

The Furniture History Society

Newsletter 208

November 2017



In this issue: An Interesting Discovery in a Drawer at Burghley | Society News | Members' Corner | Future Society Events | Occasional Visits | Other Notices | Book Reviews | Reports on the Society's Events

An Interesting Discovery in a Drawer at Burghley

Two watercolours showing nineteenth-century interiors of Burghley House, Northamptonshire, have proved useful to the investigation of the layout and furnishing of two of the main rooms on the ground floor: the Red and the Blue Drawing Rooms. That of the Blue Drawing Room is by George Shepherd (1784–1862) and is dated 1817 on the reverse. All of the paintings and most of the furnishings are recognizable and are still in the house, several are still in this room.

The painting of the Red Drawing Room (Fig. 2) was recognized by Tim Knox in the collection of the Museo Mario Praz in Rome. It is undated, but must be before 1828 when structural alterations to the room are known to have taken place that are not shown. Again, the massive

paintings by Luca Giordano are easily recognizable and extant, although now elsewhere, and most of the furniture can be identified.

One item of furniture is common to both paintings: the slightly incongruous brown desk with slender legs and several visible drawers that is on the right-hand side of the room, in one instance with folios piled upon it.

During the reorganization of a crowded furniture store, a rather plain desk, similar to that in both paintings, was found at the very back of the room, covered with a dust sheet and ignored for some time.

Anthony Beech, the skilled furniture conservator based at Burghley, was asked to extract and investigate the desk. Once in an open space, it was found to be an artist's



The Blue Drawing Room, 1817

The Red Drawing Room, c. 1815 — the desk table highlighted in white



table with a baize-covered top. This top leaf can be raised and tilted to form a drawing surface; a ratchet system allows the angle to be altered. A neatly concealed slide unfolds to provide a small shelf on the upper edge of the raised top, whilst candle-slides are fitted to both sides.

Three of the four drawers were opened, revealing nothing but dust. The fourth was found to be locked. Having removed a



The desk table

lock-plate, Anthony was able to make a key that opened the last drawer.

The opening of the drawer was one of those memorable moments that will remain with both of us. It was full to the brim with paper-wrapped objects, set within a neatly constructed, fitted interior. Careful unwrapping revealed a complete artist's compendium — brushes, reed pens, brush-pots, a ceramic palette, chalks with their steel *porte-couleurs*, watercolours and labelled blocks of solid colours, two sticks of Japanese lampblack ink (*sumi*), with a small grinding tray and other implements. Most of the items seemed to still be in their original wrappings, although several show evidence of slight use. One reed pen bears a stain of ink; the watercolours have been wetted; several brushes have been lightly used.

The blocks of colour, brushes and the ceramic palette are marked 'NEWMAN, Gerrard Street, SOHO'. James Newman (c. 1757–1835) was one of the principal suppliers of artist's materials of the period.



The drawer and part of the contents



He moved his premises to Soho Square in 1801.¹ One bundle of pencils, wrapped and marked as *'Black Chalk Pencils'*, is stamped 'JOHN MIDDLETON' between two coronets. Middleton had premises in Vine Street and was appointed black lead pencil maker to George III in March 1785.² A watermark on one of the pieces of laid paper used as wrapping is dated 1802.

Henry, 10th Earl and 1st Marquess of Exeter (1754–1804), inherited Burghley in 1793. Whilst not acknowledged as a keen artist, he is known to have pretended to be a landscape painter during the period of his self-imposed, anonymous exile in rural Shropshire following the collapse of his first marriage. It is possible that the table could have been an impulsive purchase by



Paint blocks and *sumi* and watercolours

him that was used once or twice, then set aside and used only as a folio table.

A second possible owner might have been his daughter by his second marriage,

Lady Sophia (1792–1823). She was a talented amateur artist, whose drawings of Burghley, created between 1815 and 1822, were made into engravings and provide an

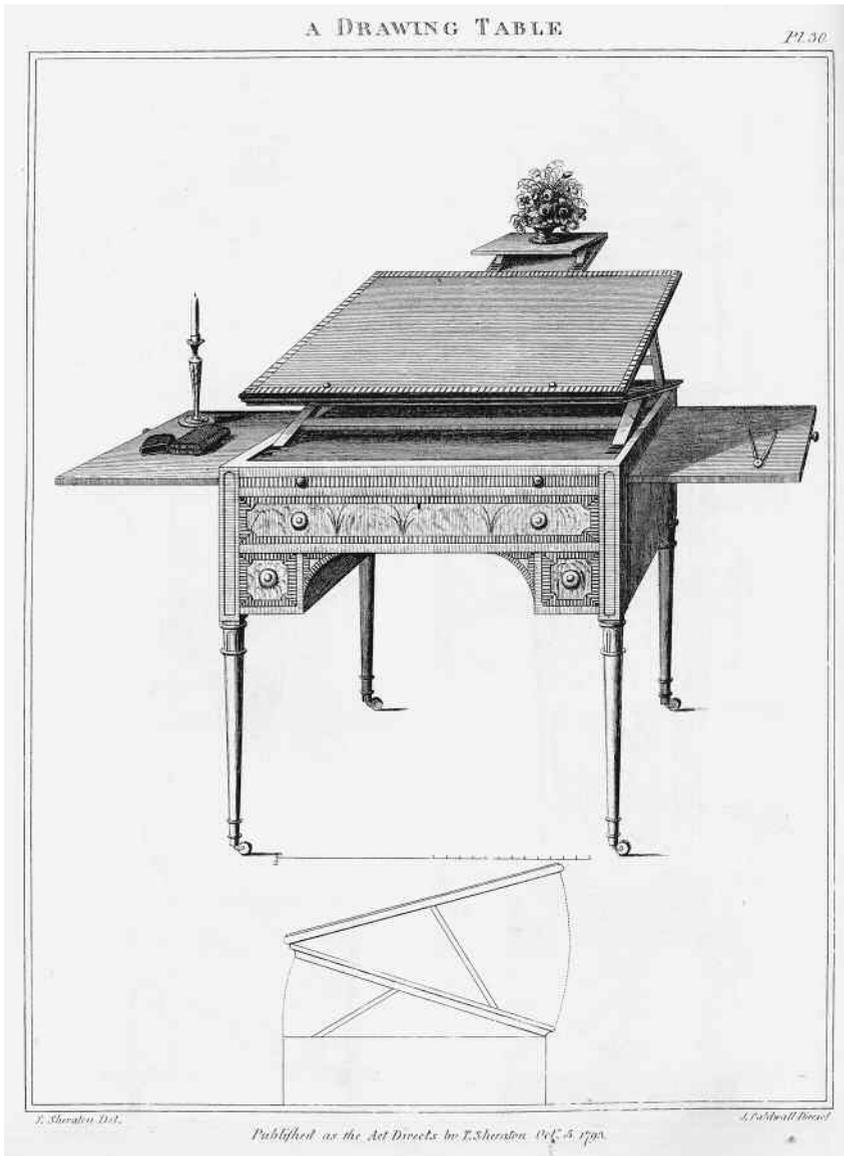
important record of the layout and furnishing of the house. However, the lack of use of the artist's materials would seem to suggest father rather than daughter as a buyer.

