

The Furniture History Society

Newsletter 207

August 2017



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James Henry Sellers: Signed, Sealed, Delivered

In November 1975, Julian Treuherz, then Keeper of Fine Art at Manchester City Museum & Art Gallery and the organizer of the exhibition, *Partnership in Style: Edgar Wood and J. Henry Sellers*, held between October and November 1975, described the furniture of the Manchester-based architect-designer, James Henry Sellers (1861–1954) as: ‘... never before exhibited and never seen in salerooms’, and predicted that it ‘will totally alter our awareness of Edwardian design. Less jazzy than Wood’s [Edgar], less folksy than Gimson’s [Ernest], it is urbane and discreet, with nicely judged geometric inlays and veneers of rare and exotic woods’.¹ Over forty years later, Sellers’ furniture has yet to be exhibited again, and when seen in the saleroom is rarely recognized or appreciated. Furthermore, photographs of his furniture are seldom published: ‘The Furniture of James Henry Sellers’, in *Furniture History*, vi (1970), 84–87, illustrates three examples; the Manchester 1975 exhibition catalogue just ten; and a further six can be seen in ‘Tradition and Innovation’, in *The Antique Dealer and Collectors Guide* (May 1994). All of the above were written by Stuart Evans, who had catalogued the surviving Sellers’ drawings for furniture as part of his dissertation for his Diploma in the History of Art and Design

at the City of Birmingham Polytechnic. It is understandable that, excluding these few specialist references, it is as if Sellers as a furniture designer had never existed. This short paper will seek to readdress this deficit by examining items of furniture, designed by Sellers, and made in 1919 for the Lancastrian industrialist, Percival Duxbury (1872–1945) for ‘The Orchard’, Bury, by W. Henshall & Sons of Barker Street, Oldham.

Although he produced progressive work for Oldham clients from as early as 1901, Sellers’ more interesting and advanced work commenced after 1904 when he met the well-established architect, Edgar Wood (1860–1935), a founder member of the Northern Art Workers’ Guild. Wood and Sellers shared offices in an informal partnership from 1904 to 1914, and, despite working independently, they undoubtedly influenced each other. When discussing two school buildings of 1908–10, which they jointly designed, Nicolas Pevsner (1902–83) concluded that Wood and Sellers, ‘two Lancashire architects of no great renown got as near as anyone in England to the most progressive European and American work of 1900–14’.² In February 1954, John Archer, who knew Sellers personally, wrote authoritatively of him in the *Manchester Guardian*: ‘He was a modest and unassuming man, hating fuss,



Fig. 1 English walnut cabinet with panels veneered in burr elm, bronze handles and shoes, designed by James Henry Sellers in 1919. Courtesy of Woolley & Wallis, Salisbury

affectation or pretentiousness. He excelled as a furniture designer. He brought to architecture the qualities of his sterling character — simplicity, strength, directness and integrity. He belongs to the Lancashire tradition', a tradition in furniture-making, which was perfectly represented by the work of Gillows.³

Sellers' Arts and Crafts credentials, and his reputation as a furniture designer, were sufficiently established by 1909 for him to be invited to lecture at the Manchester Society of Architects and the Northern Art Workers' Guild on 'Modern Furniture'. What was required, Sellers advised, was 'style, but not a style', and certainly 'not a reproduction of old work', but 'a living art'.⁴

The only items of Sellers' furniture that exist in any English museum are those in Manchester City Museum & Art Gallery, the majority of which were donated by the Bolton millionaire industrialist Frank Hindley Smith (1863–1939). He was a friend of Roger Fry (1866–1934), who advised Smith on the arrangement of his extensive art collection, which was later donated to the Ashmolean, Fitzwilliam and Bolton museums. An article on the house designed by Sellers for Smith, published in *Country Life*, 11 February 1928, pp. 669–70, noted that Sellers' name 'has long been associated with pieces [of furniture] of original design and sound workmanship and the fact that those shown here were made as long ago as

1912 is proof of his pioneer activities. Broad flat surfaces displaying the figure of fine woods with inlay for relief and an absence of mouldings, distinguishes these pieces, which were made expressly for Smith. The bedroom pieces are particularly successful ...'. These early examples in the museum collection display the style Sellers discussed in his lecture; in addition, they are contemporary with the 'fine' furniture of Ernest Gimson (1864–1919), and provide a legitimate comparison.

Many Arts and Crafts architects such as Gimson, C. F. A Voysey (1857–1941) and Sellers did not make the furniture that they designed, instead they employed suitable woodworking firms or craftsmen to execute their designs. Sellers' choice of craftsmen was based on his experience:

Personally, I have found that in making fine furniture the joiner is a better craftsman than the cabinetmaker. He is more thorough in his methods of construction. The cabinetmaker, clever though he undoubtedly is, relies too much upon artful dodges, and he is a past master of the art of camouflage.⁵

It is not unusual for joiners to produce plain, utilitarian or rustic furniture, but Sellers is exceptional in judging their

construction and their craftsmanship to be superior to that of cabinet-makers in the manufacture of 'fine' furniture.

The recent discovery of invoices itemizing fine furniture for an extensive commission by W. Henshall & Sons of Barker Street, Oldham, a firm of 'Joiners, Builders, Timber and Slate Merchants', shows that Sellers practised what he preached.

Duxbury's decision to 'refurnish' must have been made almost immediately after the end of the First World War (11 November 1918) because, as the first invoice shows, by 16 January 1919, interior work at his house, 'The Orchard', Bury, had already begun. The designer of this interior was Sellers, who, if his other furniture commissions from wealthy industrialists are a reliable guide, would have been known to the client, having acted as architect in connection with Duxbury's business. The remnants of Sellers' archive are held in the Special Collections of Manchester Metropolitan University. These include drawings of much but not all of the furniture from this commission from 1919, as well as many later items, made between



Fig. 2 Bill heading for Henshall's 29 November 1919 invoice. Courtesy of Gordon Lewis

Aug. 5	" 2 polished & inlaid English walnut china cabinets each in two heights to details 6' 8" high x 4' 0" wide x 1' 7" deep	
7	" 1 polished & inlaid English walnut china cabinet in two heights, lower portion having 2 cupboards & 5 drawers to details 6' 9" high- x 5' 2½" wide x 1' 7½" deep	590 0 0
	" Carting above to Bury & Joiners fixing in position	
	NETT	£578 0 10

Fig. 3 Extract from Henshall's 1919 invoice issued to Percival Duxbury.
Courtesy of Gordon Lewis

1920 and 1922, which included an extensive and expensive (£1, 791 16s) fourteen-piece bedroom suite still with the family, and important items from the drawing room now in private collections. The final invoice dates from February 1930. Additionally, illustrations of the completed interiors were published in *Modern English Furniture* (Country Life, 1930), p. 131.

The first drawing by Sellers for Duxbury's 'china cupboards' or 'cabinets' is dated 21 January 1918 (but should correctly read '1919'); the final drawing was completed ten days later on 31 January 1919.

The first invoice, dated 29 November 1919, and issued by W. Henshall & Sons lists:

- 2 polished & inlaid English walnut china cabinets each in two heights to details 6' 3" high x 4' 0" wide x 1' 7" deep
- 1 polished & inlaid English walnut china cabinet in two heights, lower portion having 2 cupboards & 5 drawers to details 6' 9" high x 5' 2½" wide x 1' 7½" deep

The cost for the three cabinets came to £590, and included delivery and fitting in

position of the finished cabinets on 5 and 7 August 1919.

The cabinets are constructed in English walnut, and the doors and side panels are veneered in quartered burr elm. The interiors of the upper-glazed sections are veneered in quartered mahogany, cross-banded in ebony and mahogany, while the interiors of the lower cupboards are in mahogany. The cock beading on the drawers and the interior glazing bars is in ebony, and the lower shelf of the upper section is a single length of half-inch thick 'unpolished' Macassar ebony. The allusion to 'polished' on the invoices but not the drawings indicates the French polishing, which Sellers invariably required to seal the timber as a precaution against warping. The feet are protected by bronze 'shoes', a refinement both utilitarian and decorative, which is present on many of Sellers' designs.

The drawings include details and instructions reminiscent of those by Voysey. The rear (unseen) of the quartered mahogany panels in the interior of the top



Fig. 4 Two of Duxbury's cabinets or cupboards in their original setting with Voysey carpet and Alfred Stevens fire grate.
© Country Life

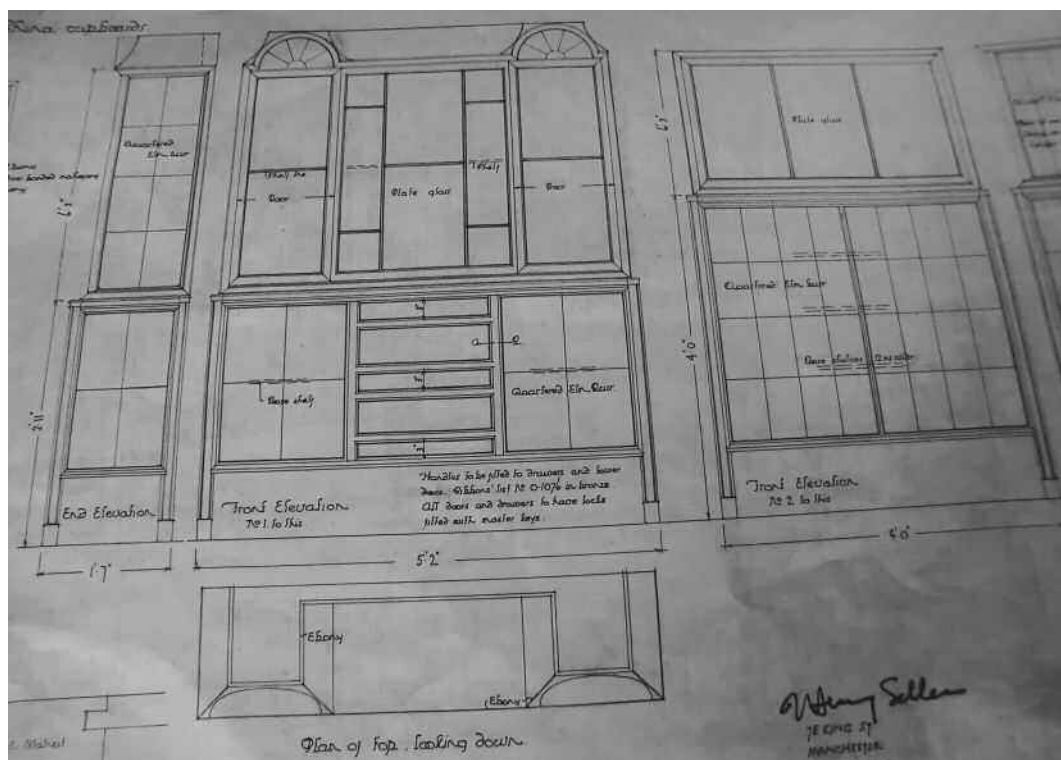
section are annotated 'veneered on back to prevent warping', and the (visible) 'quartered mahogany to be selected by JHS'. The glazing in 'polished plate glass' is, unusually, required to be 'embedded in black cotton velvet'. On very close inspection, this refinement is still present. The plate glass is to be held in place by 'ebony fixed with bronze cups and screws'. The 'Handles to be fitted to drawers and lower doors Gibbons list No 0.107 in bronze' are from the Wolverhampton manufacturer, Gibbons & Co. (Willenhall) Ltd, John Street, whose quality fittings Sellers often used.

