



**THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY**

NEWSLETTER

No. 191

AUGUST 2013

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUMS TRUST ACQUIRES AN IMPORTANT  
WRITING TABLE FOR SOHO HOUSE MUSEUM



*Fig. 1 Satinwood writing table supplied by James Newton to Matthew Boulton in 1798, Birmingham Museums Trust*

Birmingham Museums Trust has acquired an original writing table commissioned by Matthew Boulton for his daughter Anne (1768–1829) which was formerly part of the furnishings at Soho House in Handsworth (fig. 1).

The satinwood table is a fine example of the work of James Newton and it still has its original label (fig. 2). It is especially significant as it can be clearly identified in Newton's 1798 bill to Boulton which survives in Birmingham Archives (fig. 3):

A Ladys Satten Wood Writing table of very / fine wood Banded with Rose and Tulip / wood, with a slide cover'd fine green Cloth / & Writing Apparus good brass Lock & / Patten handles Varnished and highly / Polished

Above the maker's label on the drawer bottom the letters AB are written in an eighteenth-century hand which supports the theory that it was made for Boulton's daughter, Anne.

The newly acquired table will be displayed in Anne Boulton's sitting room at Soho House along with a carved wood and gilt gesso pier glass of about 1795 which Birmingham Museums have bought as part of the same acquisition.

Soho House was the elegant home of the manufacturer and Enlightenment polymath Matthew Boulton from 1766 until his death in 1809. It was a favourite meeting place of the famous Lunar Society, whose members included Boulton, Erasmus Darwin, Josiah Wedgwood, James Watt and Joseph Priestley. The building was refurbished and opened as a historic house museum in 1995.



*Fig. 2 Detail of maker's label*

		Pro <sup>o</sup> for <sup>o</sup> £	01	01	4
1790 June	✓ A Ladys Satten Wood Writing table of very fine w <sup>o</sup> d Banded with Rose and Tulip wood, with a slide covered fine green Cloth, & Writing apparatus good brass Lock. Spallard handle. Harnish <sup>d</sup> and highly Polish <sup>d</sup>		6	16	6
	✓ 11 Damask Leather Cover for d <sup>o</sup>		7		6
	✓ A neat Oval Satten Wood Ladys Work table on a pillar and Claw Stand, with a silk Rug fringed & Harnish <sup>d</sup> and highly Polish <sup>d</sup>		5	10	
	✓ 11 Damask Leather Cover		5		
	✓ 2 neat Satten wood pole Screens, with folding Mounts. Harnish <sup>d</sup> & highly Po- lish <sup>d</sup>		3	3	
	✓ 3 fine white Holland Roller Blinds on tin Wares with brass back pulleys & Line		2	3	
	✓ 2 1/2 y <sup>d</sup> of best Brussels Carpet & Border made to plan for sitting room 27/3		7	0	7/2
	✓ 2 Maho <sup>o</sup> of Benjer Chairs, covered in black Leather finished with harnish <sup>d</sup> . Metal Nails 2.4.14.6		9	9	
	✓ A Mahogany Pillar back Chair with a round Curved Seat, and punch Cushion, the top and border covered with red Maroon and the bottom with black Leather		3	2	
	✓ A strong Packing Case for 2 Maho <sup>o</sup> of Chair Mattens Nails & Packing		14		
	✓ A Bille for 2 Maho <sup>o</sup> of Benjer Chairs		17	6	
	✓ 1 D <sup>o</sup> and Packing Sofa, Window Curtains Cushions &c		1	12	0
		Con <sup>o</sup> for <sup>o</sup> £	123	4	5/2

Fig. 3 James Newton's 1798 invoice to Matthew Boulton describing the table supplied, Birmingham Archive and Heritage Service

Anne Boulton (1768–1829) was the eldest of Matthew’s two children. She lived at Soho House until her brother’s marriage in 1817. Anne and her father were very close, writing to each other regularly when he was away on business. She never married.

James Newton (1760–1829) was a highly-regarded London cabinet-maker who provided a range of services (house refurbishment, upholstery, appraisals, furniture making). The bulk of his recorded clientele consisted of members of the aristocracy — indeed the only non-aristocrat he is known to have supplied furniture to was Matthew Boulton. Following the remodelling of Soho House in 1796 by Samuel Wyatt, Newton worked in association with Boulton’s decorator Cornelius Dixon and supplied significant quantities of furniture and fabrics valued at £530.

Over the last twenty years Birmingham Museums have proactively collected material for Soho House including furniture, metalwork, paintings and works on paper. The collections there include a set of japanned drawing room chairs by Newton which were made for Soho in 1797 (the bill survives in Birmingham Archives) and which were purchased from Christie’s at the Great Tew sale in 1987. Two other pieces almost certainly made for Soho by Newton are a fine ‘Klismos’ chair (also acquired at the Tew sale) and a decorative plinth purpose-built for Boulton’s famous Sidereal Clock.

Birmingham Museums also own several other pieces of furniture made by Newton but not provenanced to Soho. These include a number of small tables and a parcel-gilt and ebonized rosewood side cabinet, originally from Belton House, Lincs, which was purchased in 1994 and is now displayed in the Breakfast Room at Soho. However, the table is especially significant for the museum’s collections as it is only the second documented piece of Newton furniture made for Soho House for which the original bill survives (together with the set of dining chairs mentioned above).

The £25,000 fundraising target for the acquisition was achieved thanks to grants from the Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of Birmingham Museums.

