

The Furniture History Society

# Newsletter 202

May 2016



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# Simplicity and Comfort: Late Eighteenth-Century Furniture for Chiswick House

On 2 March, English Heritage acquired at auction a pair of George III painted beech armchairs, with cane backs and seats, for the collection at Chiswick House (Fig. 1). The chairs were part of the furnishings and objects that accompanied Deborah, Duchess of Devonshire (1920–2014) when she moved from Chatsworth to her last home, The Old Vicarage at Edensor on the Chatsworth estate. However, the labels beneath the

back rails of the seats, neatly printed with room names 'Gallery' and 'West Saloon', provide the first clue to their original location in the Devonshires' Thames-side villa, Chiswick House.

The armchairs, which formed part of a large suite with matching side chairs (Fig. 2), were first recorded at Chiswick House in an inventory taken in 1811.<sup>1</sup> For example, in the 'Salloon West of Dome' there were '2 White and Gold Elbow



Fig. 1 The beech and cane armchairs, with later decoration, acquired by English Heritage from Sotheby's *Deborah, Duchess of Devonshire: The Last of the Mitford Sisters* sale. Image courtesy of Sotheby's



Fig. 2 One of four parcel-gilt and painted beechwood side chairs, with cane backs and seats. Acquired by English Heritage in 2010, and conserved by Tankerdale Ltd, with the special assistance of The Art Fund, the Chiswick House Friends and The Pilgrim Trust

Chairs with cane back and seat, Cushions and Chints Callico cases'. They can then be tracked through the subsequent nineteenth-century inventories taken in 1863, 1869 and 1892. Although the side chairs can be glimpsed in watercolours of the Gallery and West Saloon painted in the 1820s by William Henry Hunt (now at Chatsworth), the first and clear visual record of the armchairs is a set of photographs of the principal rooms taken in about 1890 (Fig. 3).<sup>2</sup> These photographs show the interiors of Chiswick not long before the collections were dispersed to other Devonshire properties. The chairs were probably ordered by the 5th Duke of Devonshire (1748–1811) and his wife Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire

(1757–1806), as part of their major building and redecoration works at Chiswick. The 5th Duke transformed Lord Burlington's villa into a substantial house, adding flanking three-storey wings to the east and west, the fabric of which was in place by 21 October 1790 when they were described in an insurance policy.<sup>3</sup>

The first floor of the West Wing was divided into two large rooms, which were used as a Dining Room and Drawing Room. The East Wing incorporated Lord Burlington's 'Link' building, which once joined the villa to his Jacobean house, now used as the Duke's Dressing Room. It also provided two new rooms, the Duke's Chamber and the Duchess's Dressing Room (the latter called the Blue Room in the 1811 inventory). The wings were joined to the original villa by top-lit vestibules — described simply as Ante-Rooms in 1790 but called the West and East Saloon by 1811 — as well as a pair of Portland stone staircases. The ground floor of the wings provided additional servants' space, and on the third floor there were bed and dressing rooms.

It is particularly interesting that the chairs have been described as possibly designed by the architect, James Wyatt (1746–1813).<sup>4</sup> Wyatt's larger involvement with the design and decoration of the Chiswick wings has been much debated. In 1794, when the improvements to Chiswick were still under way, John Bew



Fig. 3 View of the West Saloon, Chiswick House, c. 1890, showing three of the beech and cane armchairs *in situ* together with the low satinwood bookshelves, which the 5th Duke and Duchess of Devonshire had fitted around the room. The striking marble statue of the 'Veiled Vestal Virgin' by Raffaello Monti (now at Chatsworth) was made in 1846–47, and is part of the 6th Duke of Devonshire's additions to Chiswick House. Reproduced by permission of Historic England

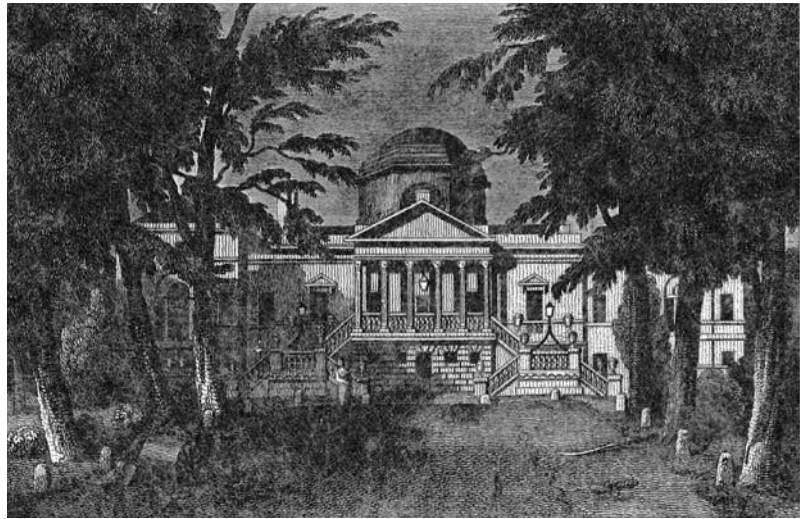
wrote in the 7th edition of the London pocket companion, the *Ambulator*, that 'Two wings have been added to the house, from the designs of Mr Wyatt', an attribution that was frequently repeated in published descriptions of the house. The 5th Duke employed Wyatt as Surveyor from 1774 to 1796, and he carried out the redecoration of the Duke's central London property, Devonshire House.

However, as early as 1837 this attribution was questioned at a meeting of the Institute of British Architects, and the wings reattributed to the surveyor, architect and property developer, John

White (1747–1813). As the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported in August 1837, they had received amongst some donations 'an original measured drawing of Chiswick House, the well-known seat of the Duke of Devonshire'. In a conversation which ensued, it was stated that the wings to the mansion were not added by Wyatt, as generally supposed, but by Mr White, 'an architect of the last century'.