One feature of the finished work not described on the drawings is that the linings of the drawers (but not their sides or backs) are made in plywood; Sellers had specified the use of '3-ply' for veneered wardrobe panels as early as 1904. The use of 'ply' is not, as might be assumed, an economy measure but a legitimate use of up-to-date technology, which reduced the possibility of shrinkage or warping where

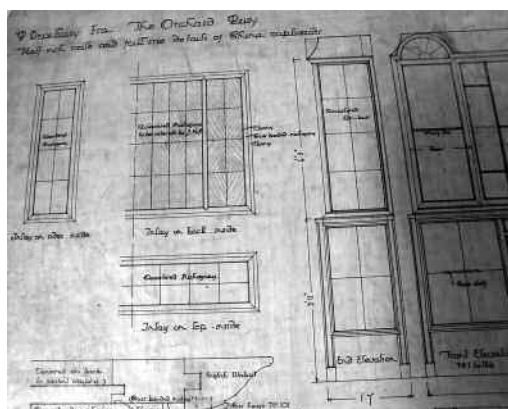
the use of a thoroughly seasoned timber, even mahogany, could not be relied upon to be completely stable. A more widespread use of 'ply' for drawer linings eventually became established in Arts and Crafts furniture during the 1930s. Sellers' pioneering use of this material in furniture of the highest quality no doubt contributed to his enduring reputation for influential and original design, construction and technique.⁶

Pins rather than adjustable screws are used to fix the drawer linings. The 'ply', which appears to be of mahogany throughout, remains free from woodworm or shrinkage. Reference to '3-ply' is made only once on the drawings, for the lower doors, which are veneered in burr elm. Logically, only one annotation was required for the joiner to understand the designer's intention that all areas in burr elm were to be veneered on '3-ply' panels.

A further example of Sellers' willingness to incorporate modern innovations and advances in technology is his use of SOSS



Figs 5 and 6 Detailed drawings for one large and two smaller 'china cupboards', dated 31 January 1919. Courtesy of the Henry Sellers archive at Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections



invisible hinges. These were patented in 1916 in America, so the specification 'SOSS hinge No 101 bronze polished' on the drawings for this 1919 cabinet is an early example.⁷

A separate item on the initial invoice was the charge of £77 10s for the matching 'polished and inlaid English walnut and burr elm mantelpiece with alcove

cupboard', which had been delivered and fitted on 3 March and 7 March 1919. This alcove is perhaps better described as a 'niche' and is visible in the *Modern English Furniture* image (*op. cit.*, p. 131). The fireplace and its mantelpiece are often regarded as the focal point of any scheme of decoration, while the semicircular dome of the 'niche' finds reference as the



Fig. 7 A SOSS patent hinge fitted on the Duxbury cabinets. Invisible when closed, they prevented catching when dusting

unifying motif in those of the larger cabinet. A 'writing desk' also with 'niches', and ensuite with the cabinets, was invoiced at £194, and delivered on 12 January 1920. The total Henshall bill for the work of 1919, which included £678 0s 10d from the first invoice, amounted to £872 0s 10d. Sellers' invoices for his design services for Duxbury have not been traced, and it is assumed that he worked on a percentage basis.

Summing up the importance of Sellers' work, the perspicacious patron of Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), E. B. Hudson (1854–1936), editor of *Country Life*, in a letter to Sellers in August 1928 wrote:

To my mind your work has had more to do with the present movement in modern furniture [...] than anyone living and I think the French movement is very much indebted to you — you can trace their designing from what you have done.⁸

It is a sad fact that Sellers' furniture has become almost unknown in England, and thus hardly surprising that his influence on French furniture has yet to be investigated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stuart Evans; Gordon Lewis; Jeremy Parrett, Manchester Metropolitan University; Hanah Williamson, Manchester City Museum & Art Gallery.

CHRIS MORLEY

- 1 *The Connoisseur* (November 1975).
- 2 Nicolas Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, South Lancashire* (1969), p. 49, introduction.
- 3 John A. G. Archer, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 February 1954.
- 4 'Modern Furniture', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, Tuesday 2 March 1909.
- 5 Stuart Evans, 'The Furniture of J. Henry Sellers', *Furniture History*, vi (1970), pp. 86–87.
- 6 J. and R. Hooper, *Modern Furniture and Fittings* (1948), p. 31, where full plans are given for a cabinet designed in 1920. His work was still regarded as 'exceptional' in 1948, and such individual pieces 'take a leading place in the field of twentieth-century design and craftsmanship'.
- 7 Hinge Publication no. US1208037 A; publication date 12 December 1916; inventors C. J. Soss; original assignee Henry Soss; Samuel Soss; Charles J. Soss.
- 8 Evans, 'The Furniture of J. Henry Sellers', p. 87, n. 2.

Thanks to Matthew Winterbottom



The Society would like to record its gratitude to Matthew Winterbottom, who has edited two editions of the Newsletter every year since 2008. He is handing over responsibility to Sharon Goodman, who will now edit all four editions. The Council would like to thank him, on behalf of members, for the considerable work that he has undertaken, alongside demanding curatorial roles, most recently at the Ashmolean Museum, where he was responsible for the excellent new gallery of nineteenth-century art, opened in 2016. In 2015, with Elizabeth Jamieson, he launched the new format of the Newsletter that has proved so popular.

British and Irish Furniture Makers Online

The Furniture History Society in partnership with the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, is

publishing the British and Irish Furniture Makers Online (BIFMO) database at the end of September, thanks to generous funding from the Furniture History Society and its membership. It is a fully searchable and freely accessible online database, comprising the *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers, 1660–1840*, and London Joiners' Company apprenticeship bindings and freedom admissions, 1640–1720. BIFMO is a long-term project in its earliest stages, and we are now set to begin the research and developmental phase with the goal of creating the most comprehensive digital resource for the history of the British and Irish furniture trade.

Currently, the database only includes information on English furniture-makers, but Scottish, Welsh and Irish makers will be incorporated as the project progresses, and the date parameters will be expanded to run from 1600 to the present day. Over the past century, the study of furniture history has matured into a wide-ranging historical field of study, which encompasses art, material and cultural history, as well as social, economic and political history. The database aims to serve as a valuable resource to a broad range of scholars, academics, students, connoisseurs and the commercial market.

The *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers* (1986) was compiled, written and edited over seven years by the late

historians, Geoffrey Beard and Christopher Gilbert, supported by three assistant editors, Brian Austen, Arthur Bond and Angela Evans. In their acknowledgements to the *Dictionary*, the editors explained that it was 'by far the most ambitious co-operative effort ever undertaken by furniture historians and will stand for many years as a tribute to the enthusiasm and industry of a large number of people'. This team effort included over four hundred volunteer researchers and twenty-five regional organizers across twenty regions of England. There had been only one prior attempt to systematically document English furniture-makers: in 1953, Sir Ambrose Heal published *The London Furniture Makers: From the Restoration to the Victorian Era, 1660–1840*, and included over 2,500 London tradesmen.

The furniture-makers selected for the 1986 publication of the *Dictionary* do not represent the entire furniture industry but rather the ones the editors considered 'the main furniture trades'. These include cabinet- and chair-makers, upholsters, upholsterers, turners, and some craftsmen and artisans participating in the finishing and/or decorative sectors: carvers, gilders, japanners and inlayers. Given the limitations of disseminating information in print — and considering that there are 50,000 furniture-makers recorded in the *Dictionary* — Beard and Gilbert took the decision to exclude auxiliary tradesmen who supplied the industry, such as timber merchants, sawyers, brass founders and ironmongers, to name but a few. Nevertheless, the editors wisely preserved all of the data on 70,000 record cards, and

the tradesmen and women who were omitted from the printed source will be integrated into the database as the project proceeds.

The ground-breaking *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers* was an extraordinary achievement. This project aims to produce an equally important digital resource to extend our understanding of furniture-makers into the twenty-first century. The editors of the *Dictionary* noted that 'virtually nothing is known about the majority of makers, although in due course some may emerge as rounded characters'. This is the one of the fundamental aims of the BIFMO project.

You can find further information about the database by clicking the BIFMO link on the Furniture History website. The project was reviewed in the July 2017 edition of *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 159, no. 1372, 'Furniture history: the digital future': www.burlington.org.uk/archive/editorial/furniture-history-the-digital-future. Take a look!

LAURIE LINDEY

Furniture and the Domestic Interior, 1500–1915

FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 2017

The Furniture History Society's fourth Research Seminar will be hosted by the Frick Collection in New York on Friday, 27 October 2017.

A study afternoon of six talks by emerging scholars from the United States and Europe will cover a wide range of

topics from the sixteenth-century to nineteenth-century collections of furniture. The eighteenth century will be well represented by three papers on clocks, Russian rococo furniture and chairs depicted in the portraits of a master working at the Orléans court. In addition to presenting their work, speakers will have the opportunity to study furniture in the museum's permanent collection and discuss ongoing research in a seminar setting. An evening reception hosted by the Frick will bring an end to an afternoon of illuminating talks in the study of furniture history.

For further information, see www.frick.org/programs/symposia

Legacies

The Hon. Treasurer hopes that the splendid legacy of £10,000 from Alison Kelly will remind members to remember the Society when they are making their wills. A bequest to the Furniture History Society is a fine way to commemorate a love of furniture or to remember the life of a loved one. Our Finance Officer, Keith Nicholls, will be pleased to advise your solicitor on a suitable form of words.

Grant Award for Young Scholars

The Furniture History Society would like to thank the Worshipful Company of Cardmakers for a grant of £1000. Over a period of three years, twelve young people under the age of 25 will be offered free memberships to the Furniture History

Society. The Society is grateful for this generous gift, which will give young scholars the opportunity to learn more about furniture history through the special events, publications, study trips and symposia offered by the Society throughout the year.

Subscription Reminder

To all members who have not set up a direct debit or paid their subscription for the current year, please note that subscriptions were due on 1 July. Please send payment to Keith Nicholls as soon as possible, email: finance@furniturehistorysociety.org, or post to FHS, 37 Railway Road, Teddington TW11 8SD.

Furniture History 2017

Now in the press, and ready for distribution in October, is the 2017 Journal of the Furniture History Society.

With over 270 pages, it contains eleven articles with a wide range of subjects, including newly-discovered Turkey-work cushion covers from Brasenose College, Oxford, c. 1660, more biographical information on Gerrit Jensen, furniture that belonged to the Duchesse de Bourbon after the French Revolution, the bankruptcy inventories of Jane Austen's brother and his banking partners, the magnificent 'Congress of Vienna table' now at Mount Stewart, Northern Ireland, fresh research into the furnishing schemes of the 6th Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey — and much more.

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 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.**

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

Visit to Knole House, Knole Park, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0RP

MONDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

This visit is now fully subscribed. Please contact the Events Secretary if you would like to go on the waiting list.

