



THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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THE RAWLINSON BOOKCASE BY GILLOWS OF LANCASTER SUCCESSFULLY ACQUIRED

We can now celebrate the successful campaign by Lancashire County Museum Service (reported in November's *Newsletter*) to raise £260,000 to save an exceptional eighteenth-century Gillows bookcase. The full amount was raised with the help of £100,000 from the Art Fund (Richard Wilson Harris bequest) and additional support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the North West Regional Development Agency, Lancashire County Council and Samlesbury Decorative and Fine Art Society. Lancashire County Museum Service wishes especially to thank Sir Nicholas Goodison, President of the FHS, whose letter detailing the importance of the bookcase and expressing the support of the Council of the Society so much assisted the campaign to keep this rare and outstanding piece of furniture in the country.

This magnificent bookcase is one of the most outstanding and fully documented examples of furniture made by Gillows of Lancaster in a period only some forty years after its establishment by Robert Gillow (1702/3–1772) in 1728. Very little of the firm's pre-1790 production is even accredited, let alone fully documented like this piece. Mary Hutton Rawlinson (1715–86), for whom it was made in 1772, was the widow of Thomas Hutton Rawlinson (1712–69), a Quaker merchant whose fortunes had progressed from the ownership of a Lancashire ironworks to a close involvement in the Slave Trade. Rawlinson's commercial interests in the West Indies included the importation of mahogany into Lancaster, some of which was supplied to Gillows and may well have been used in the construction of this bookcase.

The bookcase has survived in splendid condition; it is richly ornamented with carving, marquetry, superb highly-figured book-matched veneers, gilding (traces of which are still on the glazing bars) and finely-chased silvered handles. This combination in one piece is altogether exceptional for Gillows, who made minimal use of such techniques in the eighteenth century. The estimate for the bookcase, which records the use of mahogany



Figure 1 The Rawlinson Bookcase, Gillows of Lancaster, 1772, Mahogany, inlaid, traces of gilding, silvered handles, height 208 cm; width 127 cm; depth 65 cm, Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster

veneer on the inside surfaces of the lower section as against solid mahogany in the upper section; the '16 Leaves of Gold & Size' used on the glazing bars; and the exact number of hinges, screws, bolts and escutcheons deployed, is so detailed that the bookcase can be identified from the written description alone. The estimate is also significant for the evidence it provides of the operations of the furniture trade, demonstrating the distinction between extra costs incurred in the use of especially good materials or refined execution. The use of inlay in an object otherwise 'like the Sketch' is noted together with the 'Extra Cha[rge] for Extraordinary finers [veneers]'.

Gillows' 'estimate book' records that 'An Elegant Bookcase for Mrs. Hutton Rawlinson or her daughter' was made in July 1772 (Westminster Reference Library: Gillows Archive, 344/90, Estimate Book 1766–1773, p. 215). Although described as an 'estimate book', it appears to record the details of manufacture of objects after their completion. It is known that the bookcase was made for Mary Hutton Rawlinson (1715–86), however, the reference in the estimate to 'or her daughter' indicates some confusion on the part of the writer, who may have seen an earlier lost note that it was made for Mary Rawlinson, but also knew she had a daughter Mary (1737–1808) who could have commissioned it.

Mary Hutton Rawlinson was the widow of Thomas Hutton Rawlinson (1712–69), a successful West Indies Merchant, trading from the Port of Lancaster. The Rawlinsons were the chief ironmasters in the Backbarrow Company, supplying a commodity which was not only exported, but was useful in outfitting ships for the new and rapidly developing markets between Lancaster and the West Indies. They dominated the West Indian trade at Lancaster; indeed the family's level of involvement and influence in transatlantic commercial activities is well evidenced: in 1756, for example, at least eight of the seventeen vessels returning from the West Indian and mainland American colonies during that year were Rawlinson owned (M. Elder, *The Slave Trade and the Economic Development of eighteenth century Lancaster*, p. 183). It is particularly interesting to note that for a number of years the companies controlled by Thomas Hutton Rawlinson and later by his son, Abraham, were the principal importers of the finest mahogany into Lancaster, both supplying Gillows (Alex Kidson, *George Romney*, exhibition catalogue, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 2002, p. 63).

The attribution to Gillows is endorsed by comparison with another documented piece, a chest-of-drawers made for the Duke of Dorset in June 1772 (a month before this bookcase). It has very similar marquetry on the canted corners. This is entered in Gillows' Journal as '... a neat Mahogany Comode 3ft drawn / wth Toilet Drawer & Inlaid Corners / intended for the Duke of Dorset'. It was made for the 'Shop in London' (ibid.), one of numerous commissions subcontracted to Gillows of



Figure 2 Lady's marquetry workbox, made by Francis Dowbiggin, 1808, Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster

Lancaster by their cousin's London business, Gillow & Taylor. The chest-of-drawers, sold at Christie's, has a dispatch label on the back reading 'For / Messrs. Gillows [sic] & Taylor / No 116 Oxford Street / London'. It also has identical drawer-handles, unusual in being silvered rather than gold-coloured, which confirms that the handles on the bookcase must indeed be original, despite the omission of any reference to them (or to any drawer-handles) in the account.

