



## THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 195

AUGUST 2014

### FIFTY YEARS!

Following the Society's Mansion House celebratory party on 5 June, the Fiftieth Anniversary Appeal Fund has reached the wonderful total of £225,000, leaving another £25,000 to be raised before this year's AGM in November. If you have not already donated or know of any person or a charitable educational trust that might be prepared to support this Fund, whose aims are to support education, research and publications through the Society, please contact the Appeal Secretary, [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org), for a donation form.



*The Rt Hon the Lord Mayor of London with Mr Nicholas Woolf, her consort, and Sir Nicholas Goodison, President of the Society, Christopher Rowell, Chairman and Simon Jervis, former Chairman (Photograph: Jessica Alexander)*

The Champagne Reception was such a success that was felt that transcripts of the speeches of the Lord Mayor and the President of the Society should be included in the Newsletter:

The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of London  
Alderman Fiona Woolf C.B.E.

*Ladies and Gentlemen.*

*Welcome to Mansion House! Home of the Lord Mayors of London since the middle of the eighteenth century. And home to one of your own — a proud member of the Furniture History Society — for 2014!*

*Nicholas and I are both members — my mother insisted! She was a textile historian who specialized in chairs with original coverings, and was one of the Society's earliest members. She said we would learn a lot — not just from the captivating curators, but from the dealers. She was absolutely right — the energy, expertise and experience of this Society are exhilarating, and we are honoured to be part of it.*

*We were both a little nervous at the beginning — worried we would be unmasked as a Lawyer and a Tax Advisor, who knew very little about furniture! Nicholas even went on a furniture course at London Metropolitan University in order to swot up — he always does his homework!*

*Fortunately, we were welcomed into one of the friendliest families I have ever known — and we've made so many friends in our own right, that I have to remind people who my mother was!*

*One of the very best things about being in the Society is visiting special places — peeking behind the scenes to see some hidden treasures! So I am delighted to give my Furniture Society Family a peek into the historic interior of Mansion House — one of the City's finest jewels, hidden in plain sight!*

*We are standing in the Salon — and it is a little more classy than most Saloons! This was originally an open courtyard — although what works in Venice or Rome is a little less appealing in damper London-climes. A roof was duly commissioned!*

*However, the chandeliers took a little longer. The City leaders originally owned a single set of chandeliers, which was moved back and forth between Mansion House and Guildhall as the occasion demanded. As might be expected with a precarious 'chandelier-shuffle', the inevitable occurred! One day in the 1790s, a chandelier was dropped and smashed beyond repair. The City recognised a false economy and had separate sets made — the stunning results are above us.*

*As you experts can see, this House is a treasure-trove of art, architecture and extraordinary furniture. The red and gold chairs and sofas on this floor are part of the Nile Suite, commissioned in 1803 by the City Upholder. We've put out some of the best examples for you to admire! The design features an upturned anchor and rope, a fashionable reference of the time to Nelson's naval victories and also a celebration of London's links with the Thames. The furniture was covered originally in yellow silk damask, but was recovered in crimson in 1835.*

*In 2012, the Mansion House Keeper, Wayne Garrigan, carried out the first full inventory of all the furniture, for over twenty-five years. He uncovered some marvellous pieces, such as two rattan chairs hiding in a basement, which were part of the original inventory of the House. Dating to the 1700s, they have now been restored fully, and we have put them out on display.*

*There is some information about the furniture in Sally Jeffrey's book about Mansion House but I think it's high time we published a book which is just about the furniture! Last year, we published books about the Harold Samuel Art Collection, and the Statues, so I'm sure Wayne is looking for a new project! The stucco work is another great possibility!*

*For 50 years, FHS has been an excellent source of information, education and support for so many people.*

*\* Through the Furniture History journal — the world's foremost scholarly periodical on this subject.*



*FHS Members listen to the Lord Mayor's speech in the Mansion House*

- \* *Through the brilliant, bite-sized FHS Newsletter — which reads like a good novel!*
- \* *Through bursaries and prizes to encourage excellence among the next generation of craftsmen.*
- \* *And through crucial support for research by scholars and curators — preserving our precious heritage, and facilitating a better understanding and appreciation for the future.*

*FHS should be very proud. And none more so than its surviving Founder-member, a prominent scholar of the decorative arts who has also served as FHS Chairman and Hon. Editor of Furniture History, Geoffrey Beard.*

*Geoffrey — it is an honour to host you here this evening. You have made an invaluable contribution to the creative industries, and we all owe you a debt of gratitude.*