Private visit to Clarence House, The Mall, London SW1 1BA

TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2017

NB: PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE

This visit is now fully subscribed. Please contact the Events Secretary if you would like to go on the waiting list.

Edinburgh

12–15 OCTOBER 2017

This is now fully subscribed. Please contact the Events Secretary if you would like to go on the waiting list.

Visit to 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)

We will study the carefully reconstructed 1739 Court Room and adjoining Picture Gallery, which house an important and elaborate rococo console donated to the museum by Sanderson, builder of the original Foundling Hospital. We will be met by Caro Howell, Director of the Museum. Our guide will be Jane King who, over twenty years, has supported the conservation and restoration of a large part of the collection. The Foundling Hospital was the UK's first public art gallery. One famous ally, William Hogarth, encouraged his friends to donate paintings in order to raise funds. Not only are there



The Foundling Museum

fine works by leading eighteenth-century artists, but also important frames, by such makers as Linnell. Also to be studied is a group of eighteenth-century clocks. Members wishing to see the main museum should arrive earlier. Afterwards there is an opportunity for us to meet in a nearby cafe for tea or drinks.

COST: £20

LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
MONDAY 16 OCTOBER 2017

Annual Lecture, Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J OBE

TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2017
6 PM FOR 6.30 PM START

Judith Goodison

'Thomas Chippendale junior — Out from the shadow'

Judith Goodison's forthcoming book rounds off the story of the Chippendale cabinet-making and interior decorating firm. She suggests that the younger man was closely involved before the death of his father, and supervised during his long career the design and making of some of the finest furniture of its time.

Admission to the lecture is free, but attendance is by ticket only, which must be acquired in advance. Please apply to the Events Secretary by email or post. Numbers are limited to 90.



Armchair, one of twelve by Thomas Chippendale junior, satinwood with ebony banding, caned seat, brass castors, modern cushion, made for the Picture Room, Stourhead, Wiltshire, 1802. © Christie's Images, 2014

Annual General Meeting and Works in Progress – Bath

To be followed by an optional tour at the Holburne Museum

SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2017
11.00 AM–1.00 PM, TOUR AT 2.15 PM APPROX.

The Annual General Meeting & Works in Progress – Bath for the year ending 30 June 2017 will be held at the Guildhall, Bath. The AGM will start at 11.00 am (coffee from 10.30 am).



Holburne Museum, Bath

Three talks will follow the business of the day including Dr Laurie Lindey speaking about current progress on the British and Irish Furniture Makers Online, a partnership project between the Society and the Institute of Historical Research.

Further details of the day will be sent to members who register and will be on the website in September. The programme will include a paper from one of our Early Career Group and a review of the British-wide plans to celebrate the tercentenary of the birth of Thomas Chippendale.

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 cold buffet 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.

The meeting will be followed by a private, furniture-orientated tour at the Holburne Museum, led by curators Tom Boggis and Catrin Jones. This tour is free, but members must register their attendance at least seven days in advance with the Events Secretary.

Future Society Events

Study Trip to Barcelona

WEDNESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER–
SUNDAY 1 OCTOBER 2017

Applications have now closed. Please contact the Events Secretary if you would like to go on the waiting list.

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 are not organized by the Furniture History Society. Information/booking instructions will be found under individual items.

Lecture: Parnham & the Matter of Making

THE DESIGN MUSEUM
TUESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2017
6.15 PM–7.45 PM

Parnham College, founded by the renowned British designer, John Makepeace OBE, in 1976, was a design school built upon certain principles. It nurtured and

pioneered a human-centred approach to craftsmanship. Arguing that British design and woodcraft education at the time was inadequate, the school set out to develop an educational model that would integrate design, making and business management as a single discipline. It ignited the careers of some of the most distinguished designers, including Lord Linley, Konstantin Grcic, Juliane Trummer, Sarah Kay, Jake Phipps and Sean Sutcliffe.

To mark its forty-year anniversary, and celebrate the launch of the 180-page book, *Beyond Parnham*, the Design Museum is bringing together leading voices in the field of craft to discuss the legacy of Parnham College and the value of making and craftsmanship in design today.

Speakers include Richard Sennett, John Makepeace OBE, Glenn Adamson and Catharine Rossi in a talk about the importance of making, design and the future of craftsmanship.

www.designmuseum.org/things-to-do/talks-and-events/parnham-the-matter-of-making

Event: London Design Festival

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM
FROM SATURDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2017

The London Design Festival is an annual event, held to celebrate and promote



John Makepeace

London as the design capital of the world and as the gateway to the international creative community. As the festival hub, the V&A will house a broad range of specially commissioned installations and displays around the museum by some of the world's most exciting designers, as well as a huge programme of events including talks, tours and workshops. www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/london-design-festival-2017

Lecture: Spencer House lecture: Furniture of the Gilded Age by Dr Ulrich Leben

SPENCER HOUSE, 27 ST JAMES'S
PLACE, LONDON SW1A 1NR
MONDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2017
6.30 PM

The pinnacle of artistic and technical ability and unequalled in its quality, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild's collection of French eighteenth-century furniture was assembled to furnish Waddesdon Manor.

Ulrich Leben will introduce pieces by the greatest chair-makers and *ébénistes* — Cressent, Riesener, Dubois, RVLC and Dubois. Waddesdon's collection contains the most important single group of works by the royal cabinet-maker Jean Henri Riesener, many originally created for the palace at Versailles. The manor's furnished interiors also display the UK's most significant collection of furniture adorned with Sèvres porcelain plaques, remarkable in both their number and originality of their mounts and combinations.

Other highlights include lesser known, but equally rare, examples of painted and lacquered or carved French furniture. Ulrich Leben is Associate Curator of Furniture at Waddesdon, Visiting Professor at Bard Graduate Centre, New York, and has recently published *Empire Style: The Hôtel de Beauharnais in Paris*, with Jörg Ebeling.

The lecture will be followed by drinks and an opportunity to look at the restored fine eighteenth-century State Rooms at Spencer House. www.waddesdon.org.uk/whats-on/spencer-house-lecture-furniture-gilded-age-dr-ulrich-leben/



The year 2018 celebrates the tercentenary of the birth of Thomas Chippendale. The Chippendale Society is developing a busy programme of events between February and September, starting with a major exhibition, *Chippendale 300: the Exhibition*, at Leeds City Museum from 9 February to 10 June 2018. The Chippendale Society describes it thus:

This exhibition celebrates the life and work of Thomas Chippendale (1718–1779), Britain's most famous furniture maker. It will be the most comprehensive exhibition of Thomas Chippendale's work ever presented and will include furniture, accessories, drawings, documents and other material from collections

Thomas Chippendale:
The Emblematic Heads
Table (detail), 1775
(private collection)



throughout the United Kingdom. Alongside well-known masterpieces from public collections there will be rarely-seen furniture from private houses and some new discoveries, never before exhibited. The exhibition explores Thomas Chippendale's life and work in five major themes: his family origins, training, career and the publication of the ground-breaking *Director*; his furniture in the Rococo, Gothic, Chinese and neo-Classical styles; the management of his commissions, including relations with clients; his workshops, including manufacturing and decorative techniques; and his legacy from the 18th century to the present day.

Chippendale 300 is honoured to have HRH the Prince of Wales as its patron, and has created a partnership with other organizations to offer a series of events at historic properties with collections of Chippendale furniture across the UK, from Paxton House and Dumfries House in

Scotland to Firle Place in East Sussex. The Furniture History Society is pleased to be a contributor to these celebrations and is planning to hold the 2018 Annual Symposium in Leeds to coincide with the exhibition. The annual lecture will celebrate his work and the 2018 Journal will also be dedicated to Chippendale's times and his legacy. The Hon. Editorial Secretary will be interested to hear from any members who may wish to contribute new material or perspectives to the Journal: the deadline for contributions will be 1 March 2018. Contact: editor.furniturehistory@gmail.com

For more information, visit the excellent website: www.chippendale300.co.uk.

More events will be posted on the website as plans develop, so keep looking.

LISA WHITE

Book Review

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).

WOLF BURCHARD, *The Sovereign Artist. Charles Le Brun and the Image of Louis XIV* (Paul Holberton Publishing, 2016). Hardback, 288 pp., 200 col. illus. ISBN 9781911300052. £40

Charles Le Brun must have been a very busy man. The sheer extent of his output, which included architectural projects, decorative painting cycles, designs for furniture, carpets, silver and tapestries — to say nothing of his easel paintings and contributions to artistic theory — is staggering. He was created Premier peintre du roi (1662), director of the Gobelins manufactory (1664), rector and later director (1683) of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, a member of the Petit Conseil supplying designs for the Louvre's new east facade (1666), a member of the Académie royale d'architecture (1678) and a consultant to the Petite Académie, which was responsible for the King's official imagery. It is perhaps for this reason that art historians have often found it more manageable to focus on one area of Le Brun's works rather than to tackle a more representative spread of his corpus. It is commendable that a scholar more widely



perceived to be a decorative arts historian has tackled this challenge full on, and in justifying the title of 'Sovereign Artist' Wolf Burchard offers a series of case studies to present the breadth of the artist's achievements in the different areas of painting, architecture, tapestry, furniture and carpet design.

The ambition of the book is to be lauded, and its publication in English a welcome addition to the scholarship on Le Brun, who has not always been fashionable and whose reputation has not always maintained its lustre over the last three hundred years. In this author, however, the artist has a valiant supporter and one who sets out to open our eyes to the artist's creativity and his enormous energy, skills and achievements. Whilst

some of the case studies are more convincing than others, all are shot through with informed details and scholarly research, and Burchard provides absorbing accounts of Le Brun's activities at the Gobelins manufactory and of the projects he masterminded for the Louvre Galerie (Savonnerie carpets) and the Escalier des Ambassadeurs at Versailles (decorative painting and perhaps even architectural design).

Many of Le Brun's purported activities are unrecorded and therefore remain difficult to confirm, but the author has mined contemporary sources to build a convincing picture of Le Brun as the mastermind at the Gobelins: 'like the sun in its solar system', according to Claude Nivelon, 'no work [of art] that was made there that was not of his design' (Roger de Piles). In an analysis of one of the tapestries from the famous *Histoire du Roi* series, *La Visite du roy aux Gobelins*, Burchard provides us with fascinating glimpses of the administration of the Gobelins, its workforce and its premises, and the output of the likes of the cabinet-maker Domenico Cucci and the lapidaries Ferdinando Megliorini and Filippo Branchi. To what extent designs for all the different media produced at the Gobelins can have been by Le Brun must be open to doubt, and we cannot be clear about the extent of collaboration with outside workshops, but it is plausibly posited that he signed off on much of the manufactory's production, ensuring that everything conveyed the underlying message of Louis XIV's *gloire*, unified in its richness and magnificence. The importance of the Gobelins to the image-

making of Louis XIV is well known, but Burchard draws an analogy with the way in which Le Brun simultaneously wanted to project his own self-image; there he is in the tapestry (*La Visite du Roy aux Gobelins*), presenting the Gobelins' production to his sovereign and yet sovereign himself, directing the activities of his own absolute realm of cabinet-makers, silversmiths, tapestry weavers and embroiderers.