Chris Rice  
Head of Heritage Services  
Birmingham Museums Trust

## A WARING & GILLOWS CABINETMAKER

Comparatively few individual craftsmen are recorded in the history of furniture. A provenanced piece from Chippendale’s workshops is generally simply called ‘Chippendale’ whether he worked on the item himself or not. Some Gillows furniture is signed by the individual craftsmen, but almost invariably in pencil, hidden under a drawer and we rarely know anything about the individual’s life or career. One of the less well-known joys of working on the BBC Antiques Roadshow is that one periodically meets a cabinetmaker, usually a retired gentleman, or their descendants. Whenever possible I ask the person to pass details on to the Furniture Department at the Victoria & Albert Museum to go onto their burgeoning card index for posterity. On 4 September 2008 in Dundee a lady wanted to show me a few precious notes about her father’s career in Waring & Gillows workshops in Lancaster.

John Arthur Bates (1897–1978) worked for Warings from 1911 to 1962, carrying out his apprenticeship with the firm, starting at the age of fourteen and working for the same company for some fifty years, earning a gold watch as a thank you. His wife’s father, two brothers and a nephew all worked for Gillows. The notes include two lined books with Bates’ neat handwriting from his early years as an apprentice. Written in pencil in a studied, almost feminine hand are copious notes and detailed drawings with descriptions

of mouldings, joints, handles and decorative details showing that the young man was expected to know in some detail the history of furniture making, the types and properties of the various timbers used. Many notes are in preparation for exams, either Grade I or II. Family tradition suggests that the work was done at night school — The Storey Institute in Lancaster. One book is dated 1913–1914 where Bates was the only person in his class that year to obtain a 1st Class City & Guilds award. One reason given for Bates' success was his ability to draw.

Bates served his country fighting in Belgium in the 1914–1918 Great War, returning to Waring & Gillow when demobbed. He remained until the Lancaster workshops closed in 1962 when he was made redundant. In the Second World War Bates once again served his country building the wooden framed de Havilland DH98 Mosquito 'The Wooden Wonder'. Many of the men in the factory had to help the seamstresses sewing the canvas coverings for the airplanes, as it was too heavy for the women to feed through the sewing machines.

Fitting out ships was a large part of the workload, including the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, and he had to take his toolbox to Southampton on occasion. He also helped with the work for Skibo castle for Andrew Carnegie. Another commission was for the Royal train for a visit by Queen Elizabeth II to South Africa — the train still exists in South Africa today. Bates' tools were carefully looked after, stamped with the owner's name and kept in a beautifully made cabinetmaker's tool chest. In the 1950s, hours were 07:45 to 17:30 but 17:45 on Monday evenings. To be even one minute late meant losing a quarter of an hour's pay. Health and Safety was not as stringent as today: the men's hands suffered when using a white glue in the late 1950s fixed by an acid, clothes were stained brown with the dust of mahogany and other timbers before the days of the now compulsory dust extractors. However, by this time holidays had improved from Bank Holidays only to a two-week break in the summer.

Waring & Gillow was founded in 1897 by an informal merging of Gillow of Lancaster with Waring of Liverpool, ratified in 1903. The Waring & Gillow showrooms joined with Maple & Co in 1980.

I am very grateful to John Bates daughter, Mrs Patricia Mee in summarizing her father's career for me for this article.

Christopher Payne

## FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS

### BOOKINGS

For places on visits please apply to the Events Secretary Anne-Marie Bannister, Bricket House, 90 Mount Pleasant Lane, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Herts., AL2 3XD. Tel. 07775 907390 enclosing a separate cheque and separate stamped addressed envelope for each event using the enclosed booking form. NB. PLEASE NOTE NEW EVENTS E-MAIL ADDRESS: [events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:events@furniturehistorysociety.org).

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.

There is now an extra facility on the website for members to express interest in certain events and then pay, if assigned a place after the closing date (where this is applicable).

These events are as follows: the Annual Lecture; the AGM; and the visit to the City & Guilds Carving Workshop on 26 November 2013. This is a test of the new capability for on-line booking and is therefore limited only to these events at present, but hopefully will be extended to all in the future. The normal blue form should be used for booking other events until further notice. If you have no on-line facility or are uneasy about using this new procedure, please just use the blue form as usual or e-mail [events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:events@furniturehistorysociety.org). WHERE POSSIBLE, JOINING INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE DESPATCHED BY E-MAIL SO PLEASE REMEMBER TO PROVIDE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS IF YOU HAVE ONE.

#### CANCELLATIONS

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events 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. PLEASE ENSURE THERE IS SUFFICIENT POSTAGE ON YOUR SAE AS WELL AS YOUR APPLICATION/BLUE FORM ENVELOPE.

### FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS

#### SUSSEX STUDY WEEKEND

6–8 September 2013

This visit is now fully subscribed but if you would like to be added to the waiting list, please contact the Events Secretary.

#### ANNUAL LECTURE

*'Plywood: the material that dare not speak its name'* — Christopher Wilk

The Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1

Monday 21 October 2013, 6.00 pm for 6.30 pm – 7.45 pm lecture

Plywood, a type of laminated wood, has a complicated and largely undocumented history stretching back to the ancient world. It became highly visible in furniture design in the 1940s and 1950s, but its history and its use in furniture have been little explored. By the mid-nineteenth century it had been identified as a material of invention that could, through its strength and cheapness, be used as an alternative to solid wood, sometimes in extremely novel ways. By the early twentieth century it progressed along two apparently contradictory paths: firstly, as a cheap substitute for solid wood, its presence in furniture literally hidden and never mentioned to consumers; and secondly, as a proudly exposed material of design and structural innovation that would become, by the 1950s, widely accepted for furniture manufacture. This talk will offer an overview of the material through its use in furniture, but will also consider the key role of aeroplane design in developing plywood

technology. Particular attention will be paid to the shifting status of the material over the course of the twentieth century.

