



THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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MADE IN THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

This is a review of research so far into Channel Islands furniture made before 1830. Contrary to popular opinion in the Islands, there was a cabinet making industry there that grew out of the skills of carpenters and joiners associated with ship building and repair operations. Informed members of the trade and a few collectors have known this for some time. Frequently items turn up at auction with an attribution to the Channel Islands but surprisingly, until now, nobody has written in depth on the subject.

The Channel Islands are as enigmatic as the furniture that was made there. They are not part of the UK but Crown Dependencies. The two main Islands are divided into parishes: twelve in Jersey and ten in Guernsey. Each parish historically had a Seigneur who lived in the manor house of each parish. This arrangement and the laws of the land date back to before 1066.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century St Helier had a population of around 3,000. St Peter Port in Guernsey was somewhat smaller. Until the end of the seventeenth century, Channel Island furniture was simple and limited to basic joinery and carpentry, usually of oak or other indigenous woods.

This period was the beginning of a wealth explosion brought about by knitting, cider production, ship building and the cod trade. It was the advent of a new merchant class and many fine new houses were built to accommodate this prosperous group. Adding to the population was a large influx of militia to defend the Islands from the French. Evidence of this threat from the French is still visible today and the Islands still prickle with defences from the period. French Huguenots arrived following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

It was difficult to import furniture from England. It could take as long as ten days in poor weather the waters around this group of Islands were treacherous.



Fig. 1 *Secrétaire bookcase, Nicholas Lihou, 1813. Courtesy of Martel Maides*

By this stage a nascent cabinet making industry is being formed. It is assumed that the carpenters and joiners who evolved into cabinet makers probably learnt skills such as veneering and inlay work from the Huguenots. There was the start of a 'client base' for the craftsmen. The industry grew throughout the eighteenth century and reached a peak around 1830. Pieces were exported to England because of tax impositions in place on timber on the mainland. At this time there was no import duty on finished products coming from the Islands. This perhaps explains why there is so much furniture that was made in the Islands in the UK, particularly in the south.

The earliest examples of quality cabinet work discovered so far are mostly walnut veneered pieces made around 1710. They are similar in many respects to pieces that would have been made in London or elsewhere on the mainland but with many oddities in design and construction. It is curious to note that there is little evidence of a French influence in the design throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It can be difficult to establish that these early pieces did originate in the Channel Islands but construction and a Channel Islands provenance can aid attribution. From the mid-eighteenth century onward identification becomes easier. Idiosyncrasies not seen elsewhere begin to appear. These take many forms, whether it is in the use of burr elm and mahogany together, or ivory inlays and brass fittings. With the exception of a late eighteenth-century Pembroke table labelled 'Naftel', *c.* 1790, no other eighteenth-century marked furniture is known. The Naftel family were also clockmakers and silversmiths.

Labelled, stamped or signed pieces from the early nineteenth century are beginning to emerge and the history of some of their makers is starting to come to light. Names such as Le Gallais, Lihou, Poignand have long been synonymous with the Islands.

The firm of Le Gallais started in 1820. It is still in existence today but no longer makes furniture. Two pieces, a labelled card table and a stamped Wilkins Patent dining table have been uncovered. Sadly, the firm's records were lost in a warehouse fire during the 1950s. The Poignand family were silversmiths, clockmakers and cabinet makers. Some emigrated to America taking their skills with them. Disregarding the silver which is beyond the scope of this research, there are a number of longcase clocks that have been seen. Although the dials are usually signed, two examples have maker's labels attached to the case, one numbered and dated 1806. A fine mahogany bureau bookcase, *c.* 1770, in America is also attributed to a member of the Poignand family.

The Lihou family came from Guernsey; there is an island nearby that bears the same name. Four pieces signed by Nicholas Lihou are so far known: a mahogany secretaire bookcase is inscribed, signed and dated 13 September 1813 (figs 1–3). Whilst of standard appearance externally, the interior is strikingly veneered with exotic wood crossbanding and the central door is inlaid with the Eye of Providence.

From around 1840 onwards labels or stamps on furniture become common but this is beyond the period being addressed. The Islands did not have a printing press until the late eighteenth century. Resources such as hand bills and newspaper advertisements for a craftsman's work do not exist before this time. The first newspaper started in 1795. The only way to link a piece to a maker is through household accounts or probate inventories. There is a paucity of both in the Islands' archives but research is ongoing.