The design for the table can be found as Plate XXX in Thomas Sheraton's *The Cabinet-maker and Upholsters Drawing Book*, published in 1793.

The actual maker is not known, but the 1st Marquess favoured James Newton as his principal furniture supplier, and so he must be a strong candidate.

JON CULVERHOUSE
Curator, Burghley House

- 1 Jacob Simon, 'British Artists' Suppliers, 1650–1950', National Portrait Gallery, London.
- 2 Ibid.



Thomas
Sheraton's
design, 1793

Annual General Meeting & Works in Progress – Change of Venue

NOW TO BE HELD AT THE EAST
INDIA CLUB, 16 ST JAMES'S
SQUARE, LONDON SW1Y 4LH

SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2017

11.00 AM–1.00 PM

Owing to proposed severe travel disruption on Great Western Railways, which could affect members' ability to travel to Bath, it has been decided to move the Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2017 to London. The meeting will now be held at the East India Club and will start at 11.00 am (coffee from 10.30 am).

Three talks will follow the business of the day, including one by Dr Laurie Lindey, who will speak about current progress on the *Dictionary of British and Irish Furniture Makers*, a partnership project between the Society and the Institute of Historical Research. The programme will include contributions from one or more of our Early Career Group, and a review of the plans to celebrate the tercentenary of Chippendale's birth throughout Britain.

Admission to the AGM is free, but all members wishing to attend should notify the Events Secretary at least seven days in advance. Further information about the day will be sent via email nearer the time

to all those who have registered their attendance.

Tickets for a sandwich lunch with a glass of wine at the price of £15 per head should be booked with the Events Secretary at least seven days in advance.

BIFMO

The Furniture History Society and the Institute of Historical Research are delighted to announce that BIFMO is now freely available to view online at <https://bifmo.data.history.ac.uk>

The initial phase of the project saw the construction of the BIFMO database comprising the *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers, 1660–1840* and London Joiners' Company apprenticeship and freedom records, 1640–1720. Our aim is to extend the chronological dates of the resource to run from 1600 to the present day and to broaden the contents of the database to include art, material and cultural history, as well as social, economic and political history. We are now planning the second phase of the project which includes technological enhancements of the database, the updating and revision of the biographies of furniture makers published in the *Dictionary*, the addition of Joiners' Company records up to 1900, and new research. We are preparing the first research project which examines the role of British and Irish women in the furniture

trade in the nineteenth century: where they lived, their occupational roles, how they sold their wares, and their clientele.

The BIFMO project has wide-ranging potential to encourage interest in the history of furniture manufacture, retail and patronage and to act as a vehicle to engage with new members as well as those with an established interest in the subject. It provides an opportunity to ensure that study of furniture history continues to mature as new information is documented and disseminated in ways that are not possible through publication. It also provides opportunities for post-graduates and scholars in the early stages of their careers to research the history of furniture manufacture, trade and patronage. However, the extent to which we can successfully realise our ambitions is dependent on the amount of funding made available.

DR LAURIE LINDEY
Research Officer (BIFMO)
Institute of Historical Research
University of London

Sarah Medlam and Anne-Marie Bannister

Since 2012 the Furniture History Society has benefited from the imagination, wisdom, experience and efficiency of two remarkable members, Sarah Medlam and Anne-Marie Bannister, who have served as Chairman and Secretary of the Events Committee respectively.

But simply to say they have served on a Committee would belie the extraordinary energy and dedication they have both

devoted to planning events for the Society through those years – including the Symposia, Annual Lectures, residential tours to all parts of the UK and numerous short visits to places of interest. Through them, the Society has extended knowledge and interest, sometimes in subjects and places hitherto unknown to members, and has reviewed and refreshed core subjects such as historic upholstery and carving. Their meticulous work has included planning study tours, lectures and symposia with the help of their excellent Committee, finding hotels and lunch-stops, dealing with dietary requirements and wine lists, establishing train times, hiring coaches, seeking appropriate bear-leaders and lecturers, and perhaps most importantly encouraging private house owners to admit the Society to see collections otherwise little known or understood. The Society owes them both an enormous debt of gratitude and although they may be stepping back from their onerous duties, we are delighted to know that they will continue to join in the Society's activities, without the burdens they have carried so splendidly. Thank you, Sarah and Anne-Marie, and all our good wishes for the future.

LISA WHITE
*Honorary Editorial Secretary, on behalf of
the President, Chairman and Council*

Treve Rosoman

It is with sadness that we announce the death of Treve Rosoman, a long-standing and active member of the Society, who died on 4 October 2017. An obituary will appear in the February *Newsletter*.

Members' Corner

Masonic Furniture from the Lodge of Unanimity No. 89

Details and illustrations of some of the Masters' chairs in the London livery companies are discussed in *Ceremonial and Commemorative Chairs of Great Britain* by Clare Graham, but details of provincial Masonic furniture remain a neglected field. The market for second-hand Masonic regalia has always existed between Lodges. However, since the 1980s, sets of chairs sold in the saleroom rarely list the Lodge name or supply any further information. Recently, the Malvern salerooms sold three chairs — Master's, Senior and Junior Warden's chairs — that came with rare provenance documentation intact.