Thomas and John Dowbiggin executed the exceptionally fine carving, marquetry and gilding on the bookcase, and are recorded in the written account of its manufacture:

Tho ^s Dowbiggin Carv ^g & Inlaying	30 Days	3/-	4 10 0
Jn ^o D ^o D ^o D ^o &c	11 days	2/6	1 7 6

The fact that both tasks, 'Carv^g & Inlaying' — and by implication also the gilding — were carried out by both of them is notable and may reflect a difference in furniture making practice between London (where it seems there was generally a greater division of labour) and most provincial towns.

It has been conjectured that Thomas and John were related to the celebrated Thomas Dowbiggin (1788–1854), Royal cabinet-maker and upholsterer, of Mount Street, London, one of the most successful cabinet-makers of the second quarter of the nineteenth century and closely associated with the Victorian company Holland & Sons. We have established that Thomas and his younger brother John, who made the bookcase, were the children of John Dowbiggin (b. 1720) and Isabel Egglin, who married in the parish of Tatham near Lancaster on 19 January, 1737/8. Thomas (b. 24 October 1738) must surely be the Thomas Dowbiggin (1738–1811), cabinet-maker at Gillows, whose death was reported in the *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 October 1811. The registers of Hornby also record the christening of John, son of John Dowbiggin, on 31 May 1741. The two brothers are also included in the list of Free Burgesses of Lancaster as follows:

1761–2 Dowbiggin, John of Lancaster, joyner
 1761–2 Dowbiggin, Thos. Of Lancaster, joyner.

We also have discovered that Thomas (1738–1811) was the father of Francis Dowbiggin (c. 1765–1832), cabinet-maker at Gillows 1787–1816, who was himself the father of Thomas Dowbiggin (1788–1854), Royal cabinet-maker and upholsterer of Mount Street, London. We can therefore see how the skills exemplified in this bookcase were passed down from father to son in three generations to Thomas Dowbiggin, of Mount Street, London. It is worth mentioning that by an extraordinary coincidence, the Judges' Lodgings Museum recently acquired a splendid Gillows lady's marquetry workbox made by the above Francis Dowbiggin in 1808 (Fig. 2).

The bookcase is now on display at the Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster which has, since 1975, brought together a nationally-important collection of Gillow furniture of all periods.

For the information in this article thanks must go to Lucy Wood and Sarah Medlam of the Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department of the V&A Museum, to Apter-Fredericks Ltd of Fulham Road, London and to Gillow historian Susan Stuart. Diane Main, historian of the Dowbiggin family, provided details of the family descent which linked Thomas Dowbiggin (1738–1811), cabinet-maker of Lancaster, to Thomas Dowbiggin (1788–1854), Royal cabinet-maker of London.

Stephen Sartin, Associate Curator of Art
 Lancashire County Museum Service

DRAYTON HOUSE AND ITS MARBLE BUFFET: A RECONSTRUCTION

In 2001 the clearance of the loft of one of the outbuildings alongside Drayton House in Northamptonshire revealed a sizeable collection of pieces of marble. These ranged from parts of long curved slabs, roughly six feet in length, pieces of curved cornice with carved decorative keystones, and pieces of marble frames. Examination of these suggested they dated from around 1700 and that they might be remnants of a marble buffet room which had existed alongside the dining room in the early-eighteenth century. More recently a chance reference to a picture sale at Christies in the 1970s produced a reproduction of a painting of Ceres by Gerard Lanscroom which had also been part of the room. These discoveries set in motion more research to see whether it might be possible to reconstruct the appearance of the buffet.

Buffet rooms, with fitments to allow the display of plate as well as providing facilities for washing utensils, were to be found in many of the large houses around the 1700 date. The only one to survive *in situ* today is that at Swangrove on the Badminton estate in Gloucestershire, but another intact example, formerly at Chatsworth is now at Thornbridge Hall in Derbyshire (both are illustrated in Girouard: *Life in the English Country House*, London 1978). A marble niche in the attic at Kingston Lacey, Dorset, probably originates from a buffet, and of course there are large marble recesses associated with dining at Holkham House, Norfolk and Cobham Hall in Kent.

