

The Furniture History Society

Newsletter 237

February 2025



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Events | Grants

Here you can find **all currently scheduled** forthcoming FHS and BIFMO Events; please refer to subsequent pages for more information. Additional events may still be added and advertised by email and on the website.

2025

13 FEBRUARY	Visits to Brooks’s Club and the Athenaeum
20 FEBRUARY	Visit to the East Wing of Buckingham Palace
22 MARCH	Annual Symposium
26 MARCH	Annual Lecture 2024 with Dr Susan Weber – New Date
2 APRIL	Visit to Dorneywood
25-27 APRIL	Spring Overseas Study Trip to Northern Ireland
9-11 MAY	Spring UK Study Trip to Leeds
19 JUNE	Visit to Portmeirion



Principal Corridor. ©Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.

Visit to the East Wing of Buckingham Palace

THURSDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2025
10.30 PM –1.00 PM

The East Wing of Buckingham Palace which includes the iconic front façade and features the famous central balcony where the Monarch and Members of the Royal Family make appearances, was built between 1847 and 1849, extending the footprint of the Palace to increase accommodation for Queen Victoria’s growing family.

The building of the East Wing was financed through the sale of George IV’s seaside retreat in Brighton, the Royal Pavilion, in 1850. The style of the

architecture and interiors of the Pavilion reflected the King’s love of the chinoiserie style, and upon the sale of the building, its contents were transferred to the East Wing at Buckingham Palace, inspiring the décor of its principal rooms, and featuring some of the finest furniture in the Royal Collection.

Starting in 2017, the Reservicing of Buckingham Palace is a ten-year programme of works to update the essential services to one of the UK’s most iconic buildings and has provided the opportunity for the conservation of many of the works of art in the Royal Collection.

The newly renovated East Wing was completed in Spring 2024 and opened to the public for a limited number of tours for the first time, later that year.

The Palladian-style
Dolls' House
at Uppark, West
Sussex. ©National
Trust Images/Nadia
Mackenzie.



Our exclusive private tour led by Caroline de Guitaut, Surveyor of The King's Works of Art, will focus on the furniture and decorative art in the principal rooms of the East Wing, including the Yellow Drawing Room, Principal Corridor and the Centre Room.

COST: £130

LIMIT: 25

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:

FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2025

The 49th Annual Symposium

The Art of the Dolls' House

THE LYDIA AND MANFRED GORVY LECTURE
THEATRE, VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM,
LONDON

SATURDAY 22 MARCH 2025

10.30 AM – 5.00 PM

This international roster of speakers will celebrate the earliest surviving European examples preserved in the Netherlands

and Nuremberg. That tradition developed in Britain where two beautifully furnished 'baby' houses treasured by Huguenot heiresses are today curated by the National Trust. The dolls' house belonging to Petronella de la Court in Utrecht complemented her contemporary art collection. Three hundred years later, the model of Trent Park illustrates that great house during the ownership of collector and aesthete Phillip Sassoon. Trent Park reopens to the public in June 2025.

Architect-designed Queen Mary's Dolls' House has just celebrated its centenary whilst the installation of dolls' houses at the Young V&A by Rachel Whiteread and the curatorial team have contributed to its enviable position as 2024 Museum of the Year. The symposium will revisit these miniature homes and explore their legacy and creative inspiration as educational tools opening the eyes of successive generations through fascination with miniature worlds.

10.00 - 10.30 A.M.	Registration
10.30 - 10.35 A.M.	Welcome by Christopher Rowell, FHS Chairman
10.35 A.M.	<u>Session One. The European Dolls' House</u> Moderated by Christopher Rowell
10.40 - 11.05 A.M.	<i>Revisiting the 'Nuremberg Houses': seventeenth-century miniature households as imperfect windows into the past</i> Heike Zech , Deputy Director, Germanisches Museum, Nuremberg
11.05 - 11.30 A.M.	<i>At Home in the Seventeenth Century: The Rijksmuseum Dolls' Houses</i> Sara van Dijk , Curator of Textiles, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
11.30 - 11.40 A.M.	SHORT BREAK
11.40 AM - 12.05 P.M.	<i>Petronella de La Court's dolls' house in Utrecht (1670-1690)</i> <i>Registration, research and re-installation – new findings and considerations</i> Natalie Dubois , Curator of Applied Art and Design, Centraal Museum, Utrecht (The Netherlands)
12.05 - 12.30 P.M.	<i>Kinnaird Castle: A Miniature Mystery</i> Ben Taggart , model maker of historic properties
12.30 - 12.45 P.M.	Q & A
12.45 - 2.00 P.M.	LUNCH (Demonstration of miniature furniture making by Terence Facey; Study Session on silver toys with Kirstin Kennedy, curator in V&A Metalwork)
2.00 P.M.	<u>Session Two: National Trust Dolls' Houses</u> Moderated by Megan Wheeler, Assistant Curator, Furniture, National Trust
2.05 - 2.30 P.M.	<i>'Deceptively spacious': the Dolls' House and framing significance and story at Nostell</i> Simon McCormack , Property Curator, Nostell Priory, National Trust
2.30 - 2.55 P.M.	<i>The Lethieullier family Dolls' House at the Huguenot Museum</i> Tessa Murdoch
2.55 - 3.20 P.M.	BREAK FOR TEA, (Tea/Coffee in the Paintings Galleries)
3.20 PM	<u>Session Three. Displaying Dolls' Houses</u> Moderated by Tessa Murdoch
3.25 - 4.00 P.M.	<i>'Fitted up with perfect fidelity': Lutyens and Queen Mary's Dolls' House.</i> Kathryn Jones , Senior Curator of Decorative Arts, Royal Collection Trust
4.00 - 4.25 P.M.	<i>Dolls' houses from the V&A</i> William Newton , Curator, Young V&A
4.25 - 4.45 P.M.	Q & A
4.45 - 5.00 P.M.	Closing remarks/summing up
5.00 P.M.	End

There will be an opportunity for delegates to visit the exhibition *Sarah Lethieullier's 1730s Dolls' House* at the Huguenot Museum, Rochester, Kent on Friday 21 March 2025

Tickets for the Symposium are now available on Eventbrite.

New date for postponed FHS Annual Lecture

SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES, BURLINGTON
HOUSE, PICCADILLY, LONDON W1J OBE

6.00 PM FOR A 6.30 PM START

WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 2025

**Philip Speakman Webb, Architect and
Designer of the Arts and Crafts Movement**

Dr Susan Weber

Philip Webb was one of the most original and talented designers of secular furniture in the nineteenth century. He created articles of domestic work from seating furniture to tables, bookcases, and wardrobes as well as pianos, screens, and standing mirrors that lie beyond the normal remit of most Victorian furniture designers. Although his work has been overshadowed by that of his friend and early business partner William Morris, this lecture explores his contributions to the field of furniture through an examination and analysis of his creative efforts. The sources of his work are also surveyed as he journeyed from Gothic revivalist to British vernacular enthusiast to Arts and Crafts practitioner with his own distinctive 'plain and substantial style'. This talk is a preview of Dr Weber's study of his furniture output as part of the upcoming exhibition and catalogue, *Philip Speakman Webb, Architect and Designer of the Arts and Crafts Movement* slated for the Bard Graduate Centre in 2026.

Admission to the lecture is free for members, but attendance is by ticket only, which must be acquired in advance.

Drinks beforehand kindly sponsored by Bonhams.

Please apply to the Events Secretary by email or post. Numbers are limited to 110. Preference for tickets to those members previously signed up.