The Lodge of Unanimity No. 89 was granted its constitution in February 1754 at St Anne's Coffee House, Manchester, and later moved to the King's Head, Salford, and finally, in 1807, to Dukinfield, located five miles east of Manchester.

Descriptions in *Harrops' Manchester Mercury*, dated October 1759, of celebrations to mark the victory at Quebec at which the Lodge was active, may have generated enthusiasm for members to order a Master's chair and stool. In fact, the costs to make the Master's chair were listed alongside the expenses of the victory illuminations.

The account is as follows:

To James Trelford for a Mahogany for the Master	£3 13s 6d
To Samuel Leathwick for carving the same	£3 3s 0d



The Masonic chairs from the Lodge of Unanimity No. 89

To stuffing the seat 'c r' as by Trelfords bill	£0 6s 0d
To Three steps for the same	£0 3s 0d
Set of castors for the chair	£0 3s 6d
Scarlet Damask Covering for covering the seat of the chair	£1 2s 0d
Trelford for Cupboard for Chair and putting Castors on	£0 16s 0d
Bro Wood for painting and gilding the Chair	£0 15s 0d
To more nails for the chair and some silk binding round it	£0 1s 4d

The history of the Lodge presumes a further two chairs for the Senior and Junior Wardens were made later by the same three men. Unfortunately, the Minute books from 1760 to 1802 are missing, but the three chairs are undoubtedly by the same craftsmen. The Master's chair is on cabriole legs and the two lesser chairs have straight legs and are of lower seat height, thus not requiring footstools. The three chairs are in West Indian mahogany, with the same fine attention to the carved details and painted decoration. The wood dowel covers are now missing, but their absence interestingly reveals original prominent dome-headed screws attaching the arms to the back uprights and to the seat rails.

The chairs were so well thought of locally that, in August 1848, Brother Thomas Shaw of Moira Lodge asked for a 'loan' of the three chairs on the occasion of the Provincial meeting at Stalybridge. It was agreed by a majority that the three chairs and any other regalia be lent to Moira Lodge.

It is a mystery why the names of James Telford, Samuel Leathwick and Brother Wood are apparently unrecorded in trade

directories. Perhaps the trio worked exclusively for the Masonic Lodges, and this was deemed sufficient recognition.

The three chairs sold in 2015 for £20,064.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Phillip Serrell, auctioneer; James Cale, The Lodge of Unanimity No. 89.

ANDREW JENKINS

Identification of a Motif on a Cornice at Burghley

Jon Culverhouse, curator at Burghley (and the author of the lead article in this *Newsletter*) would like to know if any FHS member might be able to assist in the identification of the motif shown on the central roundel of the cornice — see image below. Please email Jon directly at jon@burghley.co.uk. If you would like to share your thoughts in this publication, please copy the Newsletter Editor.



Central roundel of the cornice at Burghley

Future Society Events

Bookings

For places on visits requested before 25 November 2017, 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 for each event, using the enclosed booking form. Where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched 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. After end of November 2017 please check the website for new contact details for events.**

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.

Please note the Events email address: 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.

Occasional Visits

The Foundling Museum, 40 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1NZ

TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2017
3.30 PM–4.45 PM (WITH OPTIONAL
EXTRA TIME BEFORE THE VISIT
COMMENCES)

This visit was advertised in the August 2017 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: £20 LIMIT: 20

Bevis Marks Synagogue, Between Houndsditch and Leadenhall Streets, London EC3A 5DQ

THURSDAY 11 JANUARY 2018
11 AM–12.30 PM

Built in 1701, Bevis Marks Synagogue is the oldest synagogue in the United Kingdom and it has remained constantly in use. Its origin lies with Spanish and Portuguese Jews who came to London in the seventeenth century, escaping persecution by the Catholic Church and taking advantage of a greater religious tolerance in this country under Oliver Cromwell.

By 1657, a house in Creechurch Lane in the City of London had been converted into a synagogue and the site of Bevis Marks was acquired in 1699. Constructed by Joseph Avis, a Quaker builder who is said to have refused any profit from the work, and with an oak beam presented by Queen Anne, the synagogue was completed in 1701. Remarkably, the synagogue has seen almost no significant alteration in the last three centuries.

Original furnishings include a magnificent classical Ark and other architectural woodwork, a series of brass chandeliers and early oak benches, as well as later eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century seat furniture, tables and stands. Members will enjoy a private visit.

COST: £20 LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER 2017

Blythe House, 23 Blythe Road, London W14 0QX

THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2018
2.00 PM FOR 2.15 PM START–4.15 PM

Our annual visit to Blythe House, hosted by members of the Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department at the V&A, will concentrate this year on 'ingenious' furniture — pieces that transform from one use into another, are fitted with

complex mechanisms or designed for a very particular use or in a revolutionary or unexpected material.

COST: £30 LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 26 JANUARY 2018

SAVE THE DATES

The 42nd Annual Symposium, Leeds City Art Gallery

SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2018

The Annual Symposium in 2018 will be devoted to Thomas Chippendale Senior and his legacy, as part of the celebrations of the tercentenary of his birth, and will coincide with the exhibition *Thomas Chippendale, a Celebration of Craftsmanship and Design, 1718–2018* at Leeds City Museum. The Symposium will be held in the lecture theatre of Leeds City Art Gallery, which is a five-minute walk from the main railway station, with the museum close by. After the Symposium, the exhibition will be opened specially for us for an early evening visit. The exhibition curators, Adam Bowett and James Lomax, are working with Sarah Medlam and Lisa White on the programme for the Symposium. Further details will appear in the February *Newsletter*, but please also keep an eye on the website, where the programme and booking details will be published.

