Clyde with a fine collection of Gillow's furniture.

Thanks to the generous support of the Glasgow Museums, the cost for this weekend is £375 per person sharing a room or £400 for single room.

For details and application form please apply to the Activities Secretary sending sae. Applications for funding towards the cost of this study weekend are invited by the Tom Ingram Fund and Oliver Ford Trust, please apply to Adriana Turpin, turpinadriana@hotmail.com, for further information.

Closing date for applications 30 April 2010

FHS SPRING STUDY WEEKEND, DERBYSHIRE: 'Some Stately Beds and Other Treasures'

Thursday 6 May evening to Sunday 9 May 2010

Details of this study weekend appeared in the November *Newsletter*. Visits include Chatsworth (the new Gallery displays), Haddon Hall, Hardwick Hall, Kedleston Hall and a tour with private dinner at Renishaw Hall. Study sessions will be led by Matthew Hirst (Head of Art & Historic Collections, Chatsworth), Annabel Westman (textile historian), Andrew Barber (Curator The National Trust East Midlands) and Lucy Wood (V&A).

Closing date for applications was 5 January 2010. For information about availability of any remaining places please contact the Activities Secretary.

OCCASIONAL VISITS

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, London EC4

Wednesday 24 March 2010, 2.00–4.00 pm

2010 will mark the 300th anniversary of Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece and the Society are delighted to have the opportunity to visit the public areas of the Cathedral and have special access to the Chapter House, the Side Chapels and Quire, the Library and Trophy Room which are not normally open to the public. Original plans and drawings and furniture designs will also be available for study. Our tour will be led by FHS member, Noël Riley, who previously compiled the furniture inventory, and Simon Carter, the Collections Manager at the Cathedral.

Fee: £20 Limit: 25 members

Closing date for applications 1 March 2010

THE NORFOLK HOUSE FURNITURE, STUDY DAY AT ARUNDEL CASTLE, West Sussex

Monday 19 April 2010, 10.45 am–4.00 pm

John Martin Robinson is kindly leading this study day at Arundel Castle to consider the furniture and furnishings of Norfolk House, St James's, the celebrated London home of the Dukes of Norfolk. Rebuilt in 1748–56, the exterior was designed by the neo-palladian architect, Matthew Brettingham, but the interior decoration was masterminded by Giovanni Battista Borra, an architect originally from Turin, and also owed much to the taste of Mary Blount, 9th Duchess of Norfolk, who had lived on the continent for many years.

Following the demolition of Norfolk House in 1938, much of the furniture which had been commissioned from leading designers, cabinet makers and gilders, was removed to Arundel Castle and this study day will provide the opportunity for close inspection of these objects, consideration of the 1755 and 1777 Norfolk House inventories and other archival documentation, and the patronage of the Norfolk family over the generations.

Fee: £60 to include coffee on arrival & lunch Limit: 30 members

Closing date for applications 1 March 2010

**HORACE WALPOLE AND STRAWBERRY HILL, Private Visit to the Exhibition,
Victoria and Albert Museum, London SW7**

Tuesday 20 April 2010, 9.00–10.30 am

This first major exhibition on Horace Walpole will bring together many of the most remarkable objects of this important English collector of the eighteenth century. Walpole was the first to systematically assemble the visual evidence of English history, and the first to recognise the importance of the portrait miniature. The exhibition will recreate Walpole's pioneering collection in the context of the rooms at Strawberry Hill and will feature various loaned objects which will not be on show at Strawberry Hill, when it reopens to the public later in the year.

This early morning visit will be led by Michael Snodin, curator of the exhibition, Sarah Medlam, Deputy Keeper of the Furniture Textiles & Fashion Department, and Susan Walker of Yale University, the latter whose presence will enable close study of The Cabinet of Miniatures and Enamels, the Boulle coffer on stand, and chairs from the collection of The Lewis Walpole Library.

Fee: £10 Limit: 20 members

Closing date for applications 1 March 2010

DORNEY COURT and ETON COLLEGE, Nr Windsor, Berkshire

Tuesday 27 April 2010, 11.00 am – 4.30 pm

Dorney Court has been the Palmer family home since the early sixteenth century. Architecturally the house had certain improvements made in the eighteenth century and then was given a tudoresque overhaul in the late nineteenth century, but the fifteenth-century great hall still exists with its outstanding collection of portraits by Lely, Kneller, Janssen and others. The furniture and textile collections reflect the house's origins: walnut and needlework, cabinets, old oak and Gillow's bedroom furniture much of which was collected or returned in the early twentieth century. The family have also made several contemporary furniture commissions.

After lunch at a local restaurant or pub, the group will make their own way to Eton College, where Henrietta Ryan, Curator of Collections, will lead our afternoon visit with the furniture expertise of Nick Humphrey, curator at the V&A. The group will be privileged to visit the Election Hall, the Library, the Provost Parlour, Lower School and other areas, not normally open on public tours, which feature early English/Flemish furniture as well as some later eighteenth-century objects.

Fee: £38 Limit: 20 members

Closing date for applications 10 March 2010

**VICTORIA & ALBERT: ART & LOVE – Private Visit to the exhibition and
Introductory Talk, The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London SW1**

Wednesday 26 May 2010, 6.00–7.30 pm

Jonathan Marsden, curator of the exhibition, will give an introductory talk about Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's mutual delight in collecting and displaying works of art from the time of their engagement in 1839 until Albert's death in 1861.

The exhibition includes 400 works of all kinds, ranging from early Italian altarpieces to Victorian paintings, porcelain, sculpture and photography. Of particular interest to

members of the Society will be a set of candelabra from Balmoral in the form of Highlanders holding trophies, a collaboration between Landseer and two leading manufacturers, Minton of Stoke-on-Trent and Winfield of Birmingham; a stag-horn settee from Osborne, now identified as having been made in Gotha in 1845, and colossal gilt bronze torches by Barbedienne. Among works of art shown at the Great Exhibition in 1851 there will be an extraordinary carved writing table of Swiss manufacture and the ivory throne presented by the Maharaja of Travancore.