Visit to Dorneywood

DORNEY WOOD ROAD, BURNHAM,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, SL18PY

WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL 2025

2.00 PM – 4.30 PM

Situated near Burnham Beeches, Dorneywood was once part of the Dorney Court Estate. When Lord Courtauld-Thomson purchased the house in 1919, he refurbished the house and added an east wing. In 1942 Lord Courtauld-Thomson decided that, on his death (which occurred in 1954) the house, with a small endowment, should pass to the nation for use by a senior member of the government (in recent times the Chancellor of the Exchequer) as a weekend retreat. It is now owned by the National Trust and leased to the Dorneywood Trust.

There appears to have been a house on the Dorneywood site since the sixteenth century. The eighteenth-century manor house was partly destroyed by fire in 1910 and later rebuilt and restored. The house is decorated and furnished in the style of the 1930s and 1940s with Lord Courtauld-Thomson's furniture, books and works of art carefully preserved with much in daily use.

Following an introduction to the history of the house and its seventy years as a ministerial residence, members will have the chance to visit the four principal ground floor rooms. You will hear how the Dorneywood team balances the roles



Dorneywood South Front

of historic house and working residence/retreat with the charitable purposes of the Dorneywood Trust. You will also have the chance to look at the 'tented' interior on the first-floor landing, which is normally not available for viewing for reasons of privacy.

Selected pieces of furniture will be opened for closer inspection. Beyond the furniture, there is a famous mural by Rex Whistler; landscape painting by Winston Churchill; overdoor paintings by Jacob de Wit and many highlights in the book collection. The visit includes a 'Sparkling Afternoon Tea' in the Music Room and weather depending, the chance to walk around the six-acre garden.

COST: £130 (INCLUDES AFTERNOON TEA)

LIMIT: 18

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:

FRIDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2025

Study Trip to Northern Ireland

FRIDAY 25 APRIL TO SUNDAY 27 APRIL 2025

Following the success of the 2018 trip to Northern Ireland, the FHS is organising a second two-night, three-day study weekend including visits to Seaforde, Clondeboy House and Ballywalter Park. We are also returning to Hillsborough Castle, built in the 1770s by Wills Hill, later 1st Marquess of Downshire, and Mount Stewart, the Irish seat of the Stewart family, Marquesses of Londonderry, which was remodelled and enlarged in the 1840s, and where much has happened since the FHS visited in 2018.

The trip will begin with a visit to Seaforde, the private residence of the Forde family, where we will be welcomed by Lady Anthea Forde. Before we visit the house, we will be shown the renowned



Clandeboyne Staircase and Hall

Butterfly House and Garden. Seaford was rebuilt in 1817 following a fire and retains much of the Regency furniture supplied to the house.

On Saturday morning we will go to Hillsborough Castle which is managed by Historic Royal Palaces as a residence of the Royal Family and the home of the Secretary of State since the 1970s. Built in the 1770s by the first Marquis of Downshire, the castle was enlarged and modified between the 1790s and the 1840s, and includes a series of fine state rooms.

Then we will have a privileged private visit to Clandeboyne which was built in the early nineteenth century by James, 2nd Lord Dufferin (1755-1836). It was altered and enlarged by his great great-nephew Frederick Temple Hamilton-Temple-

Blackwood, 1st Marquess of Dufferin and Ava (1826-1902), the distinguished Victorian diplomat. The mansion contains his eclectic collection from his years spent abroad as Governor General of Canada and Viceroy of India, and Ambassador to Russia, France, Italy and The Porte. In the twentieth century the fifth and last Marquess, Sheridan (1938-1988), and his artist wife Lindy Guinness (1941-2020), added a significant collection of Irish furniture. Since 2020 Clandeboyne has been administered by the Dufferin Foundation. Sir Ian Huddleston, Senior Trustee of the Foundation, has generously agreed to host our drinks in the house followed by dinner in the Banqueting Hall.

Sunday starts with a visit to Ballywalter Park, the seat of Lord and Lady Dunleath. The original house was purchased by Andrew Mulholland in 1846 and was extensively remodelled and extended in the Italianate Villa style after 1846 and contains interesting eighteenth and nineteenth century furniture and a superb conservatory.

Our trip will conclude with a visit to Mount Stewart (NT) where we will be led by Frances Bailey, Head Curator for Northern Ireland, for a tour of the significant historic interiors. Mount Stewart, home of the Londonderry family, contains important contents collected over many generations including furniture from the Congress of Vienna.

The trip is being organised by Willie Lorimer with the support of Sara Heaton, with Cristina Alfonsín FHS Overseas Events Manager handling the logistics. To express interest, please contact Cristina at overseasevents@furniturehistorysociety.org

Spring UK Study Trip to Leeds

FRIDAY 9 MAY – SUNDAY 11 MAY 2025

This two-night, three-day Study Trip is organised and led by Adam Toole, Curator - Temple Newsam and Decorative Art, Leeds Museums and Galleries. The weekend is an opportunity to visit, or revisit and study, the most important houses and furniture collections in the area, including Castle Howard, Harewood House, Temple Newsam, and Lotherton Hall as well as two private houses, Birdsall House and Weston Hall. We are delighted that James Lomax, who was curator at Temple Newsam House for thirty years, will give us an evening lecture about the nationally important furniture collection there, prior to our visit. This will be the first visit to Lotherton Hall and Temple Newsam by the FHS since new acquisitions have been added, this notably includes two tables by Gimson and the large Cooper bequest at Lotherton Hall, and an important 1760s commode made for Charles Townley at Temple Newsam amongst other items.

Birdsall House, the home of the Willoughby family since 1729, is viewable only with a private tour. Based on an original Tudor house, it was expanded in the eighteenth century into larger neo-classical house, and again in 1873 by Anthony Salvin, and contains a rich collection of furniture. Weston Hall, owned by the Dawson family, dates from the fifteenth century, and was largely rebuilt in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has a collection of furniture acquired over time by the family, and a banqueting



The Townley Commode: George III Marquetry Commode with Lava and Specimen marble top. Commissioned by Charles Townley (1737-1805), c.1770. ©Leeds Museums & Galleries (Temple Newsam). Photography Norman Taylor.

house dating from 1600 in the grounds.

To see if there are still spaces, please contact events@furniturehistorysociety.org.

Visit to Portmeirion

MINFFORDD, PENRHYNDEUDRAETH, GWYNEDD, LL48 6ER

THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2025

11.00 PM – 4.00 PM

This day visit to Portmeirion will concentrate on the Portmeirion Hotel, situated at the quayside of the village created by visionary architect Clough Williams-Ellis between 1926 and 1976, and will include other points of interest. In a previous life, the hotel was an extravagantly furnished marine villa in a place formerly known as Aber Iâ, built in the 1840s by Henry Seymour Westmacott. Rachel Hunt, Collections Curator, will



The Library at the Portmeirion Hotel, showing the door frames, and one of the Levien doors. Following a fire in 1981, the doors were restored and are wall-mounted; the original frames now accommodate mirrors. Photograph courtesy of and ©John Hammond.

introduce us to the house and to recent research into its furnishings, particularly work by Johann Martin Levien. Two elaborately carved doors have recently been identified as being the work of Levien, thanks to Serena Newmark (author of Levien's biography on BIFMO). Levien introduced New Zealand timbers into British furniture making, showcasing them in a prize-winning sideboard at the Great Exhibition of 1851. The sideboard was also acquired by Westmacott for Aber Iâ (though it was later sold). The Levien doors were probably commissioned to complement the sideboard, and had ornately carved frames, possibly by Westmacott's cousin, James Sherwood Westmacott.

We will then have a tour of other items of interest at Portmeirion including the early seventeenth-century 'Hercules' ceiling rescued in 1936 from the about-to-be-demolished Emral Hall, a behind the scenes look at a store of furniture and other objects, and two Eisteddfod chairs. Members will be able to explore the rest of the village after the visit (closes 5.30 pm).

