

The Furniture History Society

# Newsletter 204

November 2016

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# Triangular Chairs at Strawberry Hill: The Genuine and the Fabricated

Walpole's interest in Gothic design continued beyond the style's by-then-diminishing, though not entirely side-lined, popularity in mainstream fashionable furniture.<sup>1</sup> He used antiquarian prints as the basis for Strawberry Hill's architectural components; Wenceslaus Hollar's depiction of the screen at Old St Paul's, London, was instrumental in the design of the Library's presses.<sup>2</sup> This method — copying and recreating elements or whole architecture schemes — enabled Walpole to reproduce architecture that he and his friends in the Strawberry Committee had not seen first-hand, or which no longer existed (such as Old St Paul's). Harnessing engravings of medieval architecture consequently allowed Walpole and his circle to overcome the 'general disuse of Gothic architecture, and the decay and alterations so frequently made in churches'.<sup>3</sup>

These engravings, despite holding sway over significant parts of Strawberry Hill, were effectively useless when it came to the villa's furniture. The only readily traceable or engraved medieval furniture at the time, and which remains the case today, is ecclesiastical, such as choir-stalls, *cathedra* and chests. These models are not especially practical for domestic dwellings,

and A. W. N. Pugin in his 1841 treatise, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, satirized designers for basing their domestic architecture and furniture upon non-domestic, religious examples.<sup>4</sup>

Walpole, and the designers gathered around him at Strawberry Hill, filled in these 'gaps' by fashioning new furniture in an 'old', Gothic, style such as the Parlour's eight black chairs.<sup>5</sup> Walpole did not want to make Strawberry Hill 'so Gothic as to exclude convenience, and modern refinements in luxury'.<sup>6</sup> But he also wanted 'proper' Gothic furniture as well: these pieces would exhibit, to use Walpole's phrase, the 'true rust of the Barons' wars',<sup>7</sup> and the pieces that he amassed at his Gothic villa became the definitive repertoire of non-mainstream and non-fashionable furniture that was thought to date from the medieval period: Welch, Glastonbury and the 'True Black Blood'.<sup>8</sup> Walpole's interest in this antiquarian, 'romantic' type of furniture is expressed in the 1750s, even though his collection of ancient furniture was not amassed for a decade. Writing in August 1752 to Thomas Gray (1716–71), the poet and antiquary, Walpole's reveals his interest in this type of woodwork:

The true original chairs were all sold [...] there are nothing now but Halsey-chairs, not

adapted to the squareness of a Gothic dowager's rump. And by the way I do not see how the uneasiness and uncomfortableness of a coronation-chair can be any objection with you: every chair that is easy is modern, and unknown to our ancestors.<sup>9</sup>

Part of the attraction of collecting these pieces of ancient furniture was that they were, as Walpole points out, not comfortable according to modern, eighteenth-century mores, but instead speak 'of our ancestors'; in effect, they are old and explicitly look so. Walpole was certainly interested in conveying such impressions.

His network of antiquarian friends was particularly useful: Walpole asked them to scout out such pieces whenever practical. In 1762, for instance, Walpole writes to William Cole (1714–82), asking,

When you go into Cheshire and upon your ramble, may I trouble you with a commission, but about which you must promise me not to go a step out of your way. Mr Bateman has a cloister at Old Windsor furnished with ancient wooden chairs, most of them triangular, but all of various patterns, and carved or turned in the most uncouth and whimsical forms. He picked them up one by one, for two, three, five or six shillings apiece from the different farmhouses in Herefordshire. [...] There may be such in poor cottages in so neighbouring a country as Cheshire. I should not grudge any expense for purchase or carriage; and should be glad even of a couple for my cloister here. When you are copying inscriptions in a churchyard in any village, think of me, and step into the first cottage you see — but don't take it farther than that.<sup>10</sup>

Walpole's Welch chairs, a name given by their apparent origin and concentration in the Welsh Marches, were not acquired in this manner, but at the auction of Dickie Bateman's property in Old Windsor.<sup>11</sup>

Walpole and Bateman knew each other well, and writing about him in 1762 Walpole emphasizes the importance of his old triangular chairs:

I did not doubt but you would approve Mr Bateman's since it has changed its religion; I converted it from Chinese to Gothic. His cloister of founders, which by the way is Mr Bentley's, is delightful: I envy him his old chairs.<sup>12</sup>

Following Bateman's death and the sale of his property at Old Windsor in 1775, Walpole purchased the 'Welch Chairs &c' for £31 10s 7d: the collection that he approved of and envied was now his. About the newly acquired collection, he writes that 'I have crammed my Cloister with three cartloads of lumbering chairs from Mr. Bateman's, and at last am surfeited with the immovable objects of our forefathers'.<sup>13</sup> As the quote demonstrates, Walpole felt these distinctive, uncouth and massy tripod chairs, made from turned spindles (an ancient wood-working technique) dowelled together, were truly ancient and entirely appropriate for Strawberry Hill. The tripod form was made in Northern Europe from c. 1500, so it is an old, though not extremely old, type of chair.

Delineated in George 'Perfect' Harding's depiction of the Cloisters at Strawberry Hill (Fig. 1), Bateman's chairs were each of a subtly different form. If we concentrate upon the two nearest examples on the right-hand side, you can see immediately the differences in the arrangement and number of rails in each of the chair's arms, the formation and structure of each chair's back — either triangular or triangular supporting a raked rectangular panel —



Fig. 1 George 'Perfect' Harding, *The great cloisters at Strawberry Hill*. SH Views H263 no. 1. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library

and the amount and intricacy of the turned ornament. Harding's illustration reveals that each chair is different, which responds to Walpole's claim that Bateman picked them up as isolated, one-off, examples in different locations in Herefordshire. This variety, and their unusual, irregular and certainly non-fashionable forms, certainly emphasizes their antique credentials, and, by implication, that of Strawberry Hill: Walpole's self-conscious new-old villa.

A pair of Welch chairs, also acquired at Bateman's sale, were displayed in Strawberry Hill's Star Chamber (Fig. 2). Their colouring — a highly irregular blue-and-white barber-pole scheme — underscores the variety and different treatments of this type. Indeed, the example on the right displays Dicky Bateman's coat of arms: the chair's form therefore conveyed with little subtlety the antiquity of Bateman's lineage.

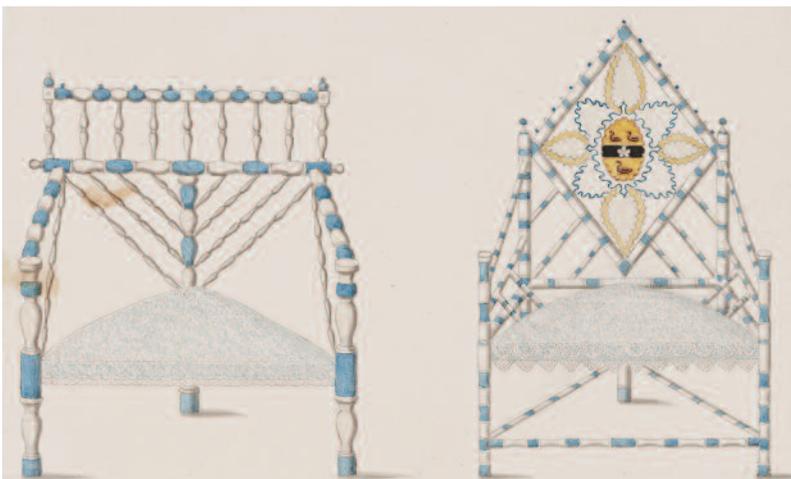
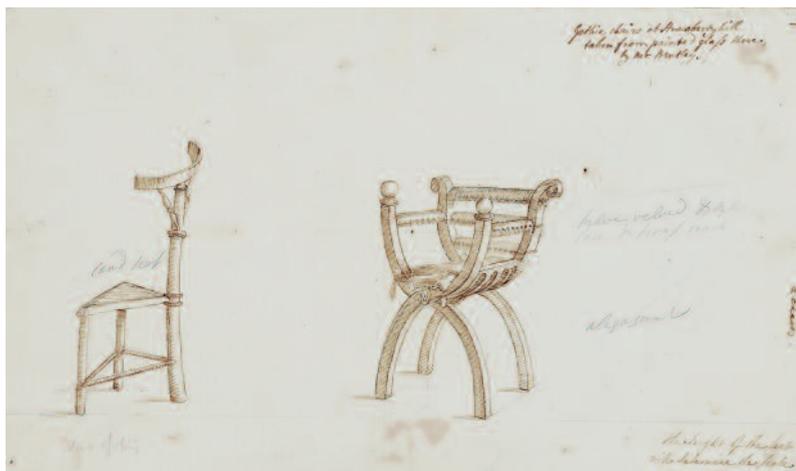


Fig. 2 Detail of the Welch chairs in the Star Chamber. In 33 30 copy 4 Folio. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library

Fig. 3 Richard Bentley, *Gothic chairs from Strawberry Hill taken from painted glass there, by Mr. Bentley.* In 49 3585 Folio. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library



Figs 4a and 4b John Chute, *Designs for Gothic tripod chairs and a façade.* In 49 3490 Folio. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library