White's sketchbook remains in the RIBA's collections and contains plans of Chiswick House.<sup>5</sup> These plans could be surveys of an existing building (White was employed as surveyor by the 5th Duke in

Fig. 4 Chiswick House in 1815



1796), but they are accompanied by detailed accounts of the work undertaken by the bricklayers, slaters, masons, carpenters, joiners and plasterers during the construction of the 'New Wings'. Only the bricklayer's bills are dated, 1790 and 1791, but the names of the same craftsmen appear in the Household Accounts for Chiswick in the early 1790s.<sup>6</sup> It seems probable that both Wyatt and White were involved at Chiswick. James Anderson's research into 'An Early Scheme for Marylebone Park and the New Street to Carlton House' makes the argument for another Wyatt-White collaboration, and also notes that they both worked for the 3rd Duke of Portland (the Duke of Devonshire's brother-in-law).<sup>7</sup>

The reactions to the wing buildings were mixed. Bew accepted that the wings

will remove the objections that have been made to the house, as more fanciful and beautiful, than convenient and habitable, but they seem to be too close to the centre, too large in proportion to it, and perhaps, too elegantly simple to appear as corresponding parts.

However, others praised their simplicity as well as the space and comfort that the interiors offered. J. Norris Brewer, writing in *The Beauties of England and Wales*, commented in 1816 that 'By the late additions, comfort and accommodation are united to elegance of display', while J. P. Neale in *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen* in 1829 observed, 'the fitting up of the wings is of a more simple character: the rooms are, however, larger and more adapted for comfort'.

The 1811 Inventory helps us to build up a picture of the late eighteenth-century decorative scheme, providing a context for the suite of chairs. With their original white paint and gilt decoration still detectable beneath later paint layers on four of the side chairs, they would have harmonised with other elements of the interiors. Both the Blue Room and the Drawing Room, for example, had chimney glasses and pier glasses with white and gold frames, as well as pairs of white and gold fire screens. Chintz, used for the cases of the chair cushions, predominated. It

was used widely for the seat furniture, including two sets of 'Turkish couches' in the Drawing Room, bed furniture for both the Duke and Duchess's beds, and window curtains in many of the rooms, which were lined with pink calico or green silk.

One of the striking features of the interiors was the sheer quantity of bookshelves. Predominantly made of mahogany or satinwood with marble tops and brass galleries, they were fitted around the rooms, in the window recesses and (in the small circular room which terminates the west end of the Gallery) fitted into the blank doors. For example, in the West Saloon, there were 'the open Sattinwood Book-shelves fitted up in 8 pieces round the Room', while in the East Saloon, in addition to a set of bookshelves, there were '4 Sattinwood Cases and shelves with plate Glass doors and tops for Minerals fitted to the Window, Angles of the Room &c.'. The Duchess's collections of minerals and shells were also displayed in a mahogany glass case and two sets of satinwood shelves with plate-glass tops in the Mineral Closet adjoining the Blue Room (originally the Duchess's Dressing Room).

The majority of the bookshelves were low, leaving wall space to display the large collection of paintings inherited from Lord Burlington. The paintings were taken down and put in packing cases until the improvements to Chiswick were finished. Extensive cleaning and repairs, partly carried out by the picture restorer Benjamin Vandergucht, as well as the re-gilding of picture frames, was required.

As with their alterations to the Private Apartments at Chatsworth in the 1770s and early 1780s, the new furnishings at Chiswick reflected the 5th Duke and Duchess's French taste.<sup>8</sup> The rooms were furnished with French *fauteuils*, made by one of the leading *menuisiers* in Paris, Jean-Baptiste Tilliard, and French clocks on marble columns and pedestals, while the majority of the windows were hung with 'French drapery Rod window curtains'. John White's accounts for the masons' work, carried out by Robert Ashton & Son, make a tantalising reference to 'Mr De Guerre' in relation to alterations to the chimneypieces, suggesting that, perhaps, as at Carlton House for the Prince of Wales, the French *marchand-mercier*, Dominique Daguerre, was providing instructions.

The Household Accounts for 1793–96 record a flurry of activity at Chiswick, and list many of the same London craftsmen utilised either at Chatsworth or by members of the Duke and Duchess's immediate social circle at Carlton House and Althorp (for the Duchess's brother, Lord Spencer). For example, the carver and gilder, Sefferin Nelson, supplied and gilded picture frames and frames for glasses; Walter Wilson, the cabinetmaker and upholsterer based on the Strand, provided furniture and carried out upholstery; Robson & Co., the paper-hangers of Piccadilly, not only hung paper in several rooms but also provided cornices and glass frames; Elward and Marsh, of Mount Street, carried out upholstery; and Richard Ovey, the linen draper from 22 Tavistock Street, provided calico for window curtains and for furniture.

The demolition of the wing buildings by the Ministry of Works in 1956 makes objects and archives essential to understanding the later phases of Chiswick House's history. After conservation, the armchairs will join four of the side chairs from the same suite, four of the parcel-gilt and painted beechwood *fauteuils* by Jean-Baptiste Tilliard (c. 1755–65) and a lady's roll-top writing desk (c. 1785) currently displayed in the Bedchamber and Closet at Chiswick.

These acquisitions have prompted my continuing research into the wing buildings, their interiors and use.

The Chatsworth archive material which informs this article is used by permission of the Duke of Devonshire and the Chatsworth House Trust.

DR ESMÉ WHITTAKER

*Curator (Collections),  
London & East, English Heritage*

- 1 Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth, CH36/5/4.
- 2 Historic England Archive.
- 3 Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth, L/114/10.
- 4 See Sotheby's catalogue for the Deborah, Duchess of Devonshire sale, London, 2 March 2016, pp. 114-15
- 5 RIBA British Architectural Library, SKB 407/2.
- 6 Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth, C/166.
- 7 *Architectural History*, 44 (2001), pp. 106-14.
- 8 Ivan Hall, 'A Neoclassical Episode at Chatsworth', *Burlington Magazine*, 122 (1980), pp. 400-14.

# Breaking News

## Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster

The Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, with its internationally important collection of Gillows furniture, has been given a six-month reprieve. The museum, which was threatened with closure on

31 March by Lancashire County Council, owing to funding cuts, will now stay open until 30 September. This will give the Friends of the Judges' Lodgings more time to establish and seek funding for an independent trust. Follow and support their efforts at Facebook Group page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/832655583420666/>.



Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster



## Annual Lecture 2016, Society of Antiquaries, London W1

MONDAY 31 OCTOBER 2016

Adam Bowett will speak on the subject of  
Gerrit Jensen.



Cabinet, veneered with floral marquetry,  
almost certainly by Gerrit Jensen, at Ham  
House, Surrey. © National Trust Images/  
John Hammond

## AGM, East India Club, London SW1

SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2016

**Please hold these dates in your diaries  
with further details to follow.**

## Subscriptions

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the  
Subscription Renewal Form for the year  
commencing 1 July 2016. If you have  
already signed up to pay by direct debit  
(only available to members with UK bank  
accounts) or by standing order, you need  
not take any further action. However, if  
you have not set up a direct debit or a  
standing order, please complete the  
renewal form, ensuring that you either  
forward a cheque payable to 'Furniture  
History Society' or complete your credit  
card details, and return it to: Finance &  
Membership Officer, Keith Nicholls, 37  
Railway Road, Teddington TW11 8SD.  
Keith's contact details are also on the back  
cover of this Newsletter.

There are still a significant number of  
members who have not paid their 2015/16  
subscription, or have paid at the old  
rate. If you are one of these, please arrange  
payment to the Finance & Membership  
Officer without delay.

The editors would like to apologise to  
members for the later than usual delivery  
of the February issue of the newsletter.

# Future Society Events

## Bookings

For places on visits please apply to the Events Secretary Anne-Marie Bannister, Bricket House, 90 Mount Pleasant Lane, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL2 3XD (tel. 07775 907390), with a separate cheque, using the enclosed booking form. Where possible, joining instructions will be despatched by email, **so please remember to provide your email address if you have one. There is no need to send an SAE if you provide a clearly written email address.**

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

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

## Cancellations

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £10.00 or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted up to seven days before the date of a visit, but refunds will be subject to a £10.00 deduction for administrative costs. Please note that in the rare instances where members cannot pay until the day of a visit, they will still be charged the full amount for the day if cancelling less than seven days before the visit, or if they fail to attend. This is necessary as the Society has usually paid in advance for a certain number of members to participate in, for example, a tour /lunch. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours, and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

# Study Trip to Suffolk

FRIDAY 14–SUNDAY 16 OCTOBER 2016

This three-day, two-night study weekend will be based at the Ufford Park Hotel near Woodbridge. Dr James Bettley will provide an introductory lecture to participants on the country houses of Suffolk, which he has recently studied for the new edition of Pevsner. The trip will feature a private visit to Helmingham Hall by kind

invitation of Lord and Lady Tollemache, and also a private dinner at the home of Stephen Calloway, formerly curator of paintings at the V&A. We will also visit some additional fine country houses, including Somerleyton Hall and Otley Hall, as well as a number of local churches with interesting woodwork.

The trip will be led by Dr Tessa Murdoch of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Please register your interest with the Events Secretary.



Helmingham Hall

# Occasional Visits

Deene Park, Corby,  
Northamptonshire  
NN17 3EW and Elton  
Hall, nr Peterborough,  
Cambridgeshire PE8 6SH

WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE 2016  
10.30 AM–4.30 PM APPROX.

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

Lady Lever Art Gallery,  
Queen Mary's Drive,  
Wirral, Merseyside  
CH62 5EQ

THURSDAY 7 JULY 2016  
10.30 AM–4.30 PM

The Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, was built between 1913 and 1922 to house the art collection of William Hesketh, 1st Viscount Leverhulme (1851-1925), and was dedicated to the memory of his wife. It houses not only a celebrated collection of paintings but one of the most significant collections of furniture outside London,

with particular strength in mid-eighteenth-century English furniture. The visit will be led by the former Curator of the Museum, Lucy Wood, who has published two enormously well-respected catalogues on commodes and on the upholstered furniture in the collection. Lucy will be handling and demonstrating the furniture to us in a day-long study session. This is a perfect opportunity for a visit to the gallery, which has recently completed a substantial refurbishment programme.

Please note the early closing date for this visit as successful applicants may need to book trains as soon as places are confirmed

COST: £60

LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 3 JUNE 2016



Lady Lever Art Gallery

Shardeloes, Missenden  
Road, Amersham,  
Buckinghamshire HP7  
ORL

TUESDAY 12 JULY 2016  
10.30 AM–3.30 PM

Work to build the present house at Shardeloes for William Drake began in 1758 to the Palladian plans of Stiff Leadbetter, Surveyor of St Pauls. Leadbetter died before the work was finished, and the project was redesigned in the new neo-classical taste and completed in 1766 by Robert Adam — the first country-house commission where he worked both inside and out. The original furniture and furnishings were supplied by Linnell, but pretty much all dispersed in sales from the 1880s to the 1950s, and the house itself was only narrowly saved

from the wrecking ball by being the first notable country house to be converted to flats in 1959.

FHS member Edward Copisarow has the Drawing Room, Library and Dressing Room within his apartment, and by entering through the Hall our visit will take in four of the five fine rooms in the house. The Library bookcases were altered in 1775 to designs of James Wyatt, but have not changed since, and, also from the eighteenth century, the drawing-room window cornices are now back *in situ* on kind loan. Otherwise, copies of Linnell drawings from the V&A, Adam drawings at Sir John Soane Museum and the RIBA archive, along with photos from *Country Life*, *The Connoisseur* and family albums dating from the 1870s to the present day, will all be displayed to show the way in which each room's furnishings have evolved over the last 250 years.

The current contents include a mixture of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian furniture, a collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century board and table games in the Library and a 1979 dining suite by John Makepeace in the Dressing Room.



Shardeloes

Riesener Study Day,  
Waddesdon Manor,  
Aylesbury,  
Buckinghamshire HP18 0JH

MONDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2016  
10.30 AM-4.30 PM



Waddesdon Manor

COST: £40

LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 17 JUNE 2016

In conjunction with the exhibition at Waddesdon Manor highlighting the work of Jean-Henri Riesener (see p. 18), staff at Waddesdon are offering members of the FHS the opportunity for a focused study day on these pieces. Dr Ulrich Leben, Research Curator, and Emily Roy, Curator, at Waddesdon, will lead members in a detailed examination of the commodes and a study of their construction, and royal history.