During the course of research, it was suggested that there were insufficient skills, a lack of customers and insufficient timber in the Islands to sustain a cabinet making industry. However, there was a growing industry in shipbuilding from the late seventeenth century. This industry employed numerous joiners and carpenters who could easily have adapted their skills to make furniture. Many of them went into the house building industry that was growing so rapidly at that time. Those skills manifest themselves in the fine staircases, built-in cupboards, doors and fireplaces that can still be seen. The lack of customers is



Fig. 2 Detail showing inscription on secretaire bookcase. Courtesy of Martel Maides

contradicted by the number of houses being built for the new merchant class from the early eighteenth century onwards. There was a huge amount of wealth at the time originating from the industries previously mentioned together with privateering and smuggling.

Jersey is forty-five square miles in size, Guernsey is just twenty-four. It is therefore unlikely that there was enough indigenous timber to support ship building and furniture making. However, the cod industry saw the development of a triangular trade route between the Islands, the cod feeding grounds off Newfoundland, the eastern coast of North America and the Caribbean. Timber was often used as balast on the return journey back to the Channel Islands. On occasions this was simply dumped on the quay side upon return. Not an example of ballast but one of merchant shipping, there is a record of a cargo of timber, including oak, being shipped from New England to Jersey in 1678. Hardwoods were a staple requirement of ship building and later in the eighteenth century a settlement of Jersey men was established in Belize specifically to supply mahogany to the Channel Islands. Softwoods were imported from North America and the Baltic.

The first use of mahogany in the Islands is found in house interiors rather than furniture. Solid and veneered walnut, fruitwoods and oak were the most common woods employed in furniture making until around 1770 when mahogany became the predominant material. Exotic woods were used as inlays from around this date.



Fig. 3 Detail showing interior of secretaire bookcase. Courtesy of Martel Maides

Many Islanders emigrated to North America, Australia and New Zealand taking their skills with them. A group of furniture in America attributed to Charles Guillaume is considered by some to include the earliest examples of cabinet making in that country. Guillaume is believed to have emigrated from Jersey around 1690.

Channel Islands furniture doesn't seem to have a place in the history of furniture. Perhaps this is because the Islands are erroneously thought of as just another province of England and its furniture has been subsumed within that generality. For many years similar was thought of Scottish and Irish furniture. Those views have now been dispelled with some excellent publications and it is hoped something similar can be achieved by this ongoing research.

John Vost
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FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS

BOOKINGS

For places on all visits please apply to the Events Secretary, Sara Heaton, 18 First Street, London, SW3 2LD. Tel. 07775 907390 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

FHS ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM: *Miniature Furniture And Interiors*

The Goodison Lecture Theatre, The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London W1

Saturday 5 March 2011, 10.30 am–4.30 pm

Simon Swynfen Jervis, Chairman of the Society, has organised and will chair the 2011 Annual Symposium. The concept of this event is to consider the insights that dolls' houses and other forms of miniature furniture and interiors can throw on the history of furniture and interiors and their miniaturisation in a broader sense, as well as the detail of individual examples.

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| 10.00 am | Registration & coffee/tea on arrival |
| 10.30–10.50 am | Simon Swynfen Jervis (Chairman of the FHS)
<i>Introduction</i> |
| 10.55–11.25 am | Dr Jet Pijzel-Dommisee (Gemeentemuseum Den Haag)
<i>Dutch Dolls' Houses: exploring the Dutch interior of the late seventeenth century</i> |
| 11.30–12.00 pm | Dr Anna Cremer (University of Giessen)
<i>Mon Plaisir in Arnstadt: the Dolls' House City between female education, courtly habits and personal testimony</i> |
| 12.05–12.35 pm | Dr Celina Fox (Author, <i>The Arts of Industry in the Age of Enlightenment</i>)
<i>Enlightenment Pedagogy in Miniature: Madame de Genlis's models and their Context</i> |
| 12.40 pm | Lunch |
| 1.45–2.15 pm | Margaret Towner (Author and Researcher)
<i>The Commercial Production of Miniature Furniture in Germany and Britain</i> |
| 2.20–2.50 pm | Kathryn Jones (Royal Collection)
<i>Queen Mary's Dolls' House at Windsor Castle</i> |
| 2.55–3.25 pm | Christopher Monkhouse (Chicago Institute of Art)
<i>The Thorne Rooms</i> |
| 3.30–4.00 pm | Ian Gow (National Trust for Scotland)
<i>The Inspiration of Vivien Greene</i> |
| 4.00–4.15 pm | Question and Answer Session |
| 4.15 pm | Tea |

Fee: £35 (£30 students and OAPS) for FHS members, all non-members £40. Includes morning coffee and afternoon tea.