Fortunately Drayton has a good series of inventories and these contain basic descriptions of the room. The 1710 inventory is the earliest reference:

In the Beaufett Roome adjoining to the Great Hall

Four tables

A marble table for the beaufett

Two Marble nieches

Two Marble Cesterns with marble faced plints

The topp of the Roome with the topp of the Neeches and the

Beaufett painted by Mr. Lancroone

(There then follows the contents of 'The painted Parlor or Dineing roome')

The inventory of 1770 is more specific about the fittings:

The Side Board Room

A Large Marble Side Board Table 2 feet 5 by

4 feet 10 Inches on a Walnut Tree Frame

A D^o 2 Feet by 3 Feet 8 Inch^s on a D^o. Frame

A D^o 1 Feet 10 Inch^s by 3 Feet 11 Inch^s on a D^o Frame

Two Oval Marble Cisterns 1 Feet 8 By 2 Feet 2 Inches

The measurements in the last were especially useful since it enabled the identification of the two marble cisterns or urns, which were still in the house, now standing in the Hall windows and used for the display of pot plants. Also it became clear that the tops of the marble tables also survived, now resting on late-eighteenth-century frames. On checking the curve of the marble cornices with the curve of the cisterns, it confirmed that they were all part of the same ensemble.

Another vital piece of the jigsaw is to be found in a small notebook compiled by Sir James Thornhill now in the British Museum (BM 1884-7-26, p. 41). Thornhill must have been asked to go to Drayton by the then owner Sir John Germain, with the possibility of a commission. To aid his memory Thornhill has drawn a sketch plan of the Hall and the adjoining buffet room. Most usefully it shows the location of the sideboard and niches in the room

and also has the dimensions of each space. Unfortunately the plan is not dated so it is unclear whether the whole thing was complete when Thornhill visited, or perhaps just the marble fittings. Perhaps he decided against it and this is how Lanscroom got the job.

The discovery of the sale of the Lanscroom painting at Christies, where fortunately it was photographed, contributed further, since its base width was exactly that of the sideboard table, so they clearly belonged together. Germain was obviously pleased with the painting since Lanscroom returned in 1712 and painted the walls of a staircase.

So, putting all this together allows a fairly accurate reconstruction of the buffet wall to be drawn up. As the tables were all on walnut frames the suggestion is that the rest of the room was panelled, so allowing the marble niches and table tops to appear in contrast.

As for the marble work, bills in the Drayton Archive show that it was provided by the sculptor William Woodman. An unsigned bill dated May 1702 (Drayton Archive MM/A/466) lists 'the Ritch Italian veined Marble Chimney peece in the Great Hall at Drayton' (still *in situ*) as well as 'for rubing stoping polishing and Glazing ye Marble Table £02.00.00' and 'for polishing stoping and Glazing ye Marble Cisterns 02.00.00'. Then in May 1704 Elinor Woodman signs a receipt for £13 'for the use of my husband' for four marble tables, and another receipt signed by Woodman himself dated 15 July 1704 for £5.07.06 'on Acct. of marble works' (Ibid MM/A/559 and 574). It is the handwriting of the last that confirms that the earlier undated bill is also Woodman's.

The Buffet Room survived till 1798 when the area was reformed as part of a new dining area under the direction of the designer William Stephens (Drayton archive). A doorway was cut through where the sideboard had been into an adjoining room which then became the Breakfast Room, while the former Dining Room was turned into the Green Drawing Room. At this time Arthur Lockington, the estate carpenter, made a series of neo-classical table stands to support the displaced marble tops.

There is doubtless more evidence in other archives of these buffet arrangements and perhaps this note will bring further examples to light.

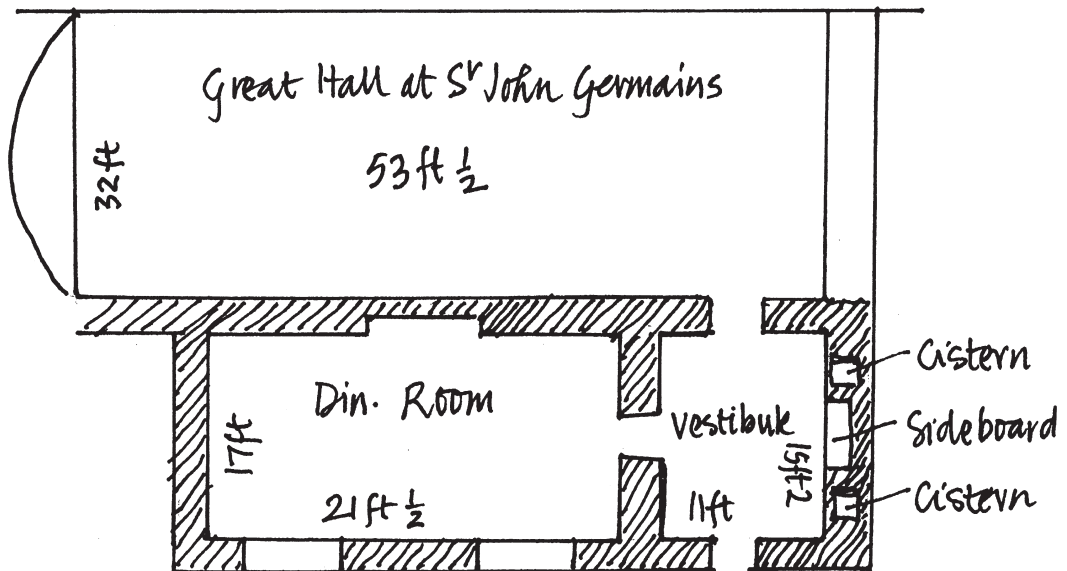


Figure 3 Conjectural reconstruction of the buffet at Drayton — plan based on Thornhill's sketch plan, by Bruce Bailey, 2008



Figure 4 Reconstruction of the Drayton Buffet, by Bruce Bailey, 2008

(I am grateful to Orlando Rock at Christies for his help, to Geoffrey Fisher at the Courtauld Institute of Art for his thoughts on Woodman, and for ideas to Tim Knox.)