Walpole also had Richard Bentley — one of the Strawberry Hill designers — to derive a triangular chair from a piece of sixteenth-century Flemish glass in Walpole's bedchamber at Strawberry Hill (Fig. 3).<sup>14</sup> Although not of the Welch type, with its profusion of turned rails and knobs, it is of the triangular form, and entitled a Gothic chair. Walpole had two chairs made after this pattern and placed alongside the Bateman barber-pole-painted chairs in the Star Chamber.<sup>15</sup> And John Chute, Walpole's 'oracle of taste', also designed chairs of this type, but 'Gothed' up with extra ornament to suggest the

form's antiquity and its suitability to Gothic houses and interiors (Figs 4a and 4b).<sup>16</sup> These ancient and modern pastiches of triangular chairs enabled Walpole to create and convey ideas and impressions of the past, and they assisted him in making Strawberry Hill a new-old dwelling. Their age lent the interiors an apparently genuine and striking patina that the rest of the house and its collections worked with and could play off. They became essential to the romantic interior and were reproduced during the nineteenth century, such as that made in imitation of a seventeenth-century chair at Wells (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Mr Kensett (probably maker),  
 Reproduction of a seventeenth-century  
 turned chair in the Bishop's Palace, Wells,  
 Somerset, c. 1830–40. © Victoria and Albert  
 Museum, London

- 1 Peter N. Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic: Medievalist Architecture, Furniture and Interiors, 1730–1840* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), pp. 91–179.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 68–70.
- 3 Horace Walpole, *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole, the Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford, at Strawberry-Hill, near Twickenham. With an Inventory of the Furniture, Pictures, Curiosities, &c.* (Strawberry Hill: Thomas Kirgate, 1784), p. i.
- 4 Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture: Set Forth in Two Lectures Delivered at St. Marie's, Oscott* (London: John Weale, 1841), pp. 40–42.

- 5 Michael Snodin, *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 15–57, and Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*, pp. 83–85.
- 6 Walpole, *Description of the Villa*, p. iii.
- 7 Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis, et al., 48 vols, vol. 35 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 148.
- 8 Clive Wainwright, *The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home, 1750–1850* (London: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1989), 90–92, 96, 97, 106.
- 9 Thomas Gray, *Correspondence of Thomas Gray, 1734–1755*, ed. by Paget Jackson Toynbee and Leonard Whibley, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 364.
- 10 Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis and A. Dale Wallace, 48 vols, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 90.
- 11 See Matthew Reeve, 'Dickie Bateman and the Gothicization of Old Windsor: Architecture and Sexuality in the Circle of Horace Walpole', *Architectural History*, 56 (2013), 99–133.
- 12 Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis and Ralph S. Brown Jr, 48 vols, vol. 10 (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 43.
- 13 Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis, A. Dale Wallace and Edwine M. Martz, 48 vols, vol. 32 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 245.
- 14 Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 3585 f. 43.
- 15 Walpole, *Description of the Villa*, p. 42.
- 16 See Peter N. Lindfield, 'Georgian Gothic Fabrications in the Antiquarian Style: William Kent, Batty Langley and Horace Walpole', in *Gothic Legacies: Four Centuries of Tradition and Innovation in Art and Architecture*, ed. by Ayla Lepine and Laura Cleaver (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), pp. 51–52.

PETER N. LINDFIELD  
 Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow,  
 University of Stirling

## Obituary

AVERILL ALISON KELLY, MA, FSA  
1913–2016

Alison Kelly, who died on 15 August, was for many years an active member of the Society, joining many of the overseas study trips and weekends in this country. She was best known for her pioneering work on the eighteenth-century manufacturer Eleanor Coade, and for her 1990 publication *Mrs Coade's Stone*, which is still the standard work on the subject. Alison served on the Council of the Society from 1976 to 1979.

Alison was born in Liverpool, where her father was Professor of Surgery at the university. She was sent to a school in



Surrey that was suitably undemanding for a well brought-up girl of her generation, so it required all the tenacity that she showed in her adult life for her to gain entrance to Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she read English Language and Literature. After she took her degree, she spent a year at the Liverpool City School of Art before working in the Stage Design Department of the Westminster Theatre in the late 1930s. During the war she put these skills to use in the Camouflage Unit at Leamington Spa, devising camouflage schemes for factories and other large buildings, and flying round the country assessing the success of the work that she had created using models.

After the death of her father in 1945, Alison and her mother moved to Surrey and later to Kensington. She lectured for the Workers' Educational Association, for the City Lit and for London University Extra-Mural Department, as well as undertaking freelance lecturing, and had a real knack for making her subjects accessible to audiences with limited specialist knowledge. Alison developed a particular interest in Wedgwood, publishing *The Story of Wedgwood* with Faber & Faber in 1962, and *Decorative Wedgwood in Architecture and Furniture* with the same, published in 1965. In 1968, *Country Life* published her *English Fireplaces*. Her interests and her lecturing were moving towards a concern with interiors. She published a number of articles in periodicals ranging from *Country Life* to

the *Burlington Magazine*, and *Antiques Magazine* in the USA.

Her work on Eleanor Coade occupied her free time over seventeen years and involved not only substantial archival work but also great expeditions to check up on the artificial stone as used in obscure churches or overgrown gardens. Finding a publisher proved difficult, but Alison was not discouraged. She had learned to be a very competent photographer in order to record her Coade findings, and, when she could not find a publisher for her book, she simply set about the arduous task of self-publishing. The fact that the book is still a constant reference for many of us is a tribute to her scholarship and tenacity.

Older members will remember her as a cheerful companion on many visits, generous in sharing her knowledge and keen to discuss all that we saw.

SARAH MEDLAM

## *British and Irish Furniture Makers Online*

The Furniture History Society in collaboration with the University of London's Institute of Historical Research began a new and exciting project in early September to create a fully searchable online database. The initial one-year phase will digitize the 1986 publication of the *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660–1840*, edited by Geoffrey Beard and Christopher Gilbert, and integrate this with the records of over 12,000 furniture makers who were working in London in the years 1640–1720, information that was not included in the 1986 publication. By the

end of 2017 the database will be available online and free to access.

Subsequent phases of the project will revise and update the existing data with new research to incorporate furniture makers from across Britain and the Republic of Ireland. The aim of the project is to create an online historical resource, which includes 'traditional' furniture history and social, economic and cultural history, thereby reflecting the ways in which the historiography of furniture has matured over the years. The date range may be extended to the years 1600–1900, and conceivably to the present day. One of the greatest benefits of the database is that it is both adaptable and expandable as its framework allows for the continual insertion of an infinite amount of material of all periods.

The first phase of the project has been mostly funded from the Furniture History Society's 50th Anniversary Appeal Fund. The Chairman of the Council, Christopher Rowell, in partnership with the Institute of Historical Research, will be endeavouring to raise the money to fund subsequent years of the project through private donations, and perhaps also through academic funding bodies. There will be a huge scope for the involvement of scholars, and for training and motivation of younger historians in helping with research and writing up entries, after the first phase of the project is complete. The encouragement of younger scholars is a key element of the Furniture History Society's 50th Anniversary Appeal Fund, and it is hoped that they will take a vital role in the developmental stages. The Furniture History Society and Institute of

Historical Research also envisage working closely with museums, heritage trusts, livery companies, private owners, academic institutions, auction houses and the trade in establishing sources of information to be included in the database of *British and Irish Furniture Makers Online*.

The Institute of Historical Research will design and maintain the website, which will be 'future-proofed' by the University under the same terms that it protects its own online material, thus ensuring that the database of *British and Irish Furniture Makers Online* is technically permanent and secure.

LAURIE LINDEY

### *Honorary Secretary to the Council of the Furniture History Society*

The Furniture History Society is seeking a new Secretary to the Council, in succession to Clarissa Ward, who has retired after several years of generous service to the Society. The post involves a number of duties, in particular attendance at Council and some other meetings of the Society, preparing agendas, gathering reports, taking and circulating minutes, and preparing the Annual Report of the Society for presentation at the Annual General Meeting, usually held in November. It is hoped to appoint a new Hon. Secretary at or before the 2016 AGM on Saturday 26 November.

Further details available from the acting Hon. Secretary, Lisa White, email: [lisawhite1851@gmail.com](mailto:lisawhite1851@gmail.com).

# 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, Hertfordshire AL2 3XD (tel. 07775 907390), with a separate cheque, using the enclosed booking form. Where possible, joining instructions will be despatched by email, **so please remember to provide your email address if you have one. There is no need to send an SAE if you provide a clearly written email address.**

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 visits is printed in the Newsletter. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available.** Members are reminded that places are not allocated on a first come, first served basis, but that all applications are equally considered following the closing date for applications.

Please note the Events email address: [events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:events@furniturehistorysociety.org).