*You should be very proud of everything FHS has achieved — and we celebrate a very successful Fiftieth Anniversary Appeal, which has raised well over £200,000 for all the Society activities I mentioned. Thanks to the efforts, and generosity, of everyone here — so many more people will be able to study, curate and enjoy our precious furniture heritage for years to come.*

*Congratulations — and thank you.*

**Sir Nicholas Goodison, President of the Furniture History Society**

*Lord Mayor, and other fellow members,*

*Thank you, Lord Mayor, for those celebratory words about the Society in its fiftieth year, and for inviting us to hold our celebration in the glorious surroundings of the Mansion House. Thank you too for your thoughtfulness in putting on the special display for our inspection of the pieces from the Nile suite and other furniture.*

*And thank you for your warm welcome to Geoffrey Beard, founder in 1964 with Lindsay Boynton of our Society, its first Honorary Editor, later Chairman, and moving spirit and joint editor of our greatest cooperative venture the Dictionary of English Furniture Makers. I too am delighted to see him with us today. I would only like to add to your tribute that there is no one to whom the Society owes more for its inspiration and development and, from my experience, nobody who was more fun to work with.*

*Geoffrey set a pattern of high standards and scholarship for the Journal that has never slipped. We should be very proud of the achievement of fifty issues of the Journal, which is now recognised*



as the leading scholarly journal on furniture history in the world. The fiftieth issue this year will be a bumper volume, and we have decided to dedicate it to Geoffrey.

With the *Journal* and all our other efforts over the years to encourage scholarship and study in the field — and the enthusiasm that needs to go with it — the Society has put the study of furniture and interior decoration firmly on the map. But we need to go further. We need to take full advantage of new and developing means of publishing and communication, and we are intent on encouraging and enthusing more, and yet more, younger people to develop their interest. That is why we launched our Fiftieth Anniversary Appeal, which has been very ably led by our previous Chairman Simon Jervis. He will talk to us shortly about it.

Before he does, I would like to repeat our warm thanks to you, Lord Mayor, and to invite you all to drink a toast to the future progress of our Society.

## A FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY GREETING FROM GEORG HIMMELHEBER

1 June 2014

Dear Furniture History Society,

Fifty years! It's unbelievable! Should I have been thirty-five years of age when I became a member of the Society?

In sixty-four I belonged to the staff of the Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe and had to care for the furnishings of the castles in the country of Baden. Obviously there I found a lot of furniture even those of Abraham Roentgen, absolutely unknown until that date.

And one day I found in my office a prospectus of a new to found society, which would study the history of furniture. Of course I was interested in it. Recognising the fee of the membership should be one guinea, I found this so chic that it was instantly clear that I had to become a member. The first German member!

In sixty-six I learned to know Simon Jervis in the V&A, who became the translator of my book on Biedermeier furniture. And a real very good friend! For many, many years for me he was the personification of the Society.

If I now look on the noble rank of yearbooks on the shelf in my office, I must say what a lot of important and interesting things I learned in all these years. Thus I have to thank the Society and I wish it great good luck for the next fifty years!

Georg Himmelheber

It is unusual for the Society to receive an anniversary greeting and unprecedented for this to be printed in its *Newsletter*. But an exception had to be made in this case in view of the distinction of the sender. As I am the object of flattering reference therein I was asked to supply a gloss. Soon after I arrived at the Victoria & Albert Museum, in late 1966, my Keeper, Peter Thornton, then editor of the Faber Monographs on Furniture, asked me to translate Georg Himmelheber's *Biedermeier Furniture*. When this eventually appeared in 1974 it was the first modern monograph on its subject (a Hungarian edition appeared in 1982, thanks to the support of our member Hedvig Szabolcsi, and the first German edition in 1987). Georg's main career was as curator of furniture at the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich, where he helped to entertain the Society during a memorable visit in 1978, and where he rose to deputy director. His many publications, notably the third volume, *Klassizismus – Historismus – Jugendstil* (1982) of Heinrich Kreisels great history of German furniture, the whole of which Georg revised in 1981, *Kleine Möbel* (1979), *Deutsche Möbelvorlagen 1800–1900* (1988) and *Cast-Iron Furniture* (1996), have ranged from the middle ages to the twentieth century and include three articles in *Furniture History*, and he continues to be productive at 85, his eightieth birthday having been celebrated, a little late,

by a three-day symposium at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin in April 2010. Georg Himmelheber is indeed the doyen of German furniture historians and one of the Society's most distinguished members. Praise for the Society from him is praise indeed, and emphasises our international spread.