COST: £50, INCLUDING TEA/COFFEE  
ON ARRIVAL AND LUNCH

LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 15 JULY 2016

# Hinton Ampner, Alresford, Hampshire SO24 0LA and

particularly strong in works of the Baroque period. Dutton also created a stunning setting for his revived house, and the garden stands as one of the finest of the mid-twentieth century alongside Sissinghurst and Hidcote. James Rothwell, curator, will kindly lead members on this visit during closed hours.

WEDNESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2016  
10.30 AM–4.30 PM

Hinton Ampner was reconstructed after a devastating fire in 1961 by its connoisseur owner, Ralph Dutton. He proceeded to reassemble an impressive collection, which included Robert Adam mirrors and doorcases, fine Regency furniture, and the National Trust's best assemblage of hardstones, as well as Sèvres and other porcelain, and a picture collection



Hinton Ampner





# Overseas Visits

## Madrid and Environs

11–15 JUNE 2016

This trip was advertised in the November 2015 and February 2016 *Newsletters* and is now fully subscribed.

## Vienna

8–11 OCTOBER 2016

The FHS is organising a four-day study visit to Vienna. The Society will visit several imperial and princely palaces, as well as public and private collections. These will include Schloss Schönbrunn, the Hofmobiliendepot (the former Imperial wardrobe now furnishing the presidential palaces of the Republic of Austria) and the recently reopened decorative arts galleries at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

The visit is being organised by Dr Melanie Doderer-Winkler and Dr Wolf Burchard.

Work on this trip is in progress. Members may register their interest with the Events Secretary and information will be sent out when available.

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

The FHS Grants Committee now meet quarterly to consider all applications from members, to support their participation in **FHS foreign and UK study trips where the cost of a trip exceeds £45.**

Please contact Jo Norman at [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org) for further information and grant application forms.

# Other Notices

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

## Exhibition: *A Closer Look: Spotlight on French Royal Furniture by Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806)*

WADDESDON MANOR,  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
23 MARCH – 23 OCTOBER 2016

Waddesdon Manor houses three extraordinary chests-of-drawers by court cabinetmaker Jean-Henri Riesener, two of which belonged to members of the French Royal family. They are among twelve pieces of furniture now at Waddesdon that

were originally at the Palace of Versailles. This display will allow visitors to look closely at these chests-of-drawers and learn about their design, technical construction and fascinating history. The display will also include new digital interpretation.

## Conference: *The Artisans and Craft Production in Nineteenth-Century Scotland*

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2016

The conference fee is £20 (£12 for students). For a booking form and further information on speakers, see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/history-classics->



Jean-Henri Riesener,  
chest of drawers, 1778.  
Photo Jérôme Letellier  
© The National Trust,  
Waddesdon Manor

archaeology/news-events/events/  
artisans-conference. Janice Helland  
(Queens University, Ontario) will give a  
free public lecture as part of the conference  
on the preceding Wednesday 8 June.

## Conference: *Sensing Time: The Art & Science of Clocks and Watches*

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LYDIA  
& MANFRED GORVY LECTURE THEATRE  
SATURDAY 18 JUNE 2016  
10.00 AM–5.00 PM

Followed by a concert 'Music for Clocks'  
performed by Florilegium at the Foundling  
Museum from 6.00 pm–8.00 pm.

Booking via the V&A Website.

## Seminar: *Russian Arts and Crafts*

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM,  
CLOSE SEMINAR ROOM  
FRIDAY 24 JUNE 2016  
2.00 PM–5.30 PM

With guest speakers Dr Polly Blakesley and  
Cynthia Sparke, and with a study visit to  
the Europe 1800-1900 Gallery.

Booking via the V&A Website

## Study Day: *Strawberry Hill Furniture Study Day*

STRAWBERRY HILL, MIDDLESEX  
THURSDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2016  
9.30 AM–4.30 PM

Celebrating the acquisition of the  
Warburton Chair, a key piece of Walpole's  
collection, this study day will focus on the  
design and uses of antiquarian furniture at  
Strawberry Hill.

Speakers will explore the house's place  
in the broader history of antiquarian  
interiors, and the afterlife of Walpole's  
collection. Speakers will include Adam  
Bowett, Sarah Medlam and Silvia Davoli.  
The day will include a guided tour of the  
house, plus coffee, lunch and afternoon tea  
— all included in the ticket price. Full  
programme available on the website,  
<http://www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk>.

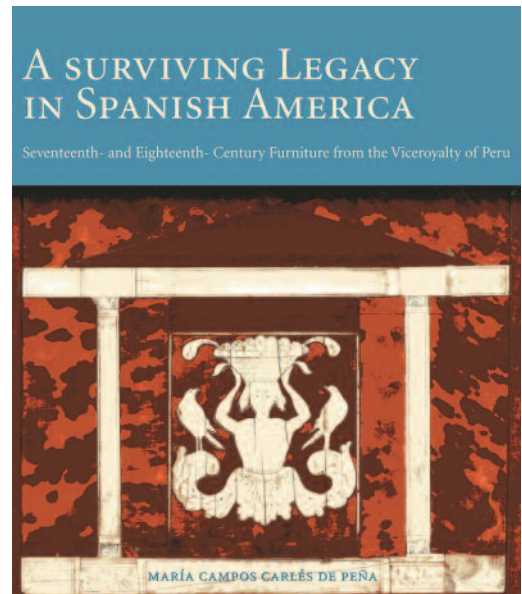
# Book Reviews

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, e-mail: ss.jervis@btopenworld.com).