## 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 £10.00 deduction for administrative costs. Please note that in the rare instances where members cannot pay until the day of a visit, they will still be charged the full amount for the day if cancelling less than seven days before the visit, or if they fail to attend. This is necessary as the Society has usually paid in advance for a certain number of members to participate in, for example, a tour/lunch. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours, and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

## Annual General Meeting and Works in Progress

THE EAST INDIA CLUB,  
16 ST JAMES'S SQUARE, LONDON SW1  
SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2016  
11.00 AM–1.00 PM  
(COFFEE FROM 10.30 AM)

The business meeting will be followed by four talks on current projects in museums around the country. Dr Heike Zeck, Senior Curator in the Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum, will talk about the re-installation of the galleries in the museum that show the Gilbert Collection. These galleries have been closed for some years during building work for the new Exhibition Road

entrance, but are re-opening in autumn 2016. The collection includes not only fine metalwork but also impressive cabinets and tables mounted in hardstone and micro-mosaic. David Beevers, Keeper of the Royal Pavilion, will talk about the recent programme of research, conservation and restoration in the Saloon, which will be open to the public once more in 2017, after several years of work, funded by an appeal. The programme has included the conservation and restoration

of the many elements of the luxurious decoration of the walls and ceiling, and the recreation of the room's original carpet. Annabel Westman will talk in detail about her work on the recreation of textiles for this room, including the tricky matter of choosing colours from historic descriptions. Finally, Matthew Winterbottom will talk about the new nineteenth-century galleries at the Ashmolean Museum, opened earlier this year.

## Study Trip to Teesdale and surrounding area

THURSDAY 30 MARCH–  
SUNDAY 2 APRIL 2017

The centrepiece of this four-day, three-night visit will be an entire day studying the important collections at the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle, led by staff and by its former Curator of Furniture, and FHS Events Committee Chairman, Sarah Medlam. The other two days will be spent examining collections in some of the major nearby country houses, including



The Bowes Museum

Raby Castle, Rokeby Hall, Aske Hall and Kiplin Hall.

Please contact the Events Secretary to register your interest.

## Save the Date – Annual Symposium

SATURDAY, 6 MAY 2017

Members may like to note that the above event is scheduled for Saturday 6 May 2017. It is taking place slightly later than usual to coincide with the exhibition of neo-classical gilt bronze *Gilded Interiors*,

*Parisian Luxury and the Antique 1770–1790*, which will open at the Wallace Collection on 4 May 2017. Further details will be available in the February 2017 *Newsletter* and on the FHS website.

# Occasional and Overseas Visits

Evening visit to the Handel / Hendrix House, 25 Brook Street, London W1K 4HB, including a recital on period instruments

WEDNESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2016  
6.30 PM–8.30 PM

This visit was advertised in the August 2016 edition of the *Newsletter*. At the time of going to press there are still a few places available. Please contact the Events Secretary for details.

COST: £25

Private visit to Apter-Frederick's, 265–67 Fulham Road, London SW3 6HY

THURSDAY 12 JANUARY 2017  
10.00 AM–12.30 PM

Currently celebrating their 70th year in the same Fulham Road premises, this family business is now run by the fourth-generation partnership of brothers Harry and Guy, noted for dealing in the finest examples of English eighteenth- and



The Composition Room at Handel House Museum. © Handel House Museum

nineteenth-century furniture. This private visit offers members a wonderful opportunity to get behind the high-gloss facade of the antiques world and discuss individual pieces, their merits, their restoration and their appeal. The visit will be led by FHS Council member, Guy Apter.

COST: £25

LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2016

## Blythe House, 23 Blythe Road, London W14 0QX

THURSDAY 2 MARCH 2017

2.00 PM FOR 2.15 PM START-4.15 PM

This year our visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum Study Collections at Blythe House will concentrate on examples of inlay, veneering and marquetry from all periods. A team of V&A curators will lead

this visit which gives us the usual and much-valued opportunity to examine pieces closely and to discuss them in small groups.

COST: £30

LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2017

## Empire Furniture in Paris

MONDAY 20 AND

TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2017

Over this two-day visit to Paris, the Furniture History Society will focus on some of the most significant furniture and interiors of the French *Premier Empire* (1804-15). The group will have access to three sites that are not usually open to the general public:

- the Hôtel de Charost, official residence of HM's Ambassador to France since 1814, when it was bought by the Duke of Wellington;
- the Hôtel de Beauharnais, official residence of the German Ambassador and recently subject to extensive conservation works. The house, lavishly decorated for Napoleon's stepson, Eugène de Beauharnais, features the most complete suite of Empire interiors in all of Paris;
- the furniture stores at the Mobilier National, which comprise some



Hôtel de Charost

particularly fine pieces of French Imperial furniture and gilt bronzes.

These visits will be led by Dr Wolf Burchard.

COST: TO BE ADVISED

Please register your interest with the Events Secretary

LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 13 JANUARY 2017

*N.B. Participants will be responsible for making their own travel and any accommodation arrangements.*

## Advance Notice: Barcelona, Early Autumn 2017

Fernando Romero Simó, Dip. RSA, Art Consultant and long-standing FHS member and Dr Melanie Doderer-Winkler are organising a study trip to Barcelona. More details to follow in the next newsletter.

## Grants available for FHS UK & Overseas Visits Including One-Day Visits

The FHS Grants Committee now meet quarterly to consider all applications from members, to support their participation in **FHS foreign and UK study trips where the cost of a trip exceeds £45**. Please contact Jo Norman at [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org) for further information and grant application forms.

# Other Notices

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

## Exhibitions in Museums: *Garnitures: Vase Sets from National Trust Houses*

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM,  
LONDON

10 OCTOBER 2016 TO 30 APRIL 2017



Five-piece silver garniture above a French ebony-veneered cabinet on stand in the King's Room, Knole, Kent. © National Trust Images/Robert Morris

This display, in partnership with the National Trust, explores the history of the garniture, sets of vases unified by their design and specific context. [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk).

## Public Lecture and Book Launch: *Strawberry Hill, Middlesex*

THURSDAY 17 NOVEMBER,  
7.00 PM–9.00 PM

Peter Lindfield, one of the speakers at the Strawberry Hill furniture study day on 15 September, and author of the lead article in this *Newsletter*, will be launching his book, *Georgian Gothic: Medievalist*



*Georgian Gothic:  
Medievalist  
Architecture,  
Furniture  
and Interiors,  
1730–1840*

*Architecture, Furniture and Interiors, 1730–1840*, at Strawberry Hill.

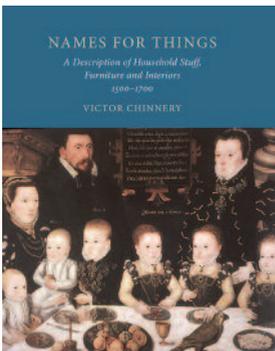
Peter will be giving a thirty-minute illustrated talk on the theme of the Gothic Revival in architecture, furniture and interiors in Georgian Britain, holding a champagne reception, and signing copies of his book. To attend the lecture, register at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/talkbook-launchreception-georgian-gothic-architecture-furniture-interiors-tickets-26417372071>

## New Publication: *Names for Things, A Description of Household Stuff, Furniture and Interiors 1500–1700*, Victor Chinnery

The posthumous publication of a glossary of terms, written by Victor Chinnery, and published in October 2016, places emphasis on the integrated relationship between furniture and the many artefacts found within the early British home. In addition to furniture, the book encompasses interior decoration, metalwork, pottery, wood types and the use of colour in interiors. Glossary entries — giving a detailed description of the objects — are backed up by inventory references and other documentary evidence, which aim to explain how the objects would have been used in a period setting. The book is edited and contains a foreword by Jan Chinnery.

To place an order for the book and for payment details by bank transfer or cheque, please contact email: [press@dandmheritage.co.uk](mailto:press@dandmheritage.co.uk) or telephone D&M Heritage Press on 01484 534323.

It is hoped to review the book in a later issue of this *Newsletter*.



*Names for Things*,  
Victor Chinnery

## The Queen's House, Greenwich

To mark its 400th anniversary, the Queen's House, Greenwich, reopened on 11 October. The ceiling in the King's Presence Chamber, has been restored to its royal splendour, complementing the Queen's Presence Chamber, which was restored in 2013. Both rooms have a bold new colour on the walls, bright blue for the King's and bright red for the Queen's, as befits their seventeenth-century majesty. Read more at <http://www.rmg.co.uk/queens-house/history/refurbishment>.

## The Design Museum

The new Design Museum will open on 24 November 2016 in its new John Pawson-designed home in the former Commonwealth Institute. John Pawson's conversion of the 1960s building will triple the museum's current exhibition spaces to almost 10,000 square metres, allowing the museum to accommodate the first permanent display of its collection, alongside two temporary exhibitions.

## National Museum of Scotland

The new galleries at the National Museum of Scotland are now open, showcasing the most important international collections of decorative art, design, fashion, science and technology in ten new galleries. Read more at <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/discover-the-museum/new-galleries/>.

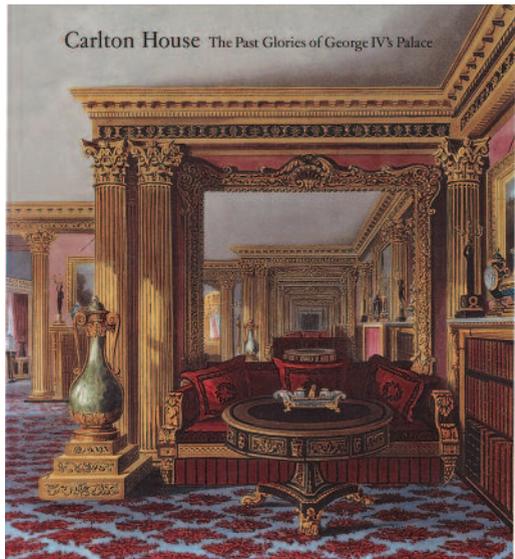
## Handling Rembrandt

The back panel of Rembrandt's portrait of 'A Rabbi with a Cap', 1635, acquired by George III as part of the Consul Smith collection in 1762 (RCIN 405519), features a curious incised outline for a (presumably) removable handle, but what sort of handle would have fitted into the slot — a metal or wooden one? Have members seen similar backboards with slots? Is this conventional framing practice, perhaps diagnostic of a particular framing fashion, or even framer? Please send comments to Rufus Bird, email: [rufus.bird@royalcollection.org.uk](mailto:rufus.bird@royalcollection.org.uk).