Simon Swynfen Jervis

#### FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY AGM APPEAL FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

The recent fine photography of the Mansion House celebration has underlined the lack of photographs held by the Society of early events and, in particular, of our founders and of those who were active in the early years of the Society — people like Tom and Thesa Ingram, Geoffrey Beard, Christopher Gilbert and Nancy Trueblood. If any members have good photographs of these and other members active in the past, and would like to offer them to the Society, they will be placed with the written and published archive, which is held at the Archive of Art and Design in the V&A's Study Centre at Blythe House.

We are seeking good and clear images of members, rather than general views of events. In order to avoid later complications over copyright, please only submit images for which you own the copyright and for which you would be willing to grant the Society free licence to use for any purposes, and in perpetuity. Digital photographs or scans should have a resolution of at least 2048 × 1536, but if you have good, clear prints or slides, we can digitize and return these. Please identify all the people shown in photographs and date the photographs as closely as you can.

We hope members may offer enough good images to provide a display at the AGM at Nostell Priory in November and later on the website. Please send images by the middle of September to Sarah Medlam, 25B Durham Terrace, London W2 5PB, or to [skmedlam@gmail.com](mailto:skmedlam@gmail.com)

#### A VERY ROYAL PERQUISITE; THE EVENTFUL LIFE OF GEORGE I'S CORONATION THRONE

This year marks the three-hundredth anniversary of George I's coronation on 20 October 1714. Several exhibitions, both in London and Hanover, commemorate the Hanoverian Succession. Spread across five historic sites, including the re-built Schloss Herrenhausen, the 'Landesausstellung' (state exhibition) in Hanover explores the rise of the Hanoverian dynasty as well as the political, economic and cultural relations between Britain and Hanover during the 123 years of the so-called 'Personal Union'.<sup>1</sup> While new presentations of the Georgian apartments at Kensington, Kew and Hampton Court Palace tell many stories surrounding the Hanoverians' personal life in their original historic setting, The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace offers a survey of the art and cultural patronage of George I, George II, Queen Caroline and Frederick, Prince of Wales.<sup>2</sup>

In 2005, Adam Bowett published a comprehensive study on George I's coronation throne supplied by the joiner Richard Roberts, whose workshop bore the appropriate name 'The Royal Chair' (fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> This exquisitely carved gilt-wood chair, surmounted by the king's cipher, flanked by three-dimensional royal supporters, was first sold at Sotheby's, London in 1987, and then, once again at Sotheby's, in 1991.<sup>4</sup> It is presumably the continental quality and the boldness of the sculptural elements, in combination with the heraldic hint at George I, which led its 1987 cataloguers to believe it was of European, probably Hanoverian manufacture. Bowett has since unveiled the mystery around the magnificent throne as he was able to trace it to a warrant issued by the Duke of Montagu in his capacity of Master of the Great Wardrobe as well as Richard Roberts' ensuing bill:

For a very rich Chair of State frame the Top of the back finely Carved with a Lyon & Unicorn, Sheild [sic], Cypher, Crown & Scepters, the lower part carved very rich & all gilt ... £ 17.0.0.<sup>5</sup>

The present note can offer but a humble addition to Bowett's meticulous research. In his article, he concludes that although the chair appears first to have been consigned from a continental — presumably German — collection, 'the immediate provenance before being placed on the London art market ... throws no light on the history of the chair since 1714.'<sup>6</sup> He puts forward the possibility that the chair could have been sent to Germany either 'as a perquisite by a Hanoverian courtier or possibly by George I himself.'<sup>7</sup>

Bowett's assumption proves to have been correct. Baroness Sophia Charlotte von Kielmansegg, née Countess von Platen-Hallermund (1675–1725) was George I's half-sister, born to his father the Elector Ernst August of Hanover and his mistress, Countess Sophia von Platen-Hallermund. Her husband was Baron Johann Adolph von Kielmansegg (1668–1717), a Hanoverian courtier, who had the unofficial British Royal Household appointment of Deputy Master of the Horse. The King was fond of Sophia, and in the absence of a Queen Consort, she held an unusually prominent position in the new royal household. Madame Kielmansegg, as she was often known, had apartments refitted for her at St James's Palace close to the king's — an enterprise in which Richard Roberts was extensively involved, although for negligible sums, as the costs were primarily spent on textiles.<sup>8</sup> Baron Kielmansegg similarly breached English constitutional niceties as a German because of his loyalty to the king and the important role he played in the organising the processions attendant on George I's arrival and his coronation service at Westminster Abbey. So it is not entirely surprising to discover in the Kielmansegg family chronicles as well as The National Archives that the couple subsequently received, as royal perquisites, both the coronation throne and the parchment of the king's first speech after being crowned.<sup>9</sup> In many ways, the Baron repaid his George I's generous gift a few years later when in 1717 he footed the bill for George Frideric Handel's celebrated Water Music for the Thames river pageant that the couple organised in honour of the king.<sup>10</sup>

The king's throne was an extraordinary perquisite, since these were traditionally the preserve of the hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain, and most important furnishings were taken when no longer needed by the Lord Chamberlain or the Groom of the Stool, (a post which incidentally, George I deferred appointing). The king was limited by Parliament in the number of Germans that were allowed to accompany him to England, and the ways in which he could reward them. More specifically, he was not permitted to hand out senior court posts to his Hanoverian retinue. In this light, such an unusual and personal gift, previously unnoticed, could therefore be regarded as being politically motivated.