Christopher Wilk is Keeper of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion at the V&A. Plywood and laminated wood is his current area of research.

Admission to the Lecture is free but attendance is by ticket only, which must be acquired in advance from the Events Secretary. Numbers are limited to 90.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND WORKS IN PROGRESS TALKS

The East India Club, 16 St James's Square, London SW1

Saturday 23 November 2013, 11.00 am – 1.00 pm

The Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2013 will be held at the East India Club. The AGM will start at 11.00 am (coffee from 10.30 am).

The theme of the works in progress will be 'New Openings', including talks by Christopher Rowell of The National Trust, and Laura Houliston of English Heritage on Kenwood House. There will also be two presentations from members of the Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department at the V&A: Edwina Ehrman will introduce members to the new Clothworkers Study Centre for Textiles at Blythe House, which opens to the public on 8 November; Leela Meinertas will talk about the cleaning and conservation of the writing cabinet made for Augustus III, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, which will be a key exhibit in the new European Galleries at the V&A, scheduled to open at the end of 2014.

Admission to the AGM is free but all members wishing to attend should notify the Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance. Members may be interested to know that the East India Club has purchased a larger projection screen since our last meeting, and has also made some improvements to its catering menus. Tickets for a sandwich lunch with a glass of wine at the lower price of £15 per head should be booked with the Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance.

## OCCASIONAL VISITS

WILTON HOUSE, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 0BJ

Tuesday 17 September 2013

Notice of this visit appeared in the May 2013 *Newsletter* and is now fully subscribed. If you would like to be added to the waiting list, please contact the Events Secretary.

AMMERDOWN HOUSE, Radstock, Somerset BA3 5SH and MELL'S MANOR, Frome, Somerset BA11 3RE

Wednesday 9 October 2013 10.30 am – 4.30 pm approx.

Ammerdown House has been in the Jolliffe family since it was built between 1789 and 1793. Many of the contents were designed and made particularly for the house by the workshops of John Linnell, including pieces in rosewood, satinwood, kingwood and giltwood. Highlights include an exceptional set of seventeen George II mahogany dining chairs by William Hallett and the house contains an interesting variety of seat, table, desk, cabinet and display furniture, mahogany and walnut pieces, predominantly English. Andrew Jolliffe,

current owner will give members a private tour of the house accompanied by Matthew Winterbottom, curator of the Holburne Museum in Bath and FHS Council Member, who will talk about the Linnell furniture supplied for the house.

Mells Manor, current home of the Asquith family, was built in the sixteenth century for Edward Horner, altered in the seventeenth century, partially demolished around 1780, and restored by Sir Edwin Lutyens in the twentieth century. We will have the privilege of a private visit to the house by kind invitation of the current Earl and Countess of Oxford, and will see some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century furniture brought to the house when the family moved here in the early twentieth century from Mells Park. We will also see some interesting early Italian and Pre-Raphaelite paintings and rugs collected by William Graham, the current Earl of Oxford's great-great grandfather.

If any members are fortunate enough to have access to a rare copy of *Time Remembered*, by Frances Horner, there is an atmospheric account of the move to the house, and the origin of some of the pictures.

£48 per head (to include morning coffee, two-course lunch at Ammerdown and tea at Mells) Limit: 20 members

Closing Date: 13 September 2013

#### VISIT TO THE HISTORIC CARVING DEPARTMENT AT THE CITY & GUILDS OF LONDON ART SCHOOL, 124 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4DJ

Tuesday 26 November 2013 2.30 pm – 4.30 pm

Given its name, it may come as a surprise to learn that the City and Guilds Art School is in fact entirely independent of the eponymous Institute. Although it was linked for a while, for most of its long history, which can be traced back to 1854, the School was, and remains, resolutely independent. The Arts and Crafts philosophy still lives on at the School today. Tutors are still artists and craftspeople, and students of the Historic Carving Department, who work in both wood and stone, still have the opportunity to put the skills they learn into effect in real and prestigious art projects.

During the visit members will be able to visit the wood and stone carving studios and will have the opportunity to meet the students and tutors. Members will also be able to visit the Conservation Laboratories which undertake projects in wood, some gilded, alongside a wide range of other materials.

For further history and background to the visit, please see [www.cityandguildsartschool.ac.uk](http://www.cityandguildsartschool.ac.uk)

£15 per head including tea/coffee Limit: 20 Members

Closing Date: 4 October 2013

## OVERSEAS EVENTS

### AMSTERDAM

3–5 November 2013

The Rijksmuseum has re-opened the new display of its great collections. Dr Reinier Baarsen, Senior Curator of Furniture at the Rijksmuseum, has offered to lead a three-day study visit to Amsterdam in November 2013 for FHS members. Please note attendees will be required to book their own hotel accommodation in Amsterdam.



Please contact the Events Secretary for full details and an application form.

Closing date for applications: 12 September 2013

The Tom Ingram Fund and Oliver Ford Trust welcome grant applications for participation in this study tour from PhD students and junior curators/furniture scholars. For application form please apply to Clarissa Ward, FHS Grants Secretary, e-mail [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org). Completed forms must be submitted to the FHS Grants Committee by 7 September 2013.