Fee: £30 Limit: 50 members

Final date for applications 20 March 2010

OVERSEAS STUDY TOURS

FHS STUDY TOUR, IMPORTANT CHATEAUX NORTH OF PARIS

Sunday 10 October to Tuesday 12 October 2010

Ecouen and the Musée de Renaissance, Compiègne and Chantilly, all royal chateaux or with strong royal associations, will be the focus of this short study tour being kindly organised and led by Charles Garnett and Sylvain Levy Alban.

The group will study the extensive furniture collections at the Musée de Renaissance including sixteenth-century masterpieces like the walnut Farnese cabinet, the cabinet of Clairvaux, a sumptuous Venetian cabinet of architectural proportions, examples of fan tables and chairs of the period. The royal chateau of Compiègne was completely rebuilt 1751–88 by Louis XV as a summer residence, although there is little eighteenth-century furniture remaining. After the revolution Napoleon refurnished the building with an outstanding collection of Empire furniture; Jacob Desmalter was commissioned to supply much of the furniture, some of which was chosen by Empress Josephine. There is also a museum at Compiègne devoted to paintings and works of art of the Second Empire. Chantilly, was the home of the Princes of Condé and now houses the Musée de Condé, probably the finest collection of paintings in France outside the Louvre as well as such furniture delights as a Louis XVI Riesener commode, Jacob furniture from the Salon des Jeux in Saint Cloud, a le Lorrain desk possibly by Montigny as well as the stunning rococo panelling of the Monkey Room and the mid-nineteenth century rooms of the Duc D'Aumale and his Duchess. There will be other visits in the area and accommodation for two nights will be organised.

For details and application form please apply to the Activities Secretary sending sae.

Applications for funding towards the cost of this study weekend are invited by the Tom Ingram Fund and Oliver Ford Trust, please apply to Adriana Turpin, turpinadriana@hotmail.com, for further information.

Final date for applications 10 May 2010

FHS STUDY WEEKEND COBURG AND GOTHA

Thursday 10 to Sunday 13 June 2010

Details of this study weekend appeared in the November newsletter. Closing date for applications was 15 December 2009 and the tour is fully subscribed.

NEW PUBLICATION

Members will have noted in the 2009 journal the discovery by Simon Jervis of a previously unknown Regency design book by John Stafford of Bath. This design book and Simon's article concerning it have been issued by the Society as a publication for sale to the public. The book has an attractive colour cover and is priced at £6.95 inclusive of postage and packing. Members may order copies from Brian Austen at the address shown at the rear of this *Newsletter*. Booksellers and museum bookshops can order from the same source and trade discount will be allowed on such orders.

OTHER ITEMS

Please note that these are not organised by the Furniture History Society. Information/booking instructions will be found under individual items.

THE NATIONAL TRUST'S FURNITURE COLLECTIONS with Christopher Rowell and Michael Hall, Apollo Magazine talk at BADA Fair, Duke of York Square, London SW3

Monday 22 March at 11.00 am

To coincide with the publication of the National Trust's Historic Houses and Collections Annual 2010, Christopher Rowell, the Trust's Furniture Curator, will discuss some of the famous and little known treasures on show in its houses. He will explain also the Trust's acquisition policy, based on a desire to return furniture to its original setting, and will outline its new programme of publishing catalogues of the collections. The talk will be introduced by Michael Hall, Editor of *Apollo*.

Admission is free to visitors of the fair, but places should be reserved by telephoning the fair office 0207 589 6108 or see www.bada-antiques-fair.co.uk.

HOPETOUN HOUSE MASTER CLASS: THE PHENOMENON OF THE STATE BED, Hopetoun House, 22–23 April 2010

This Master Class is the first in a series and will deal with two over-riding and inter-related themes: Studying & understanding the significance of the state bed, c. 1550–c. 1800, within its state apartment context, and conserving and presenting the state bed in great houses and museums open to the public.

Day 1

9–10 am Coffee and Registration

10 am Dr Peter Burman
Welcome and Introduction

10.15 am David Jones (University of St Andrews)
Best Beds and State Beds

11.15 am (i) Sandra Olm McRae
The history of the Hopetoun State Bed
(ii) Sarah Gerrish (Furniture Conservator)
The Hopetoun State Bed: conserving the wooden carcass
(iii) Tuula Pardoe (The Scottish Conservation Studio)
The Hopetoun State Bed: a textile conservation programme in the making

- 12.15 pm Annabel Westman (Textile Historian)
The Conservation and Restoration of the Dunham Massey State Bed
- 1 pm Lunch
- 2.15 pm Richard Dean (The National Trust) and Jeremy Hall (Peter Hall & Co.)
An Elizabethan Best Bed from Sizergh Castle, Cumbria
- 3 pm Ian Gow (The National Trust for Scotland)
The Newhailes Best Bed and its Apartment Planning
- 3.20 pm Charlotte Rostek, Curator (Dumfries House)
Thomas Chippendale's Best Bed at Dumfries House
- 3.40 pm Tea
- 4.15 pm Six study groups to examine selected items of furniture and textiles
- 6–7 pm Drinks reception

Day 2

- 9.30 am Paul Rem (Royal Palace of Het Loo)
English State Beds and the House of Orange
- 10.30 am Coffee
- 11 am Dr Susanne Evers (Stiftung Preussischer Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg)
The State Beds of the Royal Palaces of Berlin and Potsdam
- 11.40 am Maria Jordan (Historic Royal Palaces)
Queen Charlotte's and Queen Anne's Beds, Hampton Court Palace
- 12.20 pm Ksynia Marko (National Trust)
Understanding and Interpretation: the unfolding story of the James II bed at Knole
- 1 pm Lunch
- 2.15 pm Sarah Medlam (Victoria & Albert Museum)
Three English State Beds (from Boughton and Houghton) in the ownership of the Victoria & Albert Museum
- 3.15 pm Christopher Rowell (The National Trust)
Reflections on State Beds from a National Trust perspective
- 4 pm Questions and Discussion followed by an *Envoi* from the Earl and Countess of Hopetoun
- 4.30 pm Tea

A programme of visits will be organised on the Saturday if there is sufficient demand

Cost : £150.00 per person. There are a limited number of student places available at £80.00. For further information and to book please contact: Dr Peter Burman, tel. 013 1556 3876; email: peterburman@btinternet.com or peter.burman@tu-cottbus.de

WESSEX FINE ART STUDY COURSE, Architecture and Artistry: Buildings and Gardens in the West Country, 20–26 June 2010

This course, based at Dillington House, Somerset, will visit many private houses, including some with important collections of furniture. These include Castle Hill, Devon, home of the Earl and Countess of Arran, Orchard Wyndham and Hatch Court, Somerset and Forde Abbey, Dorset. Also of particular interest is mediaeval furniture at Wells Cathedral not normally on view.