*Fig. 1 Richard Roberts, George I's Coronation Throne, 1714 (private collection)*

However, this exceptional perquisite was only one among dozens of good quality pieces of furniture provided to the King's closest German courtiers through the royal makers managed by the Wardrobe. If they could not receive salaries from the Civil List they certainly were appointed very comfortable lodgings close to the seat of power.<sup>11</sup> For example early in the new reign, at St James's the king's acknowledged mistress, Madame Schulenburg, was provided with a crimson damask bed with requisite seat furniture and her new bedchamber had a parquet floor. This was a distinctly European feature, rarely found in English palaces and clearly intended for a person of great rank even though she had no formal role.<sup>12</sup> A year later the King's companion was given her own house at St James's, which took its name from a more infamous royal mistress, Charles II's Duchess of Cleveland. An inventory of furniture supplied and hired for this house survives, suggesting perhaps an impromptu arrangement, as notably it is the more costly upholstery which was loaned. This gives the impression of quite a substantial home, fashionably, but not extravagantly furnished.<sup>13</sup> Besides these two important women in the King's somewhat atypical household, another Hanoverian recipient of the Royal Wardrobe's largesse was Grand Marshall, Baron von Hattorf, the King's German cabinet secretary. He was given a large apartment in the Earl of Oxford's former St James's home, for which there is a furnishing account for the enormous sum of £2,035. This provides further fascinating insight into a serving courtier's apartment.<sup>14</sup>

The later history of George I's coronation throne is just as fascinating. Amongst other treasured objects, such as an apparently lost chair cover embroidered by Electress Sophia of Hanover herself and presented to her god-daughter Sophia Charlotte von Kielmansegg in 1711,<sup>15</sup> the throne remained preserved in the Kielmansegg collection throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and for the beginning of the twentieth. Two early twentieth-century photographs in the Kielmansegg family archives show the throne at Schloss Gülzow (an estate that belonged to the family from 1736 to 1930) and possibly in a flat in Hamburg (figs 2 and 3). It may be that the chair was moved from Gülzow to

*Fig. 2 (below) George I's Coronation Throne at Schloss Gülzow, historic photograph, c.1900–30*

*Fig. 3 (right) George I's Coronation Throne, probably in Hamburg, historic photograph, c.1930s–40s*





Hamburg in 1930, after Count Karl von Kielmansegg's (1871–1953) financial situation forced him to sell the estate. Bowett discovered three stamps on the chair's frame, one of which reads 'Hamburg' that may therefore date from this movement (fig. 4).<sup>16</sup> George I's throne could have survived the upheavals of the Second World War inside the flat in Hamburg, for the building where it was located was one of the few not to have been destroyed by the bombing of the city in the summer of 1943.

Owing to the somewhat picturesque contrast between its scale and opulence, and the domesticity of the interiors where the two photographs were taken, the throne chair looks evidently 'out of place', having been designed originally as the focal point of a solemn ritual in the architectural vastness of Westminster Abbey. The most circulated print showing George I's coronation (fig. 5) features a vast throne at the centre of the background, which unfortunately does not bear much resemblance to Richard Robert's chair and is likely to be the mere invention of the print-maker — indeed, the rendition of the Abbey itself is far from accurate.

It would appear that, in contrast to his son, later George II, George I met grand state ceremonies with utmost reservation. Lord Hervey noted: 'all the pageantry and splendour, badges and trappings of royalty, were as pleasing to the son as they were irksome to the father.'<sup>17</sup> Hence, compared to the spectacle that was George II's and Queen Caroline's coronation of 1727, George I's was a simple one.<sup>18</sup> The latter's attempts not to stand out by emphasising continuity with his royal predecessors may provide further explanation to the stylistic similarities between George I's throne discussed here and Queen Anne's supplied by Thomas Roberts — Richard Roberts supposed father — today in the collection of the Marquess of Salisbury at Hatfield House.<sup>19</sup>