## OTHER ITEMS

CALL FOR PAPERS FROM PHD/POST-DOC STUDENTS, JUNIOR MUSEUM/  
HERITAGE CURATORS BASED IN THE USA

FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY RESEARCH SEMINAR 2014

*'British & Continental Furniture And Interiors, 1500–1900'*

Monday 3 February 2014, 10 am – 5 pm, hosted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Following the success of the inaugural FHS Research Seminar in November 2012 at the Wallace Collection, London, the Society is delighted to announce that the Metropolitan Museum of Art have most generously agreed to host a similar academic event for a scholarly audience in New York to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Society.

The Metropolitan Museum is currently planning the refurbishment of its British Galleries for 2014. The aim of the research seminar is to present current research on topics of British and European furniture history, construction, design, conservation and historical interiors. In particular we would welcome papers focussing on British furniture 1500–1900 looking at two important areas of interest: the connections and influences exchanged between British and Continental Europe during this period; and the reception, collecting and understanding of British furniture in the United States.

There will be a series of Powerpoint papers each lasting 20 minutes from PhD/Post Doc students, junior museum/heritage curators and other researchers at an early stage of their career development.

Interested speakers are requested to send an abstract of c.300 words outlining their proposed topic, research methodologies and sources. They should also send a current Curriculum Vitae and details of one referee to the FHS Grants Secretary, [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org) by 29 September 2013. A panel from the Furniture History Society Grants Committee and the European Department of Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum, will consider submissions and confirm the programme by the end of October. Some limited assistance with travel expenses may be available and any requests should be included, with justification, with the applicant's abstract. The Society is also happy to provide further details, outlining the aims and objectives of the seminar, to enable participants to apply to their own institution for funding.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENTS ([www.furniturehistorysociety.org](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org))

The Society has been working hard to improve its website to give members extra benefits and an improved service. Laura Ongaro has been appointed as the new Website Editor.

### *Log-in for Members*

Those members who have supplied their email addresses to the Society should have received an email giving personal login details. Logging in will give access to additional content unavailable to non-members, including news stories and the latest *Newsletter*. Any member who has not received and wishes to be given login details should email Laura, [website@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:website@furniturehistorysociety.org)

### *Online for Events*

See 'Bookings under Future Society Events' for more information

### *News Items*

The Website Editor is actively looking to make the website a leading resource for news and information relevant to the academic aims of the Society. News stories (not commercial information) can be shared with the membership through the site (subject to approval by the Council). In addition, Laura is keen to have rights-free images for use to illustrate news stories as well as enhancing the look and feel of the website. News information or images for contribution and any thoughts/comments on the new website should be sent to [website@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:website@furniturehistorysociety.org)

## OTHER EVENTS

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

### TWO NEW REGENCY GALLERIES

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston will be opening this September a specially designed tented Regency gallery to display the generous gift of Regency objects given by Horace W. Brock. This new gallery will show furniture and works of art gathered by Dr Brock over the past three decades. Highlights include a cabinet on stand attributed to James Newton, wall lights designed by Thomas Hope for Duchess Street, a Carlton House desk attributed to George Oakley, and pieces by George Bullock and William Bullock, together with works of art by Benjamin Vulliamy and Rundell and Bridge and Rundell. Many of these carefully-chosen pieces were included in the exhibition 'Splendor and Elegance: European Decorative Arts and Drawings from the Horace Wood Brock Collection', Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, January–May 2009.

Meanwhile, the National Trust for Scotland has recently re-installed the Stirling Collection of Regency furniture, removed from the Trust's former headquarters at Charlotte Square, Edinburgh and now at the House of Dun, Montrose. Formed by the distinguished architect Sir James Stirling (1926–92), the collection was briefly published by Michael Hall, 'Stirling Wit and Passion', *Country Life*, 31 August 2000, pp. 50–53. The collection includes furniture designed by Thomas Hope, George Bullock and George Smith, together with clocks and candelabra by Benjamin Vulliamy and Stirling's accumulation of Grand Tour bronzes. The installation also incorporates some of Stirling's Paris porcelain and part of a dinner service designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, as well as chairs designed by Mies van der Rohe.



*The Stirling Collection of Regency furniture, removed from the Trust's former headquarters at Charlotte Square, Edinburgh and now at the House of Dun, Montrose*

CONSERVATION IN FOCUS: TRUE COLOURS REVEALED — THE TREATMENT OF A CHEST OF DRAWERS FOR MARIE-ANTOINETTE Exhibition

Ritblat Conservation Gallery, Wallace Collection, London

27 April, 2013 – 1 January, 2014

On 9 December 1780 a commode was delivered to the palace of Versailles by the royal cabinet-maker, Jean-Henri Riesener, for the use of Queen Marie-Antoinette in her private study. The commode was described as being a 'new model' in the palace records and it



marks a step towards the refined simplicity of Riesener's later works. He used the lattice-work marquetry and tripartite form for which he was renowned, but embellished the piece with jewel-like gilt bronze mounts that are more delicate and naturalistic than those on his earlier works. These depictions of real flowers — including roses, pinks, narcissi, poppies, lilies-of-the-valley and dahlias — reflect the love of nature which was such an important element in French court fashion at this time and which was a defining characteristic of Marie-Antoinette's personal taste. In the centre of the frieze, garlanded by flowers, are the Queen's initials framing the key-hole. The workmanship is of the very highest quality.

Based on findings from a recent conservation project, the original colours of the commode have been digitally reconstructed to show how vibrant and colourful furniture of this type could be.