MARÍA CAMPOS CARLÉS DE PEÑA,  
*A Surviving Legacy in Spanish America:  
Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Furniture  
from the Viceroyalty of Peru* (Madrid: Ediciones  
El Viso, 2013). xv + 443 pp., 560 col.,  
10 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-84-940061-0. €50

An unexpected and arguably anomalous feature of Christopher Gilbert's monumental 1978 Temple Newsam furniture catalogue was the group of over thirty Peruvian pieces collected in Lima from 1878 to 1909, given by Lady Margaret Ramsden in 1955. In 2011, these were deaccessioned and sold to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The very generously illustrated book under review embraces a much larger and wider representation of Peruvian furniture from the early seventeenth century to about 1800. Translated into an English which is usually serviceable, though sometimes uncertain, too much of the text is taken up with description after description of the pieces illustrated. The principal cities covered are Lima, founded in 1535, Trujillo, also 1535, Arequipa, 1540, and Cuzco, formerly the Inca capital; a modern map showing their location and that of other sites mentioned would have been useful. Given that

virtually all the movable furniture is undated and anonymous (the odd exceptions include a complex house altar inscribed with an indulgence dated 1771 and an elaborately crested armoire dated 1776, both rococo) and that most provenances are recent (the various Prado, including Prado Heudebert, collections were formed by that late nineteenth-century dynasty of bankers and politicians from about 1900 onwards), the fixed ecclesiastical monuments are particularly vital stylistic evidence. Many of these, choir-stalls, sacristy cupboards, pulpits and screenwork, are elaborate and splendid, and the great stalls in Lima Cathedral (1623–32) are documented as designed by the Sevillian, Martín Alonso de Mesa, who died in 1626, specified by



another Sevillian, Luis Ortiz de Vargas, who returned to Spain in 1627, and executed by the Barcelona-born Pedro de Noguera and his workshop. Much more such detail would help to underpin future research, as firm facts are everywhere lacking. A substantial Appendix detailing the political organisation of Peru before and after Pizarro's 1532 invasion is at too high a level and of limited relevance. Nonetheless, the availability of this



Desk and bookcase made in Lima, Peru, c. 1760-1810 © Victoria & Albert Museum

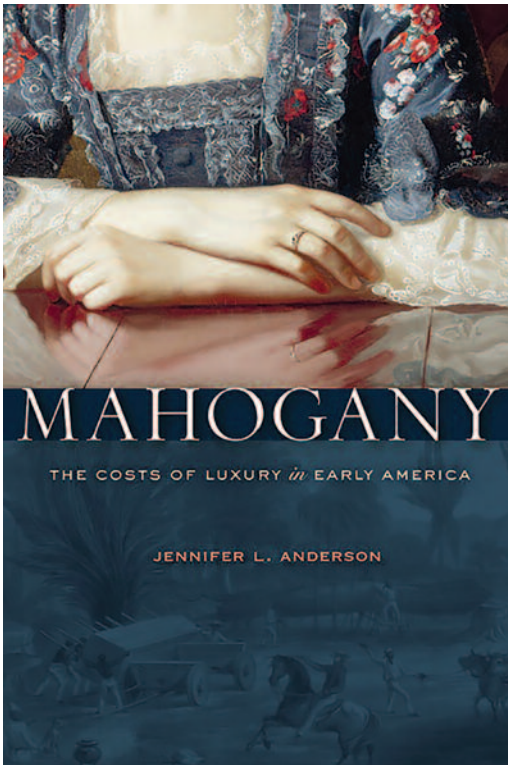
pioneering and kaleidoscopic corpus of images, organised into groups by style and /or materials and techniques (leather, a full chapter whose illustrations include two trunks (*petacas*) with names in fine Trajanic lettering, which must be identifiable), should be an inspiration to analysis and discovery. The transmission and influence of ornamental prints, including those from Augsburg, is among the themes deserving further investigation. As for discovery, one example, a mother-of-pearl veneered bureau-bookcase bequeathed to the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1943 (W.3-1943) and hitherto tentatively identified as Mexican, but evidently Peruvian, may serve to whet the appetite.

SSJ

JENNIFER L. ANDERSON, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America* (Harvard University Press, 2012). 315 pp., 2 maps, 21 illus. ISBN 978-0-674-04871-3. £27.95

Two evocations of mahogany introduce this valuable book: the dust-jacket detail of John Singleton Copley's portrait of Isaac and Jemima Winslow, of Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1773, depicting 'the gleaming surface of the table, adding an aura of gentility to the careful composition of their juxtaposed hands', and a preamble quoting the British Poet Laureate Thomas Wharton's poem of 1748:

Odious upon a Walnut-Plank to dine!  
 No, the red-veined Mohoggany be mine!  
 Each Chest and Chair around my Room  
 that Stands,  
 Was shipped thro' Dangerous Seas from  
 Distant Lands.



These well-chosen documents establish the book's remit, to explore the history of mahogany as a desirable commodity in colonial and post-colonial America and, to a lesser extent, Britain. It is not primarily about furniture, although much mahogany was, of course, destined for this use. It rather describes how, from the early eighteenth century, mahogany became a vehicle for conspicuous consumption, along with other exotic commodities including tea, coffee, sugar and tobacco. In contrast to these latter providers of short-term gratification, Anderson identifies three factors behind mahogany's enduring appeal, durability, limited availability and increasing scarcity, and notes that similar attractions underlay the long-established taste for objects of ivory and turtle-shell. She examines the physical qualities

admired in mahogany: its strength, its resistance to attack from insects and its size, first attractive to shipwrights and house-builders, and later, increasingly, to furniture-makers. Also considered is mahogany's aesthetic quality, those 'silky, polished surfaces, deep saturated colours, and intriguingly figured grains' which eventually established it as the 'pinnacle of style and refinement' in Philadelphia, the most refined American city before 1776.