Royal thrones continue to be an object of fascination. Hugh Roberts' ground-breaking articles 'Royal Thrones' (1989) and 'Thrones re-visited' (2007) have shed light on the manifold complexities entailed in the study of these unique pieces of furniture, ranging from understanding the administrative mechanisms behind their commissioning to their value as most prestigious perquisites.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, it is their physical splendour, the



Fig. 4 Detail of the stamp



Fig. 5 After Peter Schenck the Younger, King George I's Coronation at Westminster Abbey, 1714, RCIN 750369, Royal Collection Trust 2014 © Her Majesty The Queen



craftsmanship behind their rich carvings, gilding and often lavish upholstery (although some thrones were in fact made on the cheap), paired with their symbolic and ceremonial importance, that make them both intriguing and challenging objects of research — as recently demonstrated in an exhibition at Versailles.<sup>21</sup> None of the exhibitions commemorating the tercentenary of the Hanoverians' arrival in Britain features a throne chair. However, no other physical object — not even the 1714 crown frame, which is the centre piece of the 'Landesausstellung' in Hanover — could symbolise better George I's accession to the British Throne than the throne itself. It therefore seems appropriate to remind oneself of this exceptional piece of furniture and its unusual fate.

Wolf Burchard and Sebastian Edwards

Acknowledgements: we are very grateful to Count and Countess Nikolaus von Kielmansegg for generously sharing their photographs and knowledge of George I's throne chair. For their help and scholarly advice we would also like to thank Rufus Bird, Adam Bowett, Sarah Medlam, Sir Hugh Roberts, Bryn Sayles and Lucy Wood.

<sup>1</sup> Katja Lembke (ed.), *Hannovers Herrscher auf Englands Thron* (ex. cat.), Hanover 2014 (English edition: *The Hanoverians on Britain's Throne*).

<sup>2</sup> Desmond Shawe-Taylor (ed.), *The First Georgians: Art & Monarchy, 1714–1760* (ex. cat.), London 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Adam Bowett, 'George I's Coronation Throne', *Apollo* vol. CLXI, no. 515 (January 2005), pp. 42–7; see also Adam Bowett, *Early Georgian Furniture, 1715–1740*, London 2009, pp. 146–7.

<sup>4</sup> *Important Continental Furniture*, Sotheby's London, 22 May 1987, lot. 43 and *Important English Furniture*, Sotheby's London, 15 November 1991, lot. 45.

<sup>5</sup> TNA, LC 2/20 (1) quoted in Bowett 2005, p. 45 (op. cit.).

<sup>6</sup> Bowett 2005, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Bowett 2004, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> See forthcoming: Rufus Bird, 'The furniture and furnishing of St James's Palace, 1714–1715', *Furniture History* LXIX (2014); for further furnishing campaigns under the early Hanoverians, see Rufus Bird, 'Furniture and Interiors in the Royal Palaces, 1714–1760' in *The First Georgians* 2014 (op. cit., 1), pp. 167–79.

<sup>9</sup> Erich Graf von Kielmansegg, *Familienchronik der Herren, Freiherren und Grafen von Kielmansegg*, 2nd Edition, Wien 1910, p. 454, and The National Archives, LC 5/156 p.34

<sup>10</sup> Jacob Simon, editor, *Handel, A Celebration of his Life and Times 1685–1759*, National Portrait Gallery, London 1985, pp. 95–6.

<sup>11</sup> See Bird, *Furniture History* (2014).

<sup>12</sup> TNA, LC 5/156 f.33v., 134.

<sup>13</sup> TNA LC 5/127 no. 90.

<sup>14</sup> TNA. LC 5/127 no. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Kielmansegg 1910, p. 450.

<sup>16</sup> Bowett 2005, p. 44, note 3.

<sup>17</sup> John Hervey, *Some Materials towards Memoirs of the Reign of George II*, 3 vols, ed. Romney Sedgwick, vol. I, London 1931, p. 66 cited in Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714–1760*, Cambridge 2006, p. 100.

<sup>18</sup> Shirley Bury, 'The Coronation from the Restoration of the Monarchy to 1953, George I, 1714–27' in Claude Bair (ed.), *The Crown Jewels: The History of the Coronation Regalia in the Jewel House of the Tower of London*, London 1998, pp. 463–72; for a contemporary German account see: Johann Christian Lünig, 'Nachricht von der solennen Crönung König Georgens des I. in Groß-Britannien, de Anno 1714' in *Theatrum Ceremoniale Historico-Politicum Oder Historisch- und Politischer Schau=Platz Aller Ceremonien*, Leipzig, 1719, pp. 1378–84 and the very brief description in the *Mercure Galant* (November 1714), p. 148–52.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Medlam, 'Chair of state and footstool used at the coronation of Queen Anne' in Michael Snodin and Nigel Llewellyn (ed.), *Baroque, 1620–1800. Style in the Age of Magnificence* (ex. cat.), London 2009, no. 148, pp. 350–1.