Bruce A. Bailey
Drayton House

FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS

BOOKINGS

For places on all visits, please apply to the Activities Secretary, Clarissa Ward, 25 Wardo Avenue, London, SW6 6RA, tel. /fax 020 7384 4458, enclosing a separate cheque and separate stamped addressed envelope for each event using the enclosed booking form. Applications should only be made by members or joint members, and by those who intend to take part in the whole programme. No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting list please enclose a telephone number where you can be reached. Please note that a closing date for applications for all visits is printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available.

CANCELLATIONS

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for occasional visits costing £10.00 or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted and fees returned up to seven

days before the date of a visit, but will be subject to a £5.00 deduction for administrative costs. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

N.B. PLEASE REMEMBER TO SEND SUFFICIENT STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPES FOR ALL APPLICATIONS, INCLUDING REQUESTS FOR DETAILS OF FOREIGN TOURS AND STUDY WEEKENDS.

ANNUAL LECTURE

The London Furniture Industry 1640–1720

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

Wednesday 15 October 2008, 6.00pm for 6.30–8.00pm

The 2008 Annual Lecture will be given by Laurie Lindey, who is currently working on her PhD at the University of London. In recent years, she has worked as research assistant to Dr David Mitchell, the Goldsmiths Company, Dr Tessa Murdoch, Dr Adam Bowett, Dr Amin Jaffer and Eleanor John, and has written articles for the Society's newsletters on specific aspects of the London furniture trade at this period.

The doors will open at 6.00 pm when wine and soft drinks will be available. The lecture will begin at 6.30 pm.

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

AUTUMN STUDY TOUR

Thursday 25 and Friday 26 September 2008

This short stay in Cheshire with study days at Dunham Massey and the Lady Lever Art Gallery is regretfully being postponed until 2009.

OTHER ITEMS

FREDERICK PARKER CHAIR COLLECTION LAUNCHED ONLINE

A unique collection of chairs amassed by Frederick Parker & Sons, later Parker Knoll Ltd, has been fully catalogued and digitised and is now available to view online at the Visual Arts Data Service website <http://www.vads.ahds.ac.uk/search.php>

The chair collection demonstrates 350 years of British chair design and manufacture. They are part of the Frederick Parker Collection that also includes a collection of carvings and the Frederick Parker Company archive.

Frederick Parker (born 1845) built up a substantial and high quality furniture making business. He supplied furniture for ocean liners, country houses, palaces and the high-end retail trade. Frederick Parker was convinced that the only way his workforce could produce fine, new furniture for contemporary use was by studying 'the old masters'. Thus he collected a library of books on furniture, 360 pieces of furniture (mostly chairs) as well as examples of carvings and textiles to inspire his designers and furniture makers.

In 2002 the Frederick Parker Foundation agreed the long-term loan of the chairs, carvings and archive to London Metropolitan University. The chairs went on public exhibition within Metropolitan Works at the Sir John Cass Department of Art, Media and Design.

The Collection is a valuable educational tool, providing research and source material for students and academics from a range of disciplines such as interior design, conservation and museum studies, design, furniture, social and business history.

Amy Robinson, Visual Arts Data Service (VADS)
amy@vads.ahds.ac.uk

REFERENCE COLLECTION OF COMMERCIAL FURNITURE VARNISHERS

Do you have an old tin of spar-varnish collecting dust in your garage? The dregs of a can of lacquer from the 80s you thought just might come in handy some day? Well, if so, we need your contributions to the brand new Reference Collection of Commercial Furniture Varnishes.

The goal is to build a comprehensive collection of commercial furniture varnish samples from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, including products of all types from all over the world.

We are in a period of dramatic transformation in the world of varnishes designed for wood and furniture, with health and safety concerns driving rapid changes in regulations covering the sale and use of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). A whole array of varnishes is on the verge of disappearing. At the same time, an incredible variety of low-VOC varnishes have been brought to market to suit the new regulatory environment.

Dusan Stulik and Art Kaplan of the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) are cataloging and storing the collection of varnish samples at the GCI in Los Angeles. They will ensure that the collection is available as an open resource to all interested researchers in the future.