Further details from WFASC tel. 01962 771579 or email wesfasc@talk21.com

CALL FOR PAPERS: 'Restoring Joints, Conserving Structures' 10th International Symposium on Wood and Furniture Conservation, Organised by Stichting Ebenist, October 2010, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Joints and structures are familiar aspects of a furniture conservator's everyday practice, yet academically they do not always receive the attention they deserve. Since the structural makeup of a piece of furniture is ultimately most vital to its preservation, it therefore deserves the close scrutiny of the professional conservator.

Anyone wishing to present a paper is invited to submit a provisional title and an abstract of approximately 250 words by 1 May 2010 to: Stichting Ebenist, PO Box 15902, 1001 NK Amsterdam, The Netherlands or info@ebenist.org

LAUNCH OF THE SECOND EDITION OF THE ONLINE DIRECTORY OF BRITISH PICTURE FRAMEMAKERS

This was launched in October 2009 on the National Portrait Gallery website at www.npg.org.uk/research/conservation/directory-of-british-framemakers.php. In this revised and expanded edition, the directory has been carried back from 1750 to 1630, and later entries have been revised, incorporating information from newly available online sources, including early newspapers and the 1911 census. The following makers have been added: from the seventeenth century, René Cousin and his son Peter, John de Critz, William Emmett, Balthasar and Tobias Flessiers, George Geldorp, Matthew Goodricke, John Le Sage, Henry Norris and his son John, Edward Pearce, Jean Pelletier and his sons René and Thomas, and Zacharie Taylor; from the eighteenth century: John Boson, Thomas Chippendale, Richard Fletcher, Matthew Gosset, William Hallett, John Howard and his son Gerrard, Robert Johnson, Samuel Norman, James Pascall and his wife Ann, Paul Petit, John Selden and William Waters; from the nineteenth century: James Honeyman Brown, John Rorke, Henry Spencer and his son Harry, and William and John Wright. It is proposed to revise and expand the directory regularly and feedback is welcomed.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION, Survey of American art in UK public collections

The University of Glasgow has received grants to undertake a survey and feasibility study towards the creation of an online database of pre-1940 American (United States) art in UK public collections. The project will include works of fine and decorative art. Could members with any information or knowledge of collections of American material please contact: Andrew Greg, Director, National Inventory Research Project, Department of History of Art, University of Glasgow, 8 University Gardens, Glasgow G12 8QQ; email: a.greg@arthist.arts.gla.ac.uk

BOOK REVIEW

Suggestions for future reviews and publishers' review copies should be sent to Dr Reinier Baarsen, Reviews Editor, Rijksmuseum, PO Box 74888, 1070 DN Amsterdam, The Netherlands, tel. 00-31-20-6747220. E-mail: r.baarsen@rijksmuseum.nl.

Phyllis Ross, *Gilbert Rohde: Modern Design for Modern Living* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 274 pp., 45 col., 145 b. & w. illus., ISBN 978-0-300-12064-6, £40

During his lifetime (1894–1944), Gilbert Rohde's was not an internationally known name. Then again, nor were those of any of the other major American furniture designers of the 1930s, among them Paul Frankl, Donald Deskey and Russel Wright. Only architects who also happened to design furniture, such as Frank Lloyd Wright or the partnership of George Howe and William Lescaze, received international attention. Yet Phyllis Ross claims in her substantial and well-illustrated monograph, that Rohde was 'the most important American furniture designer of the interwar period' (p.4). This claim is based not merely on the quality or huge number of Rohde's designs or the commercial success of his furniture; the main argument is rather that he self-consciously and successfully set out to re-define the role of the designer in the American furniture industry. He actively concerned himself with designing furniture but also with a myriad of other roles: as an advocate for an exclusively modern style in American furniture, both publicly as a writer and teacher as well as within the Herman Miller Company (for whom he worked for twelve years and whose fortunes he transformed); as the originator of new forms of marketing and selling furniture; as the designer of new types of catalogues and advertising; and, above all, as someone who taught the industry that they could sell a lifestyle as much as furniture. Ross argues convincingly that, in Rohde's career, the sum was greater than the parts, even though the parts represented a series of considerable achievements.

Rohde turned to furniture and interior design about 1927 after working as a journalist, political cartoonist and illustrator. He first designed custom-made pieces for his own interiors, then, from 1930, for the manufacturer Heywood-Wakefield. Most consequentially, in 1932 he began his remarkable collaboration with the Herman Miller Company. In the aftermath of the Great Depression, this company was facing bankruptcy and, two years after their first discussion with Rohde, they took what Miller's owner regarded as 'a gamble' (p.63) by producing two distinctly modern bedroom suites designed by Rohde. Herman Miller gradually changed from a manufacturer of period reproduction furniture to one that offered products in the most up-to-date style, influenced by German modernism, French Art Deco and by Surrealism. Unusually, Rohde's knowledge of such work was informed by visits to Germany and France: in 1927, when he went to the new Bauhaus buildings in Dessau, and may have had the first of his meetings with Marcel Breuer, head of the cabinetmaking workshop; in 1931, when he visited, among other places, the Berlin Building Exhibition and the Exposition Coloniale in Paris; and in 1937, when he saw the Paris International Exposition.

Rohde became, according to Ross, a celebrity in his own country. His career was at a peak as the United States entered World War II, but his death in 1944 led to his subsequent disappearance from public consciousness. Not until the revival of interest in American interwar design in the 1980s was Gilbert Rohde written about and his furniture valued once again.