Spring Study Trip: Dumfries House, Ayrshire, and Paxton House, Berwickshire

FRIDAY 8 JUNE–SATURDAY 9 JUNE 2018

Continuing the Chippendale theme, we are arranging back-to-back study days at two Scottish houses that reflect contrasting aspects of the work of Thomas Chippendale. Dumfries House contains the only collection of Chippendale furniture that reflects the full rococo style depicted in the engraved plates of the *Director* (the furniture supplied between 1759 and 1766), while Paxton was furnished in the neo-classical taste between 1774 and 1791.

Full details will be available in the February *Newsletter*.

FHS Grants

Grants are available for FHS UK and 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 Jill Bace, email: grants@furniturehistorysociety.org for further information and grant application forms.

Other Notices

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

Study Day: Eighteenth-Century Furniture at Blair Castle, Hosted by Professor David Jones

FRIDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2017
10 AM–4.30 PM

Blair Castle, Perthshire, was transformed in the first half of the eighteenth century,

employing the most fashionable craftsman to create a Palladian mansion furnished with pieces by leading English and Scottish cabinet-makers. James Murray, 2nd Duke of Atholl (1690–1764), spent over ten years working on the interior, making new State Rooms, installing marble chimneypieces by Thomas Carter, lavish rococo plasterwork by Thomas Clayton, and a new staircase designed by Abraham Swan, who was responsible for much of the exceptional chinoiserie garden architecture.

Between 1748 and 1761, a surprisingly varied roll-call of cabinet-makers supplied work to the house. The list includes Chippendale the Elder, Chipchase &



Blair Castle

Lambert, John Gordon (of Gordon & Tait), William Masters, John Hodson, John Schaw and George Sandeman. All this is fully documented and supported by a series of bills kept in the castle archive. Highlights of the collection are undoubtedly the Chippendale items, which are the earliest (pre-Dumfries House) pieces in the *Director* style, and the furniture made from estate materials, such as the astonishing broomwood desk and bookcase (1758) by George Sandeman, and the later pair of larch and Glen Tilt marble cabinets made by George Bullock for John, 4th Duke of Atholl, in 1817/18.

The study day will be housed in the Private Library of the castle, where it will be possible to scrutinize pieces and their associated documentation in some detail. Other furniture will be studied *in situ*. There will be opportunity (weather permitting) to see over the extensive rococo gardens – the most northerly in Britain.

COST: £75 (INCLUDES A SOUP AND SANDWICH LUNCH, TEA & COFFEE)

Accommodation if required is available, <http://atholl-estates.co.uk/stay-on-the-estate/>

Email archive@blair-castle.co.uk to book, places are limited.

Forthcoming Publication: *Wallpapers at Temple Newsam, 1635 to the Present* by Anthony Wells-Cole and Barbara Walker

Decorative wallpapers have for five centuries up to the present day had the power to transform the appearance of a room, a whole house. This illustrated book is the culmination of nearly forty years' work to explore their impact on Temple Newsam, one of the great country houses of England.

The book opens with an introduction to the phases of decoration of the house from c. 1520 to the present day. This is followed by a room-by-room tour describing all the significant wallpapers discovered in each during the twenty-five-year restoration from 1983 onwards. The result is a visual record of the most spectacular papers and a comprehensive history of the decoration of the house.

To be published December 2017. To pre-order, visit:

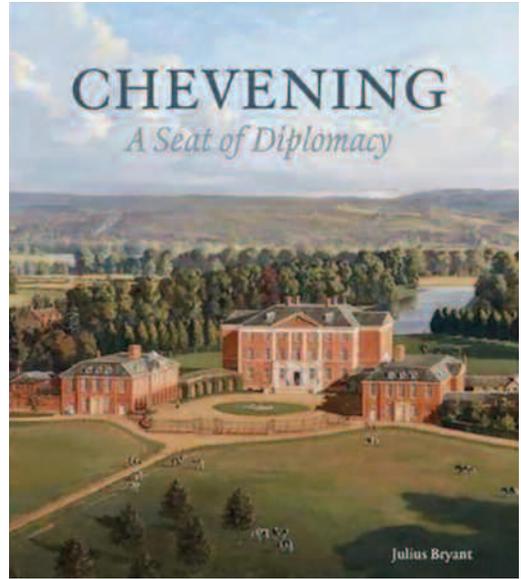
www.jeremymillspublishing.co.uk/bookshop

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).

JULIUS BRYANT, *Chevening, A Seat of Diplomacy* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2017). 144 pp., 118 col. illus., 1 family tree, 1 map. ISBN 978-1-9311300-11-3. £30.

In 1967, the 7th and last Earl Stanhope (also 13th and last Earl of Chesterfield) died, leaving Chevening, in Kent, to a Trust charged with its preservation and management as a retreat for a prime ministerial nominee, honouring a wish first expressed in 1943. Nicely, 2017 marks fifty years of this Trust's existence and three hundred of Stanhope ownership. *Chevening* by Julius Bryant, a Trustee nominated by the Victoria and Albert Museum (the first was our late member, Desmond FitzGerald, Knight of Glin), constitutes a short history and guide to the house, its collections and occupants, and to the garden and church. It is a handsome, well-illustrated product with a good family tree and garden map (but not, regrettably, a house plan), and a full bibliography, including Aubrey Newman's indispensable *The Stanhopes of Chevening* (1969), commissioned by the last Earl. Readers of *Furniture History* know Lucy Wood's 2005 article on the gawky and extraordinary 'mahoganized' oak