COST: £70 (INCLUDES LUNCH & AFTERNOON TEA) Travel and accommodation not included.

LIMIT: 18

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:

FRIDAY 7 MARCH 2025

Bookings

For places on visits please apply by email or letter to the Events Secretary, Beatrice Goddard indicating that you wish to pay by card or online or providing separate cheques for each event. The email address is events@furniturehistorysociety.org, or telephone 0777 5907390. For online payments you will be provided with a link to a payment page and an event reference. Where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched by e-mail, so please remember to provide your e-mail address if you have one.

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 provide a telephone number. Please note the closing dates for applications 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 considered equally following the closing date.

Cancellations

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £20.00 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. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours; terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

Online Events

We continue to arrange occasional online events, but we are sometimes unable to advertise them in the Newsletter owing to publication lead-in times. We let members know by email and send links to members about a week in advance. They will also be advertised on the FHS website, on Instagram and Facebook (@furniturehistorysociety).

Most online events are free to members. Non-members can join for a small fee. BIFMO study courses will charge a fee for both members and non-members.

Recordings of many of our past lectures are freely available to members via accessing My Account on the FHS website using the following link:

www.furniturehistorysociety.org/membership/account/login/

Please use your email address and password, set up in My Account, to access. If you have forgotten or not set up a password, please use the link below.

www.furniturehistorysociety.org/accountforgot-your-password/

If you have any enquiries, or suggestions for future speakers or topics, please email the Events Secretary.

<i>Membership category</i>	<i>Rate for 2025-26 onwards</i>
UK Individual (or Sole) members	£72
UK Young Individual members (aged under 35)	£40
UK Joint members*	£82
UK Institutional or Corporate members	£96
International Individual members	£93
International Young Individual members (aged under 35)	£50
International Joint members*	£105
International Institutional or Corporate members	£115

**i.e., two people receiving one mailing at the same address*

Subscriptions

Current year, 2024-25

Members are reminded that subscriptions for the year 2024-25 fell due on 1 July 2024. If a Renewal Notice has been included in this mailing, it means that you are in arrears with your subscription.

If you have created a “My Account” page on the Society’s website, please use it to renew. Failing that, please follow the instructions on the Renewal Notice.

In accordance with the Society’s Rules, until payment is received, you will not be sent any further publications and, in due course, you will be struck off.

Revised subscription rates, 2025-26 onwards

At the Annual General Meeting in November 2024, members approved Council’s proposal that subscription rates be increased with effect from 1 July 2025—the first increase for three years.

The new rates, which reflect the general increase in prices since 2021, are shown in the table above.

To ensure that you renew for 2025-26 at the correct rate, please see the methods of payment and the action required set out below. The Society’s preferred form of payment is direct debit, or for those members without a sterling denominated bank account, a debit/credit card.

- **Direct Debit.** You need not take any action. Your bank account will be debited at the new rate on or soon after 1 July 2025.
- **Credit / Debit card.** If you wish to pay by Debit/Credit card, please open the Membership page of the Society’s website and in Step 1 choose the Credit/Debit card option. This will also set you up a “My Account”.
- **Standing Order.** Please tell your bank the new amount required.

Members who use a standing order are encouraged to switch to a direct debit. To do this, please instruct your bank to cancel your standing order, log in to the Membership page of the website and download a direct debit form.

- **Cheque.** If you wish to pay by cheque, please contact Anna Clarke, the Society’s Finance & Membership Officer, at membership@furniturehistorysociety.org. The Society only accepts sterling subscription payments. If you have any queries about the correct rate, or are unsure of the payment process, please contact the Society’s Membership Officer at membership@furniturehistorysociety.org.

- **Gift Aid.** Members who pay UK tax are encouraged to make a Gift Aid declaration which enables the Society to recover income tax on their subscriptions at 25% at no cost to themselves. In addition, if a member pays tax at higher rates, he or she will be able to recover a further amount (up to 25%) through their Self Assessment tax return.

To make a Gift Aid declaration, please open the Membership page of the website and download and print off the Gift Aid declaration, then complete and return it to the Membership Officer, Anna Clarke at Furniture History Society, c/o Department of Performance, Furniture, Textiles and Fashion, V&A Museum, London SW7 2RL.

Opportunities for advertising

The Furniture History Society, a registered UK Charity, now accepts advertising in its quarterly Newsletter. A well-illustrated and informative publication with a broad reach of over 1,000 furniture lovers. The Newsletter is published in February, May, August and November of each year. Current rates are £200 for a half page, £400 for a full page, and £600 for the inside back cover. Further information, including deadlines for copy, is available from the co-Editor, Iain Stephens, via email: iain.stephens@royal.uk.

BIFMO UPDATE

British and Irish Furniture Makers Online

BIFMO (bifmo.furniturehistorysociety.org) publishes biographies and blogs about British and Irish furniture makers and associated craftspeople, c.1600-1914. Launched in 2016, the project is solely managed by the FHS. It is our globally-free research tool with a wealth of entries and is an authoritative one-stop site for all researchers in the fields of furniture history, interiors, country house furnishings, and associated trades. To spread the word about this important resource, please acknowledge your use of BIFMO resources in any published material.

If you have information you would like to contribute to BIFMO please contact the BIFMO Editors at bifmoeditor@furniturehistorysociety.org.

'One by one the genuine old firms are dropping out'

So stated *The Furniture Gazette* in 1893 on the demise of Wilkinson & Son of Old Bond Street.

BIFMO was recently given access to Wilkinson family records and have

documented its furniture-making history from 1766. The founder of this renowned business was Joshua Wilkinson, born in 1725, his father probably a clothier in York. Joshua married Sarah Brind on 20 July 1755, the daughter of John, a loriner and founder, at St. Leonard's, Shoreditch.¹ In 1756 Joshua was made a freeman of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths by redemption and became a liveryman in 1763, possibly facilitated through his wife's family, some of whom were members of the Company. From 1763 the family were resident at Broker's Row, Moorfields, London,² and by 1766 Wilkinson was trading as an upholster, cabinet maker and house broker in Moorfields. The family firm of Wilkinson and Sons was first recorded in 1780.³

Joshua's younger brother, Joseph, worked with Wilkinson & Sons as an upholster and cabinet maker at 107 Cheapside in 1782. Joshua's two eldest sons, Joshua Jnr (b. 1759), freeman of the Upholders' Company in 1781; and William (b. 1763) freeman of the Goldsmiths'

Company in 1784 and Upholders' Company in 1809 both worked with their father. A third son, John Henry (b. 1770) was apprenticed through the Goldsmiths' Company to his father 'to learn his art of a Housebroker' and indeed property is believed to have formed much of the family's wealth.⁴

Joshua Snr died in Highgate in 1790, leaving many 'leasehold messuages or tenements and appurtenances', to his three sons, plus £1,000 each. The same amount was left to both his brother, William, and his nephew, Thomas, instructing cash sums to be invested in the family upholsters' business to provide for his wife and daughters' annuities. His widow also received other properties and his personal effects.⁵

Of Joshua's three sons, Joshua Jnr was at 107 Cheapside and 7 Brokers Row until 1785.⁶ He was possibly the same Joshua Wilkinson listed as an auctioneer, appraiser and upholsterer in City Road, opposite Peerless Pond in 1802.⁷ He died in 1806. After his father's death, William went into partnership with his cousin, Thomas, as W. & T. Wilkinson at 9 and 10 Broker Row, whilst John Henry, was registered as a director of a 'wholesale upholsterers' business' at 25 Budge Row in 1794.⁸

The partnership of W. & T. Wilkinson, dissolved in 1808, and the later business, William Wilkinson & Sons at 14 Ludgate Hill, are well documented.⁹

After William's death in 1833, two of his sons, William Jnr and Charles, renamed the firm as William & Charles Wilkinson. It was this firm that furnished the new Goldsmiths' Hall in 1834-35, with bills totalling nearly £8,500.¹⁰ On William Jnr's death in 1853, his widow sold her share

to his brother, Charles, who relocated the firm to Old Bond Street and Grosvenor Mews, renaming the firm Charles Wilkinson & Son.