#### FOUR CENTURIES OF MASSACHUSETTS FURNITURE

Regional studies have long been a staple of American furniture scholarship. Yet rarely has anyone focused on furniture production in a single state over many centuries. During 2013 and 2014 a consortium of institutions in the United States will explore the contributions of Massachusetts furniture-makers from the earliest years of English settlement to the present day. Driving the collaborative effort are eleven founding partners: the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Concord Museum, Fuller Craft Museum, Historic Deerfield, Historic New England, Massachusetts Historical Society, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, North Bennet Street School, Old Sturbridge Village, Peabody Essex Museum, and Winterthur Museum. These institutions, joined by other Massachusetts organizations, have planned an ambitious array of exhibitions, symposia, major publications, online databases, and public programs that both celebrate and document the accomplishments of this state's furniture craftsmen, manufacturers, and designers. For a complete calendar of activities and further information about the scope of the project see the website: [www.fourcenturies.org](http://www.fourcenturies.org).

Perhaps no state holds a more prominent place in the history of furniture-making in the United States than Massachusetts. From the early products of Pilgrims and Puritans through the factory production in the late nineteenth-century when Gardner, Massachusetts, was the chair capital of America to the studio furniture of today, the state has achieved a remarkable record. In sheer quantity alone, the numbers are startling. The state's output of furniture exceeds well over 125 million objects and includes costly pieces in walnut, mahogany, or rosewood as well as decorative items made of less expensive painted pine or wicker. Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture seeks to recount this rich history and in the process unite a group of related institutions in the presentation of a single topic.

Brock Jobe  
Professor of American Decorative Arts, Winterthur Museum  
[bjobe@winterthur.org](mailto:bjobe@winterthur.org)

#### MASTERPIECES: ART AND EAST ANGLIA, the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, 14 September 2013 to 24 February 2014

This major exhibition of works of art celebrates the rich and distinctive culture and artistic heritage of East Anglia, from antiquity through to the present day, and will mark the unveiling of the newly-refurbished galleries by Norman Foster.

The chair-making tradition in East Anglia is represented by three distinct, but closely allied, design lineages: the Mendlesham; the Norfolk Reed Back; and the Suffolk Ball Back — all illustrated in this exhibition by examples loaned from the Suffolk Chair Collection.

Founded in 2003, the Collection brings together over forty original nineteenth-century chair designs as a reference collection for contemporary commissions and re-editions. Also on view will be *Festival Chair* made by Tim Whiting, one of several contemporary Suffolk chair-makers, which was commissioned in February 2013 especially for the exhibition.

LONDON ANTIQUE TEXTILE FAIR, Chelsea Old Town Hall SW3 5EE,  
Sunday 6 October

Dealers from the UK and Europe will be offering a vast range of quality textiles, costumes and related items.

#### LOOKING FOR A GOOD HOME

A collection of slides formerly belonging to Edward Joy. They include furniture, interiors, buildings — even pictures of FHS members on study trips! They are well organised in fitted boxes, and annotated — about 800 slides in all.

Apply to Noël Riley 01787 269315 or [noelriley@emailaccount.com](mailto:noelriley@emailaccount.com)

#### NEW ACQUISITION

The Holburne Museum in Bath has just acquired this remarkable beadwork basket thanks to the generosity of hundreds of donors and major grants from The National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund. Made in England in the 1660s, the basket incorporates exceptionally rare glass figures of Charles II and Catherine of Braganza. Like the glass beads, these would have been imported from the Continent, perhaps from Nevers. The basket will take its place in the Holburne's permanent displays in September.



## BOOK REVIEWS

Suggestions for future reviews and publishers' review copies should be sent to Simon Swynfen Jervis, 45 Bedford Gardens, London W8 7EF, tel. 020 7727 8739. E-mail: ss.jervis@btopenworld.com

Mirja Harms, Franziska Franke, Peter Klein, *Der Henndorfer Truhenfund, Hildesheimer Beiträge zur Erforschung und Erhaltung von Kulturgut*, 1, Munich (Siegl), 2012, 150 pp., 77 col., 127 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-3-935643-54-2, €29.80.

This book describes and analyses an extraordinary survival, a cohesive group of no fewer than 127 chests (and a chest front) in or from storage lofts high above the village church of Henndorf in Transylvania, which once contained some three hundred such chests. Sixty have been dendrochronologically dated, the earliest to 1466 and the latest to 1799, five being fifteenth century, thirty-one sixteenth century, and eight eighteenth, with a large gap from 1645 to 1726.

Transylvania or Siebenbürgen was settled in about 1150 by Germans from the Rhineland and neighbouring areas, summoned by King Geza II of Hungary. They were called, in Latin, 'saxones', because they enjoyed privileges similar to those granted to imported Saxon miners.

Their settlements were repeatedly attacked, first by the Mongols and later by the Turks, and were therefore heavily fortified, including, as in Henndorf, the churches, Lutheran from 1547.

The chests are completely undocumented and folk memories are relatively slight (during Ceausescu's later years and after his fall there was a tremendous exodus of Saxons, and now all that is left is a small ageing population). Many of the chests were sold and dispersed at this period. On the ground there was once another sequence of quite plain large rectangular chests, within the fortified enceinte, which were apparently used for the storage of grain. The chests above the church may originally have been used to store valuables, but after the Turks had been defeated in 1699 it seems that they were more used for luxury food and drink, and that each household owned a chest.