<sup>20</sup> Hugh Roberts, 'Royal Thrones, 1760–1840', *Furniture History* XXV (1989), pp. 61–85 and 'Thrones Revisited', *Furniture History* XLIII (2007), pp. 43–54.

<sup>21</sup> Jacques Charles-Gaffiot, *Trônes en Majesté: l'Autorité et son symbole* (cat.), Paris 2011.

## 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, Herts., AL2 3XD, Tel. 07775 907390 enclosing a separate cheque and separate stamped A5 addressed envelope for each event using the enclosed booking form. There is no need to send an SAE if you provide a clearly-written e-mail address as where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched by e-mail. NB. PLEASE NOTE THE EVENTS E-MAIL ADDRESS: [events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:events@furniturehistorysociety.org)

Applications should only be made by members who intend to take part in the whole programme. No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting list please enclose a telephone number where you can be reached. Please note that a closing date for applications for visits is printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available. Members are reminded that places are not allocated on a first come, first served basis, but that all applications are equally considered following the closing date for applications.

There is now an extra facility on the website for members to express interest in certain events and then pay, if assigned a place after the closing date (where this is applicable). This is now possible for all day events and the Annual Symposium. If you have no on-line facility or are uneasy about using this new procedure, please just use the blue form as usual or e-mail [events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:events@furniturehistorysociety.org). WHERE POSSIBLE, JOINING INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE DESPATCHED BY E-MAIL SO PLEASE REMEMBER TO PROVIDE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS IF YOU HAVE ONE.

### 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 £5.00 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 they cancel 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 eg. 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.







## OTHER NOTICE

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

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF ATTINGHAM ANNUAL FALL LECTURE: THE IRISH TREASURE HOUSE COMES TO AMERICA, Christopher P. Monkhouse

22 September 2014, The Union League Club, 38 East 37th St, New York City

Join Attingham alumni and friends for a special evening featuring Christopher P. Monkhouse, curator of the upcoming landmark exhibition *Ireland: Art on a World Stage, 1690–1840* at the Art Institute of Chicago. For further details see [www.americanfriendsofattingham.org](http://www.americanfriendsofattingham.org)

CONFERENCE: *The Period Room: Museum, Material, Experience*

18–20 September 2014

The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham

This conference, jointly organised by the University of Leeds and The Bowes Museum, and supported by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, considers the Period Room, and the historic interior, from a wide variety of perspectives in order to address some key questions about the history and practice of Period Room displays in Museums. The conference has an interdisciplinary framework incorporating theoretical and practice-based perspectives. It brings together leading academics and museum professionals from a wide range of institutions in the UK, Europe and the USA, to discuss, debate and share perspectives on the history and interpretation of Period Rooms and historic interiors in museums.

Conference speakers include museum professionals from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Minneapolis Institute of Art; New Orleans Museum of Art; National

Museums, Scotland; Historic Royal Palaces; The Science Museum, London; The Jewish Museum, Vienna, and the Universalmuseum Joannneum, Graz, as well as academics from University of Cambridge; University of Ghent; KTH Royal Institute, Stockholm; De Montfort University; University of Durham; Open University; University of Potsdam; University of Southampton.

Included in the conference fees are:

Presentations on the innovative methods of display and interpretation of the English Interiors Galleries at The Bowes Museum, led by senior curators.

An organised field trip to Auckland Castle.

Evening wine receptions at both The Bowes Museum and Auckland Castle.

The full conference programme and costs are available via The Bowes Museum website: [www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk](http://www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk)

For further information, or to request a booking form please contact Rosie Bradford at The Bowes Museum by email: [ThePeriodRoom@thebowesmuseum.org.uk](mailto:ThePeriodRoom@thebowesmuseum.org.uk) or by telephone: 01833 694615.

### SPECIAL OFFER TO FHS MEMBERS

*Bertrand's Toyshop in Bath: Luxury Retailing 1685–1765*, Vanessa Brett's new book, is being offered at the reduced price of £40 (normally £48) to FHS members for two months. Vanessa's article about Le Normand's remarkable featherwork was included in last February's *Newsletter*. For further details see the enclosed leaflet or contact Oblong Creative, <http://www.oblongcreative.co.uk>

### BOOK REVIEWS

Suggestions for future reviews and publishers' review copies should be sent to Simon Swynfen Jervis, 45 Bedford Gardens, London W8 7EF, tel. 020 7727 8739. Email: [ss.jervis@btopenworld.com](mailto:ss.jervis@btopenworld.com)

Barrie and Wendy Armstrong, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the North East of England: A Handbook* and *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Yorkshire: A Handbook* (Wetherby, Oblong Creative Ltd for the authors), 304 & 424 pp., 360 & 535 col. illus. ISBN 978 0 9575992 1 5 & 978 0 9575992 2 2, £21 & £25, or £42 if ordered together.