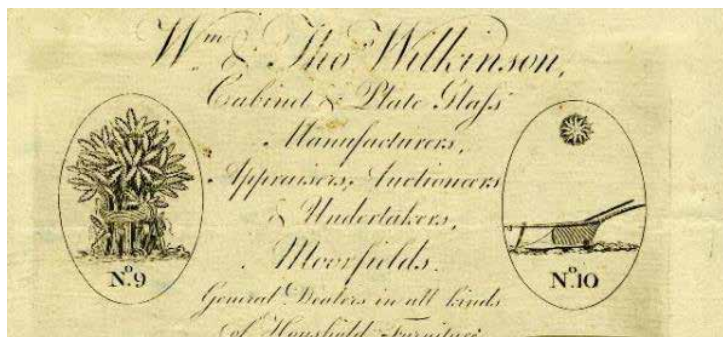
The business remained in the family, first under Charles' eldest son, Frederick and, from 1877, with Frederick's son, Charles. This marked a new era of success with the now Wilkinson & Son firm producing upholstery and furniture for the Century Guild of Artists to the designs of Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo. A photograph of the stand for the Century Guild at the International Inventions Exhibition, London, 1885, shows the sign naming Wilkinson & Son as 'Manufacturer and Agents, 8 Old Bond Street, W'.¹¹

Wilkinson & Son's furniture was also displayed at the Arts & Crafts Exhibitions, London, 1888 and 1890. An occasional satinwood table, designed by W. Bishop (1890, cat. no. 279), made by Wilkinson and Son was described as 'an Anglicized adaptation of a small Moorish smoking table',¹² perhaps comparing this with the Syrian, Turkish and Indian coffee table imported and being sold by Liberty & Co. for 30/-.¹³

Charles Wilkinson entered into a new partnership with the brothers Charles Albert and Edward Hindley, to form Hindley & Wilkinson, c.1891-92, with a 'tailing off' of the Wilkinson & Son's business as upholsterers and decorators at 8 Old Bond Street until March 1896.¹⁴

Wilkinson was described as a furniture manufacturer in census records, 1881-1901. He was married at fifty-nine years of age, in 1915, the marriage certificate stating his profession as 'independent'. Street

Trade card of William and Thomas Wilkinson, cabinet and plate glass manufacturers, appraisers, auctioneers and undertakers, Moorfields. Trustees of the British Museum (Heal, 28.235).



Charles Wilkinson (1884). Wilkinson Family records.



directories after 1900 record Hindley & Wilkinson at 8 Old Bond Street until 1908, when the premises were demolished. It was possibly at this date that Charles Wilkinson retired.

The first decade of the twentieth century marks the 'genuine' ending of the Wilkinson family's involvement in the upholstery and furniture trade. It had survived for over 140 years.

The BIFMO editors are very grateful to the Wilkinson family for its support of the BIFMO project.

LAURIE LINDEY AND CLARISSA WARD

- 1 The London Archives, Church of England Marriage and Banns, ref. P91/LEN/A/01/Ms 7498/2, 20 July 1755.
- 2 Wilkinson Family records.
- 3 *Kent's Directory*, 1780; The National Archives, Register of Duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710-1811.
- 4 The London Archives, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 31 December 1790, St Michael's Highgate.
- 5 The National Archives, Joshua Wilkinson, PROB 11/1201, 8 January 1791.
- 6 See BIFMO.
- 7 *Holden's Directory*, 1802.
- 8 *Kent's Directory*, 1794.
- 9 See BIFMO.
- 10 Michael Shrive, 'Better than that ordinarily seen: Furniture supplied to the third Goldsmiths' Hall by William and Charles Wilkinson and Thomas and George Seddon, 1834-35', *Furniture History*, 2019, Vol. 55, pp. 151-216.
- 11 Stuart Evans and Jean Liddiard, *Arts and Crafts Pioneers: The Hobby Horse Men and their Century Guild* (London: Lund Humphries, 2021).
- 12 *Furniture Gazette*, 15 November 1890.
- 13 Liberty & Co., *Handbook of Sketches* (London, 1889).
- 14 *The Queen*, 28 March 1896.

across the Atlantic; how unassuming objects can offer rich windows into interconnected material landscapes; how international relationships among artists, collectors and antiquarians contributed to the success of eighteenth-century Roman fireplaces; the interplay of architecture and furniture and resultant motifs and embellishments; how reorganisation of the furniture industry in post-Second World War II Czechoslovakia furniture production impacted culture and design; and production in Italy of the rationalist furniture of Angelo Luigi Colombo.

On 28 September, an enthusiastic ECD gathering participated in a special visit to the Château de Chantilly. The visit was guided by Adriana Turpin, Mathieu Deldicque, the curator of the 'André-Charles Boulle' exhibition, and Marc-André Paulin, a restorer. The tour provided a unique opportunity to explore the historic château and the fantastic exhibition, with a particular focus on the exquisite craftsmanship of this virtuoso *ebeniste* on display.

November found members attending the three informative sessions of the BIFMO/FHS online course 'British Furniture Abroad in the Eighteenth Century'. The course was a valuable learning experience, offering deep insights into the historical and cultural impact of British craftsmanship on an international scale.

Also in late November, the ECD group were invited to the workshop of Arthur Peters, a furniture restorer and ECD member. This visit provided an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the restoration process, with an opportunity to observe the techniques and expertise involved in bringing historic pieces back to life. It was a fascinating and educational experience for everyone who joined the visit.

The ECD committee's ongoing commitment to fostering learning and building connections within the area of furniture studies will continue in the Spring 2025 with more events in the works.

ADELE BOURBONNE

ECD News

During the Autumn, the Early Career Development group has been busy enjoying several exciting and informative events. Members were able to attend the online ECD Research Symposium: Furniture and Interiors (1650-1950) was split over two evening sessions held on September 23rd and 30th. Participants engaged in lively discussions exploring

diverse fields including the complex relationships between seat furniture design and health in eighteenth-century France; the impact of French geological prospection and marble sourcing networks on aesthetic taste for stone and objects made from them; how immigrants from Britain and Ireland shaped furniture design, cultural exchange, trade networks and craftsmanship

Tributes

Michael Whiteway 1948-2024

Michael Whiteway (1948-2024) was an authority on nineteenth-century design, and far more. He was one of London's most influential dealers in decorative arts, over a period of more than fifty years. Charming self-effacing, Michael was

hugely admired and liked by museum curators and private collectors from across the globe. The Haslam & Whiteway shop on Kensington Church Street was consciously casual in its display; Michael liked his customers to make discoveries. Malcom Haslam left the scene early, but Michael never changed the company's name.



Michael Whiteway

Having acquired a tea set designed by Archibald Knox, while still at art school, Michael soon abandoned his studies to, little by little, hone his skills as a dealer. In keeping with his personality, Michael's career developed steadily but with no self-aggrandising fanfare. He forged friendships with scholars, curators, collectors and colleagues, all of whom appreciated his knowledge and eye, which he enjoyed sharing with those who earned his trust and respect.