<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/search#/24/collection/405519/a-rabbi-with-a-cap>

## Carlton House Exhibition Catalogue — Online

Members may remember the landmark exhibition at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, mounted in 1991, under the oversight of the then Director and Surveyor of The Queen's Works of Art, the late Sir Geoffrey de Bellaigue. The accompanying catalogue for the first time reunited many of the exceptional and wide-ranging objects, which were brought together by the Prince of Wales, later George IV at Carlton House, often in dazzling combinations, before its eventual dismantling in the late 1820s. That catalogue, long out of print, has just been made available as a free online catalogue by Royal Collection Trust's in-house



publishing team. Please navigate to: <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/themes/publications/carlton-house> where the catalogue can be viewed onscreen or downloaded as a PDF document.

## Percival D. Griffiths and Robert Wemyss Symonds

The writers are researching a book on the late collector, Percival D. Griffiths (1862–1937) and his advisor, Robert Wemyss Symonds (1889–1958). We are anxious to hear from anyone who may have memories — or family connections — to either of these gentleman. Additionally, we would welcome knowing of any pieces that were in the late Mr Griffiths' collection for inclusion in a new book about him and his collection. Christian Jussel, William DeGregario, email: [griffithsbook@gmail.com](mailto:griffithsbook@gmail.com)

# 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, email: ss.jervis@btopenworld.com).

ALMUT KLEIN AND PETRA KRUTISCH, *Schränke und Kommoden 1650–1800 im Germanischen Nationalmuseum*, 2 vols (Ostfildern, 2015). I, *Schränke und Kommoden (ohne Nürnberg)*, 272 pp., 264 col., 108 b. & w. illus.; II, *Nürnberger Schränke und Kommoden*, 292 pp., 285 col., 103 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-3-7757-4023-4. €98

The scale of this substantial catalogue of the cupboards and commodes in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in

Nuremberg is the more striking in that it comprises a mere sixty-seven entries, two, for objects now lost, in a summary format. Each full entry (all are very generously illustrated) commences with a sentence or two evoking the object's character, and then provides a systematic small-print anatomy (dimensions; carcass woods; moulding woods; veneer woods; surface treatment; metal elements; other materials; construction; special features; traces left by tools; alterations; provenance), mainly based on observations made during conservation, supported by spectrum analysis and X-rays. Next comes the main entry, in normal print, first describing design, construction and ornament, and then exploring date and origin, mainly through comparisons with other surviving pieces, but sometimes using stylistic criteria or other historical evidence. Each entry ends with a summary of the distribution of the various woods, notes and bibliography. At the end of the second volume is a forceful and informative essay urging the importance and interest of tool marks, its illustrations including fifteen pre-1800 tools from the museum's collection, all sixty-two such tools being listed thereafter, with another list detailing tools depicted on nine guild chests dating from 1595 to 1759. A further illustrated essay tackles all the furniture mounts, followed by a full listing, and another locks, bolts and other ironwork, with a



*Schränke und Kommoden 1650–1800 im Germanischen Nationalmuseum*

detailed catalogue of the locks, X-rays of each and photographs of both locks and keys. A final brief essay on decorative papers is also supported by a catalogue, and the remaining apparatus comprises a systematic list of woods, an illustrated glossary, and the bibliography. There is no index.

The Germanisches Nationalmuseum, founded in 1852, only began to collect furniture later than 1650 in the 1890s. The origins of many of the sixty-seven objects are obscure, twelve being described as simply as early holdings; there are twenty-six purchases, half around 1900 with the rest grouped either in the 1930s and 1940s or in the late 1950s or early 1960s; nineteen objects have come by gift or bequest, including all six received in 2000 or later; and the remainder are mainly deposits from other official collections or trusts, including a mid-eighteenth-century commode from the collection of the celebrated Nuremberg businessman, Paul Wolfgang Merkel (1756–1820). The museum's holdings have thus grown by fits and starts, and in one case, a Nuremberg cupboard close to 1700, which arrived as a mere container for part of the enormous collection of Norica in various media bequeathed by Guido von Volckamer in 1940, by chance. The catalogue's first volume is predominantly German with some Swiss, Dutch, Swedish or Italian outliers, while the second covers pieces attributed to Nuremberg. Quality is mixed and early documentation inevitably thin: a 1703 Mainz cupboard identified as the masterpiece of Hans Jakob Setzendreibell, whose design drawing is illustrated, thus stands out.

Many entries contain interesting insights: a 1688 Danzig inventory (Cat. 7) lists a 'Gross Holländisch Kleider Spindt' (imported or locally made?); an informative note on masterpiece drawings (Cat. 8); an excursus on salamonic columns (Cat. 11); original colours digitally restored (Cats 12 and 17); a bookcase (Cat. 21) spotted in a long-dispersed museum commemorating the 1813 battle of Leipzig; the earliest possible date for a Spindler commode (Cat. 36) pinned down by a print source to about 1770; a 1784 ebonized commode (Cat. 37) reattributed from Mainz to Alsace or the Palatinate; a sequence of china cupboards, full-scale and miniature (Cats 50, 50a and 50b), prompting an account of show kitchens — and thence garden kitchens; and a series of Nuremberg commodes with idiosyncratic side locks (e.g. Cats 58, 60 and 61). But what predominates is not the unusual or the spectacular, but a relentless concentration on the physical properties of every piece, minor or major — think of forty-three X-rays of locks — which renders this an invaluable work of reference. It is the first of a series, and whets the appetite for the treatment of cabinets and desks.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

EVA OLEDZKA, *Medieval & Renaissance Interiors in Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: British Library, 2016). 160 pp., 143 col. illus. ISBN 978 0 7123 4973 4. £25

This rewarding book tackles a neglected subject, the Gothic interior. The 'Medieval' of its title should be interpreted narrowly, the vast majority of its illustrations being



*Medieval & Renaissance Interiors in Illuminated Manuscripts*

after 1400 and only six earlier than 1300. They are virtually all from illuminated manuscripts, the great majority in the British Library, although nearly a fifth are from other collections, including eleven from the Bodleian Library in Oxford, where the author works, and an unfamiliar five from libraries in Cracow, among them a rare and revealing scene with a mural painter at work. Historians of furniture and the interior, Viollet-le-Duc notable among them, have always used such illustrations. Thus a famous *Birth of St John the Baptist* from Turin (here fig. 1) is also in Mario Praz's *History of Interior Decoration* (1964) and Jacques Thirion's *Mobilier du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance en France* (1998). The wealth of available materials is enormous: Oledzka illustrates one interior (fig. 72) from the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* in the Pierpont Morgan Library,

which contains a further fifteen at least, not to mention a delightful miniature with seven different bird cages and a perch. Anyone who remembers the revelatory *Illuminating the Renaissance* exhibition (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2003; Royal Academy, London, 2004) will recall the exquisite quality of Flemish miniatures of about 1470 to 1560.

'Renaissance' in that title was used in a temporal and cultural sense rather than stylistically: in the latter sense, most Flemish interiors are Gothic. Peter Thornton's *The Italian Renaissance Interior 1400–1600* (1991) and several subsequent works have thrown much light on the Renaissance interior, so that, unlike the Gothic, it can no longer be considered neglected. Of Eva Oledzka's illustrations, which are supplied with detailed descriptive captions in the Thornton tradition, about a sixth are Renaissance in style, and furniture historians might happily sacrifice these for more miniatures of Gothic interiors, many of which, as well as numerous panel paintings, are described in her text. By comparison, this is tipped much more towards the Renaissance, with many an echo of Thornton's work. It is systematically and clearly organized, covering in sequence the architectural shell, the elements of the interior and its contents, with a coda on display, all broken into relatively brief sections with subtitles. An omission is any coverage of the cloth of estate. There is an element of repetition both on large subjects, such as room functions, and small, such as the realism or otherwise of the interiors in *The Psalter of Henry VIII*, while an overlong treatment of maiolica

concludes with an irresolvable discussion as to whether a vase shown in a miniature is maiolica (probably) or *lattimo* glass (possible, but unlikely) and the section on kitchens strays well beyond their interiors. There is the odd slip: the Victoria & Albert Museum houses more than one Raphael cartoon; 'Spanish tables' did not have detachable trestles; and the *Codex Amiatinus* is not 'Amianitus' (twice). And the side panels described as carved in the Gothic style on a bed in a Polish miniature (fig. 98) are invisible to this viewer.