Fifteen years ago Barrie and Wendy Armstrong set out to record anything of Arts and Crafts design in their local area, the North West of England, publishing their findings as an illustrated guide in 2005. Hooked by the pleasures of the chase they embarked on a matching volume for the north-eastern counties but found so much material that in 2013 they produced two books, on the North East and Yorkshire. Primarily covering domestic and ecclesiastical architecture and the crafts associated with building, these detailed and exceptionally well-illustrated handbooks will be invaluable guides to anyone touring the areas concerned (and will surely tempt some of us to visit specially), but they also reward the reader interested in the Arts and Crafts Movement as a whole.

Each gives an introduction to the region and describes the research undertaken in libraries, record offices and museums, as well as through personal observation. The Armstrongs have a very good eye for art of the period and worked systematically across the area noting, photographing and writing up in a lively Pevsnerian style that conveys



their enthusiasm and their desire to engage others in this field of study. A particular strength is their coverage of little-known provincial architects and firms as well as the big names, both via examples of their work and in short, well-documented biographies which are a welcome addition since their first volume. As they say themselves the authors interpret the term 'Arts and Crafts' broadly, but what they have achieved through their discussion, listings, brief lives and appendices outlining the main characteristics of individuals and organisations in the Movement is a real contribution to the literature. Of particular interest to me is their unearthing of printed ephemera from local Arts and Crafts societies, revealing a pattern of activity like that found in Scotland as the Movement spread more widely after 1900.

These books are a tour de force of organisation and Oblong has done an excellent job on the design, producing sturdy volumes on quality paper with excellent colour reproduction. They are exceptionally good value for money, especially if you buy the two together (895 colour images for £42). Because of its movability furniture is not the central concern, but the architectural images provide a context for furniture of the period and there are enough entries for woodwork and carving by, among others, Bedford & Kitson, Bromet & Thorman, Beatrice Carpenter, George Jack, Harry Jackson, Joseph Phillips, H. I. Potter, John Sedding, Norman Shaw, Robert Thompson, George Walton, Randall Wells and Edgar Wood — and several amateur carving classes — to satisfy most furniture enthusiasts. Certainly they are essential reading for anyone interested in architecture and design of the period c. 1860–1940 and they are bound to inspire further research. I only hope that now the Armstrongs are at a loose end they might turn their eyes northwards and think about a matching volume for Scotland.

Annette Carruthers

Lesley Jackson, *Ercol, Furniture in the Making*, Richard Dennis Publications, Shepton Beauchamp, 2013, 192pp, over 400 colour and b&w illus. ISBN 978 09553741 97. £25

Lesley Jackson, *Modern British Furniture Design Since 1945*, V&A Publishing, London, 2013, 336pp, 353 colour and b&w illus. ISBN 978 1 8177 759 4. £40

In these two books by the same author, the tensions between tradition and modernity, craftsmanship and industry, and notions of Britishness and foreign influence are seen to be defining influences on British furniture design since the middle of the twentieth century. Lesley Jackson is very well-qualified to write about the subject since she has previously published widely and curated exhibitions about aspects of twentieth-century and contemporary design.

In her book about the High Wycombe furniture manufacturer Ercol, Jackson emphasises how much the company reflected the character of its charismatic founder Luciano Ercolani, a passionate and driven Italian who moved to England with his family when he was ten years old, in 1898. Poorly educated and with scant English, he nevertheless learned joinery in the Salvation Army's Stepney workshops. This led him to Parker Knoll in High Wycombe, and then to E. Gomme in the same town, before founding his own business, Furniture Industries, in 1920. In 1923 Luciano visited New York where he had a memorable encounter with Shaker furniture in the Metropolitan Museum: 'I was struck by how beautiful and satisfying a thing can be without adornment of any kind', he recalled 'Would it were possible to convince people that if they work honestly and follow the purest ideas, they are themselves on the threshold of creating work that will live for all time.' These were the same values he found expressed in the Windsor chair tradition of High Wycombe and English vernacular furniture from broadly the eighteenth century onwards, that came to be the distinctive character of his own furniture.