Writing from an American perspective (she is Associate Professor of History at the State University of New York at Stony Brook), Anderson accepts that 'mahogany's rising social status in England ... certainly primed colonial America', and notes the significance of the Naval Stores Act of 1721, crucial in increasing its availability and status as a luxury material on both sides of the Atlantic. It is, indeed, a valuable addition to the historiography of mahogany in Britain. She explores many aspects of the developing mahogany trade and industry, including production and harvesting in the West Indies, particularly Jamaica, the 'gold standard' of the species, and in other islands where the eighteenth-century rush for quick cash crops, especially sugar, almost wiped out mahogany before plantation owners realised its value. The difficulties and dangers encountered by itinerant woodcutters in inland, mountainous regions of the islands are described with fascinating documentary references, and the industry's relationship to slave ownership is dealt with in a forthright manner. The mahogany trade is set against the background of European wars, which impacted on the economies of

West Indian Islands, for instance, the Seven Years War and subsequent Treaty of Paris that redefined ownerships, and encouraged the development of the harsh logging business and trade in the Bay of Honduras. The destination of these precious cargoes is illuminated by the careers of successful merchants like Aaron Lopez of Newport, Rhode Island, whose international and family networks enabled him to deal all along the American Eastern Seaboard, and Nicholas Boylston of Boston, who even risked his cargo in illicit trading in 1763, carrying mahogany to St Petersburg in defiance of British restrictions. The impact of the American War of Independence — war, blockades and disruption of trade links — and the establishment of the Early Republic changed attitudes to the timber, first identified by revolutionaries as emblematic of old colonial rule, but later redefined as appropriate for a new social elite. Different sources replaced the old British West Indian colonies (Cuba, Hispaniola and Santo Domingo supplied the cabinetmakers of the new republic), and developing technology accelerated and cheapened furniture production with steam-powered machinery and the use of veneers rather than solid timber.

In addition to economic and social aspects of the use of mahogany, Anderson charts rising interest in the species itself: its origins, the differences between *M. Swietenia* and *M. Macrophylla*, its particular qualities and the necessary environments

for successful growth — and the many failures to grow it elsewhere as it became farmed out in the Caribbean and Central America. There are two useful maps, and eight colour plates and small black-and-white figures illustrate some topics, but the book is not conceived for full illustration, there being many other sources easily accessible through the bibliography and notes.

Anderson concludes by investigating the mid-nineteenth-century evaluation and re-evaluation of mahogany — firstly in its associations with slavery, noted by Charles Dickens during his tours to the United States, from the 1850s as the preferred furniture material of ‘old money’ in the elite societies of New York and Boston, and ultimately its veneration as an intrinsic element of the Colonial Revival style: ‘Old mahogany’, states Anderson, ‘seemed to embody the solidity, strength and durability of the Founders’ unifying vision, despite, (or in some cases *precisely because of*) its elitest connotations’. The author’s final remarks return to her central theme:

Although their (mahogany furnishings) beauty and substance remain a testament to human creativity and initiative, it bears remembering that they also recall a story of destruction and suffering. All that remains of much human endeavour and of majestic trees felled long ago, these objects of desire are also objects of memory.

LISA WHITE

# Reports on the Society's Events

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

## Early-Stage Career Development News: Autumn Research Seminar

On Friday 20 November 2015, the third Research Seminar for emerging scholars took place at the Wallace Collection. Held in celebration of Sir Nicholas Goodison's 25 years as President of the Society, the study day concentrated on European furniture from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth. Scholars from the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Britain explored different aspects of furniture making, design and patronage, giving detailed insights into a wide variety of topics.

Ada de Wit, currently at the Wallace Collection, looked at specific workshops in The Hague and Rotterdam during the seventeenth century, linking carving in interiors with that on ships. Olivia Fryman, Researcher and Assistant Curator on the Kensington Monograph Project,

Historic Royal Palaces, traced the history of a rare leather chest of drawers, which she was able to link to the workshop of Richard Pigg or perhaps that of William Johnson. Its survival gives an insight into the more functional types of furniture supplied to members of the household of Queen Anne. Esther van der Hoorn, Junior Curator at the Rijksmuseum, gave a fascinating account of a group of designs for sedan chairs, now given to the 1680s although based on earlier French models. Comparisons between the designs revealed how such two-dimensional patterns could be transformed by different craftsmen. Jean-Baptiste Corne, PhD candidate at the Ecole du Louvre, discussed the relationship between the Rousseau brothers and the cabinetmaker George Jacob, identifying their work through recently discovered designs. By analysing pieces carved by the brothers he was able to detail more clearly the workings of Jacob's *atelier*. The morning session ended with a paper by Annemarie Klootwijk, Junior Curator at Duivenvoorde Castle, who examined a set of mirrors at the castle and showed through comparison of their designs and techniques how the set had been created in the eighteenth century and then extended in the nineteenth.

The afternoon began with a talk by Julie Godin, from the University of Nantes, discussing her research into the



Regency furniture at Chatsworth, a project she began when an intern there. Her paper considered the important suite of furniture commissioned by the 6th Duke and based on designs by Thomas Hope. Christiane Ernek-van der Goes, from the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden, explored a hitherto unknown nineteenth-century cabinetmaker, Johann August Türpe, member of a large family firm, who created works in imitation of Jean Pierre Latz, the eighteenth century Parisian *ébéniste*, and other elaborate historicist marquetry. Thomas Deshayes, Direction de la Mémoire du Patrimoine et des Archives, at the Ministry of Defence, Paris, concerned himself with parallels in taste between the 4th Marquis of Hertford and his French counterpart, Leopold Double, who, like Hertford, acquired important examples of French eighteenth-century furniture, in particular anything associated with Marie-Antoinette. Caroline McCaffrey, currently a PhD candidate at the University of Leeds, took the discussion into the twentieth century with her paper on the Scottish architect, Sir Robert Lorimer, chiefly known for his designs within the Arts and Crafts Movement. Caroline, however, examined the influences of French furniture on his style. The final paper of the day by Benjamin Zurstrassen, Assistant Curator at the Horta Museum in Brussels, closely analysed Henry Van de Velde's approach to ornament, using writings that Van de Velde never published.

The seminar, which was generously sponsored by the Oliver Ford Trust and

the Wallace Collection, provided an exceptional opportunity for these young scholars to meet and discuss their work with members of the FHS. By bringing together outstanding scholars from across Europe, the Society contributes importantly to developing new research, particularly from new talent – something very close to the heart of our President.