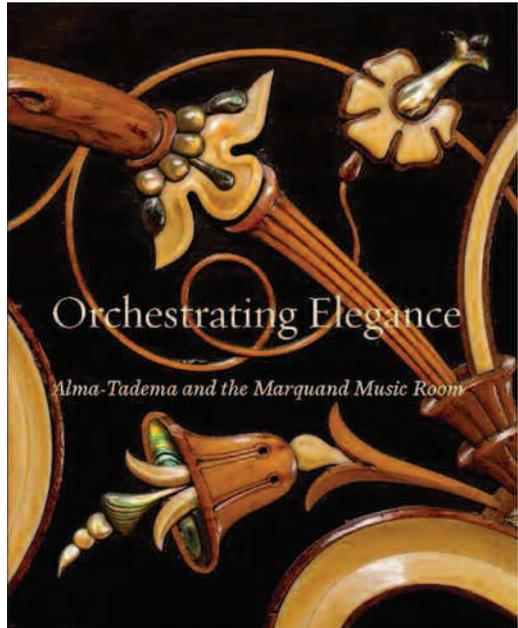
Chevening

'Lanthorn stand' supplied by William Hallett in 1748, alienated by the Trust but bought back in 2004. However, the most notable furnishing campaign at Chevening was that conducted by William Bradshaw in 1736–37: in the house are his hall chairs, his gilt tables and stands for a lacquer cabinet and chest, a notable set of armchairs covered in tapestry, and his extensions to the Berlin tapestries presented to the 1st Earl in 1720. And above the chimneypiece in the Tapestry Room (the 'Noble Room' for which John Webb supplied unexecuted designs comparable to Wilton), Bradshaw's carved and gilt frame for Balthasar Denner's portrait of the 1st Earl introduces a fine series including a rococo frame to a Lely

from Strawberry Hill and that to Batoni's enchanting 1761 portrait of Louisa Grenville (commissioned not by the 3rd Earl Temple, but for the 2nd Earl by his brother Henry Grenville, Louisa's father), whose symmetry and palms point towards neo-classicism and, possibly, Linnell. Later ingredients include work on the Library by Howard & Sons in 1863–69 and the Thurston's Billiard Room of about 1875, but particular interest attaches to post-1967 interventions, for instance John Fowler's stripping and bleaching of the previously mahoganized geometrical staircase by Nicholas Dubois of 1723, Edward Bulmer's scarlet silk in the Drawing Room, and Senior and Carmichael's 2006 conference table in the Tapestry Room. Internally and externally (refaced in red brick with extended Portland dressings, including a new pediment), Chevening now constitutes a paradigm of late twentieth-century Georgian good taste. Bryant's *Chevening*, with Marcus May's idyllic bird's-eye of 2006 on its dust-jacket, catches this moment. And, without being targeted at furniture historians, it contains much, much more to inform and tantalize them (several references to the 1723, 'Thirty four large Garden Seats, 60 Windsor chairs painted Green', and 1753 inventories whet the appetite for full transcriptions).

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

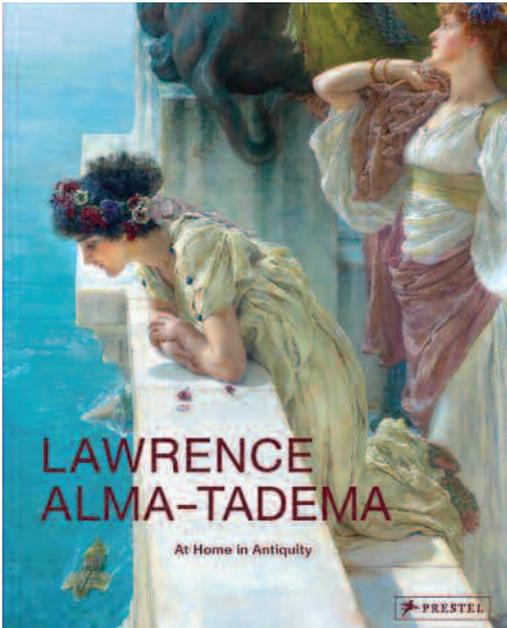
KATHLEEN M. MORRIS and ALEXIS GOODIN (eds), *Orchestrating Elegance, Alma-Tadema and the Marquand Music Room* (Williamstown: Clark Art Institute, 2017). ix + 220 pp., 189 col. and b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-0-300-22667-6. £30



Orchestrating Elegance, Alma-Tadema and the Marquand Music Room

ELIZABETH PRETTEJOHN and PETER TRIPP (eds), *Lawrence Alma-Tadema, At Home in Antiquity* (Munich: Prestel, 2016). 239 pp., 260 col. and b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-3-7913-5552-8. £35

In about 1881, Henry Gurdon Marquand, prodigiously rich, commissioned his friend, the architect Richard Morris Hunt, to design a mansion on the corner of 68th Street and Madison Avenue, New York. In early 1884, its structure nearing completion, Marquand asked the painter Lawrence Alma-Tadema to create the interior of the music room, the principal entertaining space. This was the only such commission ever accepted by Alma-Tadema, and included wall decorations, embroidered curtains and *portières*, ceiling paintings ordered from Sir Frederic Leighton, delivered in 1886 and, later, a fender designed by Edward Onslow Ford.



Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *At Home in Antiquity*

Two paintings by Alma-Tadema, *Amo Te, Ama Me* (1881) and *A Reading from Homer* (1885) hung in the room, which also displayed Greek vases collected by Marquand, but the cynosure was its extensive suite of furniture by Johnstone, Norman & Co., a large music cabinet, corner cabinets, five settees, curved and straight, side chairs, armchairs (one acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1980), footstools and round tables and, above all, the Steinway grand piano and its two stools, finally delivered in November 1887. Sadly, this magnificent ensemble was short-lived, being dispersed after Marquand's death in 1902. Bizarrely, parts of Leighton's ceiling ended up in the South East Gas Board Dramatic Club Rooms in Croydon, but the piano and a substantial group of furniture were acquired by the theatre producer Martin

Beck and his wife, and gravitated to the foyer of their New York theatre, until sold in 1980. The piano and its stools, on loan to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston for a decade, were sold again in 1997 and purchased for over a million dollars by Michael Conforti, the recently appointed director of the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown.

Orchestrating Elegance presents a full account of the Marquand commission and its subsequent history, prefaced by an account of Alma-Tadema's two London houses, Townshend House (1871–86) and 17 Grove End Road ('Casa Tadema', 1886–1912), the principal theatres for his gifts as decorator and designer. The Marquand piano, dedicated to Apollo and the Muses, their names inlaid in Greek on its lid, is an extraordinary display of skill in both design and execution, using an excited palette of materials including cedar, boxwood, ebony, satinwood, mother-of-pearl, abalone and coral, with much low-relief inlay of Fourdinois-like virtuosity, not to mention a keyboard painting by Edward Poynter. It had a precursor, Alma-Tadema's own spectacular Byzantine piano, completed in 1878 but, alas, destroyed in the Blitz; it and its accompanying seat are generously illustrated, as is the half-Pompeian/half-Egyptian studio couch, acquired by the V&A in 1971, plausibly re-dated to 1875.