Michael partnered early with the Fine Art Society in some notable and ground-breaking exhibitions. For example, in 1972, following the deaths in the previous year of the pioneering collectors and scholars Charles and Lavinia Handley-Read, the 'Aesthetic Movement and the Art of Japan', and then in 1973 the 'Arts

and Crafts Movement'. Later commercial exhibitions, again done in partnership with colleagues, include 'WAS Benson, 1854-1924, an exhibition of his metalwork' (1981) and 'Théodore Deck: Céramiste' (2000). Michael also worked with institutions and museums, co-curating major exhibitions on Dr Christopher Dresser, the first at the Palazzo della Triennale, Milan (2001-02) and the second, 'Shock of the Old: Christopher Dresser' shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum London, before moving to the Cooper Hewitt, New York (2004). In 1993 he co-authored with Charlotte Gere, *Nineteenth-Century Design from Pugin to Mackintosh*. Latterly, particularly since his retirement from active dealing, Michael, in conjunction with his wife Mariko, arranged a series of touring exhibitions for the Brain Trust in Japan. Topics included Morris, Dresser, Scandinavian design and the 1960s. But Michael never lost his instincts as a hunter-gatherer (as he described himself); no day was complete without a 'have you seen this coming up...' telephone call.

Museum curators, to whom Michael was unfailing generous, depended on his sage advice, and were also able to make judicious additions to their collections at a time when the opportunity to make discoveries abounded. Examples of Michael's many furniture triumphs include an A.W.N. Pugin-designed Chair of State made for the House of Lords, a William Burges-designed chest of drawers from Tower House, an Owen Jones-designed sofa for Alfred Morrison, and no fewer than three of E.W. Godwin's iconic sideboards. The accession documents

at the British Museum and the V&A are a testament to Michael's contributions. Michael's shop will be remembered for its ever-changing collection of nineteenth-century design. But Richard Riemerschmid, Marcel Breuer, Alvar Aalto, Ole Wanscher, not to mention early radios and vacuum cleaners would all be found too.

To his friends, Michael will be fondly recalled for his generosity, his dislike of pomposity, and his humility. Some will also recall his passion for motor racing and motorbikes, his love of cakes, and his tolerance of those who followed the Arsenal.

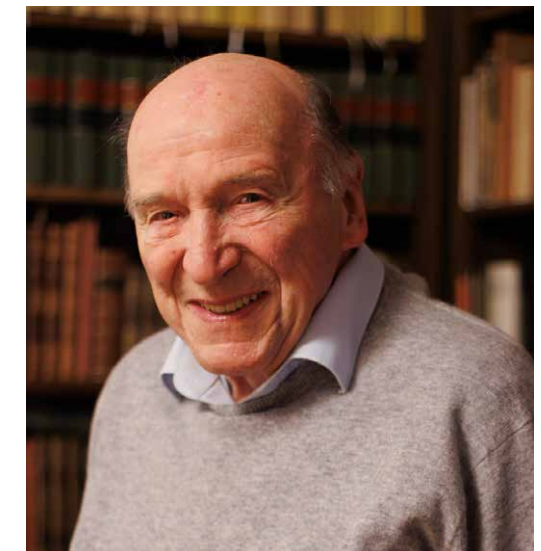
Michael and Mariko married in 1985 and celebrated with a warmly remembered reception at Burges's Tower House. Michael spoke frequently, with great admiration, about their children Hanako and Tom.

MARTIN P. LEVY

Georg Himmelheber 1929-2024

The most prominent German furniture historian of the past half century, Georg Himmelheber, who died on 1 September aged ninety-five, became one of the first members of the Furniture History Society in 1964 and when writing to congratulate the Society on its first 50 years recalled the subscription as one guinea which seemed to him so 'chic' as to be irresistible (this letter printed in *FHS Newsletter*, 195, August 2014). Georg was a scion of a cabinet-making dynasty. In 1768 his direct ancestor Johannes Himmelheber set up a cabinet-making workshop in Karlsruhe. The firm thrived and developed into a furniture factory, 'Gebrüder Himmelheber, Möbelfabrikanten', active until 1958,

although its premises and most of its records perished in a fire in 1942 (see 'Gustav Himmelheber as a Student at the Karlsruhe School of Applied Arts', *Furniture History*, Vol. 51, 2015, pp. 235-240). Georg's father, Bernhard, was an interior architect and collected drawings, as did an uncle, Philipp Hermann, artist and picture restorer. The anthropologist, Hans Himmelheber, was another uncle, as was Max Himmelheber, inventor of chipboard and acolyte of Shintoism and Animism. After training as a cabinet-maker Georg studied art history at Kiel, Munich and Freiburg; his Freiburg doctoral thesis (1954) was eventually published as *Der Ostchor des Augsburger Doms* (1963). From 1956 to 1959 he worked for the Landesamt für Denkmalpflege in Stuttgart; his *Die Kunstdenkmäler des ehemaligen Oberamts Künzelsau* (1962, reprinted 1983) was a result. His next post was as a curator at the Badisches Landesmuseum in his native Karlsruhe.



Georg Himmelheber

Georg's curatorial responsibilities in Karlsruhe extended to *schlösser* throughout Baden and there was ample opportunity for discoveries and research. This led in 1964 to the first of many publications on the Roentgen dynasty, Abraham and his eldest son David. In 1965, his reputation as a furniture historian fully established, he was appointed the curator of the great collection of the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich, where he became deputy director in 1974 and whence he retired in 1991. Throughout this long career Georg advised and assisted museums throughout Germany. The work which it gave him most pleasure to secure for the Bayerisches Museum itself was perhaps the 'Stroganov' desk by David Roentgen, a miraculous abstract combination of burr birch and gilt bronze of about 1785, deposited on permanent loan in 1975.

A ground-breaking event for German furniture history was the publication in 1967 of the first volume, *Von den Anfängen bis zum Hochbarock* of Heinrich Kreisel's monumental *Die Kunst des deutschen Möbels*, rapidly succeeded in 1970 by the second, *Spätbarock und Rokoko*. In the foreword to this last Kreisel stated that he had entrusted the third volume, *Klassizismus/ Historismus/Jugendstil* to Georg, and this duly appeared in 1973, on the same heroic scale as its predecessors. After Kreisel's death in 1975 Georg went on to produce a revised third edition of the first volume (1981), and revised editions of the second and third (his own) volumes (both 1983). 'Kreisel/Himmelheber' is universally recognised as foundational for the study of German furniture. A further basic tool

followed in 1988, *Deutsche Möbelvorlagen 1800-1900*, a systematic configuration of nearly four thousand designs, inspired by the *Pictorial Dictionary of British 19th Century Furniture Design* (1977).

In 1974 came *Biedermeier Furniture*, the first modern treatment of this subject, commissioned by Peter Thornton of the Victoria & Albert Museum for the Faber Monographs on Furniture series. A German edition followed in 1978, and an enlarged version in 1987; thanks to Georg's friendship with the leading Hungarian furniture historian, Hedwig Szabolcsi, a Budapest edition had already appeared in 1982. Georg's 'Biedermeier Gothic' (*Furniture History*, Vol. 21, 1985, pp.121-126) was a contribution to Peter Thornton's *Festschrift*. In 1987 his account of Biedermeier was questioned by Hans Ottomeyer and Christian Witt-Dörning respectively in two major exhibitions, *Biedermeiers Glück und Ende* in the Munich Stadtmuseum and *Bürgersinn und Aufbegehren* in the Vienna Historisches Museum; both had the dates 1815 to 1848 in their subtitles. Georg responded in 1988 with a splendid display at the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich under the defiant title *Kunst des Biedermeier 1815-1835*. The ripples of this controversy have subsided but there can be no doubt that Georg would not be browbeaten and 'gave as good as he got.'