ADRIANA TURPIN AND LUCY WOOD

## Private Visit to 'The World of Charles and Ray Eames' Exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery, 14 January 2016

For those among us who are avid amateurs of modern design, there could not have been a better review of the work of Charles and Ray Eames than this private visit. This couple's iconic status is unassailable; they are universally recognised as the most important designers of the mid-twentieth century.

The exhibition does not only display their by now classic designs but also how experimental Charles and Ray were. They documented, with photographs, graphic presentations and films, every step they took in the process of solving a design problem. They were amazing communicators and great pioneers in the use of media. Thus, as one walks through the various exhibition bays, it is most important to keep looking upwards at the multiple screens, which show beautifully

clear and clean versions of the couple's numerous films.

After a very practical, hands-on design education at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, where Charles met his life-long friend Eero Saarinen, with whom he designed the first moulded plywood shell seats, which won them first prize in MOMA's 1940-41 competition 'Organic Designs in Home Furnishing', Eames moved with his new wife, Ray Kaiser, a fine arts graduate, to southern California. There they started to experiment further with moulding plywood in the bathroom of their flat. Following a contract from the military for developing plywood nose cones for gliders, a doctor approached them to ask them to develop lightweight splints and, later, stretchers for transporting wounded patients; the splint was amazingly successful and some 150,000 were manufactured for the US Navy. This was the initial work which led to the development of their plywood furniture in which the idealist couple sought to produce simple, comfortable designs for the least cost, exhibited after the war in 1946 at a monographic furniture show at MOMA. The range of furniture displayed on that occasion ended up being the most imitated designs of the second half of the last century. This was also the time when Herman Miller took over the manufacture of their models, for whose company Charles and Ray created the most imaginative and fun advertising material and showrooms.

No less influential was the house Charles and Ray built for themselves in Santa Monica in 1949 where they used

stock windows and doors combined with steel columns and open web joists, all ordered from manufacturers' catalogues. They created a light, delicate and transparent frame, in which light and shadows shifted constantly. They filled their home with a vast collection of crafted folk artefacts and toys from many countries, from South America to Japan. They frequently changed the display, reintroducing clutter and fun into the modern home, in contrast to the austere interiors of radical European Modernists of the 1920s and 1930s (whom they admired).

Another discovery at this Exhibition was how the couple reached out to a vast audience through educational projects and installations at international exhibitions. Among the numerous graphic presentations and films, I found especially fascinating their 1959 presentation at the American National Exhibition in Moscow focusing on domestic life as opposed to the Russians' own emphasis on their conquest of space. Among other slide and filmic presentations, the Barbican exhibition shows the extraordinary and wonderfully prescient 1977 film the *Powers of Ten*.

One cannot help wondering what Charles and Ray would have done with the digital age. We can only admire the legacy of invention admirably displayed here. This was a most rewarding visit, and we are deeply grateful to Christopher Wilk and Lotte Johnson, Assistant Curator, Barbican Gallery, for sharing their knowledge with us.

ANNE CERESOLE

## V&A Furniture Stores, Blythe House, 25 February 2016

On 25 February, a small group of us were treated to a tour of the V&A furniture stores, with a specific focus on upholstered furniture, expertly led by Frances Collard and Sarah Medlam, with Leela Meinertas, Nick Humphrey and Max Donnelly.

Frances began the tour with a broad overview of the history of upholstery, from its first beginnings as a simple, permanently attached padding in the seventeenth century, to the 'rolled edge' seen in the eighteenth century, which brought added comfort, and to the later adoption of springs in the nineteenth century. It was interesting to discover that almost all traditional methods of upholstery had been developed and were in use by the early eighteenth century: webbing, a base cloth to support the stuffing, calico to prevent the stuffing escaping and then a decorative and often expensive top cover. Furthermore, although sprung seats are undoubtedly a Victorian technique in general upholstery, springs are mentioned in advertisements for chamber horses as early as 1793.

The curators selected a range of upholstered chairs and stools, mainly English but some French and German examples, too, ranging from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, to demonstrate both the stylistic and technical development of the upholstered seat. Not only did the selection span the centuries, but it also spanned the social scale, from expensive commissions for grand country

houses, to more domestic pieces used by the middle classes. Examples particularly worth mentioning are the Chastleton easy chair, dated by the design of its original bizarre-pattern silk top fabric to c. 1705, with a down-filled, kid-leather-lined seat cushion visible beneath the silk; a George I gilt and punch-work decorated side chair c. 1715, an early example of the *à chassis* technique whereby seat and back are fitted with removable frames of upholstery, this technique avoiding damage to the visible and intricate carving and gesso decoration; and a charming George III mahogany side chair, c. 1760, with needlework imitating a damask design and the more cost-effective stamped wool to the reverse.

Although it is rare to find upholstered furniture with its original upholstery or, indeed, with its original top fabric, we were lucky enough to be shown several such survivals which sparked conversations on the selection of top fabric, the choices available and the changing fashion through the centuries.

Of the twenty or so pieces that we studied, the highlights were arguably the two Houghton chairs: one giltwood from the eagle suite in the main state apartment, the other parcel-gilt walnut, from the suite made for the second state apartment. Both are thought to have been commissioned from Thomas Roberts the Younger between 1725 and 1732; their exact date is unknown as the only surviving bill at Houghton is for £1000 of silver-gilt trim used on the state bed. The chairs are fascinating examples of the detail, precision and expense that was characterised in upholstered seat furniture in the 1720s and 1730s. Each is

upholstered with a removable green silk velvet cover, lined with linen, the covers fastened by eyelets to tiny iron pegs on the frame, perhaps to enable changing the top cover with the season. The outline of the parcel-gilt walnut chair is picked out with silk braid trim, whilst the eagle chair has even more luxurious silver-gilt thread trim. The base cloth and webbing are set onto a sub-frame in each case to avoid damage to the expensive carved frames.

It was astonishing to see what excellent condition they are in, thanks to limited use and to case-covers, which were originally provided for them, to protect them whilst they were not in use. Such care was taken

over the velvet covers that some retain embroidered numbers on them, indicating that they were tailored for each chair. This innovative upholstery concept is an exceedingly rare survival. Another fascinating feature was the trace of a scarf on the eagle chair, seen along the back edge of the metal trim on the upper back. This would have hung down at the back of the chair when they were set formally against the wall, but could be easily flipped over the front of the padded back to protect the velvet from wig powder when the chair was in use.