If you have one or more commercial varnishes that you would like to submit to the collection, please follow these simple instructions:

- Please list the name of the varnish, manufacturer, manufacturer's address, date and place of purchase (if known), and any other information from the container that might be of interest. We recommend taking photographs of the container as well (these can be submitted in whatever format is most convenient for you).
- Brush out one coat of the varnish onto each of 4 clean, glass microscope slides (2.5cm x 7.5cm), leaving about 2 cm blank at one end for a label. The slides will be permanently labeled at the GCI in a standard format, but please attach a temporary label that will help us to identify them. Use a clean brush for the application, and allow the varnish to dry thoroughly before submitting.
- Send your information sheet and the slides (well protected) to: Art Kaplan, Science Department, The Getty Conservation Institute, 1200 Getty Center Drive, suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90049, USA. If, for any reason, you have trouble acquiring microscope slides or if the cost of postage is a concern, please contact Art Kaplan at akaplan@getty.edu. Be sure to include your name and address so that you can be officially recorded as a contributor and we can send you a confirmation of receipt letter.

RESEARCH ON SYRIE MAUGHAM

I would be grateful for any information, and to see any photographs that members may have, on the life and work of the interior decorator Syrie Maugham (1879–1955) for the purpose of future publication.

Syrie Maugham's best work in Europe and America is considered to be between 1927 and 1937. She was the daughter of Dr Barnardo, marrying Henry Wellcome (Wellcome Trust) and secondly Somerset Maugham. She is known to have visited the 1925 Paris Exhibition of

Decorative and Industrial Arts and this visit may have been a catalyst to result in her early interiors (Le Touquet and 213 Kings Road). Although there are very few photographs of her work of this period, photographs of these two interiors show Modernist tendencies, a reversal of Edwardian traditional trends — a clean sweep of the old, letting in light, the use of white paint, crystal and mirror surfaces. An admiration for Cuvilliers may have started her passion for white furniture and the ‘white interior’, for which she became well known. Her taste was eclectic, drawing on the work of artists and furniture makers she knew. Existing material may survive under the names of her clients, which included Mona Bismarck (Mrs Harrison Williams), Mr and Mrs George Hay Whigham, her daughter Mrs Charles Sweeny (later Margaret, Duchess of Argyll), Mrs Wallis Warfield Simpson, Fort Belvedere, The Lady Rothschild at Tring, (the Pavilion at Waddesdon), and in London, Stephen Tennant at Wilsford Manor, Mr and Mrs Vincent Paravicini, Claire Booth (Mrs Henry Luce), Mr & Mrs William Paley, Mrs Paul Mellon and Mrs Marshall Field. Her friends included Cecil Beaton, Derek Hill, Oliver Messel, Lord Berners, Noël Coward, Beverley Nichols, Rex Whistler, Rebecca West and Sacheverell Sitwell.

Please contact Cecilia Neal on cecilia.neal@meltons.co.uk or tel. 020 7352 5001 if you have any information.

BOOK REVIEWS

Suggestions for future reviews and publishers’ review copies should be sent to Dr Reinier Baarsen, Reviews Editor, Rijksmuseum, PO Box 74888, 1070 DN Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel. 00-31-20-6747220. E-mail: r.baarsen@rijksmuseum.nl

Stefan Hess and Wolfgang Loescher, ‘... ein gewandtkasten in seiner Rechten Proportion unndt abteylung’, *Möbel in Basel, Meisterstücke und Meisterordnungen bis 1798* (Basel: Historisches Museum, 2007) 136 pp., 50 col. illus. ISBN 978-3-9523034-4-3, CHF 28.

The two authors, an art-historian and a restorer, have in this book worked out the distinguishing features of the masterpiece of the Basel cabinetmakers for the first time, as well as producing a history of Basel cabinetmaking from its inception to the end of the eighteenth century. Their publication is an important contribution to Swiss furniture history.

Kistenmacher are first mentioned in Basel in 1393, as having set themselves apart from the carpenters (before that, only carvers occur). From the 1430s they were called *Tischmacher* and finally, from the late-sixteenth century onward, *Schreiner*, but those terms all refer to the same craft. These craftsmen were united with the carpenters, coppers, gun makers and organ makers in the guild known as *Spinnwetternzunft*, until in the course of the sixteenth century they founded their own *Ehrenhandwerk*. This comprised fixed requirements for the running of a workshop with journeymen and pupils: a master had to be born in wedlock, have completed a period of training and *Wanderschaft*, and be a citizen of the town, but initially he did not need to submit a masterpiece. This was not required until 1589; it took the form of a clothes’ cupboard with four doors which after the design for it was approved, had to be completed within a year. As petitions by journeymen testify, the making of a cupboard with four doors took eighteen weeks or more.

A separate chapter deals with the significance of architectural treatises for this cupboard with four doors. In Basel, Hans Blum’s ‘Von den fünff Säulen’, published in Zurich in 1550 and based on Serlio and Vignola, was of central importance.

The authors have succeeded in identifying three cupboards made between 1640 and 1680 as Basel masterpieces, on the basis of careful measurements of the pieces and all their architectural components. In comparison with closely related cupboards from other regions around Southern Germany, those from Basel are distinguished by their particularly austere architectural façades which are left fairly plain.