Burchard's concern to reject Anthony Blunt's labelling of Le Brun as a 'dictator of the arts' is the underlying theme of the book. Instead, for Burchard, Le Brun was a 'sovereign' artist who negotiated his way with the artists and craftsmen with whom he worked, rather than coerced them in their activities. Whilst this may be a valid argument, its repetition can appear rather defensive at times and, although it may be the kind of semantic discussion that keeps PhD examiners interested, it is perhaps of less interest to the more general reader who may be attracted to this book. Such a reader may find some of the discussion on contemporary linguistic and philosophical theory of royal governance a touch long-winded. In the same vein, the continual reference to the historiography of his subject is to be commended, but might at times have been left more successfully to the endnotes. Whilst the necessity of publishing a thesis in order to make progress in a scholarly career is well understood, it is perhaps to be regretted that some more distance was not put between this book and the PhD which spawned it. But this is a small gripe and is not in any way to suggest that the book is not beautifully written and Burchard's prose a pleasure to read.

Before Louis XIV moved the seat of government to Versailles in 1682, the Louvre was the most important focus for architectural and artistic works in France. The design for the east facade, which had originally been open to competition but which finally emerged from the triumvirate of the Petit Conseil comprising Claude Perrault, Louis Le Vau and Le Brun, is generally assumed to have been predominantly the brainchild of Perrault, but Burchard's journey with the reader through Le Brun's architectural aspirations reveal some of his often-forgotten projects in this area. Two designs by him for the Louvre, however, apparently re-workings of Le Vau's earlier facade elevation, attest more to his primary talent as an artist than as an architect and suggest why he appears not to have made the grade in architectural terms for either Colbert or Louis XIV. Thank heavens for Perrault! If one of Le Brun's schemes had been chosen, it is unlikely that we would still be talking about the east facade today.

Burchard's Le Brun was all too aware of the hierarchy of the arts that put architecture above painting, and the book continually alludes to this status anxiety. A rather unhappy portrait emerges of a man riven by aspiration that he could not achieve. The author posits, quite plausibly, that Le Brun wanted to be Bernini, a man whose visit to Paris in 1665 ended rather unproductively, but whose achievements in Italy were known and lauded throughout Europe, in architecture, sculpture and design. Despite Burchard's attempts to show us more of Le Brun's undoubted talents, the Premier peintre did

not have the Italian's genius. Further conflicted in this hierarchy of the arts because of his involvement with the Gobelins alongside his activities in painting and architecture, he seems to have struggled perpetually with trying to balance his creative output and his artistic theory. His speeches for the Académie favoured the importance of 'dessein', or 'design' (linked to the mind and the liberal arts) over that of colour (which smacked of manual labour, for example paints and dyes), whilst much of his greatest work was steeped in colour — the Gobelins, the Savonnerie and the decorative painting at Versailles; as an artist, he was highly praised for his use of colour.

Fittingly, one of the glories of this book is the images. For once, the phrase 'lavishly illustrated' is correct, but even more so one should add 'intelligently illustrated', for here the pictures really do help tell the story and help bring Le Brun's achievements to life. Beautiful close-up details abound; for example, the silver *torchère* depicted in tapestry (from *La Visite du roy aux Gobelins*) is placed alongside a design in chalk by Le Brun for a similar silver *torchère*, and the Solomonic columns of the so-called 'Strasbourg' cabinet of c. 1675, veneered in a blue turtleshell emulating lapis lazuli, are juxtaposed with a detail from the tapestry that shows Domenico Cucci revealing his cabinet with similar columns to the King. The images of the Savonnerie carpets are a particular delight, their still-vibrant colours mimicking — as Burchard points out and visually compares — the vibrant richness of *pietre dure* table tops. Drawings,

paintings, prints, sculpture, architectural plans, furniture and wonderful designs — for example, one by Pierre Gole for the parquet floor of the Grand Dauphin's Cabinet of Curiosities at Versailles (1685) — are all laid out for the reader's delectation, taken from an impressive array of sources. The illustrations alone would make this an important and informative book, but as a whole it makes a significant contribution to reconsidering Louis XIV's Premier peintre and encourages us to understand more fully the close relationship between all the arts in the seventeenth century. We look forward to more work in this vein from the author.

HELEN JACOBSEN

TAMARA RAPPE, *Masterpieces of European Furniture from the 15th to the Early 20th Centuries in the Hermitage Collection* (Saint Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2016). 471 pp., 400 col., 4 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-5-93572-712-3. €90 (prices differ on different websites)

This luxuriously produced book fills a long-felt gap. We have struggled for many years not only with our lack of Russian to read earlier publications but also with the absence of a publication with good photographs of the exceptionally rich collection of the State Hermitage Museum. Now we have a volume with English texts and fine quality photographs of one hundred of the most important items from the collection, selected by Dr Tamara Rappe, Chief Curator of Decorative Arts in the Hermitage.

The introductory essay offers a general history of European furniture from the

Middle Ages but, more importantly for us, a brief history of collecting in Russia and a view of the complex history of the formation of the Hermitage collections over the last two hundred years. The individual texts on the pieces are short but the photographic coverage is generous, with up to eight or nine details of the most important pieces. Many of these allow careful appreciation of varnished, gilded or painted surfaces and are a very important aspect of the book's usefulness. Provenance is generally recorded back to the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, allowing us to appreciate the nature of some of the collections from which these pieces came, but earlier provenance, is, of course, generally more problematic.

The selection includes the most famous pieces, such as the cupboard from the workshop of André-Charles Boulle, with



wood marquetry, and the twenty-two Roentgen pieces that Catherine the Great purchased, but also pieces that are lesser known (at least to the writer of this review), such as the late seventeenth-century French sedan chair covered externally with embroidery on silk, or the Austrian secretaire of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, with its sculptural, balloon-shaped body and gilt-bronze keyhole escutcheons in the form of butterflies. Helena Hayward and Pat Kirkham were perhaps the last to write about the cabinet of about 1780, attributed to John Linnell; they would have enjoyed the detailed photographs on pp. 300–01 that allow us to see the wonderfully preserved detail of the marquetry. Christopher Gilbert never was able to

satisfy his curiosity about the long series of medal cabinets, of which one carries a bone label 'Cabinet Maker Roach' (according to the entry on p. 310, but sadly not illustrated). These were made between 1783 and 1788 for a collection of Tassie medallions bought by Catherine the Great. It is very good to have Burkhardt Göres's comment that the stands (and crestings?) of the cabinets were altered a little later, possibly by Christian Mayer. The form of the tall cabinets is otherwise difficult to reconcile with ideas of English design, unlike the smaller cabinet attributed to the same maker, illustrated on p. 313. This book is an overview of the collection rather than a full catalogue, but valuable to all of us.

SARAH MEDLAM

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

Early Career Visit to TEFAF, Maastricht

THURSDAY 17 MARCH–SATURDAY 19 MARCH 2017

This year, for the fourth time, the FHS invited four curators to the European Art Fair, Maastricht, to spend two days studying the works of art on view and discuss these with the dealers. This year, our group had many interests, but all were appreciative of the opportunity to go beyond their specialisations and examine so many different and wonderful examples of furniture in its widest sense. Among the highlights were the display of sixteenth-century *wunderkammer* objects at the Kugel stand, French furniture at the Aveline stand and a cabinet attributed to Pierre Gole at the Kunsthandel Peter Mühlbauer stand together with the many fascinating works with Carlton Hobbs. We

also took time to explore contemporary ceramics with Adrian Sassoon and to discuss the importance of working with contemporary artists. However, as you see below, each curator found specific items of furniture that connected with their curatorial responsibilities.

Kirsty Hanson, Assistant Curator, Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department, Victoria and Albert Museum wrote: 'The Furniture History Society Early Career visit to TEFAF afforded me the opportunity to be enlightened on a wide range of furniture styles and periods. As the past few months of my work in the furniture department at the Victoria and Albert museum has concentrated on the nineteenth century, the selection of objects available at the H. Blairman and Sons stand was ideal to focus on. My main reason for wanting to attend TEFAF was the opportunity to view other collections in order to be able to further contextualise the one which I currently work with. Therefore, a rosewood cabinet manufactured by the London-based firm, Collinson and Lock, dating from 1875, was particularly interesting. The firm was renowned for their experimentation in combining different materials, such as rosewood and ivory, supplied from *circa* 1874 to 1878. There are believed to be around sixty different models, including examples in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Art, MAK Vienna and the

Metropolitan Museum of Art. On my return from TEFAF, I was able to draw parallels with this cabinet, and similar examples in the museum's collection, such as an ebonised and painted wood cabinet, dating from 1871. Also manufactured by Collinson and Lock, it was made for display at the London International Exhibition of 1871. Comparing the museum's example with the example from TEFAF, I was able to recognise both how the firm's style developed, and key features in their manufacturing style. As I continue my work on the museum's collection of nineteenth-century furniture, this skill will be greatly beneficial.'

Dr Rachel Conroy, Curator, Temple Newsam, also found an example of modern furniture to study, reflecting her personal interest in modern and contemporary decorative arts, whether furniture, ceramics or silver. She said that

she wanted to write about an Alvar Aalto chair exhibited by H. Blairman and Sons Ltd partly because of its aesthetic appeal and partly 'because of the interesting conversation that it provoked within our group. The chair, designed around 1932 by Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto (1898–1976), *Hallway Chair 51*, was made for the Paimio Sanatorium in south-west Finland.



Today, the building is recognised as a defining moment in Aalto's early career. Aalto's use of colour within the Sanatorium was both deliberate and significant, with different hues being chosen depending on the medical advantage they were considered to provide. For example, it was theorised that orange could increase oxygen flow to the brain. Like all of the furniture for the project, the hall chairs were colour-coded to a specific ward or area within the Sanatorium. This example retains its original vibrant orange paint, albeit in a heavily worn condition, which is an unusual survival for chairs of this type. Two layers of later overpainting — in white and orange-red — had to be painstakingly removed in order to expose this primary surface. An area of the overpainted layers has been retained on the underside of the chair, showing its most recent orange-red colour, but also a white layer of paint that is thought to date from its period of use at the Sanatorium and is part of its use history. Within our group, a conversation naturally evolved around the positive and negative aspects of this and other possible approaches. My personal view is that the decision to expose the original scheme is fitting and sympathetic to its biography, as a utilitarian object that was used over many years in a fascinating architectural and social context.'

For Frances Parton, a curator of furniture and interiors with English Heritage, the furniture by David Roentgen was particularly interesting for its association with a piece by Jean-François Oeben in the collection at Ranger's House,

where she works. She, like the rest of the group, was 'immediately attracted by the ambition of the pieces, their sophisticated marquetry, seductive shapes, and surprising technical tricks, hallmarks of the furniture produced between 1742 and 1800 by the German cabinetmaker, Abraham Roentgen, and his son David. There were four pieces of Roentgen furniture on the stand: a desk, a coffer, an oval writing table and a small square table, all produced by David at the Roentgen workshop at Herrnhaag, Neuweid. Many of the moving parts were sprung-loaded, and the dynamism of the pieces came as a real surprise to me — I had previously encountered historic furniture as essentially static objects. The clarity of the movement was also inspiring — I am now motivated to investigate and understand the techniques behind it. The piece which demonstrated the multi-functional character of this kind of furniture most effectively was the small, rectangular table made for the children of Louis-Philippe-Joseph d'Orléans. The top of the table folds out into a larger table for games, or hinges at an angle as a writing desk. The legs can be unscrewed for ease of packing and transportation. David Roentgen transported his furniture across Europe and beyond to show prospective clients, winning international orders and widespread renown.