Ercolani changed the name of his company to Ercol in 1928. Jackson discusses in great depth the ranges of furniture produced by Ercol from this date, emphasising how Luciano Ercolani, later abetted by his family, industrialised handmade Windsor chairs for mass-production, often designing their own tools and jigs to do so. The company's big breakthrough was the production of wartime Utility furniture (Ercolani enthusiastically described the scheme as 'the greatest movement which has ever taken place in any country in trade.'). The author makes excellent use of period photographs of the Ercol factory and company archives and she confidently mixes business history, trade data, biography and detailed descriptions of the furniture ranges to give us a rich impression of the company and its wares.

We even meet the ERCOLion, a comedic graphic emblem for Ercol's advertising inspired by Ercolani himself. The lion, of course, implies a sense of Britishness too, and Jackson eloquently discusses the relationship of Ercol to British furniture traditions, as well as how central the firm's products were to forging contemporary taste in the postwar decades. By its 1960s heyday the Ercol plant covered twelve acres and was capable of producing 2000 pieces of furniture a day — a chair every ten seconds (a challenge only the most advanced injection moulding techniques can match even today). Although the firm's fortunes have declined since then it remains resilient, largely due to a renewed interest in mid-twentieth-century taste. *Ercol, Furniture in the Making* is dense but beautifully presented, eloquently written and provides a very timely reappraisal of what was evidently a key player in twentieth-century British furniture.

Jackson's other book surveys British furniture design since 1945 in three chronological sections. Each section is prefaced with an overview essay before in-depth case studies of designers (and where appropriate, manufacturers, including Ercol). The work is extremely prescient because, as Jackson points out, British furniture in the period 1945 to 1980 has been woefully neglected, almost to the point of invisibility. Initiated by the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers, and published by the V&A, the book focuses mostly on furniture designed for production and makes great use of the V&A's own extensive collection, much of which I think must have been photographed specially. It can be a little unclear whether we are reading about furniture *design* or the furniture manufacturing *industry* and at times their relationship is closer or more distant. As with her Ercol book, Jackson blends business history with trade data and makes excellent use of advertising and catalogue imagery giving the book depth and authority.

If I have any small qualm about both books it would be the absence any account of consumers using any of the furniture. Since her chief interest is furniture designed for everyday use, Jackson seldom, if ever, introduces the people who bought Ercol, or shows us their homes. She very thoroughly considers all aspects of the context in which this furniture was designed, made and sold, and the influences of the designers' own personalities, but that is only the beginning of the story. Perhaps there is now scope to build on the approach of these two fine books to learn what happened to the furniture that left Ercol and other factories or workshops, during its useful life.

Gareth Williams

Charles E. Mac Kay, *Shavings for Breakfast, The History of the Morris Furniture Company, Glasgow (1884–1975)*, Glasgow, 2013. Paperback, viii + 192 pp., 15 col., 286 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-0-9573443-1-0. £12.95.

This small and idiosyncratic book recounts the history of a firm still thriving as the Morris Furniture Group, from its foundation by the Russian-born Harris Morris to its incorporation in Newcastle on Tyne in about 1906 and definitive move to Glasgow in 1914, to 1975,

the year before Neil Morris, who had taken over from his father after the latter's death in 1946, retired. Mac Kay was in close contact with Neil Morris up to his death in 1995, and his own interests are focussed on the firm's heavy involvement in aviation during the Second World War, an important episode which echoes many of the themes discussed in Christopher Wilk's Annual Lecture, 'Plywood, the material that dare not speak its name' last October, and which occupies at least half the book. However he also gives an account of much outfitting of hotels, among them Gleneagles and the Strand Palace, and ocean liners, including the Queens Mary and Elizabeth, a major contribution to the Utility scheme, and, after the war, a design collaboration between Neil Morris, who had himself designed the 'Cumbrae' range in 1948, and Basil Spence on the 'Allegro' range in 1949, and many other innovatory initiatives. Although there is neither index, bibliography nor references, Mac Kay supplies a useful survey of his sources, and historians of twentieth century British furniture will find many clues among his *Shavings* worth following up.

S. S. J.















## 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 enquiries about Grant applications to the Tom Ingram Memorial Fund or Oliver Ford Trust should be addressed to Clarissa Ward, Secretary FHS Grants Committee, 25 Wardo Avenue, London SW6 6RA, email [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org), or the application form can be downloaded from the Grants page of the Society's website, [www.furniturehistorysociety.org](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org).

The FHS Grants Committee will now be meet quarterly per annum to consider all grant applications, either for independent travel/incidental expenses for the purpose of study 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 considered at these meetings:

March 10, June 10, September 10 or December 10.

## 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 Elizabeth Jamieson [ea.jamieson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ea.jamieson@tiscali.co.uk) or posted to Elizabeth Jamieson, 10 Tarleton Gardens, Forest Hill, London SE23 3XN.

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