Oledzka's text, the odd quibble apart, is a useful and thorough introduction to the

subject, but it is the illustrations which will chiefly attract the historian of furniture and interiors. It is a great new asset to have available, in colour, 140 such images, some familiar, but many more not. It is to be hoped that their availability may encourage students to undertake more focused studies of Gothic furniture and interiors. Penelope Eames's 1977 book, which covered Romanesque as well as Gothic, is now nearly forty years old and it is high time that its successors appeared.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

# Reports on the Society's Events

Members will have noticed that the new *Newsletter* includes many more photographs than before. The Editors would be grateful if members could send them **high quality digital photographs, minimum 1MB**, taken during Society visits and events that can be used to illustrate the reports.

## Study Trip to North Lancashire and Lake District

FRIDAY 18–SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2015

Our visit started on Friday afternoon at the Judges' Lodgings, built in the sixteenth century and from 1826 to 1975 serving as Judges' Lodgings for the Assizes. This imposing house was then turned into a museum devoted to the cabinet-making and upholstery firm of Gillows. This flourished for forty years, but the museum is now threatened with closure. We wish



Judges' Lodgings

Susan Stuart and her Lancaster colleagues success in their endeavours to avert this.

Amongst the notable pieces on show was the large mahogany desk, made for Sir James Ibbotson of Denton Hall, Otley, from a Chippendale design. In the Drawing Room, a recent acquisition was the bookcase commissioned in 1772 by the Quaker widow Mary Rawlinson, embellished with both inlay and carving, the latter originally gilded. In the same room there was a workbox of 1808, featuring seventy-two different woods, showing the extent of Gillows' trading links.

We continued to Lancaster Castle, built just after the Norman Conquest and for many centuries, until 2011, used as a courthouse and prison. There were major additions by Lancaster architect Thomas Harrison (1744–1829) starting in 1796. In 1804, J. M. Gandy (1771–1843) was called in to complete the Shire Hall and Crown Court, with furnishings by Gillows. The courts were built in the Gothic style, with arches in Coade stone, and the Grand Jury Room contains a large Gillows oak table and a set of extremely stylish chairs.

From Lancaster we drove to Morecambe, to the Midland Hotel — 'A Venus in white cement' (*Observer*). Our arrival perhaps did not match up to that of Lady Docker in her gold Daimler, but we were met with pretty much the same glistening white, concave curve of the

front facade. In 1932, the London, Midland and Scottish Railway bought the site for a hotel, designed by Oliver Hill (1887–1968) as a three-storey, curving building, complementing the curve of the promenade. He was known for extravagant interiors using glass, chromium, vitriolite and exotic woods, and insisted on taking complete control of every detail of the hotel's interior decoration and furnishing. He commissioned 'nautical' interior decoration from Eric Gill (1882–1940) and Eric Ravilious (1903–42), and rugs by Marion Dorn (1896–1964) (now reproduced). The hotel soon became a favourite with celebrities such as Coco Chanel, Laurence Olivier and Noel Coward. Sadly, by 1998 the Midland was derelict. In 2006, the Manchester-based property developer Urban Splash, in partnership with English Lakes Hotels, took on its restoration, including the grand, central, cantilevered staircase and the surviving Gill artworks. The hotel reopened in 2008.

Sculptural survivors include two seahorses modelled on Morecambe shrimps and carved in Portland stone on the entrance front, by Eric Gill. Inside, three key survivors have been restored: the large plaster roundel of 'Neptune and Triton' on the ceiling of the central staircase, designed and carved by Eric Gill and painted by his son-in-law Denis Tegetmeier; a Portland stone relief by Gill, 'Odysseus welcomed from the Sea by Nausicaa', with lettering by Laurie Cribb; and a relief map of north-west England carved by Eric Gill. Apparently Gill's

original design for the reception area was called 'High Jinks in Paradise', but cavorting naked youths and maidens were too risqué for the LMS. It was an inspired decision for the FHS to stay in this temple to Art Deco, the spirit of which remains, even though practical necessities of the twenty-first century have inevitably removed some of its former glory — but added quite a few bathrooms.

Saturday gave us a perfect autumn morning for our visit to Blackwell, an iconic but relatively little-known Arts and Crafts house. Designed by M. H. Baillie Scott (1865–1945) in 1898 and completed by 1900 for the Manchester brewer Sir Edward Holt (1849–1928), it was the first major commission for this intriguing architect. After a brief period as a holiday home, Blackwell served as a school. In 1999, the Lakeland Arts Trust purchased the house and have restored and re-presented it as a centre for Arts and Crafts. The visitor can once more appreciate its surviving built-in furniture: inglenook fireplaces, deep window seats looking down to the lake, built-in cupboards and alcoves. All the surviving fittings are in tune with Ruskin's belief that 'Good art flows from the craftsmen who create it' — in this case the Quaker Arthur W. Simpson (who had been apprenticed to Gillows) and his son, Hubert, who directed the 'Handicrafts' side of their Kendal-based firm, specializing originally in church carving and woodwork, and later working in a distinctive yet restrained Arts and Crafts style. The firm survived two World Wars and the depression of the 1920s, finally closing in 1955. In the delicate plasterwork



The Great Hall at Blackwell. © The Lakeland Trust

of the White Drawing Room and the robust oak panelling of the Hall and Dining Room, their work survives, often incorporating rowan berries, taken from the coat of arms of the Holt family. The block-printed hessian frieze in the Dining Room is a particularly rare survival.

The Lakeland Arts Trust has augmented Blackwell's interiors with acquisitions and loans of Arts and Crafts furniture and other applied art, although the Holts did not, in fact, furnish in this style. The Keatley Trust have lent pieces designed by Baillie Scott (a 'Manxman' piano of 1900, a pair of oak chairs, a bureau, a sideboard and barrel chair all dating from c. 1901–05, made by the Pyghtle Works, Bedford), plus outstanding pieces of dining room furniture designed by Ernest Gimson

(1864–1919), notably the dining table of c. 1910, with characteristic 'hay-rake' stretchers. Other pieces introduced to the house include an oak armchair of c. 1900 designed by E. G. Punnett for the firm of William Birch of High Wycombe (who marketed through Liberty's of London) and later furniture by Stanley Webb Davies (1894–1978), who set up a workshop at 'Gatesfield' in Windermere in 1923 and worked there until his retirement in 1961.

We moved from Blackwell to Holker Hall, owned by the Cavendish family since 1756, though not part of the Devonshire estates since 1908. The Old Wing dates to the seventeenth century, but the focus of our visit was the Victorian Wing, built after a fire of 1871 by local architects Paley

& Austin of Lancaster in Elizabethan style. The interiors boast many fine chimneypieces from the ducal quarries, together with an impressive granite staircase-screen, rising through two floors. The splendid Cararra marble chimneypiece in the Drawing Room, however, came from Montagu House, London, and the chandeliers in the Main Hall from Devonshire House, Piccadilly.

Gillows supplied furniture and carved an oak chimneypiece in the Dining Room, using some of the spiral twist columns acquired for the Oak Room in Chatsworth, by tradition from a German monastery. Susan Stuart produced a copy of Gillows' design for this, with spaces for the columns. In the Library, the bookcases were of light oak, with a matching architect's table of a design that Gillows produced throughout the nineteenth century, with changing stylistic decoration. This room also included a fine set of four George III gilded armchairs upholstered in pale blue damask (the sprung seats indicating re-upholstery), the open arms having ram's head terminals, reel-banded frames and turned tapering legs, and a part of a set of seven painted and gilt Louis XV *fauteuils*. The walls of the Drawing Room were hung in the original cinnamon silk, possibly from Macclesfield. The furnishings included a white and gilt suite of seat furniture in Chippendale style, possibly by Gillows, and a Louis XV *bureau à cylindre* in tulipwood and kingwood. A small early needlework panel now mounted in a firescreen was reputedly from Hardwick Hall and showed Chinese motifs on a black ground

— but what was its date? The Billiard Room has a locally carved Victorian table, again in pale oak, to match the linenfold panelling. Two very interesting pictures of the port of Whitehaven, the earlier dated 1686, showed the phenomenal growth of the town during the first half of the eighteenth century, mainly on the back of the rum trade. In the Dining Room, the Victorian oak table on four profusely carved cylindrical legs, with wind-out action, designed to seat thirty, was by Gillows.

The richly carved pedestal sideboard may have contained remnants of the German monastery oak, and opposite was a large, sixteenth-century chest, with the usual shallow carving, punched ground work, poker work and elaborate iron work. This form of chest has been much discussed recently but its origin is still unclear, although the traditional assignment to north Italy is still a possibility. In the Main Hall the most interesting Gillows piece was the 'circular library table' or rent table, supplied in 1767, which escaped the great fire by being in the Estate Office. Other pieces by Gillows included a rosewood pillar table and a small side table.

The fine oak staircase took three years to complete, each of its one hundred balusters individually carved by estate workmen. On the half-landing was a George II mahogany sketching table on a tripod base, similar to a design featured in the Potter advertisement print in the V&A. Bedrooms included further Gillows' furniture, a large wall mirror, *c.* 1700, with engraved glass surrounds, similar to those

at Hampton Court, and a Sorrento inlaid table of the late nineteenth century. In the Gallery was a specimen marble table raised on boldly carved sphinxes in the manner of Thomas Hope, but in fact originating from the 1851 Exhibition. Here also were a Derbyshire black limestone table and an unusual Victorian carved beech rocking seat for three children.