The Roentgen furniture relates to an object in the Wernher Collection at Ranger's House — a mechanical *table à la Bourgogne* attributed to Jean-François Oeben. Dating to around 1755 and bearing the maker's mark of Jean-François Leleu, it is made of oak veneered with purple-

wood and marquetry of tulipwood. Unexpected features include a removable leather-top drawer on folding legs, which can be used as a writing desk when in bed, and a set of counter-weight hidden shelves, which rise from the body of the piece on the insertion and rotation of a steel handle.

The diamond dealer, Julius Wernher, was given the mechanical table as a Christmas present in 1874 by his employer, the banker, Jules Porgès. This raises interesting questions about masculine art-collecting and gift-giving amongst Wernher and his contemporaries in the South African diamond and gold trade, including his close friend, Alfred Beit. It is also interesting to speculate on the foundational role this particular piece may have played in instigating Wernher's own remarkable collection. The fact that the table was sent to Wernher whilst he was living in a pretty makeshift corrugated iron structure near the Big Hole — the open-cast diamond mine at Kimberley — is a bold statement of the continued transportability, adaptability and functionality of eighteenth-century European furniture. The incongruity between the beauty, sophistication and expense of the table and the harsh, segregated, primitive environment at Kimberley underlines the disparity between those who owned and those who worked the diamond mines.'

Alexandria Smith, Assistant Curator with the National Trust, was also able to find furniture that had interesting links with the collection she curates at Tyntesfield. In her case it was 'a beautifully drawn pair of beechwood

stools modelled with carved lion heads. These stools take their inspiration from an ancient Egyptian foot stool in the collection of the Musée du Louvre. The Louvre example dates from the Saïte period (664–332 BC), named after the pharaohs' capital city of Sais and marks the beginning of the Late-Period of ancient Egypt. It would appear that the maker set out to create a scholarly re-creation, perhaps visiting the exhibit *in situ* in the Louvre to make the preliminary drawings before carving the replicas in such an accurate and sensitive fashion.

The stools represent the nineteenth-century trend of 'Egyptomania', an era of discovery and opportunity for Victorians to garner inspiration in the decorative arts and interiors. At Tyntesfield, we hold a number of prints, books and antiquities illustrating the Gibbs family's travels to Egypt, and their fascination with the ancient world. Antony Gibbs (1841–1907), the second generation of the Gibbs family, was a discerning collector and an exceptionally talented ornamental turner, who used his extensive travels and collection of artefacts and *objets d'art* to inspire the designs for his own ornamental turnings. We have been fortunate in recent months to acquire Antony's original ornamental Holtzapffel lathe dating from 1872, and discovered, tucked in one of the cabinet drawers, a number of drawings and sketches in Antony's hand depicting artefacts from the Roman exhibits at the British Museum and the Naples National Archaeological Museum. In parallel to the maker of the lion-head stools, it would appear Antony was drawing inspiration from his visits to these collections to guide

and inspire his own craft on the lathe, the results of which can still be seen at Tyntesfield today.'

Summing up, the four all said that they would like to thank the Furniture History Society for organising this wonderful and informative trip. 'We are extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to attend TEFAF under the guidance of such learned colleagues. Our trip to TEFAF has transformed our understanding of furniture and the world of antique dealers and restoration. Guided by the exceptionally knowledgeable Adriana and Yannick we were able to examine and compare pieces of furniture from different periods and regions and have in-depth discussions about provenance, design and technique. Of particular fascination was a debate centred on the ethics of restoration and intervention versus conservation. Different dealers tended to have very different methods. While some embraced a minimalist approach, respecting the layers of history of an object, akin perhaps to a traditional conservator, others saw merit in extensive restoration and repair in order to make the object more attractive to the buyer. With this latter approach it was agreed by the group that transparency and traceability of all restoration is necessary if the antiques world is to co-exist successfully with museums, galleries and conservators.'

The FHS would like to thank the Oliver Ford Trust for making this rewarding experience available to our museum and historic properties curators.

ADRIANA TURPIN

FHS Study Trip to Madrid

SATURDAY 11 JUNE TO WEDNESDAY
15 JUNE 2016

This study trip took FHS members to the Spanish capital to explore its eighteenth-century artistic heritage, especially the royal residences with their interiors and furnishings. Several trips led the group outside the city centre, to the palaces where the court resided during particular seasons of the year, in the so-called *jornadas*, at El Pardo, Aranjuez, La Granja and El Escorial.

Organized with the special support of Patrimonio Nacional, the Spanish National Heritage organisation, by FHS member, Daniela Heinze, and co-led by Dr Melanie Doderer-Winkler, the trip began with an evening reception with talks by Spanish experts Dr Mercedes Simal López on the decoration of the Buen Retiro Palace during the eighteenth century and Ángel López Castán on Mattia Gasparini and his role as a decorator and director of the royal workshops at the royal palace in Madrid.

The visit to the Palacio Real was one of the most challenging and rewarding moments of the whole trip, with privileged access granted, and the group often being allowed to go behind the ropes in order to examine the pieces up close, in the company of María Soledad García Fernández, the furniture curator at the Patrimonio Nacional, and Ángel López Castán.

Outstanding were the decorative schemes devised by Gasparini for Charles III, such as the King's extraordinary dressing room decorated from 1761 onwards, with its walls covered in the

most extravagant rococo embroideries, and a unique suite of seat-furniture executed by José Canops at the royal workshops.

We saw another suite of furniture by Gasparini and Canops, with bronzes by Antonio Vendetti, in a series of rooms not normally open to the public, showing a highly original rococo design and effortlessly blending the combination of exotic woods, incised ebony panels, brass and gilt-bronze. These masterpieces of the European rococo originally formed part of a series of cabinets, with marquetry decoration in exotic woods, adjoining Charles III's dressing room, the *Gabinetes de maderas de Indias*, begun by Canops in 1769, and finished by Theodoro Oncell from the mid-1770s onwards, which no longer survive.

Among the royal residences located outside Madrid, we visited La Granja, situated at the foot of the Sierra de Guadarrama mountains, where the court

took up residence during the summer months. In the company of Mercedes Simal López, the group began with the eighteenth-century glass factory, founded in 1727 by Philip V, the first Bourbon king on the Spanish throne, to supply mirrors for the palace of La Granja, then under construction, as well as the other royal palaces.

We were taken around by the museum's Director Paloma Pastor Rey de Viñas, beginning with a demonstration of glass-blowing techniques in the modern part of the factory, then moving on to the main building built in 1770 in the form of a church, where we received an introduction to the historical fabrication processes with the original kilns still preserved.

The adjacent building originally housed the polishing workshops, and the remains of a vast hydraulic polishing and grinding machine, designed by the Irishman, Demetrius Crow, who came to La Granja in the late eighteenth century, could still be seen. Among the mainly nineteenth-century glass objects displayed here today, we were able to closely examine the wood and iron structure of several chandeliers for which La Granja is so well known, giving us a good idea of how they were assembled in the eighteenth century.

The royal palace of La Granja offered us the opportunity to see some original decoration of the time of Philip V and his second wife Elisabeth Farnese, for whom the palace was begun prior to 1724.

The hall of mirrors still preserves large mirror plates supplied by the nearby factory, and a few of the carved and gilt Italian rococo console tables from an original group of thirty, delivered in 1739

Commode (c. 1764–1774), made for Charles III of Spain by José Canops, after a design by Mattia Gasparini, the mounts by Antonio Vendetti. Patrimonio Nacional, inv. no. 10069951. © Patrimonio Nacional

following a commission by the architect Filippo Juvarra to the sculptor Bartolomeo Steccone in Genua. Juvarra was also involved in designing the royal bedchamber, which still contains its original wall panelling incorporating leaves from screens of red and black oriental lacquer.

The royal palace of Aranjuez, the spring venue of the Bourbon court, was brought to completion by Charles III and is of brick dressed in beautiful local Colmenar de Oreja limestone. We entered the palace via its *cour d'honneur* and visited its interiors, today largely corresponding to the nineteenth-century decorations from the times of Isabella II, under the guidance of the curator in charge, Javier Jordán de Urries.

The famous Porcelain Room signed by Giuseppe Gricci, dated 1760–63 (walls) and 1765 (ceiling), was executed by craftsmen brought by Charles III from Capodimonte to begin a royal porcelain factory at Buen Retiro in Madrid. Its faceted wall and ceiling panels, larger in scale than those at Portici (Naples), are fixed with a system of rivets. The highly coloured naturalistic decoration has costumed Chinese figures with monkeys gambolling amidst garlands and flowers, and incorporate a set of fourteen wall sconces in the rococo taste and four attached corner bracket tables. The inscriptions once thought to be gibberish are now deciphered, and relate to long life and prosperity.

A visit to the Escorial took the group to the place where the court was located from the sixteenth century onwards during its autumn *jornada*. Within the monastery of

San Lorenzo de El Escorial built between 1563 and 1584 for Philip II, the visit focused on the Palacio de los Borbones, a suite of rooms completely redecorated at the impulse of Charles IV to accommodate apartments.

Under the expert guidance of the Patrimonio Nacional curators, Almudena Pérez de Tudela and Pilar Sedano, and benefiting from the presence of furniture expert Casto Castellanos Ruiz, as well as of Ángel López Castán, we had the particular privilege of studying the spectacular succession of cabinets only very rarely open to special visitors, the *Habitaciones de Maderas finas*, comprising the King's study, toilet room, ante-oratory and oratory.

These extremely lavish and sumptuously appointed jewel-like marquetry rooms were executed by the *Reales talleres de ebanisteria* under the direction of Theodoro Oncell from 1790, to be accomplished only in 1834 by Angel Maeso, in unsurpassed quality and finished to perfection. They are reminiscent of the earlier and now lost *Gabinetes de maderas de Indias* in the royal palace in Madrid, and largely preserve their purpose-made furniture, together with the matching marquetry wall panelling and related flooring, as well as silk wall hangings. Noticeable were the extremely fine hinges to the doors, executed in steel with contrasting blued-steel elements.

The imposing and well-proportioned knee-hole bureau of rectangular form in the study has delicately chiselled ormolu mounts by Domingo de Urquiza and contrasting marquetry following the decorative scheme of the cabinet, giving it

a perfect unity. Its top opens with an ingenuous drum shutter, revealing a leather writing surface, which is signed by its maker, Suarez.

Ms Pérez de Tudela then introduced us to some of the important interiors of the sixteenth century, with exceptional access to the upper choir, used by the forty-two monks of the Order of Saint Augustine who live enclosed behind the walls of the monastery. We studied the monumental rotating lectern designed by Juan de Herrera and placed here in 1589. Executed by the Italian cabinet-maker José Flecha (Giuseppe Fracchia), the carpenter Juan Serrano and the ironworker Hernando Tujarón, it is of truncated pyramid shape and stands on a plinth of red jasper with inlaid stripes in white marble. The choir stalls with chairs of simple form and a strict classical vocabulary, possibly designed by Flecha following the guidelines of Juan de Herrera, were executed by Flecha and Serrano, as well as the Flemish sculptor Anton Beuger, between 1581 and 1585.