The *Henndorfer Truhenfund* has illustrations of over fifty chests from the church, as well as a few elsewhere, some of which may originally have been at Henndorf. Schematic and exploded drawings illustrate types and construction. Particular attention is paid to the surviving painted decoration of the chests, and one miniature re-creation and a digital reconstruction reveal the vigour of the original schemes, Gothic roundels surviving to the late sixteenth century, while later patterns tend to the floral, foliate and scrolly. The dendrochronological method and evidence is fully discussed, as are comparative dimensions. The basic form, with variations, is that of a *Stollentruhe*, that is a chest whose legs are formed by the downward extension of the broad planks to either end of its front, with the canted top, sometimes asymmetrical, of an ark. This is a fascinating and important account, which may be read as a sequel to Karl Heinrich von Stülpnagel's magisterial *Die gotischen Truhen der Lüneburger Heideklöster* (Cloppenburg, 2000).

Simon Swynfen Jervis

Georg Himmelheber, *Die Berchtesgadener Holzhandwerker und Bildhauer im Barock* (Berchtesgaden, Verlag Plenk, 2012), 184 pp., 73 col., 3 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-3-940141-74-3, €28.

This nicely produced book, compact but substantial, by the indefatigable Georg Himmelheber, is an account of woodworkers and sculptors in the minuscule state of Berchtesgaden, up to 1803 an independent ecclesiastical entity in the Holy Roman Empire, ruled by a Prince-Provost, but now within Bavaria. Alpine, Berchtesgaden's economy depended on salt-mines, agriculture and timber products. The last included many practical utensils but this small community also supported a flourishing, though much exploited and strictly regulated, cottage industry producing a mass of cheap wooden toys, novelties, *bondieuseries*, souvenir and tourist wares, and educational devices, including dismountable models of the human eye, which were widely exported. Himmelheber has assembled several travellers' accounts from 1701 to 1799, wondering at this idiosyncratic phenomenon. The trade was already flourishing in 1631 and in 1731 no fewer than 271 different wares were specified. In 1712 396 turners, 256 box-makers, and 108 carvers were listed (other trades included cabinet-makers, trunk makers, bone carvers and turners, and straw-inlayers — these last often women). Demarcation disputes between the various trades and their sub-divisions were frequent. Himmelheber, concentrating on carvers, has produced a list of 444 active from 1574 to 1748, some bare names and dates but many with brief biographies. Some produced highly competent figural sculpture in polychrome wood or stone for altarpieces and church monuments.

Works made in Berchtesgaden entered princely cabinets of curiosities from at least 1598. Particularly prized were sets of wafer-thin wooden beakers stacked one inside another. Another family of products were caskets and cabinets, often elaborately decorated with colourfully dyed straw mosaic of rosettes, figures and flowers, and/or turned and carved bone columns, finials, and ornamental motifs, floral, figural and vegetal, sometimes with embroidered panels and linings or backgrounds of marbled or gilt patterned papers. The grandest to come to light so far is a cabinet in the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin, 45 cm. (18 ins.) high, purchased in 1986 as early seventeenth-century Flemish. But there must be many other specimens of this delightful genre lurking elsewhere and, thanks to Georg Himmelheber's pioneering research, they now stand a much better chance of being recognised.

Simon Swynfen Jarvis

Christopher Rowell, *Petworth, The People and The Place* (Swindon, The National Trust and London, Scala, 2012), 168 pp., 118 col., 8 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-0-70780-420-0, £18.99

The inherited property of successively the Percy family, who acquired it in 1150, the Seymours, who married into it in 1682, and the Wyndhams, who inherited it in 1750, after a marriage in 1708, Petworth is indissolubly linked with the Earldom of Northumberland, the Dukedom of Somerset, the Earldom of Egremont, and the Baronies of Leconfield and Egremont, all, except Somerset, essentially Percy titles. Christopher Rowell has been involved there since the late 1980s: he wrote the 1997 National Trust guide-book, as well as taking the lead in the resuscitation of the North Gallery in 1991 to 1993 and, spectacularly, the Carved Room from 2000 to 2002. In this handsome new publication he presents an invigorating and authoritative dynastic account of both family and house, into which is integrated a saga of patronage, inheritance and collecting on the grand scale, followed by special chapters on pictures and sculpture and, *mirabile dictu*, furniture and woodwork. Petworth's pictures are deservedly famous, with no fewer than fifteen Van Dycks and twenty

Turners, but the sculpture, from Praxiteles (in 2000 a German scholarly catalogue was published of the antique sculpture, largely collected by the second Earl of Egremont in the 1750s and 60s) to Flaxman, is almost equally remarkable.

However, apart from the Grinling Gibbons component, Petworth's furniture and woodwork has, perhaps inevitably, been overshadowed. Yet what a constellation, commencing with a late Gothic brass lectern in the chapel, the 1592 Molyneux globe, the earliest in England, and early seventeenth-century *sgabelli* with the Percy crescent (are they really Italian?). The incomparable Gibbons is celebrated, but equally a nonpareil rococo component, including superlative pier-glasses by Whittle and Norman. And there is a notable French group, including a very rich gilt table of about 1700 with the cross of Lorraine, and the rightly famous Boulle commode illustrated in the catalogue of the 1882 Hamilton Palace sale, where it was bought by the second Lord Leconfield, along with a fine set of four tapestry-covered *fauteuils à la reine*, also illustrated, and doubtless by a leading Parisian *menuisier* such as Tilliard or Heurtaut. Backed up by index, bibliography and compact references Rowell's book is an excellent encapsulation of Petworth in the round with fine and generous illustrations of objects and interiors, the latter demonstrating how successfully the house's heyday under the third Earl of Egremont — immortalised by Turner — has been recaptured. Not every National Trust house could support this approach, but Knole seems a good candidate for similar treatment.