Throughout his official career and beyond Georg produced a constant stream of publications. A tiny sample might include *Kabinettschränke* (1977), a booklet for the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, *Kleine Möbel* (1979), a catalogue of an exhibition there (a precursor to that of a

private collection, *Grosse Wunder Kleine Möbel* (2005), in Iphofen, a small town in Franconia), 'Die Münchner Christkindwiege' (1984), an article in which he unmasked a celebrated cradle in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum as a nineteenth-century confection incorporating genuine fourteenth-century panels, 'Die Möbel des Johann Daniel Sommer', a key contribution to *Die Künstlerfamilie Sommer* (1988), *Cast-Iron Furniture* (1996), an international history, and 'Der Trierer Erzbischof und seine Möbelankäufe' (1998), a fundamental archival study of the furniture acquired from Abraham Roentgen by Graf Johann Philipp von Walderdorff, archbishop of Trier. Major entries in the *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte* on linenfold, veneer and panelling also deserve mention. An act of personal piety was his privately printed tribute, with a full bibliography, *Hans Huth, 1892-1977* (1977). Huth was the pioneer of Roentgen studies and when in 2008 Georg magisterially surveyed the 2007 exhibitions

commemorating the bicentenary of David Roentgen's death in *Kunstchronik* he recalled Huth's 'erzwungene Emigration'. In 2010 a two-day conference at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin entitled, inevitably, 'Die Kunst des Deutschen Möbels', celebrated Georg's eightieth birthday, when he was justly hailed by Dr Burkhardt Göres as the Nestor of his field. Also in 2010 his *Der Mailänder Kabinettschrank* greeted the Liechtenstein Museum's acquisition of a spectacular Augsburg cabinet of about 1565, which he attributed to Lienhart Stromair. A swansong followed in a small but densely documented book, *Die Berchtesgadener Holzhandwerker und Bildhauer im Barock* (2012), which revealed this tiny ecclesiastical state as the source of many delightful *Kunstkammer* displays of virtuoso craftsmanship in wood.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

[A version of this obituary was published in the *Burlington Magazine*, 166, 2024, pp.1287-8, 2 illus.]

Book Reviews

Suggestions for reviews should be sent to Wolf Burchard at The Metropolitan Museum, 1000 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10028, U.S.A. (email: wolf.burchard@metmuseum.org; telephone +1 212 650 2208).

Publications

The Society is a leading publisher in the field of furniture history and a variety of publications are available for purchase to members and non-members. A list of available publications can be viewed here: www.furniturehistorysociety.org/publications/

Reports on FHS Events

Inevitably some reports have had to be edited down for the Newsletter, but longer reports are in many cases available from the Events Secretary on request. They are also circulated to those who attend the visit.

Study Trip to Derbyshire

THURSDAY 17 – SUNDAY 19 MAY 2024

Renishaw Hall

At Renishaw Hall, probably one of the least known properties that we were to visit, we were led by Christine Beevers, guide and part-time archivist. The historic core dates from the 1620s, with additions in the three phases in the late Georgian period. It was during the 1960s that the house blossomed under Sir Reresby and Lady Sitwell, whose presentation of the home can be seen today. The main Entrance Hall, part of the original building, is used as a living room. When you enter, greeted by two seventeenth-century Venetian Warriors and three John Piper paintings, you know there will be surprises.

The ante-dining room had a dining table whose chairs were explored in the typical fashion of furniture historians, upside down. Christine asked when and where these were made as they have been subject to previous discussions - it was agreed that these George II-style walnut chairs were likely to have been constructed in England, but had later, Italian-style arms applied.

From the small, low ceilings of the seventeenth-century rooms we walked

into the contrasting 13m x 6.4m Adam-inspired Dining Room. Treasures included Blue John tables and a 1800s Blue John vase, noted to be the second largest in existence.

In the Drawing Room, formed in 1803-04, the chandeliers were in the style of c.1825, slightly later than the room itself. The room contained three large 1713 tapestries almost lost on the walls, a family portrait, Chippendale furniture including a chimney piece from Melbourne House, and Boulle furniture.

The Billiard Room is an anteroom to the former Ballroom, now used as a reception room and hosting a most unusual collection of furniture with something for everyone's taste. I enjoyed the Grotto chairs, Venetian Rococo, and originally bought for the London house. The focal point, a painting from Raynham Hall, Norfolk, *Belisarius in Disgrace* by Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), with a gilt frame by William Kent, was bought by Sir Osbert Sitwell in the mid-twentieth century. Framing the picture were two large Venetian thrones attributed to Andreas Brustolon. Further tapestries, framed by Lutyens with white piano keys, relate to the room furnishings of 1909.

In the library, our guide presented us with an extract of *'Exalt the Eglantine'* by Sacheverell Sitwell, inspired by the marquetry table at Hardwick Hall. Renishaw Hall is a hidden gem, full of wonderful furniture.

JANICE GOOCH

Hardwick Hall

Our second visit was to Hardwick Hall, commissioned by Elizabeth, 'Bess of Hardwick' in 1597. Designed by the architect Richard Smithson, it is thought to be England's first Italianate-inspired building. Our first impression after walking past the Long Lawn was that Hardwick was designed to impress and certainly lived up to its famous aphorism of being 'more glass than wall.' Amy Lim explained that Hardwick was a subsidiary house for the Devonshire family and was preserved as a dynastic house to reflect their lineage; as such it is a rare survivor as it has never been altered and most of its contents have been essentially left intact. The small group of later works throughout the house were sent from other residences by subsequent generations after their interiors were fashionably updated.

We climbed a stairwell lined with English tapestries and a fifteenth-century Millefleurs tapestry to enter the sun-filled High Great Chamber with its distinctive polychrome fresco above a set of Brussels tapestries. The construction of the Eglantine table with its unique inlay of gaming pieces and musical instruments to commemorate Bess' marriage to George Talbot inspired discussion as did the contrast of the two massive portraits on display, especially that of Elizabeth I attributed to Nicholas Hillyard and thought to have been commissioned by Bess of Hardwick.

We continued into the Long Gallery with its massive set of thirteen Flemish 'Gideon' tapestries acquired in 1592. Dr Lim noted how the original owner's arms were covered by those of Hardwick



Hardwick Hall, Lapiere state bed canopy and headboard

and the golden hind symbols repainted to resemble the Cavendish stag. The Long Gallery featured a suite of seat furniture by the Royal chair-maker Thomas Roberts supplied c.1696-1701 as well as an impressive silk damask bed by Francis Lapierre and supplied to either Chatsworth or Devonshire House, London, in 1697.

Another highlight was the set of late-seventeenth century French tapestries depicting the 'History of the Sabines' commissioned by the 1st Duke of Devonshire, the only known set of French tapestries woven with an English coat-of-arms. Their subject was recently identified due to the identical borders on a set of French silk hangings with the same subject in the 1672 inventory of Louis XIV which may have served as a basis for their design.



Hardwick Hall's 'Sea dog' table

No visit to Hardwick would be complete without a close examination of the iconic 'Sea Dog' table in the State Withdrawing Room, commissioned in the 1570s in Paris after a design by Jacques du Cerceau, originally for Chatsworth. An alabaster panel depicting Apollo and the Nine Muses was also removed from Chatsworth and incorporated into the room's chimneypiece.

ANNE IGELBRINK

Chatsworth House

The first Chatsworth was built during Bess of Hardwick's days. But what we see now was re-built to celebrate the victory of the Whig Protestant oligarchy in the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688-9, from which William Cavendish (1640-1707), the fourth Earl, earned his Dukedom. He replaced the sixteenth-century house, building in four phases concluding in 1707. His architects were William Talman for the South and East fronts, and Thomas

Archer for the North front. He built and decorated in the international Baroque associated with Versailles and absolutism. His most important surviving interiors are the Painted Hall, by Louis Laguerre – his *Apotheosis of Julius Caesar* includes his assassination – the Chapel and the second floor State apartment.