This meticulously researched book is based not only on archives, both of Rohde himself and of his contemporaries, but also on a series of interviews with former colleagues. As a result, it contains new information about the designer's life and work. For example,

through census and school records the author has discovered that Rohde was born to German immigrants (his father was a cabinetmaker) and anglicised his name from Gustav to Gus while at one of New York's best state secondary schools and, after the age of 30, to Gilbert as his professional career advanced. From an interview with a former colleague we learn that at a time of feverish activity as an interior, exhibition and furniture designer, Rohde himself was, unusually, 'responsible for nearly all the design work in the office' (p. 170).

Ross is clearly dedicated to her subject and perhaps unsurprisingly (as with much biographical writing) her book is both highly focussed and rather uncritical. Her enthusiasm has led her to dig deep into Rohde's own history, but also to adopt a somewhat apologetic tone, unnecessarily defending the fact that Rohde was not more '*avant-garde*' (a term overused in the book). In the same vein, while in the text she soft-peddles Rohde's copying of German and French design of the 1920s, the illustrations show without question that he was plagiarising specific European models (pp. 106–09). Ross need not have worried: Rohde's achievement comes through clearly in the book. This impression is aided by the book's beautiful design (by Rita Jules) — entirely appropriate to the subject — and the excellent quality of the illustrations.

Rohde's legacy was not only his furniture designs but also, and perhaps more importantly, his transformation of the Herman Miller Furniture Company into a firm that exclusively made furniture in the modern style; also, it moved from manufacturing only domestic furniture to making pieces for business and institutional interiors. After Rohde's death, Miller's owner said that there was 'no need for design changes ... we could leisurely choose his successor' (p. 231). That successor, George Nelson (1908–86), moved the company further in the same direction, not only designing furniture and clocks himself, as Rohde had done, but also hiring designers who would redefine American furniture in the post-war period, above all Charles Eames (1907–78).

Christopher Wilk

REPORTS ON THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

VISIT TO MATTHEW BOULTON'S BICENTENARY EXHIBITIONS IN BIRMINGHAM, Friday 3 July 2009

Birmingham in 2009 marked the bicentenary of Matthew Boulton's death with several special exhibitions and a conference. Boulton was one of Britain's pioneer industrialists and this anniversary provided the city of Birmingham with a major opportunity to celebrate Boulton's historical significance, and to raise his profile nationally and internationally.

Our group met at Soho House where we were greeted by Clare Parsons, Curator of Soho House. Sir Nicholas Goodison then gave us a short presentation on Sir Matthew Boulton's life and achievements and the bicentenary celebrations.

We were then divided into groups and taken on guided tours of Soho House itself. The house was originally built in 1759. In 1761, it was leased, unfinished, by Boulton together with Soho Mill and 13 acres of land. It was to remain his home until his death and he eventually built up an estate of 200 acres with gardens and a farm. Boulton had moved to Soho because he needed a site to build his new manufactory so that he could expand his father's buckle and button business. Soho Manufactory was completed by 1765, at a cost of £10,000 — a financial burden from which he was never to fully recover. Boulton was able to expand into cut steel, silver, ormolu and Sheffield plate wares. It soon became an essential stop on the tours of wealthy travellers from all over Britain, Europe and America.

Sadly, neither the Manufactory, nor the landscaped grounds that surrounded Soho House survive today. In the 1790s Soho House was extensively remodelled by James Wyatt and a new service wing was added. The house went into a long period of decline in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was acquired by Birmingham City Council in 1990 which set about restoring it as closely as possible back to its 1790s appearance using information in the extensive Soho Archives. The house opened to the public in 1995. The result is a triumph of restoration and reconstruction. Many of the rooms contain pieces original to them or examples of the type of furniture and objects that they contained. However, many of the greatest treasures — such as John Russell's remarkable pastel of the moon — were on loan to the Gas Hall for the Boulton exhibition. Our group was particularly struck by the brightly coloured oilcloth in the Entrance Hall, reproduced after an original design and by the extraordinary curtains in the Dining Room. These have been hand painted to resemble marble after a scheme originally devised by Cornelius Dixon. It was in this Dining Room that members of the famous Lunar Society would dine and discuss their latest discoveries and ideas.

Following an excellent lunch at Soho House our group then travelled into the centre of Birmingham to the Gas Hall to see the bicentenary exhibition 'Matthew Boulton: selling what all the world desires'. We were met by Rita Mclean, Head of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, who had previously led the restoration of Soho House, and by Exhibition Curator Chris Rice. The impressive scope and size of this exhibition admirably demonstrated Birmingham's pride in Boulton and its commitment to proclaim his true national and international importance. The exhibition was divided into sections that covered every aspect of Boulton's remarkable life from his earliest days as the humble son of a buckle maker to him becoming 'the most complete manufacturer of metals in England'. The exhibition drew together a astounding amount of material from paintings, drawings and letters to cut steel, ormolu, silver, plate and coins. It began with Boulton's early life and Birmingham's importance as 'the toyshop of Europe'. Boulton's early business partnerships were examined as well as his importance as an industrial innovator. Other themes included home life at Soho House, Boulton's friendships and intellectual interests and his forays into politics. However, the section of most interest to members was undoubtedly 'Boulton and the Luxury Trades'. We saw a remarkably fine collection of ormolu and ormolu-mounted clocks, candle vases and perfume burners. These included the magnificent gilt-bronze and blue john garniture de cheminé made for George III in 1770–71. This was surely a once in a lifetime assemblage of Boulton's finest pieces. This was followed by displays about the Soho Mint where Boulton created what was arguably the world's first modern money.

We left the exhibition feeling that Boulton was truly a remarkable man in a remarkable age, the extent of which had been truly expounded on this scholarly study day by Nicholas Goodison. We are immensely grateful to him for the benefit of his renowned expertise on Matthew Boulton.