The Marquand music room is present, although not as a major ingredient, in the second book reviewed here, whose subtitle, *At Home in Antiquity*, reflects a stress on Alma-Tadema's recreation and celebration of domestic life both in his

paintings and in his two houses, the latter complex and eclectic syntheses, in which Japanese, Dutch and even Gothic elements are conspicuous alongside prevailing echoes of Pompeii and Byzantium.

Charlotte Gere contributes an accomplished essay on the houses, which were frequently described and illustrated by contemporaries, as well as serving as subjects or backgrounds for paintings by Alma-Tadema and his family. Because he was above all a painter of antiquity and because Ruskin made some severe criticisms of his works, there may be a tendency to overlook Alma-Tadema's modernity, but the composition of his paintings, the design and contents of his successive houses and his own contacts (he belonged to the Art Workers' Guild, showed at the Arts & Crafts Annual Exhibition and was a founder member of William Morris's Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) all bespeak an engagement with advanced thought and attitudes. 'Casa Tadema' prefigures villas by Otto Wagner, and an essay in *At Home*

in Antiquity pinpoints his influence on Gustav Klimt, while in another a print after Marquand's *A Reading from Homer* (1885) is spotted in Frank Lloyd Wright's house in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1905.

The almost simultaneous publication of these two handsome and authoritative books, both instigated by exhibitions, the one held in Williamstown and the other in Leeuwarden, Vienna and, most appropriately, Leighton House in Kensington, and both properly referenced and indexed, should surely inspire an informed reappraisal and appreciation of Alma-Tadema's creations as decorator and designer — and also of the interiors by his sister-in-law, Ellen Epps, and his daughter, Anna. The 1901 watercolour (Manchester Art Gallery) of his set for *Coriolanus*, illustrated in *At Home in Antiquity*, may serve to encapsulate both his virtuosic skill and his capacity to project an idealized vision of the interior, at once antique and late Victorian.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

Reports on the Society's Events

Members will have noticed that the new *Newsletter* includes many more photographs than before. The Editor would be grateful if members could send **high-quality digital photographs, 1MB minimum**, taken during Society visits and events that can be used to illustrate the reports. Where indicated, a longer version of a report is available from the Events Secretary, email: events@furniturehistorysociety.org

Gothic style, the South Wing and the Dining Room) and in particular his purchase of the portraits of *Jacob and his Twelve Sons* by Francisco de Zurbaran (1598–1664). These normally hang in the Dining Room (though currently on loan to Texas during works). Bishop Trevor bought them in 1756, prompted by his interest in the history and welfare of the Jewish people. Recently under threat of sale and dispersal, they were saved for the nation by the intervention of Mr Ruffer and the creation of the Trust.

It was in the time of Bishop Barrington (1791–1826) that James Wyatt created the present processional route in Gothic style: the Gentlemen’s Hall, the Great Stair, the Ante Room and Throne Room. These rooms are currently under restoration and replica furniture will be made to supplement the few pieces (hall chairs, Bishop’s throne) that survive from the Wyatt furnishings.

Auckland Castle

Auckland Castle was for centuries a residence of the Prince-Bishop of Durham. In 1836, the bishopric lost its special status and in recent years the bishop has lived elsewhere. The castle is now owned by the Auckland Castle Trust, which is in the process of restoring it as part of the larger regeneration of the area, supported by the generosity and inspirational leadership of Mr Jonathan Ruffer. It will re-open in 2018. Dr Christopher Ferguson, curatorial director, gave us a masterly overview of plans for the castle.

We began in the chapel, still used by the diocese. It was the medieval Great Hall until converted and consecrated by Bishop Cosin in 1665. The stalls and screen, carved with swags of fruit and foliage, are Caroline, showing the bold carving tradition that arose in the north-east under Cosin’s active programme of church embellishment.

Nolleken’s statue of Bishop Trevor (1752–71) in the ante-chapel reminded us of the sitter’s contribution to the Castle (the Gate House and Deer Shelter, both in

Bowes Museum

We were welcomed by Dr Jane Whittaker, Head of Collections, curator Joanna Hashagen and the honorary archivist Judith Phillips. Over coffee, Jane described the refurbishment the museum had undergone over the past ten years. It now has links to Durham, Leeds and Queen's

We divided our time into several specialist sessions, beginning with the furniture collected for the museum by the Bowes and their successors. A marquetry cabinet with its abundant vase of flowers, butterflies, birds and a King Charles spaniel attacking a hen is almost certainly attributable to André-Charles Boulle, on a stand possibly by Mayhew and Ince. Not part of the original Bowes collection, the cabinet was first recorded at Warwick Castle in 1811. John Hardy entertained the group with the story of how he had once owned this magnificent piece. Another relatively recent acquisition was a chair in an extraordinary Graeco-Chinese style by Georges Jacob, complete with its paper label explaining that this had been made for 'la Marquise de Marbeuf pour la chambre à coucher', the design by Jean-Demosthène Dugourc. Also admired was a botanical cabinet veneered in burr elm, once owned by Mary Eleanor Bowes, with heads of Pope, Milton and Dryden on the front. Compartments within the legs were lead-lined to preserve botanical specimens. The group was privileged to see a porcelain-mounted *bonheur du jour*, attributed to Martin Carlin, without the protective glass cover provided for it in the nineteenth century at Welbeck. This gave a rare opportunity to examine close-up the interior veneers, the details of gilt-bronzes and of the painting and gilding of the porcelain. The desk is thought to be the earliest of the series of eleven known examples.