Simon Swynfen Jervis

## REPORTS ON THE SOCIETY'S EVENTS

### BURGHLEY, 27 February 2013

The FHS group met in the Orangery at Burghley at 10.30 am to be welcomed by Orlando and Miranda Rock and Jon Culverhouse the curator. We spent the morning on the ground floor, which is mostly private, and the afternoon on the first floor, which includes the finest bedchambers, closets and drawing rooms.

Starting in the Banqueting Hall, we admired the mahogany Mayhew and Ince tables, crowned by specimen lava tops, which were brought back from Italy by Brownlow, 9th Earl of Exeter (1725–1793). Other noteworthy items included a set of richly carved and upholstered Mayhew & Ince chairs and also of Swiss (or Tyrolean?) inlaid *sgabello* chairs. In the adjoining kitchen, we admired a fine *verre eglomisé* looking glass, recently restored by Peter Holmes of Arlington Studio. On the other side of the Banqueting Hall was the library, considerably altered by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the 1760s, the star feature of which was perhaps a pair of well documented Mayhew and Ince commodes and matching pier glasses, dated 1768, which originally cost £292: the French glass, its transport and customs dues were by far the most expensive items on the bill.

The Ground floor of Burghley has an inner garden quadrangle: its sides were enclosed in the 1820s, creating among other rooms a West Hall. This proved a treasure trove of Baroque furniture, ranging from an inlaid table by Gerrit Jensen to a set of richly carved Venetian chairs, in the manner of Andrea Brustolon, from the Doge's Palace via Town and Emmanuel, as well as a table made from an earlier inlaid floor. Important items in the adjoining rooms included the 9th Earl's desk, in the West Bedroom, which contained marble specimens annotated in his own handwriting; a Mayhew and Ince china cabinet of padouk and a splendid Antwerp cabinet with tortoiseshell drawers inlaid in pewter by Van Soest in the Blue Drawing Room; and a rustic table, dated 1838 and made of twigs, originally housed in a temple in the grounds, in a Drawing Room adjoining.



The afternoon was spent on the first floor, in a sequence of rooms known as the Heaven Room (after Verrio's decorations) and the four George Rooms, followed by a series of bed chambers, the chapel and finally the kitchen. The most monumental object in the Heaven Room was huge silver wine cooler by Philip Rollos, dated 1710 and reputedly the largest piece of silver in the country — save the wine cooler in the Royal Collection which is in silver-gilt. There were also a series of stools dating from the 1690s, attributable to Thomas Pelletier, who was then also working at Boughton. John Hardy attributed a set of upholstered chairs in the 4th George Room to Thomas Chippendale. The 3rd George Room contained particularly fine commodes and corner cupboards, constructed re-using the marquetry of the earlier Closet floor, by Mayhew and Ince. In the 2nd George room, we were shown some fine scorched leather covers for the commodes in this room. The monumental state bed was made by Fell & Newton, and was carved with bushels of wheat, the Cecil crest and gilded. It was decorated with the royal coat of arms and used by Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort on a visit in 1844. The 1st George Room contained a fine bouille bureau Mazarin and chest of drawers. Its adjoining closet had perhaps the most 'papist' flavour: it housed medallions of four popes, a Carlo Dolci painting of Christ Blessing the Bread and Wine, and a fine marquetry topped North Italian desk, as well as William Beckford's agate casket. Perhaps the most important piece of continental furniture is the cabinet by Pierre Gole, dating from 1665. It is housed in the Blue Silk Bedroom and is perhaps the earliest piece of French floral marquetry, which John, 5th Earl of Exeter had bought at the Gobelins workshop. The nearby Marquetry Room included a nineteenth-century linen press, made up of large panels from a cabinet, possibly by Van Meekeren, a dead bird carved by Jean Dumontreuil from one piece of pearwood in about 1780, and a table of about 1700, decorated by an obvious devotee of Stalker & Parker's *Treatise on Japanning and Varnishing*. At the end of the tour one could not help being amazed at the scale of the beautifully preserved Kitchen and the beautiful copper utensils including a turtle-shaped tureen for turtle soup. But in terms of furniture history, the climax was probably the chapel, decorated in a 1760s 'Jacobethan Revival' style, with exquisite 'gothick' pews and pulpit by Ince & Mayhew, an altarpiece by Veronese, brought back from Murano, and the splendid torchères in the form of the 10 Wise Virgins, attributed to Hardenberg of London.

The whole day could be described as a Mayhew-and-Ince-fest and indeed a State-Bed-fest, much enlivened by John Hardy's mythological allusions. But as well as furniture, there were splendid Soho Tapestries, monumental pieces of silver, and extremely important pieces of ceramics, including examples of porcelain from the Duke of Buckingham's manufactory, dating from the 1680s. We are most grateful to Miranda and Orlando Rock for their kindness, hospitality and excellent tour, as well as to Jon Culverhouse, the archivist, who carried his enormous knowledge and scholarship so lightly but was very much the oracle.

James Yorke

## NATIONAL LIBERAL CLUB, Tuesday 19 March 2013

Members met in the entrance hall for a tour of the principal rooms. As a member, I took the party round the hall and the upstairs rooms. The Secretary, Mr Simon Roberts, ably conducted the party round the lower ground floor and the basement, including a visit (rarely allowed) to the Savage Club room.