Matthew Winterbottom

CORNWALL STUDY WEEKEND, 9–11 October 2009

The Cornwall study weekend was as rich and varied in its content as it was efficient in its organisation. We offer hearty thanks to Clarissa Ward for coordinating the trip and Dr Tessa Murdoch for her enthusiastic and scholarly leadership. We are also immensely grateful to Helen and Gilbert McCabe who, in addition to their exceptionally generous hospitality on Saturday evening, were instrumental in arranging access to many of the houses.

The tour began at Antony, a classical house started in 1720, where we were warmly welcomed by Sir Richard and Lady Carew Pole who offered a personal and learned insight

into their home. In the Hall a carved oak chest with decorative panels depicting a virgin and child flanked by cardinal virtues was discussed. It was suggested that the top was a nineteenth-century English addition to a French sixteenth-century chest, possibly from Rouen. Also of interest were a pair of c.1730 mahogany side tables with white marble tops and a portrait of Charles I seated in a richly upholstered armchair similar to surviving examples at Knole. In the inner hall an unusual c.1730 six-legged walnut side table with pink marble top was noted, the top possibly local stone. On the table was an extremely fine eighteenth-century boulle-work clock. A variety of interesting woodwork was admired in the library including pine panelling, mahogany bookcases and oak windows and shutters. The windows still have thick eighteenth-century glazing bars. Several finely carved c.1700 oval picture frames and a Louis XVI kingwood *bureau plat* were also noted. In the Tapestry Room members were enthralled by a diminutive Anglo-Dutch tripod pedestal card table of c.1685. Decorated with very fine 'seaweed' marquetry on the outside, the inside is upholstered with greenish-blue silk velvet and silver braid which may be original. Also in this room were two parcel-gilt walnut side tables with cabriole legs and marble tops of c.1720. Also of note in this room were a rare French giltwood eight-branch chandelier of c.1725 said to have come from Hamilton Palace and a drop-front marquetry scriptor in the style of Gerrit Jensen. In the Saloon we saw a pair of gilded tables with brèche violet marble tops of 1700-10 below a pair of pier glasses of similar date with bevelled glass surrounds and carved scrolling shell and foliate crestings. In the dining room a set of six Chinese rococo chairs and a pair of gothic rococo armchairs were much admired. Upstairs a Kentian carved and gilt side table of c.1725-30 was thought to have been re-gilded. The Society thanks Sir Richard and Lady Carew Pole for an inspiring and enjoyable start to our trip and a delicious lunch.

On Friday afternoon we visited Port Eliot courtesy of the Earl of St Germans and kindly organised by Jo Buchanan. Our visit was led by Clive Stewart-Lockhart who expertly guided us through the rooms. The first piece drawn to our attention was a rare carved and gilt gesso chest-on-stand. Thought to be a dowry chest, the overall decoration of lattice motif with scrolling foliate overlay, ears of corn and flowers and a red lacquer interior are similar to one at Boughton supplied by James Moore the Elder in the 1710s. Next we were challenged to identify a later example amongst a set of 1790s upholstered dining chairs by Hervé. A pair of Irish yew tables with onyx tops and a mahogany chest of drawers with a pull-out top drawer table section with hidden casters were also examined. A red tortoise-shell boulle-work armoire with *singeries* and very finely engraved metalwork prompted close inspection and a German attribution was suggested. A carved and gilt mannerist picture frame was also admired and may be original to the late sixteenth-century oil painting that it frames. A pair of virtuoso carved, painted and parcel-gilt pedestals of c.1740 was also noted as were two late-seventeenth-century Dutch inlaid cabinets on ebony stands. Elsewhere was a fine mahogany break-fronted bookcase with glazed upper section and a group of Reynolds portraits framed in carved, pierced and gilt frames with scrolling acanthus and sunflowers. A Namban lacquer cabinet on an English stand was also of interest for its smaller than usual scale. Two eighteenth-century Milanese satinwood chests of drawers also attracted attention. In Soane's Round Room, surrounded by the exuberant murals of Robert Lenkiewicz, we admired an early nineteenth-century tripod specimen table, a larger square pietra dura table top and two early nineteenth-century rosewood and kingwood break-fronted bookcases. A set of mahogany folding library steps with an upholstered seat of c.1800 was also singled out.

At Godolphin we were greeted by Ann Clegg and her team who kindly showed us round. None of the furniture original to the house survives except for an impressive and elaborately carved Flemish oak overmantel created to mark the marriage of William Godolphin

and Thomasina Sydney in 1604. It was originally in the Great Hall of the medieval building which was demolished about 1800. We were also shown the dining room with its mid-sixteenth-century linen fold panelling and ceiling, both perhaps by local craftsmen. The room is said to have been paid for with the proceeds of the sale of goods from a Spanish ship wrecked on the coast nearby. We also visited the granite apple store in the undercroft of the building where granite trestle supports and draining gullies still remain.

Our first visit on Sunday was to Prideaux Place. The Society thanks Peter Prideaux Brune for allowing us to visit in his absence and his team at the house for looking after us so beautifully. We began in the oak Great Hall which is currently used as a dining room. The sixteenth-century oak panelling, which is probably Spanish, was installed in the nineteenth century and is inlaid in various woods with depictions of animals and plants. Four carved figures of women with articulated arms are mounted high up at one end of the room. Beneath them is a dowry chest with elaborate carved decoration. In contrast, the Sitting Room gave us our first taste of the numerous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century treasures to come. We admired Regency gothic plasterwork, a satinwood Pembroke table of about 1790, a nineteenth-century bonheur de jour inset with painted porcelain portrait medallions and a silver art nouveau light switch installed when the house was first electrified. Also of interest was a group of Teniers pictures with seventeenth-century frames. In the Drawing Room were two large carved and gilt rococo mirrors, a late eighteenth-century pair of bronze wall lights and a Vizagapatan box. Of particular interest was an important group of very fine painted and inlaid satinwood furniture of about 1790. The group included an oval Pembroke table, a small square table with single drawer and a glazed display cabinet in the manner of Mayhew and Ince or Seddon and Sons. Elsewhere, the panelling and carved architectural decoration in the Reading Room is said to have been purchased from Stow House, Kilkhampton before it was demolished. Caleb Boney, a Padstowe clockmaker active between 1791 and 1810, supplied the astronomical clock in the Hall which shows the stars visible over Prideaux Place. A Japanese export mother-of-pearl chest of c.1600 was also noted although its good condition suggests it is unlikely to have been washed up on the beach as the story goes! A pair of c.1770 tabletop mahogany candle stands was also noted for their fine carving and adjustable tapering pedestals. The Library, another room decorated in regency gothic in c.1810, had an impressive vaulted plasterwork ceiling and a pair of carved regency gothic tub-back armchairs with caned seats and cushions. At the end of our visit we were shown the Gallery's sixteenth-century barrel-vaulted plasterwork ceiling depicting the stories of Moses, Steven and Susannah and the Elders.