We continued from Holker to Cartmel Priory, saved from destruction by reuse as a parish church after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Our knowledgeable volunteer guide, Bob Johnson, showed us an extraordinarily carved seventeenth-century Bishop's chair, which arrived here from Chatsworth, and a brightly painted wooden font cover, with a prominently gilded date of 1640. Of greatest interest were the magnificent misericords from the fifteenth century. Supporting figures included bats, dragons, twin-tailed mermaids (unusual in Britain, more common in Europe) and a three-faced green man. Cavendish hatchments hung on the walls and some fifteenth-century stained glass remains in the East Window. A seventeenth-century painted panel bore the Ten Commandments, with a fulsomely bearded Moses looming up behind.

We finished the afternoon at the workshops of Peter Hall & Sons in Staveley, where we were welcomed by Jeremy Hall, whose father had arrived from New Zealand at the age of fifty to found this furniture-making and retailing business. Jeremy himself studied at Leeds College of Art, then City & Guilds and West Dean College, before joining the firm, which is noted for fine conservation work

(including conservation of the Inlaid Chamber at Sizergh) and furniture making of the highest quality. He was rightly proud of his record of supporting young entrants to the profession, with twenty-one apprentices having passed through the business, and four currently engaged. We were taken to see the various workshops and the woodshed, where wood is seasoned for several years. The showroom displayed a variety of furniture and smaller woodwork. Many pieces showed influence from the Arts and Crafts, always so strong in the Lakes, but modernist pieces are also produced. A chest of drawers designed by Jeremy's son showed an undulating form suggesting a waterfall, its facade planed from a solid piece of ripple sycamore. We left heartened by the refreshing vitality of the business and its productions, and the enthusiasm of its employees.

On Sunday morning we started with a visit to Levens Hall, the home of the Bellingham family from c. 1580, the Grahme family from the 1680s and the Bagot family from the 1870s. The house is famous for its early woodwork, which reflects Flemish influence and is closely related to woodwork at Sizergh Castle and elsewhere in the immediate neighbourhood (written up by Susan Stuart and Susan Bourne in *Regional Furniture*, v (1991), 51–59). As with many early houses such as Knole and Cotehele, nineteenth-century enthusiasm for historical interiors and family history ensured its preservation, but also complicated our understanding of its history. Such interiors offer a rich

palimpsest. The most spectacular survivals of sixteenth-century woodwork here include the elaborately carved overmantel in the Large Drawing Room (dated 1595). In the Small Drawing Room the overmantel is carved with figures of the Five Senses, the Four Seasons and the Four Elements. Anthony Wells-Cole has identified engraved sources for some of the ornament, indicating the complexity of cultural connections in the area in the sixteenth century.

James Grahme was active at the court of James II, and from that period there is much surviving furniture, including pieces by Thomas Pistor, father and son (written up by Adrian Turpin in *Furniture History*, vol. 36 (2000), 43–60) and Col. Grahme's walnut-veneered travelling strongbox by Gerrit Jensen. A rare survival is a pair of squab frames in the Large Drawing Room (low frames to support cushions used for seating by ladies of the court). Also from this period is a part-finished panel of embroidery after a painting by Charles Le Brun, still showing the under-drawing that guided the embroiderer.

The heroine of the first half of the nineteenth century at Levens was Mary Howard, who came to the house at the time of her marriage in 1807, inherited it eleven years later and seems to have spent the next sixty years in restoring and beautifying it. These years brought new panelling and the rich variety of seventeenth-century gilt leather in several rooms, as well as standard antiques such as French commodes and an example of the Dutch folding chairs used for church-going in the seventeenth century (an

example dated 1663). As might be expected, Gillows worked here. Susan Stuart pointed out a burr walnut writing table of 1808 that they had provided, and in 1823 they were supplying a grained rosewood couch for one of the bedrooms, with a scroll end 'to take off', making its transport upstairs much easier. In the Museum Room a good example of a chair bed, patented by Morgan & Saunders, is shown. The house contains fine clocks, including a longcase by Richard Washington of Kendal, dated 1669, which was acquired recently.

Our final visit was to Sizergh, owned by the Strickland family since 1239 but given to the National Trust in 1950. As at Levens, different periods of furnishings survive and provide rich material for study. Fine woodwork from the sixteenth century greets visitors on the screen in the Entrance Hall and is met again in panelling upstairs, in the richly carved overmantel of the Dining Room (1564) and, most dramatically, in the Inlaid Chamber (1570–85), which was sold from the house in the 1890s but reinstated on long loan from the V&A in 1999, the work of reinstallation having been undertaken by Peter Hall & Sons. The softly golden oak is inlaid with bog oak and holly, in arabesques that show the distinct Flemish influence that is also seen at Levens. The internal porch is an unusual feature, probably taken from engraving from Vredeman de Vries. The bed (also returned from the V&A) is of similar date but has undergone much restoration in the 1780s, underlining the fact that reverence for antiquarian features well preceded the

nineteenth century. Further examples of this period include the chest in the Entrance Hall dated 1571 and carved benches in the Great Hall dated 1562.

Eighteenth-century additions to the furnishing include a scagliola table top dated 1708, inlaid with the Strickland arms, currently on the half-landing. In the Gallery were six Gillow chairs, supplied 1765–70. Susan Stuart showed us the complex, mitred joint of the stretchers that is often found on Gillows chairs. In the Drawing Room a further set by Gillow, of similar date, showed slightly Gothic shaping at the top of the backs, presumably chosen as suitable to a castle setting. In the Bindloss Room we saw a pair of double-height chests by the firm, delivered in 1758 for Walter Strickland and his bride at a cost of £15. A chest of drawers from 1762–63, also by Gillows, was lined with baywood and showed a secretaire drawer fitted with drawers only accessible from the side when the main drawer was fully pulled out. Gillows clearly continued to work at Sizergh, returning as late as 1889 to renovate old panelling in the Dining Parlour.

The Society is very grateful to our hosts and guides who were so generous in showing us these properties, and to David Oakey and Susan Stuart who put together this wonderful programme. We were fortunate to be hosted for dinner on Saturday night by John Martin Robinson at his pretty house at Barbon, and we are very grateful to him for welcoming us so warmly.

*Compiled from reports by Flo Beith, Leela Meinertas, Lisa White, Gerry Coughlan, David*

*Oakey, Tessa Murdoch and Lizzie Baxter. The longer reports are held in the archives of the Society and copies can be requested from the Events Secretary.*

## Report on the 40th Annual Symposium: 'Bright and Beautiful': colour in interiors

SATURDAY 16 APRIL 2016

THE WALLACE COLLECTION,  
MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON

Synopses prepared by the speakers.

DR STEVEN BRINDLE:  
SENIOR PROPERTIES HISTORIAN,  
ENGLISH HERITAGE

*Interior Decoration, Furniture and the Use of Colour at the Court of Henry II; Work Done for the Dover Castle Great Tower Project*

English Heritage's Great Tower Project at Dover Castle is an ambitious attempt to re-present this great building of the 1180s, built by Henry II, as if his household and court were in residence there. It is probably the only building in Britain that is known to have been occupied by King Henry, which survives, roofed, in any recognisable form. The project involved commissioning large quantities of new furniture, textiles and other objects to twelfth-century patterns and models. We were hampered by the extreme shortage of surviving twelfth-century pieces, and the project involved considerable scholarly effort in understanding twelfth-century furniture design, the uses of furniture and



The Throne Room at Dover Castle. © Historic England

the attitude to the use of colour. We used surviving mural schemes, illuminated manuscripts and painted wooden sculpture, as well as the handful of surviving pieces as source material in this ground-breaking project.

NICK HUMPHREY: CURATOR,  
FURNITURE, TEXTILES AND FASHION  
DEPT, VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM  
*Painted Furniture and Woodwork in Britain  
Before 1650*

For at least 150 years it has been recognised by furniture historians that medieval and early modern furniture and woodwork was often painted or grained (and gilded), in spite of the natural wood

(or darkened wood) appearance of most surviving work. Although documentary references, paint traces and rare surviving schemes of architectural woodwork have been used to inform research into painted woodwork of this period, no overview of painted, movable furniture has been published. Nick Humphrey's paper concentrated on painted furniture in England, informed by the evidence of a few painted schemes on fixed woodwork that have survived relatively intact, and recent, wide-ranging research into painting in Britain, 1500–1630. Between 1300 and 1650 some furniture was painted and some finished with (it is assumed) some transparent finish revealing the

natural wood colour; getting beyond this very basic statement is difficult because so little painted furniture survives. From about 1300–1520 — a period when much English church woodwork was very richly painted — utilitarian furniture could be painted in relatively simple schemes (probably often in the maker’s workshop), while exceptional pieces might be more lavishly decorated by a specialist painter-gilder. Bold colour schemes, sometimes based on heraldry, continued after 1500, but the arrival of Renaissance ornament coincided with new approaches based on two or three tones, including gilding. From about 1540–1640 fixed woodwork displayed increasingly complex painted schemes, often enhanced with graining and marbling, but these were not generally translated into movable furniture. Instead, special schemes of painted decoration were developed for certain new types of luxury furniture, heavily influenced by foreign design and imported goods.