The recurring complaints from aspiring masters that the expensive masterpiece would be unsaleable — something not unique to Basel — resulted in three exceptions being admitted: two of them are richly carved and inlaid doors of 1593 and 1595, the latter convincingly identified as the masterpiece of the well-known Franz Pergo who had come from Burgundy. In 1675 a carver from Linz, Johann Christian Frisch, was allowed to make a richly carved table as masterpiece; this was helped by the fact that he was willing to marry the widow of a cabinetmaker.

Around 1700 — considerably later than in other cities — the masterpiece was changed into a cupboard with two doors. Its front could not be completely derived from architectural treatises anymore; it was in part based on well-rounded (*'glatt'*) Basel measures. The various examples dating from 1700 to 1728 are absolutely identical in elevation and proportion. As their doors are each decorated with two robust raised panels, they are reminiscent of the examples with four doors. These pieces could be identified as masterpieces by comparison with the surprisingly plain masterpiece of Emanuel Jäcklin-Holzach of 1762. With its old-fashioned appearance, devoid of any hint of rococo, this cupboard heralds the end of the Basel masterpiece. In this city, the realization that such pieces could not be sold anymore did not result in the instigation of another masterpiece, but in its abolishment altogether.

Seven individual masterpieces are described and analyzed in a fully detailed catalogue section. This has excellent illustrations, including splendid details and views of the interiors.

The book ends with a list of all 503 cabinetmakers registered in Basel between 1357 and 1797; these include widows who continued their husband's workshop. In the early period, before a masterpiece was required, about one third of the aspiring masters came from outside the city, between 1670 and 1700 only three did, and during the entire eighteenth century no single master arrived from elsewhere. There is a separate register of 147 places of origin of cabinetmakers and other members of the *Spinnwetternzunft*. Naturally, Switzerland, Alsace and Southern Germany preponderate, but Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Brandenburg are also represented. In the 1660s 20% of the aspiring masters were sons of masters, by the middle of the eighteenth century this percentage had risen to 55. Between 1500 and 1590 the number of Basel cabinetmakers rose from 21 to 39, whereas the population of the city remained the same. Subsequently, however, their number gradually diminished, and by 1630 there were only 20 masters working.

Georg Himmelheber

Andreas Büttner, *Möbel für das Gartenreich Dessau-Wörlitz* (Wolfratshausen: Edition Minerva, 2007), 560 pp., 26 col., 451 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-3-938832-141. € 65.

In 1800 the architect Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorf died. He was buried in the communal cemetery at Dessau, the first in Germany, whose triumphal gateway he had designed. The inscription on his tomb, composed by his close friend, the classical scholar August von Rode, records that he visited the British Isles three times and Italy four. That voyages to Britain should be thus placed on a level with, or even given priority over, travel to Italy is a sign of the extraordinary admiration for British culture evinced by so many leading figures of the German enlightenment. Erdmannsdorf's first visit to England took place in 1763 to 1764, in the train of his patron and friend, Prince Franz of Anhalt-Dessau,

when he was twenty-seven and the prince twenty-three. The tiny principality of Anhalt-Dessau soon became a laboratory for enlightened experiments, many inspired by English examples, including the creation of the English landscape garden at Wörlitz, the first in Germany. The Schloss itself, built from 1769 to 1773, is influenced by Chambers's Duddingston and Brown's Claremont.

The massive and handsome catalogue here under review, very reasonably priced, commences with eight short essays, the first introductory. The next deals, sometimes inconclusively, with the models Prince Franz and Ersmannsdorf derived from their travels. The touch on the English tiller is not always sure ('Claredon' for Clarendon, 'Grimling' for Gibbons, and Blenheim described as being in the baroque 'Kent' style). But the fair point is made that the English models followed at Wörlitz tended to the neat and practical rather than the palatial. An account of the furniture trade in Dessau rightly gives prominence to Johann Andreas Irmer (1720–98), the principal maker of the furniture at Wörlitz, along with the carver Johann Christian Ehrlich (d. 1780), but others are mentioned, including Johann Ludwig Stein, son-in-law of David Hacker, court cabinet-maker in Berlin, trained by David Roentgen. Stein moved to Dessau in 1800 and was permitted to open a Möbelmagazin, which had failed by his death in 1814 (a rival set up by a local cooperative in 1804 survived until 1945). A mysterious cabinet-maker named 'Buch' is noted: from the context it is obvious that the documents refer to 'books' of gold leaf. A brief chronicle of the cabinet-makers' guild in Dessau might stand as a miniature summation of Fritz Hellwag's great 1924 history of the German craft.