The final visit of the weekend was to Pencarrow at the kind invitation of Lady Molesworth St Aubyn who gave us an energetic and informative tour, not to mention a delicious lunch. The Music Room, with its bird's eye maple grained panelling and fine rococo ceiling depicting the four seasons provided the starting point for our tour. A carrara marble chimney piece was compared to the works of Henry Cheere or Thomas Carter. Above this a very finely carved overmantel by an unknown maker painted grey and parcel gilt with ho-ho bird brackets on either side and an eagle cresting. Of particular interest was a suite of late eighteenth-century upholstered seat furniture in the French style. Said to have originally been gilt, they were later painted to resemble rosewood. Elsewhere we examined other pieces of seat furniture including a turned and carved Yorkshire/Derbyshire chair, and a suite of Louis XVI seat furniture including an Henri Jacob carved and gilt upholstered sofa. In the Drawing Room a very fine pair of demi-lune inlaid satinwood side tables of c.1790 gave rise to suggestions of a Westcountry firm having supplied these and examples seen in other Cornish houses such as Prideaux Place. In the Hall a pair of Kentian carved pine tables also attracted attention. The Society wishes to thank Lady Molesworth

St Aubyn, Sally Harvey and the the team at Pencarrow for a warm welcome and a fascinating visit.

The Cornwall study weekend was as rich and varied in its content as it was efficient in its organisation. We offer hearty thanks to Clarissa Ward for coordinating the trip and Dr Tessa Murdoch for her enthusiastic and scholarly leadership. We are also immensely grateful to Helen and Gilbert McCabe who, in addition to their exceptionally generous hospitality on Saturday evening, were instrumental in arranging access to many of the houses.

Louisa Collins

HATFIELD HOUSE, Monday 22 June

We were met by Robin Harcourt-Williams, the archivist, and gathered outside the south front, the original entrance, for a quick reminder of the salient points in the history of the Hatfield and its owners, the Earls of Salisbury. Hatfield was begun by Robert Cecil in 1607, following the exchange of Theobalds in Hertfordshire with James I. It was designed with royal progresses very much in mind but was still unfinished when Robert died in 1612, though ready enough for James to have made an informal visit the previous year. The plan comprised a central block containing the public state rooms flanked by state apartments in the wings: the King's apartments on the east, the Queen's on the west. Robert Cecil's own apartments were below on the ground floor, with Lord Cranborne's above at the top of the house.

In the eighteenth century the 6th Earl, known as the infamous 'wicked Earl' or 'drop-out Earl', left his wife as soon as she had given birth to a son and heir and retired to North Hertfordshire with his mistress, who bore him eleven children. She was given the pick of the family's best silver and early eighteenth century furniture so that by the time of the 6th Earl's death in 1780, Hatfield was in a very sorry state with much of the furniture gone.

The 7th Earl of Salisbury, later the 1st Marquess, extensively altered Hatfield soon after inheriting the house from his father in order to create more fashionable rooms of entertainment. Together with his wife, who was a charismatic society hostess, they embarked on major schemes of redecoration and refurnishing with their architect, John Donowell, supervising the work. They commissioned a vast amount of furniture from Beckwith and France (1781-90) and made many purchases from auctions including Lord Onslow's sale which is the likely source for some of the mid-eighteenth century pieces in the house. It was interesting to discover that Samuel Beckwith was Donowell's son-in-law, and their bills for 1781 and 1782 came to the astonishing total of £8,200. The wonderfully eccentric Marchioness of Salisbury died in the fire that destroyed the west wing of the house in 1835, and much of the interior decoration that one sees today is their son's restoration of a Jacobean style that he felt was far more in keeping with the character of the house than the Georgian alterations made by his father.

Our visit began in the Marble Hall, with its three long tables of elm and accompanying forms listed in the 1611 inventory. John Hardy later regaled us with the romantic story of the Millais cabinet which stands in the hall which had been presented to the 3rd Marquess by Charles Butler. We then excitedly entered the private apartments, which had been Robert Cecil's own rooms, which still retain some of their original Jacobean decoration, including, in the third room, a spectacular chimneypiece by Maximilian Colt. Most of the Georgian alterations, apart from some fine doors, were removed by the 2nd Marquess. The rooms contained many eighteenth-century treasures that the group poured over; these included a splendid commode, usually associated with Cobb or Langlois but thought by Lucy Wood to have perhaps more to do with the Swedish group of cabinet-makers in the

circle of Haupt and Furlogh in London; she mentioned Carl Gustav Martin, a nephew of Haupt and brother of the painter, Elias Martin; a most delightful and elegant satinwood and marquetry *bonheur du jour* of elliptical form thought possibly to be by Mayhew and probably made to fit an alcove in the Salisbury London house; a pair of semi-circular pier tables also bore the hallmark of Mayhew's work with the marquetry swags in the frieze continuing down the legs. A relatively plain set of dining room chairs formed part of the Beckwith and France commission as did the many picture frames — the firm apparently made about one hundred yards of framing, supplied in four different patterns.

We proceeded to the state rooms via the great staircase originally painted by Roland Buckitt, admiring in the stairwell a very fine and rare 1740s table carpet. The dog gates were the subject of much discussion; they were originally assumed to have been inserted by the second Marquess in 1830, but the current thinking is that they date from 1880. However a number of us were convinced that the hinges were in fact of seventeenth-century date, so could the gates actually be seventeenth century with embellishments made to them in the 1880s?