The chapel is shown as an exhibition space. The reredos of local alabasters and marble was carved by Samuel Watson, the in-house decorative sculptor. The altarpiece painting is by Antonio Verrio, and the walls and ceiling by Laguerre. As Dr Lim pointed out, the Chapel evoked the layout and décor of James II's Catholic Chapel Royal (1686) at Whitehall, lost in the 1702 fire, as well as the Charles II chapel at Windsor.

The State Apartment is unusually on the second floor and is reached via a cantilevered staircase with a balustrade by Jean Tijou. It is arranged on the baroque appartement principle, though with a

full suite only for the Duke, that for his Duchess is implied by a false door/mirror arrangement in the Great Chamber. The sequence continues as Drawing Room, Music Room, Bedchamber, and Closet. In the South Gallery, dedicated to the Duchess Georgiana, FHS attendee Anne Igelbrink identified a Roentgen desk; the West Gallery evoked the 3rd Earl of Burlington, builder of Chiswick, with a portrait of his protégé William Kent above over a Kentian console with an Apollo or Diana head centrepiece.

All this magnificence was not enough for the sixth Duke (1790–1858). Within the existing house, he inserted a neoclassical library, filling it with the most luxurious neoclassical seat furniture by Morell & Hughes (from Devonshire House). His architect was Wyattville, who added a



Chatsworth House, Upper Stairhall

600-feet-long wing with the State Dining Room and the Sculpture Gallery (1818-1834). The former is in a restrained Italianate style with two magnificent fireplaces by the younger Westmacott. The re-presentation of this room and collections in 2009 as a temple to the international Neoclassical taste was the achievement of Charles Noble, Curator Emeritus of Fine Art, who showed us round with Amber Rebeka of the Collections team.

RORY O'DONNELL

Haddon Hall

Our tour of Haddon Hall was led by Ruth Eady, a Duty Warden who had done significant research into the Hall's furniture. The oldest parts of Haddon date back to the twelfth century; there is a late fourteenth-century hall range and a late sixteenth-century long gallery. In the seventeenth century the family inherited the title Earl of Rutland and in 1703 they were elevated to a dukedom. With the Rutland title came Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire which the family later decided to make their main seat. Very little was done at Haddon until the early twentieth century when John Henry Manners (1886-1940, 9th Duke of Rutland), a medieval art expert, renovated Haddon so that he and his family could live there during the summer months. Due to his antiquarian interests the renovation was sympathetically done. Some of the furniture is original to the house but much was acquired by the ninth Duke.

In the kitchen range, part of the medieval hall but later altered, we examined the ninth Duke's collection of dole cupboards, which were generally felt

Haddon Hall, Dole cupboards



to be authentic. A large oak chest in the Screen's Passage, acquired from a local pub landlord in 1912, and dating to the sixteenth century or earlier, possibly came from Burton Abbey.

The Great Hall contains some furniture original to Haddon: an elm refectory table and bench of about 1450 and two seventeenth-century oak cupboards. A small ash table, sixteenth or seventeenth century, and thought to be a carving table, has an oval groove with a hole to allow the juices to drain out. The legs may be a later addition.

In the Parlour is a twentieth-century elm table commissioned by the ninth Duke as a replica of the example in the Great Hall. The dining chairs are a mixed collection, some seventeenth-century Italian and some may be reproductions from the 1930s; further work would need to be done to establish their likely source and date. An oak armchair dated 1649 on the back panel was thought to be Victorian.

In the Earl's Apartment two pieces of furniture attracted discussion. An unusual three-legged tub chair had a walnut seat and back made from one solid piece of wood, probably made by a local craftsman. A small fruitwood chest with circular geometric designs carved on the front was probably made in Britain in the seventeenth century or earlier.

KATHRYN BARNES



Haddon Hall, Earl's Apartment'

Buxton Pump and Assembly Rooms

The Crescent in Buxton was originally built between 1780 and 1789 by William Cavendish, 5th Duke of Devonshire, to provide a spa destination in the north of England to compete with fashionable Bath. Designed by the architect John Carr, the Crescent originally housed a hotel at either end with five lodging houses between and the Assembly Rooms which became the social centre of eighteenth-century Buxton. The Crescent faces the site of St Ann's Well, where warm spring water has flowed for thousands of years.

In the twentieth century the popularity of the town as a spa destination declined so in 1935 the hotel at the east end became a hospital, with the Assembly Room as the staff canteen. When the hospital closed, it was taken over by the council and the ballroom converted to a public library. Unfortunately, the weight of books caused the suspended floor to sag, so the building was declared unsafe and it was closed in the 1990s.

After lying derelict for over twenty years, the Crescent was rescued when funding from several sources including Derbyshire County Council, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund enabled the building to be restored. Work commenced in 2016 and, after a meticulous restoration costing in the region of £72 million, the building reopened in early 2020, just before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our group was escorted up the cantilevered staircase to the Assembly Room on the first floor, designed with a suspended floor for dancing. It has a spectacular coved decorative ceiling,

marble fireplaces, Corinthian columns and pilasters, mahogany doors inlaid with rosewood and the original chandeliers.

We then crossed the road to the Pump Room and 'took the waters', being presented with our own souvenir bottle. The Grade II-listed Pump Room was designed by Henry Currey and constructed in 1894, replacing John Carr's original structure, as the solution to increasing congestion at the well. Our tour was followed by a splendid dinner in the private dining room of the Buxton Crescent Hotel, rounding off a most enjoyable visit.

JOHN AND HELEN SCHOFIELD

Kedleston Hall

Property Curator Morgan Freely welcomed our group to Kedleston Hall, highlighting the key role of Robert Adam in the development of the house, with the architect also providing the guiding hand behind much of the furniture. Sir Nathaniel Curzon, 5th Bt. (later 1st Lord Scarsdale) inherited his ancestral home in 1758 and developed a Palladian scheme to rebuild the house with Matthew Brettingham, followed by James Paine. However, upon meeting Adam in the same year, by 1760 Curzon abandoned the Brettingham/Paine scheme, putting Adam in full control.

Adam's scheme was never fully completed, with two planned pavilions unrealised. However, the completed Adam interiors and their furnishings remain remarkably intact. Today, under the ownership of the National Trust and following significant restoration, Curzon and Adam's accomplishments are front

and centre of the curation of the house.

Our tour of the house started in the grandeur of the Marble Hall. Windowless, it is lit only from above, removing 'distractions' and evoking a Classical Roman courtyard. The enormous Corinthian columns are punctuated by a set of twelve benches supplied by John Linnell in 1788 from a design by Adam based upon the sarcophagus of Agrippa.

The Saloon, based upon the Pantheon in Rome, forms the North-South axis through the house with the Marble Hall. The room is furnished by a set of chairs and settees with backs curved to match the circular room, probably supplied by Linnell. As with the Marble Hall, the relationship between architecture and furniture design is in complete harmony.

In the State Apartment, we admired the extraordinary carved and gilded furniture of James Gravenor, a Derbyshire craftsman, including the extravagant state bed of 1768. Its lively palms, emerging from roots, provide a more organic contrast to the serious formality of the furniture seen hitherto. Displayed in the Wardrobe is a japanned Chinoiserie cabinet of c.1758, attributed to Linnell and probably from Curzon's London house, Audley Square.