CHARLOTTE YOUNG

## Europe 1600–1815 Galleries, V&A, 2 March 2016

An impressive entourage of experts guided our early morning tour of the refurbished European Galleries. They included Lesley Miller, textiles specialist and lead curator of the project, Leela Meinertas, Nick Humphrey and Max Donnelly from the furniture department, and Sarah Medlam, Senior Curator Emeritus, who had mentored the project from its initial stages, and remained on hand to answer our questions. Lesley started by explaining the thinking behind this major overhaul, not just of the displays but of the architecture itself, which has reasserted the windows and ceiling height of the 1909 Aston Webb building, concealed for decades; visitors

now have an awareness of the relationship between the galleries and the streets outside, even if the windows are shaded.

At least 1000 objects, from all disciplines, have been redisplayed and they cover the period 1600 to 1815 in a broadly chronological sequence, focusing on prime objects with a supporting cast to flesh out techniques, concepts and historical developments. The result is an array of furniture, paintings, sculpture, textiles, ceramics, metalwork and musical instruments — with particular focal points along the way.

Sarah Medlam gave the background to a relatively recent acquisition, one of a pair of magnificent tables, made in Venice between 1685 and 1688 by Lucio de Lucci. The exuberantly carved boxwood base (probably by Andrea Brustolon) is surmounted by a sumptuous, if now faded, marquetry top imitating *pietra dura*

mosaic, with a large central oval depicting a battle scene in extraordinary detail. The tables (the pair to this one is in the National Museum of Scotland) were probably made for Francesco Morosini, Captain-General of the Venetian forces against the Ottoman Turks during the 1680s, and later Doge of Venice.

Nick Humphrey brought us a little nearer to earth by highlighting an example of furniture brought out of store to take its place in the new galleries. This was a fine Dutch oak *kast* of the 1630s, made for the prosperous 'middling sorts'. With its carved frieze, ebony embellishments, square-panelled doors and overhanging cornice inviting a display of Delftware, this would have been a key piece of domestic furniture in a Dutch household, used with pride for the storage of linens and napery.

A feature of the galleries is the reinstated late seventeenth-century painted room from the Chateau de la Tournerie in Normandy. Originally, this may have been housed in a garden pavilion, and was perhaps designed for a visiting dignitary, complete with a fireplace and bed alcove. It has been set up here as a softly lit, intimate space of glowing colour — from its painted architectural framework of biblical and emblem panels with chequered borders and larger floral panels of stamped and painted leather (replacements for the destroyed originals).

As we turned the corner towards the galleries parallel with Exhibition Road, we paused in the new dome, a 3D jigsaw of beech ply, designed and made by Los Carpinteros, a Cuban collective, as a useful

gathering space or 'salon' for meetings, discussions, music or just a rest.

For many of us, the writing cabinet of Augustus the Strong, made in Dresden, possibly by the little-known Michael Kimmel, c. 1750, is one of the great treasures of the V&A. It is now more resplendent than ever, having had its gilt-brass mounts cleaned with dry ice, to gently remove old wax and dirt from the surface. This apparently magical process was explained by Leela Meinertas. During the conservation a very searching analysis of the cabinet itself was made: it embodies a variety of rare timbers with feats of mitred marquetry, veneers cut in a variety of directions, inlays of mother-of-pearl and ivory, and mounts of gilt brass and copper; there is neither repetition nor exact symmetry anywhere in the design. In short, Sarah Medlam has pronounced it to be the most beautifully made cabinet she has ever seen — and she has certainly seen a few!

Passing the spectacular reassembly of Count Brühl's huge Meissen table fountain, we looked at Georges Jacob's magnificent *lit à l'Italienne*, c. 1780 (see p. 30), its alcove form crowned with a domed top and suspended draperies of pale blue silk. The bed (and a chair to match) incorporates the 'unstrung bow' in the carved and gilt decoration, signifying the importance of rest from one's labours. The grouping is an intimate example of the most luxurious royal taste.

Max Donnelly led the final discussion, of the significance of John Jones and his collection, which formerly played such a dominant role in the continental galleries but is now reduced to a punchy group



George Jacob's *lit à l'Italienne*, c. 1780  
© Victoria & Albert Museum

illustrating the main characteristics of his collecting habits. This hugely successful military tailor collected French furniture essentially on three fronts: perfect 'period' pieces by known makers (such as the Leleu work table); original examples with later embellishments (represented by a plain work table with added Sèvres plaques); and new-made items in old

French style, such as the cabinet by Edward Holmes Baldock on view here.

A big thank you is due to the curators who guided us through the galleries and gave such fascinating insights into the thinking and planning behind this mammoth task of re-presentation.

NOËL RILEY

# The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund and Oliver Ford Trust

The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund makes grants towards travel and other incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research into the history of furniture, (a) whether or not the applicant is a member of the Society; (b) only when the study or research is likely to be of importance in furthering the objectives of the Society; and (c) only when travel could not be undertaken without a grant from the Society. Applications towards the cost of FHS foreign and domestic trips and study weekends are particularly welcome from scholars. Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the assistance of the Fund in any resulting publications and must report back to the Panel on completion of the travel or project. All enquiries should be addressed to Jo Norman at [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org), or for further information and grant application forms see the Grants page of the Society's website, [www.furniturehistorysociety.org](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org).  
In line with one of its roles — the promotion of interest in interior design —

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

The FHS Grants Committee now meets quarterly to consider all grant applications, either for independent travel/incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research, or for participation in FHS foreign and UK study trips. Completed application forms should be submitted with current curriculum vitae by the following deadlines so that they can be considered at these meetings:

10 JUNE, 10 SEPTEMBER OR  
10 DECEMBER.

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This issue is edited by Sharon Goodman

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## Copy Deadline

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

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

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COVER PICTURE Bookcase made by Gillows in 1772 for Mrs Mary Hutton Rawlinson of Lancaster. Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster. Photo © Apter-Fredericks