To those of us who had not visited Hatfield for a while, the appearance of the King James's Drawing Room was a revelation. The room, originally the King's Great Chamber, has been transformed by the present Lord Salisbury with stunning effect. The walls are now hung with newly-acquired tapestries, which form a background to the close hang of paintings, many of which have also been recently purchased. In the window bay stood another recent acquisition — the remarkable Chase Desk which was commissioned from Rupert Brown. All its handles and locks are concealed and it is decorated with delightful marquetry scenes of a seventeenth-century boar hunt in Cranborne Chase. The room is filled with the superb set of Beckwith and France chairs, stools and sofas, newly covered in green upholstery. On either side of the Colt fireplace are the two magnificent wing arm-chairs supplied by Thomas How in 1710/11 as 'easy chairs' and ensuite with the state bed. We studied the two *pietre dura* tables, one was thought to be a survival of the original furnishings of Hatfield dating about 1610, the other was thought to be a later copy.

We learned of the numerous changes made to the appearance of the state rooms in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the Winter Dining Room, for example, was created in the 1780s from a bedchamber and its adjoining withdrawing chamber, and the Colt fireplace was originally in an apartment for Henry, Prince of Wales. The splendid set of padouk dining chairs created much debate as to their date — could they all have been commissioned by the 1st Marchioness in c.1819 or could some of them be of 1730–40? The chief glory of this room is the tapestries of the Four Seasons, completed in 1611 by Ralph Sheldon and bought for Hatfield by the 2nd Marquess. Joan Kendall of the Textile Conservation studio gave a fascinating talk on their painstaking restoration.

The Library was formed in the 1780s out of the Queen's Great Chamber and its anteroom; the famous Colt fireplace with its mosaic portrait of Robert Cecil was originally in the Long Gallery. Here the Beckwith and France seat furniture has recently been recovered in Nigerian goatskin to match the original crimson leather.

The Long Gallery was looking magnificent with its recently adopted formal arrangement of furniture: a set of chairs supplied by Thomas How in 1711 lining the window wall and a range of seventeenth-century cabinets and chairs on the opposite wall. The centre panel of an unusual mother-of-pearl table was of superb quality and must have been seventeenth-century work from Gujarat, incorporated into an Elizabethan-style piece in the 1830s. Of the same date were marble tables inlaid with ivory fleurs de lys and Tudor roses in the antiquarian manner of Richard Bridgens.

The visit to Hatfield was an FHS classic with spirited debate and exchange of ideas. We are especially grateful to the Marquess of Salisbury for allowing us a free run of the private

apartments and our special thanks go to Robin Harcourt-Williams for leading the tour and also to Jeremy Garfield-Davies, John Hardy and Lucy Wood for their contributions.

Sarah Bowles and Philippa Barton

MONTACUTE HOUSE, 6 November 2009

Montacute House is one of the most magnificently preserved houses of the late sixteenth century. It has been largely unaltered by ever decreasingly prosperous owners over the last 400 years. The house was built by William Arnold for Sir Edward Phelips and completed in 1601. Sir Edward was an M.P., Speaker of the House of Commons, and a distinguished lawyer. The National Trust took over the empty house after the Second World War, and then set about furnishing it. A tremendous effort has been made to supply contemporary furniture, and all the rooms we visited contained seventeenth-century pieces. Dudley Dodd was the inspiration behind this day and provided the group with detailed historical background to the House and its collections. Victor Chinnery was our main furniture guide.

The Hall alone took us an hour. A refectory table with bulbous turned legs attracted much debate on its authenticity, with Victor's sceptical views producing lively debate on minute details. He also pointed out a 'falling' table, of about 1600, attributed to the well-known Salisbury cabinet-maker, William Beckham. A chair of the same period was much discussed in relation to a nineteenth-century version. A 'cupboard' chair of the mid-seventeenth century was most interesting. The sides were enclosed, as was the bottom of the back, which had a (missing) door.

The Dining Room was equally interesting. We passed by a fine walnut table, and noted five 'Cromwellian' chairs which Adam Bowett refers to as Dutch. An inlaid Cologne pattern Nonsuch chest, together with a similar chest on stand, both made at Southwark by immigrant German craftsmen in about 1600, were both much admired. We examined a rare small Scottish chair, noted for its 1684 date. The point was strongly made that even though most of us would have dated the chair much earlier than this, provincial craftsmen could take decades to catch up with modern designs. A mid-eighteenth-century gilt settee, together with a pair of matching chairs, looked quite at home despite the disparity in date.

The Parlour contained a marvellous set of ten early eighteenth-century parcel-gilt chairs, possibly by Henry Spencer, or Mr Hodson, although no documents survive. The Library was noted for the magnificent carved porch, with carvings of various dates, and an interesting example of 'marbled' wood, which consists of compressed, sometimes coloured, wood-shavings. The windows incorporated over 40 heraldic panels.

The visit concluded with the Crimson Bedroom, and the 'Best' Bedroom. We were fascinated by the most elaborately carved James I bed, made by Flemish craftsmen in Exeter. There were still traces of original paintwork. It is very similar to examples in the Ashmolean and V&A. A 1665 chest, inlaid with bone and mother-of-pearl, also attracted attention. The 'Best' Bedroom was noted for its allegedly sixteenth-century buffet, cannibalised from elaborately carved of German furniture.

I feel sure we all regretted that lack of time prevented us from exploring the house further, but it was immensely valuable that the under-explored subject of early English furniture became more alive for us thanks to Victor Chinnery. As usual, the ambience of the day was matchless, and the human atmosphere in no way matched the grey and damp November weather. We are hugely grateful to Victor Chinnery, Dudley Dodd, the National Trust staff, and of course Clarissa Ward, for organising such a rewarding day.