Flecha and Serrano also provided the architectural bookcases of exotic woods in the main room of the monastery's library. Decorated with panelling and crowned by cornices with metopes and triglyphs, they are made with contrasting woods and topped by orbs, while Doric-style columns flank a folding top to allow use as a desk.

As a further special feature of the programme, the group was able to visit the three *casitas* or 'country houses' built for Carlos Antonio de Borbón in the gardens of the royal residences — one at El Pardo and another at El Escorial while he was

Prince of Asturias, and another at Aranjuez after he had become King Charles IV.

The houses are partially in the tradition of the Italian *Casino*, and, unlike French equivalents such as the *Petit Trianon*, do not include sleeping quarters, being intended only for day visits from the palace in which the court was residing during the given season of the year.

Charles was obsessive about the decoration of his palaces and homes, and archival evidence suggests he was involved in many of the decisions. All three country houses are most reflective of his taste as they were completely new buildings, and not inherited like the larger palaces. They are characterized by small rooms or cabinets, with walls of wainscoting of remarkably elaborate wood inlay, the use of extraordinary textiles, usually elaborate woven or embroidered silk, decorated ceilings and floors of parquetry, marble or ceramic tiles. The extensive inlaid panelling and furniture made use of exotic woods from the Spanish Empire, and had become a speciality during the reign of Charles IV's father, who imported specialist German and Flemish furniture-makers to work in the royal workshops. Leading makers were José López and his grandson Pablo Palencia, along with the Urquizas and José Giardoni, who were frequently responsible for the jewel-like bronze mounts on the furniture.

At the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, the group was received and expertly guided by Sofía Rodríguez Bernis, the Director of the Museum, and a

furniture specialist. We received a talk from Félix de la Fuente Andrés, the Vice-Director, and a leading specialist in leatherwork, on the leather cases, on loan from the Prado, for items originally belonging to the Dauphin's Treasure, which we were to see in that museum.

Ms Rodríguez showed the group a very fine Augsburg silver table-top dating from about 1570, though set on a nineteenth-century frame, on the theme of Venus and Adonis. A series of richly carved and gilded *tabourets pliants*, dating from about 1707, reflected Bourbon tastes and would have originally served to add grandeur to the throne rather than provide seating. There was an important cabinet with metal inlay and tortoiseshell made by Hendrik Van Soest in about 1710 and decorated with trophies and triumphs in honour of Philip V. The cabinet was unlocked to reveal a miniature stage with artfully arranged mirrors creating an optical illusion.

Lovers of Giles Grendey were not disappointed by the two red lacquer bureau bookcases, acquired in 2010 from the suite of japanned furniture from the Duke of Infantado at Lazcano, near San Sebastián. One of them contained a red lacquer gaming counter, presumably contemporary with the furniture. In the background were strips of Chinese export wallpaper, probably of the 1820s, complete with characteristic upside-down birds. A commode was recognized as a fine example of case furniture from the royal workshop, which, in addition to the high quality of the gilded bronze mounts and inlay of exotic woods, impressed us with its large lock, broad runners and

mahogany lining in the drawers. We also saw a fine marquetry bureau by the *ébéniste* of German origin active in Spain, Medardo Arnold, dating from about 1800.

Another special visit took us to the Headquarters of the Spanish Navy (1926), an extraordinary cathedral of neo-Gothic and Art Deco architecture constructed during the reign of Alfonso XIII and the period of authoritarian rule under General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–31), with Carrara and Siena marbles, and a soaring staircase and vast rooms. Guided by Emilio Aleman de la Escosura, Director of the Naval Museum Foundation, we were extremely honoured to be able to visit the Ante-chamber and Office of the Chief of the Naval Staff (Jefe de Estado Mayor de la Armada).

Interior designed by Jean-Démosthène Dugourc c. 1802–06 for Manuel Godoy, now at the Cuartel General Armada, Madrid.
Photo © Museo Naval, Madrid

Here, we had the rare occasion to see the richly panelled room formerly used by Manuel Godoy, Charles IV's First Secretary of State and a favourite of the King and his wife Maria Luisa of Parma, as his office. The room was commissioned by Godoy between 1802 and 1806 to Jean-Demosthène Dugourc, and originally installed in the residence of the first secretaries of the state near the Royal Palace. Its lavish mahogany panelling, richly adorned with gilt-metal decoration and statues, elaborate over-doors and stucco sculptures, was later reinstalled here when a part of that palace was demolished.

After some consideration it was deemed that the seat furniture and other furnishings, although in the style of the room, were most likely not original and were probably acquired at the time the room was installed at this location.

In the adjoining Naval Museum — one of the most important museums of its kind in the world with artefacts dating back to the fifteenth century and including vast models of various ships — we saw a *pietra dura* table top that came from the same palace and had been used by the Duke of Berg (Joachim Murat) while he was in Spain.

At the Museo Nacional del Prado, most visitors arrive expecting to see an outstanding collection of paintings by Titian and Velázquez, to name but two of the great artists represented here. Many of them do not pause to consider the work of the masters who made the remarkable tables with *pietra dura* tops from the Spanish royal collections, which also reside here, and which the group came to study in the company of Mercedes Simal López and

Letizia Arbeteta Mira, a specialist on the Dauphin's Treasure, which is also housed in the museum, and part of which we saw at the end of our visit.

The *pietra dura* table tops included a colourful example designed by Jacopo Ligozzi and made in 1624 in Florence for Innocenzo Massimo (O-431), who presented it to Philip IV, featuring a parrot, butterflies and flowers. An example made in Rome in the late sixteenth century (O-449) revealed splendid workmanship, with trophies of arms in the main field and the borders. It was placed in 1839 on a base with lions originally commissioned by Velázquez during his second visit to Italy in 1651 for the Alcázar, the former royal palace in Madrid. The other two lions now support a table made before 1587 and sent as a diplomatic gift to Philip II by Cardinal Alessandrino, nephew of Pope Sixtus V (O-452).

Three console tables were made at the Real Laboratorio de Piedras Duras del Buen Retiro in Madrid with architectural scenes and illusionistic *trompe-l'œil* elements. They are based on cartoons by Flipart, which are also in the museum. One of these, dated 1775–78, has a pendant in the Ajuda Palace, Lisbon.

This summary is based on the reports provided by the following FHS members: Susan Bracken, Charles Garnett, Will Iselin, Rory O'Donnell and Charles Plante, David Oakey, Fernando Romero, François Röthlisberger, Egan Seward and James Yorke.

DANIELA HEINZE

A full report is available upon request to the Events Secretary; email: events@furniturehistorysociety.org

Study Trip to Vienna

FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER–TUESDAY 11
OCTOBER 2016

MAK (*Museum für Angewandte Kunst*)

Our guide was Christian Witt-Döring, a long-term friend of Society and recently retired Curator at MAK. Since 1986 this nineteenth-century museum has been transformed by the collaboration of contemporary artists with curators. The Baroque/Rococo Gallery, installed with Donald Judd, centred on the tiny Porcelain Room of the 1740s from the Palais Dubsky in Brno. Highlights include a library table of about 1730 from the Jesuit College in Vienna, with four chairs that fold out magically; a cabinet-on-stand from Eger (now Cheb) in the Czech Republic, dated 1723, by Nikolaus Haberstumpf; an exceptional cabinet by David Roentgen, made in 1776 for the Austrian governor of the Netherlands, Prince Karl Alexander of Lorraine; and two enormous panels of 'wooden tapestry' of 1779, from the same workshop, for the same patron. A small table of about 1790, its top set with octagons composed of triangles of veneer (giving the appearance of 'oyster') was by Franz von Hauslab, for the Countess Régine d'Aspremont.

In the Biedermeier Gallery, where Jenny Holzer was the collaborator, our main focus was on the pieces that retained (so rarely) their original upholstery, including a desk for the Archduchess Sophie, made in about 1825, where the loose, oval cushion footrest formed a vital element in the design. The adjacent gallery of Historicism and Art Nouveau, created

with Barbara Bloom, shows an ethereal 'catalogue' of chairs, abstracted by backlighting, with the chairs accessible from side aisles. The newest of the galleries celebrates design in Vienna around 1900 (stretching the story from the 1890s to the 1930s) and celebrating high design (Wiener Werkstätte, Hoffman, Moser) and mainstream production that provided for the increasingly influential middle classes.

We are extremely grateful to Christian. This is not the first time that members have been able to benefit from the wide knowledge and intellectual curiosity that make his approach to the history of furniture so stimulating.

Schloss Schönbrunn

The Imperial Palace is overwhelmingly glamorous after painstaking recent restoration. In 1642 Eleonora of Gonzaga, wife of Ferdinand II, had a *château de plaisance* built on this site. Following the damage caused by the Turkish siege of 1683, Emperor Leopold I commissioned the architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach to rebuild and expand the palace on the scale of Versailles. In 1736, Empress Maria Teresa employed Nikolaus Pacassi to remodel the palace in the Austrian rococo style. It was used as a summer residence by the emperors, briefly occupied by Napoleon on two occasions, and redecorated substantially in the nineteenth century, particularly under the Emperor Franz Joseph I and his popular wife, the Empress Elisabeth ('Sisi'). After the First World War it fell into the hands of civil servants and was only restored after 1945.

Our excellent guide was Marielore, Countess Calice, who led us firmly and expertly through the crowds that are its constant population and render the building as difficult to understand as Versailles. We mounted the Blue Stairs (ceiling by Sebastiano Ricci, 1701–02) to the suite of gilded state rooms, largely redecorated under Franz Joseph, with extravagant neo-rococo furnishings, although some rooms, such as the Audience Chamber, retain walnut panelling with gilding from its 1765 creation, together with furniture (including the throne) by Ernest Gissl, court cabinet-maker in the nineteenth century. The imperial couple were lavish in their commissions, including furniture for the Emperor's sitting- and writing-rooms, from the Austrian Exhibition in Vienna in 1845, furniture for the Empress's room by Gissl and by Johann Müller (gilded by Johann Zenter and finished by the court upholsterer Friedrich Stoger. In the Yellow Salon was a lady's secretaire by Adam Weisweiler, made about 1780 for Marie Antoinette and returned to Austria after her execution. Two cabinets from the mid-eighteenth century are lined with panels of Chinese lacquer, with fine marquetry floors, one of which originally concealed a rising table that could serve a private dinner efficiently and discreetly. The Vieux Laque Room, confected by the architect Isidore Canevale for Maria Teresa, is hung with panels cut from a screen made in the Imperial Manufactory in Peking, between rococo carving and mirrors, the whole a commemoration of her husband, created in 1765. After so much parade, including the state bed

made in 1723 for Charles VI and Elisabeth Christine, the Summer Apartments, with cheerful landscape murals by Johann Wenzel Bergls, of 1769–77, were a light relief.