A light lunch will be available for FHS members in the Meeting Room at the Wallace Collection at a cost of £17.50 to include a glass of wine. Tickets for lunch must be purchased at least 7 days in advance from the Activities Secretary. In addition the Wallace Collection restaurant will be open (for bookings tel. 0207 563 9505) and there are numerous other cafes/restaurants in the area of Wigmore Street and St Christopher's Place.

All ticket bookings must be made via the FHS Activities Secretary, email furniturehistorysociety@hotmail.com, tel. 07775 907390.

The Wallace Collection Lecture Theatre is significantly smaller than our customary venue at the V&A. It is moreover anticipated that the theme of the Symposium may have a wide appeal. *Members are thus strongly advised to book promptly to ensure that they secure a place.*

OCCASIONAL EVENTS

EXHIBITION VIEW, SOMERSET HOUSE, London WC2 1LA

John Makepeace — Enriching the Language of Furniture

Wednesday 23 March 2011, 11.00 am to 12.30 pm

John Makepeace has kindly agreed to take a group from the Society round this celebratory exhibition. The exhibition will celebrate John Makepeace's career spanning over 50 years. Sponsored by the Arts Council, pieces exhibited include those from national and private collections.

Fee: £10 Limit: 20 members

Closing date for applications 1 March

OTHER EVENTS

Please note that these events are not organised by the FHS. Information/booking instructions can be found under individual items.

12 March 2011: *Catholic families in Britain: patronage and collecting*

This day-long seminar to be held at the Society of Antiquaries's Burlington House apartments on 12 March 2011 is being organised by Fellows Tessa Murdoch and John Martin Robinson and will explore the role of Catholic families as centres of patronage in England from the sixteenth century to Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and their important links with the European continent.

Speakers will include Abbot Geoffrey Scott of Douai Abbey, Reading, on 'The Throckmortons of Coughton, Warwickshire'; Caroline Bowden of Queen Mary College, University of London, on 'Convent supporters and convent patronage: the English convents in exile 1600—1800'; Bridget Long on 'Vestments' and Tessa Murdoch on 'Sacred silver of the Arundell family's Wardour Chapel, Wiltshire'; James Stourton on Catholic collecting; John Martin Robinson on 'The antiquarian taste of the Howards of Norfolk'; Clare Hornsby on 'The collecting activities of Charles Towneley'; and Sophie Andreae and Benedict Read on 'Hidden Heritage and the challenge facing us today with particular reference to the collections at Ushaw'.

This will be followed by a concert programme devised by Andrew Cichy and I Dedicati of Oxford, including music by William Byrd for the Petres of Ingatestone, Essex, and Richard Dering, who served as a musician in Queen Henrietta Maria's chapel.

For further information and a booking form contact Maria Cristina White da Cruz catholicpatronageseminar@hotmail.co.uk

26–27 March 2011: The English Ceramic Circle Weekend Seminar: *Fire & Form — The Baroque and its influence on Ceramics in England c. 1660–1760*

There has been little examination of the Baroque style in English ceramics so this weekend seminar will be both innovative and enlightening. With its combination of formal papers which will examine the different social and cultural aspects of the style and will be

presenting both well established and new ideas, the practical tours of the museum's galleries, the hands-on sessions and the optional dinner on Saturday evening and the visit to the grandest Baroque palace in England — Blenheim, the weekend will be informative, enlightening and exciting.

For further details contact Patricia Macleod: macleod.patricia@gmail.com

OTHER ITEM

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: SAMUEL PERCY, MODELLER IN WAX

The life and work of the British wax portrait modeller Samuel Percy (c. 1753–1819) is the subject of a research programme being undertaken by Ruth Ord-Hume of Guildford, Surrey.