Bowes Museum

After a break, we examined the furniture bought by John and Joséphine for their château at Louveciennes and their Paris houses, much of it supplied by Monbro fils aîné, one of the most fashionable interior decorators and furniture suppliers in nineteenth-century Paris. These purchases reflect the typical salon-type furniture in reproduction Louis XV and XVI styles so popular in the second half of the nineteenth century. Much of the seat furniture was upholstered in textiles reused from an earlier period, the rounded shape of the chair seats indicating the new and comfortable springing. The grandest pieces here were two cabinets on stand, modelled on a well-known Boulle design, with large maiolica plaques in the centre (one painted with a copy of a fresco in the Villa Farnesina) and inner architectural cabinets of drawers, lavishly embellished with lapis lazuli, hardstones and ivory. When Louveciennes was sold in the 1860s,

the Bowes began to concentrate on filling their planned museum. They bought extensively at the 1867 exhibition as well as in 1871 in London.

After lunch, curator Dr Howard Coultts took the group around the new British Decorative Arts Gallery, which replaced a former series of five period rooms. Elements had been retained, including white and gilded panels from Chesterfield House in London, possibly designed by Isaac Ware in 1748, and an eighteenth-century fireplace from the eighteenth-century banqueting room in the Mansion House, Newcastle. The English furniture included two striking Regency bookcases, possibly attributable to Marsh and Tatham, with their Graeco/Roman-Egyptian mounts in patinated bronze, so typical of the early nineteenth century. One had come from Thomas Hope's Surrey home, the Deepdene.

We then examined some of the museum's rich textile collection, both in

the study room and on the upholstered furniture. Joséphine Bowes had an especially keen eye for textiles, assembling over 700 examples of chair covers, many in needlepoint, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Sarah Medlam showed the group a late seventeenth-century fully upholstered chair with *petit point* tapestry panels and the borders in *gros point*, a set of chairs possibly by Jacob and decorated with tapestry panels from *Aesop's Fables* and, in complete contrast, an extraordinary British *art nouveau* chair, with its original blue and white check upholstery.

We were then given the opportunity to view the new archive space and library at the top of the building, with its spectacular views over the surrounding countryside. Many of the original bills from Monbro and other suppliers had been laid out by Judith Phillips.

Our day ended with a short tour of the newly opened ceramic galleries led by Howard Coutts. Highlights included an exceptionally ambitious Sèvres table, with painted roundels of scenes from *Paradise Lost*, by Jean-Claude Develly, dating from about 1829.

Visit to the Merchant's House

MONDAY 12 JUNE 2017

The Merchant's House, on Marlborough High Street, acquired by Marlborough Town Council in 1991 and now run by the Merchant's House Trust, was part of the rebuilding of the town after the fire of April 1653. The house was built for Thomas Bayly, silk mercer, who evidently ran his business on the premises. The three-gabled, tile-hung building is timber-framed, but has a rear wing entirely of brick. The grandest first-floor room, the Panelled Chamber of 1653–56, was originally divided into two rooms and has oak panelling, an overmantel with colonnettes and two bay windows, one inset with a stained glass depiction of a sundial with a fly and the motto 'DUM SPECTAS FUGIO — Sic Vita'. The Chamber also exhibits furniture on loan from the Pelham Olive collection, and English seventeenth-century delftware, on loan from the same collector. Members were guided by the curator, Michael Gray, up the oak Great Staircase, which has its outer walls painted with fictive stone balusters to match the actual stair balusters that were originally painted a similar colour, and through two garret rooms, to reach the Kitchen Chamber and the Dining Room. The latter rooms both have striped paint schemes, applied in vertical bands about 14 inches wide, the Kitchen Chamber scheme being in a claret colour, divided up by narrow, paler bands, the Dining Room scheme having multi-coloured bands over a dark green background. These schemes

survive on the south wall of the Kitchen Chamber and round the fireplace of the Dining Room, but modern copies have been painted in on the other walls. The original intention was perhaps to imitate the effect of a striped wall textile, such as the dornix fabric found on an internal wall at Chastleton House; a similar textile is also shown in a painting of 1653 of a room in Amsterdam Town Hall by Pieter de Hooch. The colourful effect of this wall decoration in the Dining Room of the Merchant's House would have been matched, according to the 1691 inventory, by the presence of '12 Turkeyworke Chairs'. A team of volunteers have produced modern versions of such chairs, using an antique chair acquired at auction as model.

The immense interest of the Merchant's House lies in its prosperous, Puritan character, representing a period in English decoration not normally regarded as glamorous, but shown here have been surprisingly colourful. The decoration is also indifferent to any nascent classicism, the paint schemes described above not being centralized within each room. The thanks of Members go to Michael Gray, James Ayres and Terry Sparkes for sharing the house and its contents with us.

PETER HUGHES

de Bercy lived in the mid-thirteenth century. The Lygon descendants have been in residence ever since and the house has never been sold. This is a double-moated house and major building took place during Elizabethan times; the stone entrance dates to 1593. In the early eighteenth century, a fortune was inherited from William Jennens, a nephew of William III, which resulted in extensions to the house. Lygon became a Baron in 1806 and an Earl in 1815, and at this time his spouse, Catherine Deene, later first Countess Beauchamp, purchased much furniture and many artefacts in Paris, after the Napoleonic Wars.

Croome Court

The tour continued in the afternoon at Croome Court (National Trust), notable for the collaboration of the great names of eighteenth-century architecture and design: Robert Adam, 'Capability' Brown and James Wyatt. FHS members began their visit with lunch, followed by a walk through the grounds at Croome to the house itself. George William, 6th Earl of Coventry (1721–1809), known as the

Croome Court

'Collector Earl', is responsible for the shaping of Croome as we know it today.

He commissioned Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (c. 1715–83) to design the park and house. The existing Jacobean house was razed, the parkland transformed and a Palladian-style house was built along with multiple follies. Inside Brown's Rotunda, FHS members evaluated a font probably designed by Robert Adam (1728–92).

In 1760, the 6th Earl hired Adam to design the interiors in the fashionable neo-classical style. The scope of the work included every detail (furniture, plasterwork, floors) and focused on three rooms: the Gallery, the Tapestry Room (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and the Library. A magnificent set of bookcases was the feature of the Library. The set is now on display in the Wolfson Gallery in the British Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Museum no. W.76-1975). Designed in 1763 by Adam, the bookcases were executed by William Vile (c. 1700–67) and John Cobb (c. 1715–78), cabinet-makers to George III (r. 1760–1820).