DR WOLF BURCHARD:  
FURNITURE RESEARCH CURATOR,  
THE NATIONAL TRUST

*Between Theory and Practice: Charles Le Brun and Colour at the Academy and Gobelins*

Charles Le Brun was simultaneously Principal Painter to King Louis XIV, Chancellor of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture and Director of the Gobelins Manufactory, furnishing the royal residences. Colour played an important role in the artistic output of Le Brun, both on the canvas and in his designs for decorative works of art, especially tapestries and furniture. Some of Le Brun’s contemporaries at the

Academy feared that, with regards to paintings, too great an interest in colour would jeopardise the status of painting as a liberal art. This presentation explored the relationship between the theoretical lectures Le Brun gave at the Royal Academy and his artistic practice at the Gobelins.

DR IAN BRISTOW:  
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

*Conventions of Colour Usage Before Goethe and the Advent of Later Theories in Colour Harmony*

Ian Bristow considered an era before the beginning of the nineteenth century and the advent of various theories of colour harmony, which have dominated recent design theory. In the early modern period, various conventions of colour were used in interiors, some emanating from medieval times, and others from consideration during the Renaissance of the gap between the extremes of light and darkness observed by the ancient Greek philosophers. During the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, various associations culled from both current religious observance and antiquity, often in conflict with each other, were applied within a widely observed convention that paint on building materials should reflect their natural colours; but in the early to mid-eighteenth century ideas developed, following the adoption of white as the architectural framework. At first, bright hues on walls, and wallpapers offering points of colour, could be accommodated; but Robert Adam’s use of colour on ceilings provoked an adverse reaction, and led to a perceived need for colour-

harmony, which the theories of Goethe and his successors seemed soon to supply. It is through the prism of these that historic colour schemes tend today to be judged.

YANNICK CHASTANG:  
INDEPENDENT CONSERVATOR

*Colour in Marquetry: A Generation of New Work*

Yannick Chastang has been fascinated by marquetry since his student days. In the Wallace Collection's marquetry exhibition in 2001 he explored the original colours of marquetry and in the past fifteen years he has looked at original recipes, contemporaneous pictorial evidence and scientific analysis. New scientific research, mainly at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and the Bavarian Palace Conservation Department in Munich, has revealed many of the secrets of what may have been the original colours of eighteenth-century marquetry. This short talk showed some of the latest research, illustrated by the latest computer imaging, further investigated by re-creation of the marquetry using the newest knowledge.

JÜRGEN HUBER: SENIOR CONSERVATOR,  
THE WALLACE COLLECTION AND  
MARC-ANDRÉ PAULIN, FURNITURE  
CONSERVATOR, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE

*True Colours Revealed; Colour in the Creative Process of Jean-Henri Riesener*

Jürgen Huber and Marc-André Paulin spoke in turn on aspects of Riesener's use of colour, and we are grateful to Dr Helen Jacobsen for translating and reading M. Paulin's paper.

Jürgen Huber's paper explained the investigative work involved in the re-examination of an outstanding commode made by Riesener for use in the *cabinet interior* of Marie Antoinette at Versailles and delivered on 9 December 1780. During conservation in 2012 some suspected earlier alterations had been confirmed and new discoveries made. Technological advances in documentation software, increasingly cheaper and easier to use, had contributed to the investigation and assessment of a number of Riesener pieces at the Wallace Collection. Some of the original colours found on the underside of veneers on Marie Antoinette's commode had been used in a digital reconstruction of the probable original colour-scheme, while the construction of the carcass was documented using a 3D drawing program, enabling a digital reconstruction of its likely original appearance. The fading of the veneers and dystuffs is well documented in the literature of the last two decades. More research into original dystuffs and types of timber used on Riesener pieces at the Wallace will be carried out in the near future, since analytical techniques have also become both more sophisticated and more affordable. Combined with art-historical research, it will be possible to explain in greater detail how these magnificent pieces were made, what alterations have been carried out to them, and to visualize what they really looked like when first delivered.

Marc-André Paulin's overview of Riesener's work showed that, in his creative process between 1770 and the end

of the *Ancien Régime*, there was a constant desire to produce furniture that demonstrated a strong contrast in both polychromy and material effects. In certain instances, Riesener's creations highlight his need to use models developed by earlier *ébénistes* such as André-Charles Boulle, Jean-François Oeben and, to a certain degree, those which emerged from the work of Pierre-Elisabeth de Fontanieu on the imitation of semi-precious stones. The new decorative repertoire, which was introduced into the arts from 1750 onwards was heavily inspired by antique architecture. Marble, porphyry, lapis lazuli and jasper were sought-after materials for ornament in the antique style. Riesener was inspired to recreate this ornament in his marquetry.

LUCY WOOD: INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

*Taste and Invention in English Painted Furniture c. 1780–1820*

Lucy Wood's paper addressed the development of both taste and technique in decorative painted furniture in Britain from the late-eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the context in which it was deployed. She examined the sources of inspiration — from Antiquity, poetry and garden flowers — and the consequent growing demand for fresh and accurate colour in painted decoration. The varying impact of architects and artisans (including amateur artists) on fashions in painted furniture was also considered. Finally, the invention of new techniques in the search for colour fastness was reviewed, together with the contributions of some significant practitioners.

DR ALEXANDRA LOSKE: CURATOR OF THE ROYAL PAVILION AND ASSOCIATE TUTOR IN ART HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

*'A splendour of light and colour': Brighton Royal Pavilion and its Colour History*

In this paper Dr Loske charted and described the colour schemes of the Royal Pavilion in its various recorded stages, beginning with the largely unknown (and almost entirely lost) neo-classical interior from c. 1786 to 1802, which was followed by the first chinoiserie interior introduced by John and Frederick Crace from c. 1802 onwards. The best documented and final scheme under George IV developed alongside John Nash's major transformation of the building between 1815 and 1823 and was largely the work of Frederick Crace and the poorly documented Robert Jones. This scheme is today used as the main point of reference for restoration and recreation work carried out in the principal rooms of the building. Following the sale of the palace and estate by Queen Victoria to the town commissioners of Brighton in 1850, the building entered a phase that the mid-twentieth-century Director of the Royal Pavilion, Clifford Musgrave, described as 'municipal nakedness', because the building was stripped of most of its fittings, decorative finishes and furnishings, which were reused — and reinterpreted — in the newly built Blore Wing of Buckingham Palace. Dr Loske gave examples of early reactions to the oriental features of the building and discussed the use of colours and pigments in the building, with particular focus on

how and in what sequence the building was experienced by visitors. Colour was identified as one important aspect of multi-sensual stimulation, reflecting the main use of the building for entertainment and escapism.

DR SALLY-ANNE HUXTABLE:  
CURATOR OF MODERN AND  
CONTEMPORARY DESIGN,  
NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF SCOTLAND

*Colour and the Artistic Interior 1848–1900*

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented interest in interior decoration amongst the middle and upper classes of Britain. During the 1870s and 1880s there was a proliferation of advice in magazines, books and journals on how to achieve a fashionable ‘artistic’ interior scheme, and a number of figures such as Mary Margaret Haweis made a profitable living from books and articles that offered suggestions for decorating the home and/or the body, in a sufficiently artistic manner. A person’s home and dress were believed to be about more than just taste: these were markers of identity — and the colours used were paramount. Using as its starting point the notion of the aesthetic or artistic interior, both as designed space and also as the interior self of the aesthete, formed through sensory experience, the paper drew on sources in art, design and literature to explore the complex meanings and symbolism of the colours green, blue, yellow and white in artistic interiors, as well as the relationship between design practice and the ideas of artistic and aesthetic selfhood. Dr Huxtable made the case that the choices of colours made by

artists, writers, designers and householders sought to create surfaces, spaces and images that could, and did, refer to very specific concepts of culture, belief and identity.

*The Council and members of the Society are very grateful to all the speakers whose work created this very successful and well-attended day.*

## Study Trip to Shropshire and the West Midlands

FRIDAY 11–SUNDAY 13 MARCH 2016

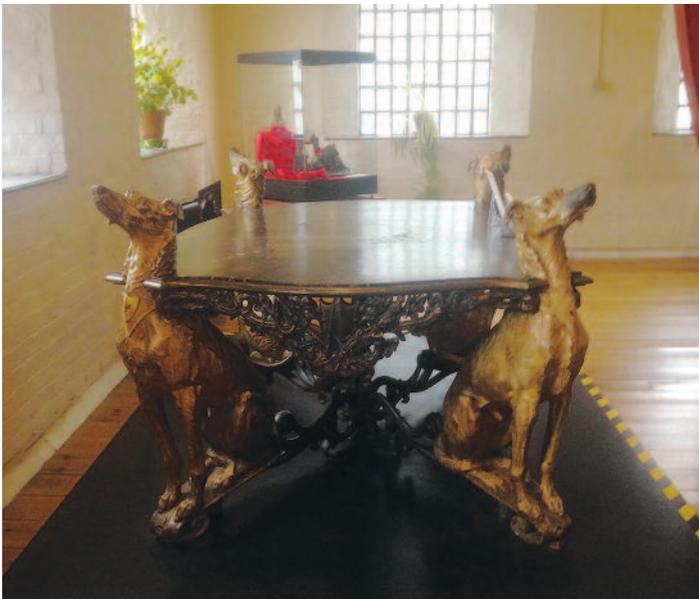


Next stop was lunch and a tour around the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's Museum of Iron at Coalbrookdale, a district, which is described as the 'Cradle of the Industrial Revolution'. John Powell, Archivist, gave a *résumé* of the site, which includes the first blast furnace for smelting iron with coke (as opposed to charcoal) built by Abraham Darby in 1709. The Museum is housed in a brick warehouse built in 1838 with cast-iron windows, sills and columns. In the forecourt was the flamboyant 'Boy and Swan' fountain design by John Bell, exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851. The success of the Company's display there led them to develop a huge range of cast-iron furniture.