Kaiserliche Wagenburg Museum, Schloss Schönbrunn

The Imperial Coach Museum contains historic coaches, sleighs and litters used by the imperial household, as well as riding uniforms, horse tackle, saddles and liveries. The coaches include the gilded and Imperial Carriage, believed to have been built for the coronation of Joseph II in 1764 and last used for the coronation of Kaiser Franz I in 1916. One of the most famous items is the automobile in which Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.

Hofburg, the Imperial Apartments

The Hofburg was the main imperial residence until the custom of passing the summers in Schönbrunn was established in the eighteenth century and, unsurprisingly, architectural intervention was continuous until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The apartments of Franz Joseph and the Empress Elisabeth are furnished in the manner of the second half of the nineteenth century, with neo-rococo furniture and decoration, although the large ceramic stoves were kept from the eighteenth century and Franz Joseph's careful nature favoured the retention of panelling and of some of the wonderful textiles from the time of Maria Theresa. These interiors are largely a museum of the later Hapsburg dynasty, with complete

interiors surviving, such as the Private Study of Franz Joseph, and including details such as the white and gilded log chests, and the bathroom installed in 1876. In the Empress Elisabeth's Wardrobe Room, the landscape murals commissioned by Maria Theresa from Johann Wenzel Bergl survive, with their exotic fruit and flowers in bright colours. In the Red Salon (the Boucher Room) is a magnificent set of the Gobelins tapestries given by Louis XVI of France to his brother-in-law, Emperor Joseph II. These, made between 1772 and 1776, tell the story of Vertumnus and Pomona. The scenes are set against a crimson ground, which is repeated in the matching tapestry covers for the large set of seat furniture and its accompanying screen.

The former Chancellery wing houses displays of silver tableware and the kitchen equipment necessary for imperial entertaining. Despite sales in 1918, 150,000 items remain, 7,000 of them displayed here.

Kunsthistorisches Museum

Kunstkammern

We had to make more than severe choices during a brief visit to the Kunstkammern, which re-opened in 2013, showing more than 2,000 of its 8,000 objects of beauty and ingenuity, reflecting the tremendous collecting gene of the Habsburgs over centuries. The re-display is magnificent and we could do little more than sample the goldsmith's work, fine cabinet-making and jewellery. Possibly the most intriguing object was the so-called Wrangel Cabinet combining a baroque ebony and hard-stone casket by Ulrich Baumgartner on a neo-classical commode by Georg Haupt.

The so-called Wrangel Cabinet by Ulrich Baumgartner (c. 1580–1652) and Georg Haupt (1741–84), casket Augsburg, c. 1631–34, commode Stockholm, dated 1776

Stadtpalais Liechtenstein

The Stadtpalais Liechtenstein is one of the grandest Viennese baroque town houses. Count Dominik Kaunitz commissioned the palace in 1691 from the architect Domenico Martinelli, who used designs by Enrico Zucalli. In 1694, Prince Johann Adam I von Liechtenstein acquired the palace, even before the completion of the building works. The palace's current interiors were designed Peter Hubert Desvignes, who came from London to work on this, his major project, from 1820 to 1840. The recent restoration has brought back to life these

Blue Drawing Room,
Stadtpalais Liechtenstein

glamorous and theatrical rooms, with their marquetry floors supplied by the young firm of Thonet (along with fragile-looking rout chairs of very early bentwood). Huge chandeliers by J. and L. Lobmeyr have been recreated following early photographs. In the Banquet Room, the original silk of the 1820s survives on the walls, although the curtains have been re-made. In the Writing Room, the book cabinets in Chippendale style were made by Leistler to Desvignes' designs. A room devoted to recent furniture acquisitions by Prince Hans-Adam II von und zu Liechtenstein included a table by David Roentgen with complex mechanical

action, and an oval writing table by the early nineteenth-century Viennese cabinet-maker, Dannhauser. In the Dining Room, the sideboard was also a Chippendale-style collaboration between Desvignes and Leistler. The nineteenth-century taste for carving was most evident in the Large Mahogany Room, where the corner *torchères*, of immense size, suggested a collaboration of Brustolon with Belter. Luxury, indeed, for its original occupants — and for us, in enjoying such a rich visit, led so competently by the Registrar Dr Michael Schweller and Fr Dr Birgit Schmidt.

Palais Dorotheum Auction House

We were welcomed to Austria's oldest and most prestigious auction house by Martin Böhm, the Director, and Alexander Doczy, its furniture specialist. The Dorotheum was founded in 1707 as a state-run institution to ensure fair trade. The auctioneers continue to be salaried civil servants. The present premises were opened in 1900, built in baroque style by order of the Emperor, and continue to sell, with, as elsewhere, a new style of presentation for the twenty-first century.

Hofmobiliendepot

The Hofmobiliendepot is both the administrative body that manages the furniture owned by the Austrian state, and a museum. The building was commissioned in 1901 by Emperor Franz Joseph. After the First World War the displays were created to provide models for craftsmen to copy, with period rooms or alcoves, restored in 1993.

We were welcomed by Dr Ilsebill Barta, in Empress Maria Ludovica's Egyptian Cabinet, made about 1808 for the Hofburg and recreated here, and guided by Dr Eva Ottilinger, a long-time member and friend of the Society, through the chronological displays that would really merit some days of careful study. The highlights included a games table in Boulle marquetry and ivory, probably made as a wedding gift for Charles VI and Elisabeth Christine in 1708; a desk in the style of Giuseppe Maggiolini, supposedly given to Maria Teresa by her son when he was governor of Milan; a suite of parcel-gilt furniture in neo-rococo style made by Philipp Schmidt for the Hetzendorf Palace,

to match eighteenth-century wall panelling; and a nineteenth-century study in Turkish style, created for Prince Rudolf in the Vienna Hofburg. Understandably strong were the series of alcoves devoted to the Biedermeier style, used for many different imperial residences between 1812 and 1838. On the upper floor we viewed a number of rooms devoted to the influential firm of Thonet, and ended with a visit to the interiors from the apartment of Lucie Rie, transported to London in 1938 and returned to Vienna after her death in 1995. The extent and variety of the Hofmobiliendepot collections make it a gem of a museum for any furniture historian, and we were lucky to have two such experts as guides.

Hofburg: the Schatzkammer

This dazzling collection of secular and ecclesiastical treasures — including the German and Austrian imperial crowns — is beautifully displayed and encourages close examination. The original cabinets from the period of Maria Teresa line the walls in some rooms. For strict furniture students, the galleries include the state cradle made by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon for the King of Rome in 1811.

Hofburg: the President's Residence

We enjoyed an unscheduled visit to the official apartments of the President of the Republic of Austria, housed in a wing of the Hofburg, previously inhabited by Empress Maria Theresa. The collections reflect the huge geographical spread of the Habsburg Empire from the seventeenth century onwards. They have been in these rooms since 1842. The impressive

collection of *pietra dura* had members dashing madly from side to side in an attempt not to miss anything. When Francis I was deprived of Lorraine in 1737, he was given the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, where he did much to increase the production of *pietra dura* in Florence — as was evident here in the cabinets and in a huge series of pictorial plaques by Giuseppe Zocchi, of the mid-century. We had a challenging and speedy view of splendid Boulle pieces, some with crossed L's for Leopold I. Notable was the greater amount of tin/ pewter used, in comparison with Parisian Boulle. We were grateful indeed to Dr Barta for organizing this whistle-stop tour for us.

Gartenpalais Liechtenstein (Summer Palace in the Rossau Quarter)

The Liechtenstein Summer Palace serves as a three-dimensional document of lavish early eighteenth-century Viennese taste, while its 2013 renovation demonstrates a respect for and continuation of family patronage that was begun by the great collectors Karl I, Karl Eusebius and Johann Adam Andreas I von Liechtenstein, and now carried on by Prince Hans-Adam II. Through the centuries there has been a special fascination for *pietra dura* and bronze. We were extremely grateful for the expert knowledge of registrar Dr Michael Schweller and Dr Birgit Schmidt.

Originally built in 1700 to the design of Domenico Rossi, the building was conceived as an Italianate pleasure palace. Carriages could originally drive through the open arcade, under stucco decoration by Santino Bussi incorporating motifs of nature and the garden. A remarkable

rococo golden carriage, made for Joseph Wenzel by Nicolas Pineau in 1738, illustrates this luxurious manner of entry. Gentlemen would descend their carriages and be received in rooms to the left (ladies to the right).

On the gentlemen's side, a library, refitted from another Liechtenstein city palace, houses approximately 100,000 volumes, attesting the importance of learning for this family. It is conceived as a Palladian hall, with richly figured burl walnut panels and bookcases. A series of porphyry pedestals supports bronzed plaster busts of scholars from antiquity. On the centre library table members noted an ambitious marble and gilt-bronze clock in the form of a temple, made in Vienna in 1795.

The staircase, designed by Domenico Martinelli, with steps of red coloured limestone (rich with fossils and quarried in Salzburg), leads, beneath the allegorical painted ceiling by Johann Rottmayr, to the Hercules Hall, the largest banqueting hall in Vienna. Hercules, symbolizing strength and brains, was an appropriate metaphor

Philip Astley-Jones revisits the conservation of the Badminton Cabinet, Gartenpalais Liechtenstein

for the original patron. The illusionistic wall and ceiling paintings are by Andrea Pozzo. There follows a series of galleries displaying the princely collections, an evocative combination of paintings, *objets d'art*, furniture and tapestries. The first is devoted to the Renaissance and contains two fine gilt *cassoni*. The next centres on a south German cabinet of the late sixteenth century, a marquetry tour de force with its overall pictorial landscapes filled with plants and beasts, mixed with abstract geometric and stylized architectural elements. Another gallery hold a collection of Boulle, including a pair of ebonized cabinets with *premiere partie* marquetry, tall-case clocks by Daniel Quare, *bureaux plats*, all of rich decoration and quality. Here also is a set of French Beauvais tapestries with *chinoiserie* scenes incorporating temples, parasols and exotic animals.

Highlights from the following rooms include a pair of tables of about 1770 by Antonio Landucci and consoles by Claude le Fort du Plessy and Nicolaus Pacassi. In the very last room we arrived at the *pièce de résistance*, the Badminton Cabinet, managing, by its sheer size and magnificence, to draw all eyes from the other exceptional pieces that surround it. The overall design was by Giovanni Battista Foggini, with bronze sculptures after Girolamo Ticciati. Philip Astley-Jones and Philip Hewat-Jaboor, who oversaw the restoration of the cabinet when it was first sold, kindly explained what treatment this magnificent piece of furniture underwent in their conservation workshop. Further pieces in the room beautifully demonstrate the family fascination with the art of *pietra dura*. In particular, marble tops by Piero

Pandolfini (1615–37) incorporating the arms of Prince Karl I, all framed in fire-gilt bronze mounts resting on carved and gilt table bases.

The Liechtenstein Summer Palace has been beautifully and expertly restored to complements its rich collections. The FHS felt honoured to be invited to share it.

Burg Forchtenstein

Resembling something from a Brothers Grimm fairy story, Forchtenstein Castle was built in the thirteenth century. In 1622, Nikolaus Esterhazy, founder of the western Hungarian line of the family, received the castle from Emperor Ferdinand II. He restored the castle and the work was continued by his son Paul, after whose death it became a repository for 'marvels', archives and other treasures related to the history of the family.