Vile & Cobb were in good company designing pieces for Croome. London cabinet-makers John Mayhew (1736–1811) and William Ince (1737–1804) designed a pair of marquetry commodes for the 6th Earl.

Font probably by Robert Adam



A pair of commodes by Mayhew & Ince



A card table with cluster column supports

The curatorial team at Croome granted FHS members special access to the furniture stores on-site and the remainder of the afternoon was spent inspecting as many as two dozen pieces in detail. Among these were: a pair of window-seats, sets of dining chairs and library chairs, and a card table with each leg formed as a cluster column of bamboo.

There is a contemporary vibe to the curatorial work at Croome, with projects such as *The Golden Box*. Created by ceramicist and conservator Bouke de Vries, the box displays the 6th Earl's purchases of Vincennes and Sèvres. A wealth of information relating to the 'Collector Earl's' purchases can be found in the Croome Archive, which was accepted in lieu of tax in 2005, and is currently held in the Worcester Record Office.

Further Reading on Croome Court

M. Dennison, 'All That Glistens', *World of Interiors* (June 2017), pp. 187–92.

W. Rieder, 'The Croome Court Tapestry Room, Worcestershire, 1771', *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1996), pp. 156–67.

C. Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome* (Phillimore, 2000).

The Croome Archive, Worcestershire Record Office.

KATE FLITCROFT

Visit to the Exhibition 'Plywood: A Material Story'

THURSDAY 13 JULY 2017

Entering the *Plywood* exhibition immediately reveals the myriad uses of the material, with a plane, canoe and dinghy suspended from the ceiling and a vast array of objects, from tea chests to modernist chairs, all vying for attention.

With Christopher Wilk's infectious enthusiasm for his subject, we learned first of all about the history of plywood, and its construction from a stack of veneers or plies, always odd in number, and glued together with the grain of each layer running perpendicular to the next, which gives stability and far greater strength than solid wood. The survival of a Third Dynasty coffin made from panels of six-ply wood reveals that the Ancient Egyptians knew this. The technique only re-emerged in Europe in the mid-eighteenth century, and was used for the delicate trellis backs of Gothic or Chinese

taste chairs, or the pierced galleries of tea tables. Sheraton, in 1791, recommends the material, clearly described, for his 'Universal Table', to 'prevent warping'.

Christopher explained how the key to its increasing use was the mechanization of veneer cutting and subsequent fall in price, from Marc Brunel's use of steam-powered cutters from 1807 to the development of rotary veneer cutters in the mid-nineteenth century. The dramatic fall in price of plywood inspired all manner of technological inventions and unlikely schemes, such as an elevated pneumatic passenger railway. A film vividly shows veneers peeling from the length of a log in one continuous sheet, like a length of cloth. It seems Russia was at the heart of this technological breakthrough — the earliest known design for a rotary lathe was patented by an Englishman living in Saint Petersburg.

It was explained how the issue of numerous patents in the second half of the nineteenth century provide crucial evidence, both illustrative and descriptive, of the developing use of plywood. Singled out were those of the German émigré cabinet-maker John Henry Belter in New York, who developed in the 1840s and 1850s the technique of moulding plywood, which he called 'pressed work'. A patent model for a rosewood chair of 1858 showed how this technique was used for sofa and chair backs. Any number of plywood layers could be used, with a 'choice wood' such as rosewood used for the outside layers. The contemporary prejudice against veneers (very *nouveau riche*) meant that trade magazines hid its use under such terms as 'built up work'.

Nearby was an example of a Gardner & Company chair of the 1870s, with its plywood seat and back made from a single sheet and perforated 'for ventilation and ornamentation'. This design was hugely successful for both domestic and commercial use, and the firm's stand at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876 inspired Franz Thonet and also Christian W. Luther from Estonia in the Russian Empire. Luther's was the first large-scale European plywood manufacturer and his massive output, often plagiarizing the Gardner designs, included the stylish hatboxes, suitcases and boxes for botanical samples on display. Luther's plywood boards were ideal for tea chests, made in their millions from the turn of the century and easily flat-packed when empty.

Christopher described how modernist designers and architects in the 1930s loved the industrial quality of plywood, and the section on modernist chairs begins with Alvar Aalto, whom he described as the great form-giver of plywood furniture. Another fascinating and helpful film revealed the ease of moulding the material for Marcel Breuer's Short Chair made by Isokon Furniture Company in London in 1936.

Despite widespread use in building projects such as low-cost housing in the US, it was the Second World War that redeemed plywood's reputation. With vastly improved waterproof glues, plywood became a material for boats and planes — most famously for Geoffrey de Havilland's Mosquito. Charles and Ray Eames, who had built aeroplane parts and designed leg splints for the US Navy, were also working on ideas of moulding plywood furniture for mass production. We looked at the hugely influential DCM chair, designed after the war, and at numerous examples inspired by it.

This is such a fascinating exhibition and we saw much more — Singer sewing machine covers, apparently the longest-lived of all plywood designs, a DKW car with a plywood body, surfboards and skateboards, a DIY Mirror Class Dinghy and a film of 'Spruce Girls' not entirely convincingly happy in their spruce veneer swimming costumes. The exhibition ends with the challenge posed by the arrival of MDF and chipboard in the 1980s, and the question of sustainability, illegal logging and experiments with sustainable products.

We were all so grateful to Christopher for a wonderfully illuminating tour.

PHILIPPA BARTON

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 Jill Bace at grants@furniturehistorysociety.org, or for further information and grant application forms see the Grants page of the Society's website, 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

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This issue is edited by Sharon Goodman.

The views expressed in this *Newsletter* are those of the respective authors. They are accepted as honest and accurate expressions of opinion, but should not necessarily be considered to reflect that of the Society or its employees

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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 Sharon Goodman, email:

sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk, or by post to 26 Burntwood Lane, London SW17 0JZ.

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COVER PICTURE Chair by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, carved with the monogram of Marie-Antoinette, probably part of a suite delivered in 1788 for the Queen's *cabinet de toilette* at the Château de Saint-Cloud. © Victoria and Albert Museum, W.7-1956