Erdmannsdorf's educational projects are described, including some delightful anti-rococo rhetoric, 'eine Vermischung des Gothischen und des Französischen, des Plumpen und des Magern' (a blend of the Gothic and the French, the podgy and the skinny) and 'Schnorkelprunk' (curlicued finery). There follows a recital of furniture imports, including in the early 1790s many pieces by Friedrich Gottlob Hoffmann of Leipzig, as well as mirrors from Dresden, Berlin and, again, Leipzig. The greatest outside provider, David Roentgen, merits a separate essay. As well as supplying furniture in 1771, he offered more in 1792 and was actually in Dessau in 1797 to 1798, hoping to settle there, part of the arduous process of disposing of his stock and finding a home for his manufactory.

A survey of contemporary witnesses produces a reasonable harvest, although, as in England, furniture was not a major cynosure. It is nice, however, to learn from Carl August Boettiger that in 1797 Hamilton's *Observations on Mount Vesuvius* (1772) lay on a table slab of lava specimens which Hamilton himself had helped to procure in 1771. As pear was the principal wood at Wörlitz an essay on fruit trees is relevant: Prince Franz was buying fruit trees in Hamburg in 1780, the pears including 'Bergamotte Bugi' and 'Miraculeuse d'Hyver', and through Count Rumford in Paris in 1808. Even more directly to the point is an account of the survival and documentation of the Wörlitz furniture. Sadly the evidence is disappointingly thin. The first surviving inventory, of 1906, only covers a single pavilion, and furniture was dispersed when the principality was dissolved in 1918, with more serious losses in 1945.

The catalogue proper follows. It is very detailed and comprehensive with sections on location, condition, conservation, provenance, literature, description, marks and an evaluation. Many of the 196 entries are of sets, starting with the first, which covers no fewer than fifty-one 'Fürst-Franz-Stühle', the pearwood chairs after a neat 'Chippendale' model, which Erdmannsdorf designed in about 1770, and which are Wörlitz's most iconic model. There is a good bibliography, but no index, and a guide to navigating the catalogue is much missed. Nowhere is its precise scope defined (built-in benches in the Gotisches Haus are included, but not the superb bookcases in the Schloss library), nor is there a brief gazetteer of the numerous locations, and the arrangement of the contents is not explained. This took a little time to work out, so a brief schema may be useful:

- I Furniture for classical interiors. Entries 1 to 142
(seats 1–36, tables 37–90, case 91–116, beds etc. 117–134, screens 135–137, mirrors 138–142)
- II Furniture for Gothic interiors. Entries 144 to 173
(seats 144–160, bed 161, tables 162–167, case 168–172, fragments 173)
- III Furniture for Chinese interiors. Entries 174 to 196
(seats 174–183, beds 184–185, tables 186–193, screens 194–196)

The first group, mainly distributed between Schloss Wörlitz and Luisium, built for Prince Franz's neglected wife from 1775, includes a group of mahogany: a commode, a big desk, a plan chest and a bed with drawers, which may well have been made in London, but, if so, surely to the idiosyncratic specifications of the Prince and Erdmannsdorf. There is a massive painted bed designed in Rome by the latter, whose creative process is illuminated by a long letter of 1771 to the Prince, which acknowledges advice from Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein, a disciple of Winckelmann, and discusses the bed's iconography; stools based on the tomb of Agrippa, probably based on Adam's designs for Shelburne House (a sketch by Friedrich Gilly, not noted in the entry, shows these *in situ* in the hall at Wörlitz); the Roentgen group (Erdmannsdorf owned up to having supplied some incorrect dimensions: if so, *pace* Büttner, he is surely likely to have specified their precociously neo-classical design); a group of six klismos chairs based on those, probably designed by Asprucci, which were delivered to the Villa Borghese by Lucia Landucci in 1774; and, to conclude on a simpler note, two Windsor chairs, the occasion for illustrating three fascinating drawings in Dessau of mobile Windsors, two of the Stowe type and one a radical 'wheelbarrow' variant. The second, Gothic, group is virtually confined to the Gotisches Haus, commenced in 1773, a German equivalent of and successor to Strawberry Hill. One of three elaborate armchairs, based on St Edward's Chair in Westminster Abbey, bizarrely incorporates steps in its seat, an invention credited to Prince Franz by Boettiger in 1797, while a large plan chest is an incunable of the Renaissance Revival. The final, Chinese, group is distributed between Chinese rooms in Schloss Wörlitz and nearby Schloss Oranienbaum, many pieces being directly copied from William Chambers' *Designs of Chinese Buildings* (1757).

The above selection can only give a hint of the variety and interest of the Wörlitz ensemble(s). This furniture is part of the first and most perfect realisation in Germany of a fresh Utopian vision. Its simplicity and practical ingenuity struck contemporary witnesses as much as the more learned, elaborate or exotic ingredients. And the *rayonnement* of English taste is nowhere more clearly displayed. *Möbel für das Gartenreich* (furniture for the garden kingdom) thus constitutes a basic tool which deserves to be in every library.

Simon Swynfen Jervis

SHORTER NOTICES

Johann Kräfftner (ed.), *The Badminton cabinet* (Vienna: Liechtenstein Museum, and Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2007) 118 pp., 117 col., 1 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-3-7913-3502-5 (hardback); 978-3-7913-6082-9 (paperback). € 29.80 (paperback).