Among the highlights were the spectacular sofas of the Drawing Room supplied by John Linnell in 1765 featuring sculptural mermaids, dolphins and other aquatic features, picking up on the maritime theme of this blue room. A pair of fustic-topped card tables supplied by Linnell, placed under pier glasses also attracted our attention. Card tables had been suggested by Adam to his client as

being more suitable for a drawing room than marble-topped console tables.

Our tour ended with the privileged opportunity to view some of Adam's drawings for Kedleston.

ADAM TOOLE

The FHS is extremely grateful to Dr Amy Lim for planning and leading this Study Trip.

Visit to Spencer House, St James's Place, Westminster

MONDAY 8 JULY 2024

The late Lord (Jacob) Rothschild oversaw a remarkable transformation of Spencer House in the 1980s and early 1990s when the house, built between 1756 and 1766 by the first Earl Spencer, was returned to its former glory as a beautiful private mansion in the heart of St James's.

Lord Rothschild set up a committee, led by interior designer David Mlinaric, appointing some of Britain's most respected specialists to ensure the restoration remained faithful to the original, including antique dealer Christopher Gibbs, curator John Harris, architectural historians John Cornforth and Colin Amory, Tom Helme as historic paint expert (now more widely known as the founder of both Farrow and Ball and Fermoie) and Dick Reid, the York-based master carver. Reid's team of twenty-two carvers spent an extraordinary ten years recreating six replica chimney pieces for the house. These were exact copies of the originals, removed to Althorp House in 1941.

Our visit commenced in the Ante Room, a room adapted by Henry Holland for the



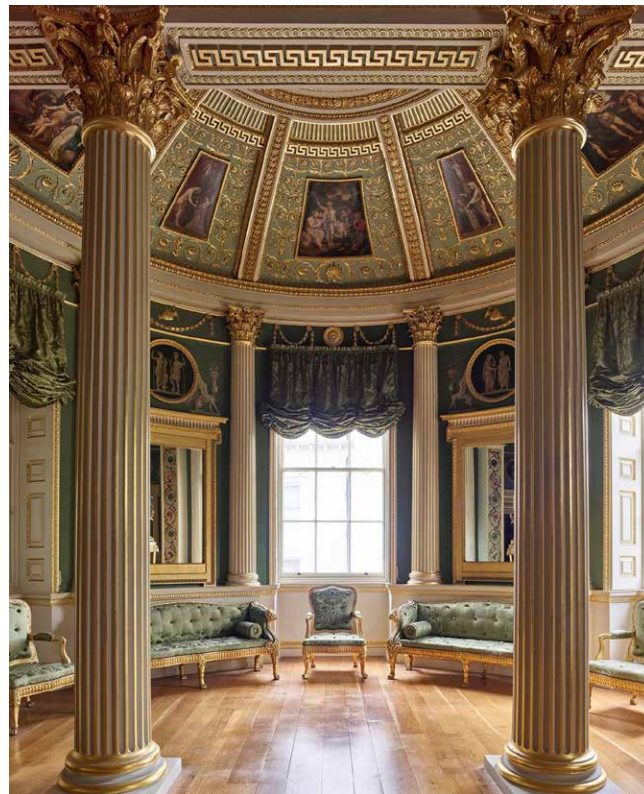
Great Room, Spencer House

second Earl Spencer in the 1780s and 90s, where we saw a sideboard by William Chambers and an armchair found by Mlinaric in Paris that was ensuite with five existing armless chairs bearing a Spencer provenance.

The décor of the Library reflects the tastes of the early nineteenth century. The collection of furniture was assembled by the restoration committee and included metamorphic library steps that Christopher Gibbs found in New York and tentatively attributed to Campbell.

Next was the Dining Room which included two amazing, gilded consoles with swags designed by John Vardy,

the original architect of the house, and probably carved by his brother Thomas. Lord Rothschild reunited the tables which are on loan from the V&A and Leeds Museums and Galleries. The room also contains two original giltwood pier tables designed by architect Sir William Chambers for the Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim and made by Robert Ansell, and a wonderful chandelier with storm shades by John Blades. The room is set off with a remarkable painting, *The Death of General Wolfe* by Benjamin West, commissioned as an autograph copy by George III, and lent by the His Majesty King Charles III.



Painted Room, Spencer House. ©Paul Highnam

The best-known room at Spencer House is the Palm Room designed by John Vardy, who designed a large suite of upholstered seat furniture for the room featuring stylised palm leaves, probably originally made by John Gordon. The suite was removed in 1783 when the second Earl Spencer converted the room into a library, and most of the suite is now in private collections. The settee is on display at the National Museum of Scotland where it has recently been conserved using modern upholstery materials. The basis for recreation of the furniture in the 1980s was a pair of armchairs bought by Christopher Gibbs. The suite was re-made by carver Ben Bacon, with gilding by Clare Kooy-Lister and upholstery by Peter Thuring. The beautiful green silk damask was woven by Humphries Weaving of Suffolk.

The Great Room has its original superb, coved ceiling derived from the Basilica of

Maxentius in Rome. As well as the new chimney piece, Dick Reid carved two pier tables and glasses from the originals now at Althorp House.

Finally, we reached the Painted Room, the masterpiece of James "Athenian" Stuart, who had replaced John Vardy as architect in 1758 - a magnificent neoclassical room with the original suite of seat furniture also designed for the room by James Stuart on loan from the V&A. The sofa frames incorporate naturalistically rendered forms of winged lions, which give the furniture great presence.

Spencer House is a magnificent testament to the determination of Lord Rothschild to recreate the splendour of the Georgian age. We are most grateful to Victoria Wilson, Collections Manager at Spencer House, who led the tour.

HUGH GARFORTH BLES

Calling All Scholars and Museum Professionals

The Furniture History Society welcomes grant applications for independent travel, research or for participation in the Society's study trips both overseas and in the United Kingdom. Scholars and museum professionals working in the fields of furniture history, furniture making, decorative arts, interior design and conservation who are in need of support for travel and research are encouraged to apply.

The Society makes grants to individuals and organisations from two funds which have been established thanks to the generosity of members of the Society. They are administered by the Society's Grants committee (Chair: Adriana Turpin) which meets quarterly to consider applications – either for independent travel for study or research, or for participation in the Society's study trips, both overseas and in the United Kingdom.

Tom Ingram Memorial Fund

Grants are awarded from the Ingram Fund towards travel and associated expenses for the purpose of study or research into the history of furniture. These grants are offered, whether or not the applicant is a member of the Society, where travel could

not be undertaken without funding from the Society; and only where the study or research is likely to further the Society's objectives. Applications towards the cost of the Society's own foreign and domestic trips and study weekends are particularly welcome from scholars and museum professionals. Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the assistance of the Ingram Fund in any resulting publications and will be required to make a short report on completion of the trip.

Oliver Ford Trust

The Oliver Ford Trust supports research by emerging scholars and junior museum professionals in the fields of furniture history, the decorative arts and interior design mainly by sponsoring places on the Society's study weekends or foreign tours. Recent awards have included grants to enable participation in the Society's Symposium at The Frick Collection in New York; a weekend visit to the TEFAF (The European Fine Art Foundation) fair; and international conferences.

Applications from individuals who are not members of the Society will be considered.

For further information or to download a grant application form, please go to the Grants page of the Society's website at www.furniturehistorysociety.org/grants/enquiries. Enquiries should be addressed to the Grants Secretary, Jill Bace, at grants@furniturehistorysociety.org.

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

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Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next Newsletter is Thursday 6th March 2025. Copy should be sent by email to harry.bonarlaw@bonhams.com

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COVER PICTURE: Mahogany, turned and joined table in the Aesthetic style, designed by Edward William Godwin around 1867-1868. Gifted to the V&A Museum by Michael Whiteway. ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London. W.71-1981.