The National Liberal Club was founded by Gladstone and other prominent Liberals in 1882 and opened in 1887. The aim was to provide a base for Liberal party members visiting

London, a club less grand architecturally and socially than the Reform Club in Pall Mall, a club for Galsworthy's Forsytes, rather than for the grander Monts.

Alfred Waterhouse (1830–1905), the club's architect was himself a Liberal and a Quaker. The club is one of his finest commissions, along with the Natural History Museum and the Prudential Building, Holborn. It was his idea to use tiles by Burmantoft to decorate many of the walls. He also employed the Great Titchfield Street cabinet-makers James and Henry Capell to manufacture his furniture designs. Much survives, particularly in the Drawing Room and Dining Room, amazingly all in good order. Many of the interiors are hung with paintings of prominent Liberals, including, in the Entrance Hall, a portrait of Churchill by Ernest Townsend, painted in 1915, shown in his uniform as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The ground floor Billiards Room has an excellent billiards table by Thurston. Nearby is the room of the Savage Club, founded in 1857 and with members connected largely to arts, literature, the law and drama. The furnishings include a late-seventeenth century inlaid armchair and a set of stylish chairs of the 1860s or 1870s which are presumably from the club's original premises in Carlton House Terrace, as they are visible in a group portrait of members painted in the 1870s. The design is strong and may have been by an architect. A staircase opposite the Billiards Room leads to the basement, where we viewed the foundation stone and the original electrically driven device — no longer used — to get wine from the vaults upstairs.

The splendid marble staircase is based on Italian originals but simplified when it was re-built after war damage. At the bottom of the staircase we saw two Waterhouse-designed tables, combining practicality and strong design. On the first floor, the old Grill Room, now called the David Lloyd George Room, after an early patron, retains its original black-leaded grill, with polished steel detailing. Nearby we saw two large watercolours by Waterhouse's office of the main elevations of the club. Next door is the Lady Violet Bonham Carter Room, named for Asquith's daughter. Her portrait dominates a room of highly idiosyncratic shape, designed to fit into the apex of the triangular building.

The most important room is the Drawing Room. It retains much Waterhouse furniture, including at least two distinguished moveable bookstands, a large set of sturdy, round occasional tables and many comfortable leather-upholstered armchairs, grander versions of the 'smoker's bow' of the Windsor tradition. There are some fine political portraits and busts and a very good silver collection. There is also a glass case containing Gladstone's axe — he died felling a tree — and his famous 'Gladstone bag'.

The last rooms we viewed were the Bar and the Dining Room, also with many portraits and a bronze statue of the young Gladstone. We saw more of the ubiquitous round tables and a set of chairs that probably arrived later, possibly from the High Wycombe firm of Birch and Birch.

Special thanks go to Mr Roberts and his staff for allowing our visit and providing great hospitality in the form of champagne and a splendid afternoon tea in front of a blazing fire.

Ronald Porter

WALLACE COLLECTION, *The Importance of Copies*, Thursday 18 April 2013

During this enlightening visit we were allowed close access to several nineteenth-century pieces commissioned by the 4th Marquess of Hertford to complement his collection of French furniture. Several key points emerged. The Marquess was evidently prepared to spend large sums on copies of furniture he admired; in fact he commissioned a total of

sixteen copies from Parisian and English makers. Surprisingly, many were made to a much higher standard of finish, and at a higher relative cost, than the originals.

We examined his copy of the 'Bureau du roi' made for Louis XV by J. F. Oeben, the first of many later copies of this piece. As a friend of Napoleon III, the Marquess probably saw the bureau during the early 1850s when it was kept at the Tuileries. Now thought to be by the little-known Parisian maker Drescher, it is a faithful copy of the nineteenth-century condition of the bureau, for example using marquetry of mellowed boxwood to imitate the faded appearance of the original white holly.

A pair of corner cupboards, one stamped J. H. Riesener, the other a British nineteenth-century fake, enabled us to examine the subtle differences in drawer construction and mounts. These illustrated the excellent bronze-casting skills that still existed in the nineteenth century; modern reproductions are far more difficult as the industry has not survived.

We then discussed a pair of boule coffers-on-stands inherited by the 4th Marquess, described by Peter Hughes in his 1996 catalogue as French, from about 1820, but which remain anonymous. Our last object-study was a copy of the writing table of the Elector of Bavaria (the original is now in the Louvre), that the Marquess commissioned from the English maker John Webb in the 1850s. He found the bureau such a fascinating piece that he had two copies made, one for his London house and one for his house in Paris. The original was later attributed to Bernard I Van Risenburg, and upstairs in the workshop we were able to compare a corner mount from the copy with an almost identical mount from a genuine BVRB piece in the collection. The copy was slightly smaller, owing to the shrinkage of the new mould taken from an original mount, and was more highly finished, with engraved detail even where it could not be seen when the mount was in place.

Very many thanks to our excellent guides Dr Helen Jacobsen, Curator of French Eighteenth-century Decorative Arts at the Wallace Collection, and Yannick Chastang, independent furniture conservator.

Kate Hay

#### 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 enquiries about grant applications should be addressed to Clarissa Ward, Secretary FHS Grants Committee, 25 Wardo Avenue, London SW6 6RA, or email [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org)

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 September**. Copy should be sent, preferably by email, Elizabeth Jamieson ea.jamieson@tiscali.co.uk or posted to Elizabeth Jamieson, 10 Tarleton Gardens, Forest Hill, London SE23 3XN.

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