It was a triumphant moment in the history of furniture collecting in Europe when in 2004 Prince Hans Adam II of Liechtenstein purchased at auction in London the celebrated Badminton cabinet, for display in the recently opened Liechtenstein Museum in Vienna. This enormous piece, set with splendid pietre dure panels, two of which bear the signature of Baccio Cappelli, and with sculptural gilt bronze mounts, was commissioned from the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence in 1726 by the 3rd Duke of Beaufort while on his

Grand Tour, and sold from Badminton House to an American collector in 1990. The present lavishly illustrated publication celebrates its arrival in Vienna. It has a very general introduction on the art of stone-cutting through the ages by Johann Kräftner which also describes the other masterpieces of *pietre dure* in the Liechtenstein collection, notably a splendid Florentine table-top of about 1636 and a unique table and casket ordered from the Prague workshops around 1620–23; all three bear the Liechtenstein coat-of-arms. Also illustrated is an ivory-veneered, *pietre dure*-mounted cabinet made in Augsburg that was recently acquired for the collection. It is said to be by Melchior Baumgartner, but this cannot be more than a general attribution which, however, is not elucidated in the text that has neither footnotes nor a bibliography. The introduction is followed by an essay on Badminton House and the Dukes of Beaufort by Tim Knox and a survey of the history of the cabinet by Alvar González-Palacios. These are both taken verbatim from the 2004 sale catalogue — surely a compliment to Christie's cataloguing standards. An edition in German has also been published.

Agnès Bos, *Musée National de la Renaissance — Château d'Écouen, Catalogue, Meubles et panneaux en ébène, Le décor des cabinets en France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris, Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2007), 168 pp., 193 col., 65 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-2-7118-5342-7. € 70.

Alexandre du Sommerard, the pioneering French antiquarian who died in 1842 and whose collection forms the basis of both the Musée de Cluny and the Musée de la Renaissance, had a fashionable predilection for ebony furniture. Curiously, he only owned a single cabinet of the well-known Parisian type dating from the first half of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately destroyed in 1970, even this was to some extent made up of disparate elements. All the other ebony furniture was of nineteenth-century manufacture, partly constructed from panels and other fragments originating from earlier cabinets. It included a highly idiosyncratic piano by one Bekers, as well as a more predictable series of low cupboards. In a campaign of 'purification', the late-nineteenth century director of the Musée de Cluny had all this furniture dismantled, preserving only the seventeenth-century parts for the collection; merely a few of the low cupboards which had been turned into museum showcases escaped this sorry fate. The present publication is a catalogue of the isolated panels and smaller elements, as well as the few surviving items of furniture. Preceded by a good and critical introduction summarizing the latest research on Parisian ebony cabinets, it understandably concentrates on the scenes represented on the panels. It is arranged by subject matter, and succeeds in identifying nearly every pictorial source. Most of the engravings and illustrated books used by the *ébénistes* had only just been produced when the panels were executed, as is rightly pointed out. A detailed appendix gives the descriptions of the furniture as listed in the 1843 inventory of Du Sommerard's possessions and identifies the fragments salvaged from each individual item. Both for the study of seventeenth-century cabinets and of nineteenth-century pastiches, this thoroughly researched catalogue is an invaluable tool.

THE OLIVER FORD TRUST AND TOM INGRAM MEMORIAL FUND

In line with one of its roles, the promotion of interest in interior design, the Oliver Ford Trust has generously expressed the desire to sponsor a place on each FHS study weekend or foreign tour. Applicants should either be a student with a particular interest in interiors, or a junior museum professional. Applications from non-members will be considered. Grants will be awarded via the Tom Ingram Fund, to which candidates should apply.

The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund makes grants towards travel and other incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research into the history of furniture (a) whether or not the applicant is a member of the Society; (b) only when the study or research is likely to be of importance in furthering the objectives of the Society; and (c) only when travel could not be undertaken without a grant from the Society. Applications towards the cost of FHS foreign and domestic trips and study weekends are particularly welcome from scholars. Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the assistance of the Fund in

any resulting publications and must report back to the Panel on completion of the travel or project. All applications should be addressed to Adriana Turpin, Secretary to the Fund at 39 Talbot Road, London W2 5JH, Turpinadriana@hotmail.com, who will also supply application forms for the Oliver Ford Trust grants on request. Please remember to send a s.a.e. with any request.

COPY DEADLINE

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is **15 June**. Copy should be sent, preferably by e-mail, to M.Winterbottom@bath.ac.uk or posted to Matthew Winterbottom, The Holburne Museum of Art, Bath BA2 4DB, tel. 01225 820813.

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The reviews in this Newsletter are published as the views of those persons who wrote them. They are accepted as accurate and honest expressions of opinion; those who wish to do so should write to communicate with the reviewer direct.