Dublin-born Percy is best known for his miniature portraits in coloured wax but he also created wax tableau in miniature and there is evidence to suggest he may have made more than thirty of these. Subjects ranged from classical (Algerines and Circassian) to religious



(Death of Christ) to genteel (Georgian ladies with their children), but his favourite subjects were undoubtedly ordinary people — peasants getting drunk, quarrelling or simply enjoying themselves. He portrayed gypsies and tinkers camping under wooded banks, boys playing marbles or frolicking on donkeys, or men squaring up for a fight. It has even been suggested that one or two are scenes taken from books. The Museum of London has one of Percy's tableaux which is a tavern scene and there have been many discussions about who the figures are although it seems certain that one of them is Dr Johnson.

The tableau illustrated here represents Voltaire on his deathbed and is the only scene known to date which depicts an actual event. It measures overall 640 mm wide by 545 mm high. Not many of these scenes can be traced today and some are only known from auction sale records. Ruth Ord-Hume would like to track down as many examples as possible of Percy's work of all types. She would be delighted to hear from anyone who has information to share on Percy or who knows the whereabouts of a portrait, bust or tableau and can be contacted on r.ordhume@gmail.com or +44 (0) 1483 574460.

REPORTS ON THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

ANNUAL LECTURE: *Nicodemus Tessin (1654–1728): The First Historian of Interior Decoration and his Collections*, Martin Olin, Monday 8 November 2010

During his training in Italy and France (1673–77, 1678–80) and his later travels in Europe (1687–88), the Swedish architect Nicodemus Tessin made copious notes about architecture, decoration, gardens and the arts in general. These notes (available in a complete edition since 2002) served him as source material when he wrote his *Treatise on Interior Decoration* in 1717 (also published in 2002). The treatise deals with its topic in an analytical manner. Tessin classifies and describes types of decoration and furniture not so much according to historical, geographical or stylistic criteria as by material, degree of magnificence and the function of the room the decor and objects occur in. When writing the treatise, Tessin also drew on his large collection of prints and drawings. The nucleus of the collection was the drawings he executed or acquired during his own travels, but he continued to add to it throughout the 1690s and the first decades of the eighteenth century. He corresponded with agents abroad, in particular the Swedish diplomat Daniel Cronström who was stationed in Paris. Packages containing the latest purchases of books, prints, drawings and the occasional luxury item were constantly in transit from Paris to Stockholm. The correspondence between Cronström and Tessin offers generous documentation of the acquisitions, while at the same time providing a vivid picture of artistic life in the French and Swedish capitals.

To be published in the series *Nicodemus Tessin the Younger: Sources, Works, Collections*, Martin Olin is preparing a catalogue of Tessin's collection of drawings for the decorative arts. Two strong areas are Roman Baroque drawings for furniture and French interior decoration from the Louis XIV and Régence periods. Many of the drawings have already been published and are well known to furniture specialists. Among the many exceptional contributions by non-Swedish scholars to this field, Peter Thornton's use of both the drawings and the written documentation as sources to the history of interior decoration is particularly inspiring.

The point of departure for the new catalogue is an inventory written by Tessin's son, the connoisseur and statesman Carl Gustaf, a few years after the architect's death in 1728. With the help of this document, it has been possible to identify a large majority of the Tessin

holdings within the collection of architectural and ornamental drawings in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. The collection was organized in a manner similar to Tessin's treatise, starting with ceilings, floors and chimneypieces and proceeding towards moveable furnishings and loose objects. The drawings appear in the list not as works by a particular draughtsman but as examples of types of mirrors, tables and candlestands, often with the sub-division into the categories *à l'italienne* or *à la française*. In some respects, the taxonomic approach recalls the work undertaken by Carl Linnaeus during this period. Linnaeus's *Systema naturae* was first published in 1735. The similarity is arguably more than a coincidence: both Nicodemus Tessin and Linnaeus had studied at the University of Uppsala where taxonomy and drawing were taught by the prominent natural historians Olof Rudbeck, father and son. Carl Gustaf Tessin would later become a patron and friend of Linnaeus.

Martin Olin

Note: The books published in the series *Nicodemus Tessin the Younger: Sources, Works, Collections*, including Tessin's *Treatise* and his *Travel Notes*, are available from the online bookshop of the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm (www.nationalmuseum.se).

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 m.winterbottom@bath.ac.uk or posted to Matthew Winterbottom, The Holburne Museum, Bath BA2 4DB, tel. 01225 820813

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