The inner courtyard is decorated with 130 frescoed portraits of Holy Roman Emperors and centres on an equestrian statue of Prince Paul, commissioned by him in 1691 from the Viennese sculptor Michael Filtzer. The enfilade of historic rooms on the second floor, with their great fireplaces and stoves, wall paintings and baroque doors, some inset with *veduta* panel of the Esterhazy estates, were refurbished in 2008. The white rococo stoves were made in the 1760s in the Esterhazy ceramic manufactories. Over four hundred portraits seek to legitimize the rise of the dynasty. There were at least three notable cabinets possibly from Augsburg, one with pewter inlay, one with mother-of-pearl arabesques and one almost entirely covered with panels of *pietre paesina*. Other treasures included

seventeenth-century scientific instruments and clocks, but the greatest surprise was the silver furniture. Prince Paul started collecting it from 1658, anticipating his elevation to a principedom. By 1696 the Esterhazy collection comprised thirty-two pieces, most of which survive, including the 1658 table by David I Schwestermüller.

The Treasure Chamber, created by Prince Paul from 1692, survived invasions by Napoleon in 1806 and the Soviet Army in 1944–45. Almost unbelievably, this *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* is housed in the original 1690s cabinets, now updated to modern security and conservation standards, but still offering an incomparable sense of history. Equally astonishing is the vault, which houses the Esterhazy archives in ebonized cabinets with small drawers still retaining their pink painted decoration, made by the court cabinet-maker Thomas Nierhauser.

We are extremely grateful to Dr Florian Bayer, Collections Manager of the Esterhazy Foundation, for his warm welcome and his excellent guidance in these astonishing collections.

Schloss Esterhazy

Schloss Esterhazy returned to the Esterhazy Foundation only in 2016, and a large part of the family collection is now held there. For our visit, Dr Bayer had set out a number of pieces of furniture and invited members to examine them closely and to pool their expertise. These included a pair of *encoignures* with marble tops and floral painting on the front, under glass, by Lieutaud of Paris; a pair of lacquer *encoignures* of about 1770 stamped by Dubois; a japanned secretaire by Martin

Carlin, about 1770; a Coromandel lacquer commode, possibly Swedish (certainly North European); a firescreen from the eighteenth century with later tapestry but retaining its original lining of green damask; a bureau cabinet of about 1700, with Viennese marquetry incorporating timber stained green by fungal infection. Even these few examples suggest that Dr Bayer and his colleagues will have many years of fascinating work ahead of them.

This breathless account gives some flavour only of our visit. The Society is conscious of its indebtedness to Dr Wolf Burchard and Dr Melanie Doderer-Winkler for creating such a rich programme.

Compiled from reports by Frances Buckland, Kate Dyson, Ros Hartmann, Mindy Papp, Stephen Kaye, Sarah Medlam, Leela Meinertas, Camille Mestdag

Study Day at Burton Constable Hall, East Yorkshire

MONDAY, 20 MARCH 2017

The Sunday evening preceding the visit, the BBC's Antiques Roadshow inadvertently aired a preview of what was in store for members fortunate enough to secure a place on this much anticipated study day. Led by the Director, Dr David Connell, the visit represented a valuable opportunity to benefit from knowledge and experience gained over a twenty-five-year career — one which, in 1992, saw Burton Constable transferred to the care of a charitable trust.

Beginning in the Great Hall, attention quickly turned towards an elegant set of

'sgabello' hall chairs — a staple of the English country house — which, adorned with the Constable family crest and intricately inlaid with panels of burr elm, appeared anything but ordinary.

The year 2017 sees Hull become UK City of Culture and, moving into the adjoining Dining Room, it seemed fitting that attention should focus upon some of the finest regional eighteenth-century craftsmanship on display in the house. A suite of pier tables and pedestals supplied by Jeremiah Hargrave highlighted the quality of craftsmanship surrounding Hull's shipbuilding industry. A pair of *cellarettes*, also by Hargrave, and saved for the Burton Constable Foundation thanks to the intervention of Christopher Gilbert, gave pleasure to one individual in particular.

In the newly restored Carved Room, members were wowed by the almost complete recreation of this significant early eighteenth-century interior — a far cry from its later use as a kitchen and a reminder of the vital work that continues here. A pair of aptly named cabinets of curiosity — containing geological

specimens and a set of reproduction coins after those in the Farnese collection — demanded much attention. Place of origin, date of production and later alterations were all points for debate — a puzzle never fully resolved.

As we approach the 300th anniversary of the birth of Yorkshire's most celebrated cabinet-maker, it was perhaps inevitable that much enthusiasm should surround the significant suite of pier tables, mirror frames (see front cover of this *Newsletter*), pelmets and seat furniture supplied by Thomas Chippendale to the Great Drawing Room in 1777.

An unexpected end to the morning came with a visit to the attics where, following a four-year lottery-funded project to restore the mirrors, Chippendale's original wall fixings were preserved. Examining the apparently fragile frames, a degree of relief was felt that modern aluminium replacements had now taken their place.

Perhaps less apparent to the group was the set of seat-furniture originally supplied

to the Constable's London address in Mansfield Street, now in the suitably named Chippendale Room, and offering a fascinating insight into historic approaches to conservation.

Following lunch — a characteristic display of Yorkshire hospitality — in the Saloon a suite of nineteenth-century giltwood chairs by Richardson and Sons of Hull — long presumed to have been copied from a single 'French' prototype — came under discussion. Similarities in construction and the character of the carving, however, led members to conclude that both were likely produced locally.

Upstairs, among the wealth of furniture lining the long Gallery, highlights included a pair of early nineteenth-century 'sphinx tables' carved by Giuseppe Leonardi, supporting specimen marble tops by mosaicist Giacomo Raffaelli, purchased by Sir Clifford Constable while on the Grand Tour — again saved for the house by the foresight of Sir Christopher Gilbert — as well as a giltwood armchair used by Queen Victoria during her visit to Hull in 1854. Here, as with the *sgabello* chairs downstairs, the use of estate-sourced elm was apparent in the thirteen mahogany veneered bookcases produced by estate joiner Thomas Higham during the 1740s.

The day concluded with the series of bedrooms and dressing rooms on the second floor, many of which were fitted out by Edward Elwick of Wakefield in the 1770s — the wonderful foliate carved giltwood state bed and pair of oval giltwood wall mirrors bearing testament, once again, to the quality of regional production at this time.

As David prepares to leave Burton Constable and move into retirement, he should take great pride in the development of the house and its historically important collection since gaining charitable status. As was clear to all who attended, David leaves behind a knowledgeable and dedicated team, many of whom supported our visit, and one which will ensure Burton continues to thrive in the future.

MICHAEL SHRIVE

Fitzwilliam Museum Visit

THURSDAY, 15 MAY 2017

Our visit, the first to the Fitzwilliam since the Study Day in 2013, was led by Dr Vicky Avery, Curator of Applied Arts, and Helen Ritchie, Research Assistant. The focus was on recent additions to the collection and the ways in which they are presented.

We began by examining the pair of Roman *pietre dure* cabinets on stands from Castle Howard which had been acquired in honour of the museum's bicentennial in 2016. These were discussed in detail in Tim Knox's article in the May 2017 issue of the *Newsletter*. The cabinets date to about 1625 and there is a question as to whether the English stands are early nineteenth century or of mid-eighteenth century in date. There was some sentiment within the group that the earlier date could be correct. Vicky commented on the high quality of the four gilt-bronze caryatid figures on each cabinet, noting how each is individually modelled, and that the posing and workmanship are quite sophisticated. She felt that the identity of the bronzier might be traceable. Vicky also touched on the trade-offs inherent in the cabinet's having left Castle Howard: they had been in that collection since about 1740. Although the Fitzwilliam cannot offer that historic setting, it does give free public access to the cabinets and perhaps a greater opportunity to place them in context.

The group next considered the so-called 'Ballyfin' cabinet, an Augsburg piece of about 1660. It features Florentine *pietre dure* panels and is unusual in being signed by its maker, Elias Bosscher. Group discussion touched on a number of points: whether the *pietre dure* plaques would have been made to order or taken from stock (with no clear resolution on that issue), the botanical and bird motifs on the plaques (unlike the geometric forms on the earlier Roman work on the Castle Howard cabinets), the dovetailed drawer joints (not found on the Italian piece), and the

roughly forty 'secret' drawers concealed throughout the cabinet. The display plan from the Fitzwilliam is to create a 'stop-start' motion video in which each feature of the cabinet is shown gradually being opened without human intervention. The curatorial goal is to make the piece more comprehensible to the museum audience.

Helen then led the group through consideration of more recent pieces acquired on loan from the Frua-Valsecchi collection. These included a pair of Koloman Moser satinwood and thuya veneered tables representative of the Wiener-Werkstätte and dating to c. 1903, and a display cabinet attributed to an E. W. Godwin design and probably made by Collinson & Lock in about 1875. The latter features Japanese lacquer panels and reflects the fashion for Japonisme, but also has design elements which Helen aptly termed 'Sheraton'.

We then examined the 'Flax and Wool' cabinet of 1858, in painted neo-medieval form to a design by William Burges. It was commissioned by Herbert George Yatman and the painted decoration is by Frederick Smallfield. The architectural shape of the 'roof', a space designed for storing top hats, was particularly notable, as were the almost whimsical painted figures representing Flax, Wool, Silk and Leather. In complete contrast, the interior of the cabinet was extremely plain. On display in the same room was an oak cabinet made by the Guild of Handicraft. The designer may be C. R. Ashbee or M. H. Baillie Scott. Helen noted that there are many unresolved issues with this piece and that light sensitivity concerns make it impossible to display the remarkable

marquetry interior. Two further items in this gallery were a three-legged library armchair made by William Watt in about 1886 to a design by Godwin, and a tea table of 1872, also to a Godwin design, which had been made for his mistress Ellen Terry and again exhibited a mix of Japanese and Sheraton motifs.

In the final gallery our group visited, we considered at some length a cabinet by André-Charles Boulle, dating to about 1680, on a later stand. This was acquired by the Fitzwilliam in 2010 and the changes it has undergone make it a valuable for teaching tool use. There is a similar example at Drumlanrig. The tortoiseshell background in the central wood marquetry panels on the front and sides of the cabinet was particularly noted, as was the neo-Egyptian taste evident in the stand. A number of later interventions were commented upon by the group, including mounts which perhaps date to the 1820s and some Boulle-type work which is not of the quality expected of the master's workshop.

We last considered two eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian desks made at Vizagapatam. One is on loan to the museum and the other was added to the collection through an AIL allocation. Both are of rosewood inlaid with ivory. They add new breadth to the collection, and Vicky noted that environmental sensitivities dictated their gallery placement.

We closed with thanks to Vicky and to Helen for their expert guidance and, undoubtedly on the part of many of us, a wish to return to explore other aspects of this outstanding collection.

E. C. TEPPER

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
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Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving material to
be published in the next *Newsletter* is
15 September.

Copy should be sent, preferably by email,
to Sharon Goodman,
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by post to 26 Burntwood Lane, London
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COVER PICTURE One of the pier glasses by Thomas Chippendale in the Great Drawing Room,
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