George Judd

ANNUAL LECTURE, Society of Antiquaries, Tuesday 17 November 2009
'Antique and Ancient Furniture Dealers in the opening decades of the nineteenth century'

The significance of the antique and curiosity trade in the history of collecting and indeed the history of art, is now becoming much more evident and there has been a small but steady stream of investigations into the history of the trade in recent years. However, despite these important investigations the history of the dealer still remains a neglected area of cultural activity. Many of the recent writings on collecting and furnishing with antiques and curiosities during the nineteenth century suggest that such activities were primarily shaped by the collectors themselves, with dealers playing only a marginal role. However, one only need direct attention to the sheer scale of the number of dealers trading in antiques and curiosities during the opening decades of the nineteenth-century to realise that current opinion needs to be reassessed. During the period 1820–40 for example, the numbers of antique and curiosity dealers in London alone multiplied by more than 1000%, rising from around 15 dealers listed in trade directories in 1820 to at least 155 dealers by 1840. The numbers involved in the trade in antiques and curiosities and the rapid expansion of dealers in the capital were also supplemented by a considerable number of provincial dealers in many of the urban centres of Britain, as well as a large number of dealers on the Continent, where the British trade acquired much of its stock of objects. From as early as the beginning of the 1820s there were curiosity dealers recorded in Liverpool, Leeds, Southampton, and Hertford and by the late 1830s and 1840s the presence of a number of curiosity dealers trading in locations such as Northampton, Gloucester, Birmingham, Portsmouth and Manchester, indicates the spread of the trade by the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The figures alone indicate that the early nineteenth-century antique and curiosity trade was much more extensive and significant than has been previously considered. The large number of dealers who were trading during the first half of the nineteenth century also contradicts Clive Wainwright's suggestion that 'even by the late 1840s there do not seem to have been large numbers of shops selling antiquities'.

The more specialised trade in antiques and curiosities that arose in the opening decades of the nineteenth century involved a complex patchwork of related and overlapping trades and commercial practices. Many traders whose activities intersected with the antique and curiosity trade continued to combine their primary activities, whilst trading in antiques and curiosities. For example, Samuel Hanson, 'cabinetmaker', William Manser 'chair japanner', and James Hadnutt, 'carver and gilder' also traded in ancient furniture. And other traders, such as James Dantzigger, 'working jeweller', combined their skills as craftworkers with trading in antiques and curiosities. The activity of trading in curiosities could also be combined with some quite surprising activities, James Shankey, for example, was listed as 'curiosity dealer and East Indian china tea dealer' in the 1830s.

The market for ancient furniture and woodwork was perhaps the most extensive of all the kinds of material that were sold by the antique and curiosity dealers during the first half of the nineteenth century. The abundant supply of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century carved woodwork and furniture in Britain and vast amounts of carved woodwork imported from the Continent during the first half of the nineteenth century provided much material for re-constructed 'ancient' furniture. Such objects would be immediately dismissed as fakes today of course, but in the first half of the nineteenth century at least, such objects did satisfy the requirements of many, but not all, collectors and furnishers. These 'reconstruction' practices do however raise the issue of the notion of the authenticity of antique and ancient furniture and any discussion of the antique and curiosity trade would not be complete without an acknowledgment of the central rôle that such narratives play

in the cultural biography of the trade itself. Indeed, it is remarkable how consistently authenticity becomes an issue when the dealer makes an appearance in the biography of an object. The enduring notion that the objects that the dealer sells are spurious and that the dealer has an inauthentic relationship to the collectable object and is therefore a dangerous threat to the legitimate practices of the collector plays a significant structuring role within the narratives on collecting. Whilst there is little doubt that several high-profile members of the trade did produce what can only be described as intentional fakes; Giovanni Freppa and his productions of fake Renaissance sculpture and Samuel Pratt and his fake 'ancient' armour are just two examples. However, one still needs to be cautious about allowing these incidents and their associated characterisations to colour the whole perception of the antique and curiosity trade itself.

The role and identity of the antique and curiosity dealer was a consistent presence in nineteenth century culture and the profile of the antique and curiosity trade was drawn ever more explicitly into the public consciousness in the period. The dealer as a discrete social and cultural identity was further embedded in the contemporary cultural consciousness through characterisations in the literary field. In 1831, for example, Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) introduced the anonymous old curiosity dealer in his novel *The Wild Ass's Skin*. Balzac returned to the theme of the characterisations of the curiosity dealer in his later novel *Cousin Pons*, published in 1847, where the dealers Rémonecq and Elias Magus provided a negative counterfoil to the main character, the collector Sylvan Pons. By the early 1840s the British public had been introduced to perhaps the most famous dealer, the grandfather of 'Little Nell, in Charles Dickens's (1812–70) *The Old Curiosity Shop*. And of course *The Old Curiosity Shop* is famously still present (as we are led to believe) in Portsmouth Street, London, a constant reminder of the significance of the antique and curiosity dealer in the cultural landscape.

THE OLIVER FORD TRUST AND TOM INGRAM MEMORIAL FUND

In line with one of its roles — the promotion of interest in interior design — the Oliver Ford Trust has generously expressed the desire to sponsor a place on each FHS study weekend or foreign tour. Applicants should either be a student with a particular interest in interiors, or a junior museum professional. Applications from non-members will be considered. Grants will be awarded via the Tom Ingram Fund, to which candidates should apply.

The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund makes grants towards travel and other incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research into the history of furniture (a) whether or not the applicant is a member of the Society; (b) only when the study or research is likely to be of importance in furthering the objectives of the Society; and (c) only when travel could not be undertaken without a grant from the Society. Applications towards the cost of FHS foreign and domestic trips and study weekends are particularly welcome from scholars. Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the assistance of the Fund in any resulting publications and must report back to the Panel on completion of the travel or project. All applications should be addressed to Adriana Turpin, Secretary to the Fund at 39 Talbot Road, London W2 5JH, Turpinadriana@hotmail.com, who will also supply application forms for the Oliver Ford Trust grants on request. Please remember to send an s.a.e. with any request.

The committee requests that applications for study trips be made well in advance of the final deadline for acceptance — preferably at least one month before.

COPY DEADLINE

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is **15 March**. Copy should be sent, preferably by email, to laura.houliston@english-heritage.org.uk or posted to Ms Laura Houliston, 44 Harrow View Road, London, W5 1LZ, tel. 0208 810 4718.

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Those who wish to do so should write to communicate with the author direct.