John Powell produced the first 1875 catalogue plus a full design dated 1868 of the Horse Chestnut Garden Bench. The huge variety of furniture in the museum

included the impressive 'Deerhound' table by John Bell for the Paris Exhibition in 1855. This table with its solid iron top is supported by four life-size cast iron figures of deerhounds.

Christopher Dresser supplied a few designs for Coalbrookdale, most importantly the 'Water Plant' garden bench, registered in 1867. Also by Dresser was a pair of 'Medieval' cast iron high back chairs, which originally cost 60s 6d.



The massive deerhound iron table designed by John Bell and made by Coalbrookdale for the 1855 Paris Exhibition, shown in the Ironbridge Museum



The Giffard crest carved on the imposing sideboard by Gillow for Chillington



Gillow hall chair with the Giffard crest, by Gillow for Chillington

The Carolean building, altered in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sets a successful example of the evolution of the English Country House, balancing modern functions (weddings, conferences, etc.) with a rare surviving collection of rooms, decoration and contents.

The tapestry room is an excellent example of that success, as it functions as a small reception/sitting room for important guests, while the contents would grace any museum collection. We noted the original (mostly against the wall) and later copies (near fireplace) of a parcel gilt, *faux bois* suite of seat furniture with ram's head supports by Morel and Hughes. One could feel the difference by weight even before looking underneath at construction and patination, and so on.

Most remarkable was the overall wall-to-wall decoration of Gobelins tapestries, acquired by Sir Henry Bridgeman and woven between 1766 and 1771. They are one of only six sets commissioned for English houses and were probably made for the family's London house in St James's Square. Careful study of details and comparative study of the Croome Court set, now at the Met, of the fireplace wall offered an insight to the nuances of 'mass' production and custom (*haute couture*) at the time.

The richly varied collections at Weston Park afford the casual visitor and the informed scholar endless possibilities for study, including furniture by Chippendale, Morel and Hughes, plus Gillows. With Gareth's encouragement and commentary we were given a wonderful opportunity to

The Weston Park  
Foundation/Mike  
Allen



understand the importance of the house, the family and its contribution to English history, as well as the continuum it affords visitors today.

Weston was a fitting conclusion to a packed weekend of study. Overall we had enjoyed rare glimpses of the English country house and its contents at its best, and importantly still mainly in the hands of its original owners and with so many original furnishings.

## Visit to Lady Lever Art Gallery

THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2016

The Lady Lever Art Gallery has recently reopened after a £3m Lottery-funded refurbishment. It was therefore an ideal moment for a visit, and we were truly fortunate to be led by Lucy Wood, whose magisterial two catalogues, of the commodes (1994) and upholstered furniture (2008), remain supreme

Compiled from reports by Gareth Williams, Louis and Lisanne Bremers-Rottier, Kerry Monaghan Smith, Elizabeth Jamieson, Simon Wedgwood, A. W. Pratt, Daniela Heinze, Catharina Mannerfelt, Charles and Veronica Lillis, Mindy Papp and Kate Dyson.

*This report is a synopsis of longer and more detailed accounts by members of the tour. The full reports are lodged in the Furniture History Society Archive.*

benchmarks for furniture studies. We were joined by curators Alyson Pollard, who gave us an introductory welcome, and David Moffat, who greatly facilitated our access.

The story of Lord Leverhulme's collections is well known, but we were reminded of his approach to English furniture which informed this major element of the museum he opened in 1923. It was only possible for us to consider a few interesting pieces in the time available, but it was enough to prove to us (if we

needed reminding) that this is one of the prime destinations for anyone interested in English decorative art of the eighteenth century.

We began by inspecting a chair from a suite dating from c. 1715 from Parham, with unique gilt leather chinoiserie covers, made specifically for these chairs, over original upholstery. Nearby was Chippendale's celebrated dressing table from Arniston, so closely related to a plate in the Director, and possibly one of the two made in rosewood mentioned in the text. We were able to admire the way the central mirror comes forward supported entirely by folding brackets (preventing any scratches to the surface), the compartments inside the dressing drawer, and the new damask 'petticoat' which shrouds the kneehole opening. The pattern

chair from the documented chinoiserie suite from Ford Castle supplied by William Davidson of Berwick was admired for its extraordinary inventiveness in design, apparently unrelated to any engraved sources. They are juxtaposed with Linnell's china stands from Badminton and a pair of possibly German figurative chinoiserie *torchères*. One of the showstoppers in the first large gallery is the parcel gilt cabinet on chest attributable to William Hallett made for Sir James Dashwood of Kirtlington Park, with its massive male terms and brass inlaid stringings and handles. Opposite are a pair of remarkable side tables which defy stylistic analysis, made for Sir James's notorious kinsman at West Wycombe. Close by is the truly exquisite commode, identical to one formerly at Aske, formerly



Painted furniture attributed to George Brookshaw



The pattern chair from Ford Castle supplied by William Davidson of Berwick

attributed to Samuel Norman, with particularly beautiful carved details and ormolu handles and escutcheons. An unprovenanced group of four chairs with handsome triple-ply hexagon trellis backs, possibly by Linnell, are related to a suite associated with Stowe. A large gothic book/display case, close to a design in the Director clearly dates to the early/mid nineteenth-century Chippendale revival.

In the Main Hall, curiously juxtaposed with the great Victorian paintings, were a series of interesting chairs: a group originating from Holkham supplied by William Hallett, probably with interventions by William Kent, with drop-in cane seats supporting their upholstery;

an unprovenanced group with strong Kentian features stylistically related to a suite at Grimsthorpe; and an exceptionally interesting pair of armchairs from Chesterfield House in a deliberate francophile style imitating the 1740s but probably dating from 100 years later. All these provoked considerable discussion.

After lunch, we continued in the gallery principally lined with some of the iconic marquetry and painted commodes for which the Lady Lever is so famous, arranged in groups for comparison and continuity. Here are the first three of several pieces by or attributed to Mayhew and Ince pieces: one rectangular (from Bothwell Castle); one semicircular (from Bretby Hall);

and one serpentine (the Bull commode). The elegant Linnell commode with emblematic marquetry in rococo cartouches sits close to the Furlong 'Diana' commode for which Lucy gave us an interpretation of its possible original appearance; opposite is his square piano case with similar dancing and musical figures. Alongside these Chippendale's commode, probably emanating from Earl Bathurst's Apsley House, holds its own with its distinctive forms and motifs. Above hangs a large mirror with boldly carved gilt frame and ornaments perhaps reminiscent of transitional examples at Harewood. Other highly memorable pieces include the Stanmer commode with its door backs veneered in ash imitating watered silk, and the Henry Hill of Marlborough commode with its drawers lined with a delightful German lining paper.

We were running short of time, so our attention turned to other later eighteenth-century pieces, not least to some of the painted furniture attributed to George Brookshaw, the superb writing cabinet attributed to Seddon, the German beadwork vase on stand, and to the most virtuoso straw-work dressing table which opened to reveal miraculously preserved colours. We considered the pros and cons of dating the magnificent collector's cabinet, given by the family as late as 1980, whose multiple drawers are veneered in a variety of different timbers. Warren Hastings' buffalo-horn armchair, the State Bed from Stowe, and Cardinal Fesch's seat furniture all drew our admiration. To finish, we heard again the amazing story of Lucy's discovery of the remaining

fragment of the long-lost and dated (1743 and 1748) needlework border made for the drugget for the Gallery at Temple Newsam, later sold and 'married' to a settee by Moss Harris for Lord Leverhulme in 1920.

*The day was full of great interest and pleasure for all of us, whether we had visited the Lady Lever many times in the past, or whether it was our first time. We are truly grateful to Lucy for sharing her knowledge so generously and enthusiastically, and to Anne Marie Banister and David Oakey for organizing the day.*

JAMES LOMAX









# The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund and Oliver Ford Trust

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 should be addressed to Jo Norman at [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org), or for further information and grant application forms see the Grants page of the Society's website, [www.furniturehistorysociety.org](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org).

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 FHS Grants Committee now meets quarterly to consider all grant applications, either for independent travel/incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research, or for participation in FHS foreign and UK study trips.

Completed application forms should be submitted with current curriculum vitae by the following deadlines so that they can be considered at these meetings:

10 JUNE, 10 SEPTEMBER OR 10 DECEMBER

TOM INGRAM MEMORIAL FUND/FHS GRANTS  
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Email: [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org)

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This issue is edited by Sharon Goodman

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## Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is 15 December. Copy should be sent, preferably by email,

to Matthew Winterbottom, email: [matthew.winterbottom@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.winterbottom@ashmus.ox.ac.uk), or The Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH. Tel.: 01865 278 289

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COVER PICTURE Henry Dasson (1825–1896), *cabinet à colonnes*, from the Russian Imperial collection at the Anitchkov Palace © State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg