

The Furniture History Society

Newsletter 199

August 2015



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The Hougoumont Crucifix

Hougoumont Farm, twelve miles south of Brussels, played a critical part in the Battle of Waterloo. An intensely atmospheric place, it survives today more or less as it was after the ferocious and bloody eight-hour struggle which engulfed it on 18 June 1815.

Before the battle of Waterloo Hougoumont consisted of a little château with a chapel attached, a barn, stables and a cluster of lesser farm buildings, all enclosed by a high wall. Next to it was a formal garden, walled on two sides and, beyond that to the east, an orchard bounded by dense hedges of beech and thorn. Close-by to the south west was an acre of mature woodland. Like many

châteaux-fermes in the province of Brabant it had something of the aspect of a fortress (Fig. 1). Hanging in the chapel above the door connecting it to the château was a life-size early seventeenth-century wooden crucifix (Fig. 2).¹

From the moment the first shot was fired Hougoumont was the scene of intense fighting. Indeed, it was the only place on the battlefield of Waterloo where fighting continued throughout the day. Its position among trees in a hollow in front of the extreme right of Wellington's line, equidistant from both armies, gave it strategic significance to both sides. If the French took Hougoumont, Wellington's line could be turned and his route to the

Fig. 1
Reconstruction of the chateau of Hougoumont as it is likely to have appeared before the battle of Waterloo, 1912, showing the chapel attached to the south side of the chateau





Fig. 2 The Hougoumont crucifix hanging above the altar in the chapel after restoration in 2008

sea cut off; if Wellington could hold it, the force of the inevitable assault on his centre would be weakened.

At about 2 pm, after the loss of hundreds of men in a succession of failed assaults, Jerome Bonaparte, the French divisional commander, ordered up a battery of howitzers to bombard Hougoumont. By 3 pm farm buildings and the chateau were on fire. Private Matthew Clay of the 3rd Foot Guards was ordered to stay at his post at the upper window of the chateau from which he was firing on enemy skirmishers:

We fully expected the floor to sink with us every moment,' he wrote in his memoir of the battle, 'and in our escape several of us ... were injured.

By the end of the day the building was a roofless shell and Hougoumont had become a place of horror. Survivors wrote of disorientation caused by dense smoke and the noise of battle, of terrified horses careering out of burning buildings and then back into the flames, and of the pitiful cries of wounded men trapped by fire and falling roofs. By now the main focus of the battle had shifted to the ridge of Mont St Jean, half a mile away, but Hougoumont remained under sporadic attack and continued to hold until the battle was won.

Meanwhile, having destroyed the chateau, the fire burned through into the adjacent chapel, where it began to consume the feet of Christ and then suddenly, it died away. Ensign George Standen wrote home:

The anecdote of the fire only burning the feet of the Cross is perfectly true, which in so superstitious a country made a great sensation.

The battle over, peace returned to Hougoumont. In 1816 it was bought by a local landowner for preservation as a memorial to those who had fought and died there.² Some of the buildings were repaired and reroofed, others were demolished, a tenant was installed in the gardener's house and Hougoumont became — and for nearly two hundred years remained — a working farm. From time to time travellers would knock on the door and be admitted by the farmer or his wife, encouraged to explore and urged not to miss the miraculous crucifix. The chapel, with the ruins of the chateau attached, was frequently drawn, painted,

Fig. 3 The chapel and the remains of the chateau soon after the battle. Aquatint after watercolour attr.

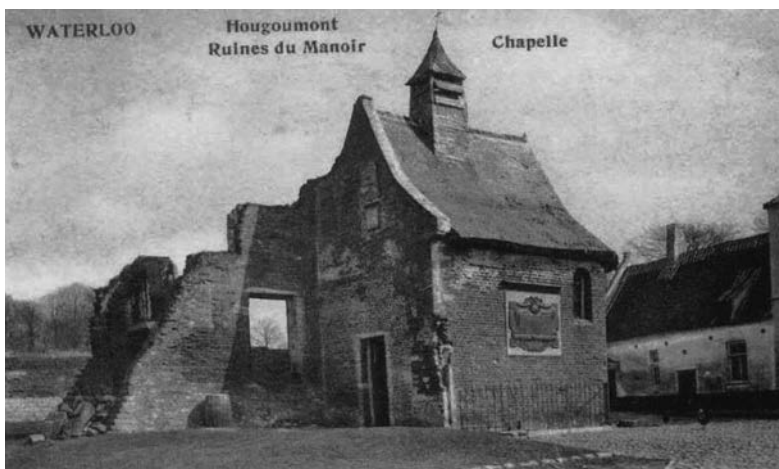
James Rouse, 1815; published in Mudford, *An Historical Account of the Campaign in the Netherlands*, 1817. (Cabinet d'Estampes, Brussels)



Fig. 4 The chapel by about 1830, showing tourists and a discreet guide in smock and top hat. One of several pen-and-wash drawings by Edouard Pingret. (Cabinet d'Estampes, Brussels)



Fig. 5 The chapel soon after the bronze plaque commemorating the defence of Hougoumont by soldiers of the brigade of Guards was installed in 1907. Until then there had been nothing to explain its semi-ruinous state or the part played by Hougoumont in the battle of Waterloo



engraved and photographed (Figs 3–4). Early views show part of the chateau still standing to its full height, but as time passed it was reduced to the few fragments that survive today (Fig. 4).

The first recorded reference to the crucifix by a peacetime visitor is in the travel journal of Lady Shelley, the intimate friend and *confidante* of the Duke of Wellington, dated 15 September 1815:

The chapel of Hougoumont is the only portion of the farm which escaped the flames which enveloped it late in the day. The woman of the house gravely assured us that the foot of our Saviour on the Cross stopped the leaping flames which rolled back the moment they touched it.

On 5 May 1816 Byron visited Hougoumont on his way into exile. His friend and travelling companion, Dr John Polidori, records in his journal that Byron galloped across the battlefield in a borrowed ‘Cossac’ horse and scratched his name on the white-washed walls of the chapel which, he adds, had been used as a refuge for the wounded:

At Hougoumont we saw the untouched chapel where our wounded lay and where the fire consumed the toes of a crucifix.

Another early visitor, Charlotte Malkin, writing on 25 July 1816, stirs a new ingredient into the story:

The only part of the premises which escaped was the Chapel when here the fire had taken place, and the feet of Christ on a crucifix above the door nearly burnt to a cinder . . . The Chapel was afterwards used as a surgery and many a limb was amputated here.

One more excerpt from many surviving accounts attests to the strong impression made on visitors by the crucifix and the Christ figure’s charred and truncated limbs. In a letter dated 24 June 1816 an Anglican parson, the Rev. Edward Stanley, condescends to the local people and their superstition:

One of the farm servants begged me to observe the chapel which he hinted had been indebted to a miracle for its safety and certainly, as a good Catholic, he had a fair foundation for his belief, as the flames had merely burnt about a yard of the floor, having been checked, as he conceived it, by the presence of a crucifix suspended over the door which had received no other injury than the loss of part of its feet.

From time to time both chapel and crucifix would need repair. Four undated photographs show the crucifix in different states during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Figs 6–7). At some stage the figure of Christ acquired a new lower right leg which was later removed. Damp and furniture beetle took their toll and the cross and Christ’s arms were renewed.

In 2003 the last farm tenant died and Hougoumont was sold to a consortium of local authorities known as the Intercommunale Bataille de Waterloo 1815. For ten years the buildings lay unoccupied and decaying while their future was debated. In 2007 the Brussels branch of The Soroptimists paid for the chapel to be repaired once again and for the crucifix to be removed for conservation. A year later, the crucifix returned and was placed above the altar



Fig. 6 (LEFT) Undated photograph of the crucifix taken between 1856 and c. 1900

Fig. 7 (ABOVE) Undated photograph of the crucifix taken between 1856 and c. 1900

where it remained until February 2011 when thieves broke in and stole it.

Meanwhile, an appeal had been launched in Belgium and the United Kingdom for the money needed to repair the buildings and open Hougomont to the public in time for the Waterloo bicentenary in 2015. While work progressed, much time was spent considering how the crucifix might be

replaced. Various ideas were floated: commissioning a painting of it from photographs, printing an image of it onto canvas or voile, or commissioning a contemporary piece of sculpture. Then, one morning in October 2014, a man walking his dog in the nearby village of Braine L'Alleud caught sight of the stolen crucifix in a neighbour's garage. The neighbour claimed to have bought it for

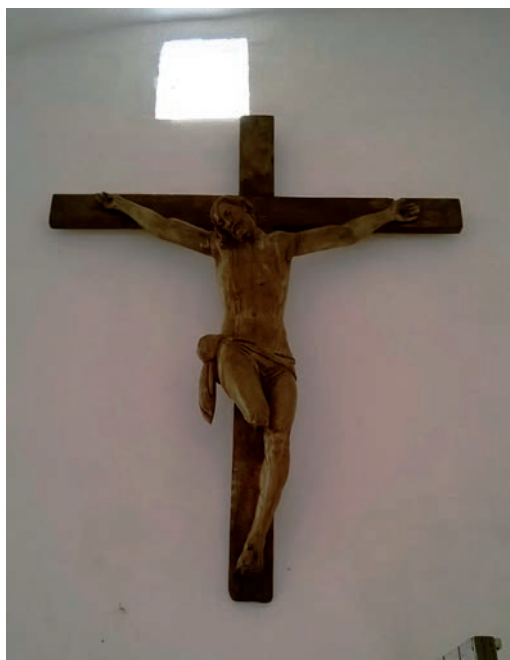


Fig. 8 (LEFT) The crucifix in the state in which it was recovered in October 2014

Fig. 9 (ABOVE) The Hougomont crucifix repaired and with replicated lower left leg, hanging over the chapel door on 17 June 2015

€200 in a local flea market. It was in pieces and damaged by rough handling; the leg which had survived down to the instep was missing (Fig. 8). The decision was taken to replicate the missing leg and to clean and, where necessary, consolidate the rest of the figure and the cross.³ By the eve of the bicentenary when The Prince of Wales officially opened Hougomont, the crucifix was back once again in the position from which it had witnessed the momentous events of 18 June 1815 (Fig. 9).

MARTIN DRURY

1 I am grateful to Mr Frits Scholten of the Rijksmuseum for his opinion that the figure of Christ is likely to have been carved in the Brabant region in about 1600 and to Mr John Hartley of Tankerdale Ltd. for identifying the wood as either lime or poplar.

2 In May 1816 the 86-year-old Chevalier de Louville, having failed to secure reparations from Louis XVIII, sold Hougomont to a local landowner, Count François-Xavier de Robiano, whose descendant, Count Guibert d'Oultremont, sold it to the Intercommunale Bataille de Waterloo 1815 in 2003. De Louville's application to Louis XVIII survives in the possession of Count d'Oultremont.

3 The Intercommunale which owns the crucifix commissioned M. Dominique Bourlée to carry out the work of conservation and repair in consultation with M. Christian Patriarche who repaired it in 2008.

Future Society Events

Bookings

For places on visits please apply to the Events Secretary Anne-Marie Bannister, Bricket House, 90 Mount Pleasant Lane, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Herts., AL2 3XD, Tel. 07775 907390 enclosing a separate cheque using the enclosed booking form and A5 stamped addressed envelope. Where possible, joining instructions will be despatched by e-mail so please remember to provide your e-mail address if you have one. There is no need to send an SAE if you provide a clearly-written e-mail 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 use the blue form for booking events or e-mail 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 eg. a tour/lunch. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

Annual Lecture

Tula Furniture — Wonder of the XVIII Century, Dr Ludmilla Dementieva

THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES,
BURLINGTON HOUSE, PICCADILLY,
LONDON W1

TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2015, 6.00 PM FOR
6.30 PM–7.45 PM LECTURE

The production of Tula steel furniture, a bi-product of the work of the famous Tula gunsmiths, was a glittering interlude in the history of Russian furniture. The story

dates back to the 1740s, when the first examples of folding armchairs were ordered by the Imperial court. The art of steel-furniture-making in Tula blossomed under the patronage of the Russian Empress Catherine II, and the last examples were made early in the nineteenth century, in the first years of the reign of her grandson, Alexander I. These daring experiments in the use of steel for furniture were highly successful and the surviving, rare examples of Tula steel furniture are now among the treasures of museums throughout the world.

The range of furniture made included armchairs and chairs, folding tables and footstools, and beds and fireplaces, as well as toilet sets and elegant mirrors. These pieces were decorated with a variety of techniques, deployed with the greatest skill and reflecting the most fashionable styles of the period.



The lecture will illustrate the best and rarest examples of Tula steel from the collections of the State Historical Museum, Moscow, the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, the Moscow Kremlin, and the former Imperial residences, including the Palaces of Tsarskoy Selo and Pavlovsk.

Dr Ludmila Dementieva was born in Moscow and studied for her doctorate in history at Moscow University, where she was a state prize winner. She is Head of the Department of Metalwork at the State Historical Museum, Moscow, with curatorial responsibility for the collections of bronze, cast iron and steel. She specializes in the study of metalwork of the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries and is an official expert for the Ministry of Culture in Russia. She has published numerous articles and books on Russian metalwork and has been responsible for more than thirty exhibitions on aspects of the subject. She is a member of ICOM-ICDAD.

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

Folding steel chair, Imperial Arms Factory, Tula, c. 1745–55 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Annual General Meeting and Works in Progress Talks

THE EAST INDIA CLUB, 16 ST JAMES'S
SQUARE, LONDON SW1

SATURDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2015,
11.00 AM–1.00 PM

The Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2015 will be held at the East India Club. The AGM will start at 11.00 am (coffee from 10.30 am).

Four talks will follow the business of the day: David Dewing, Director of the Geffrye Museum will speak about future developments there; Laura Houlston of English Heritage, and FHS Council member, will speak about the re-structuring of English Heritage; and Leela Meinertas of the Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department at the V&A will talk about the Napoleonic Medal Cabinet which was recently acquired by the Museum with financial help from the Society.

Admission to the AGM is free but all members wishing to attend should notify the Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance. Tickets for a sandwich lunch with a glass of wine at the price of £15 per head should be booked with the Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance.

Study Weekend to The Lake District

FRIDAY 18–SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER
2015

This study trip was advertised in the February and May 2015 *Newsletters* and is now fully subscribed. Please contact the Events Secretary if you would like to be put on the waiting list.

Combermere

Please register your interest via the Events Secretary or via the website.

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, and for participation in FHS foreign and UK study trips. Please contact Jo Norman at grants@furniturehistorysociety.org for further information and grant application forms.

Research Seminar on European Furniture for Sir Nicholas Goodison in Celebration of 25 years as President of the Society

HOSTED BY THE WALLACE COLLECTION,
LONDON, W1

FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2015,
10 AM–5 PM

Following the success of its two previous FHS Research Seminars, held in London in 2012 and in New York in 2014, the Society is delighted to announce that a third Research Seminar will take place, once again hosted by the Wallace Collection, on 20 November 2015.

Ten speakers from the UK, Belgium, France, Holland and Germany — all at an early stage of their career — will present short papers on their current research. Papers will encompass a broad chronological and geographical

representation of European furniture history: including topics ranging from seventeenth-century Anglo-Dutch carving to the nineteenth-century collecting of Léopold Double, and from an examination of the collaborations between Georges Jacob and the Rousseau Brothers, through to the Art Nouveau furniture and theoretical works of Henry van de Velde.

A detailed programme and tickets will be available on the FHS website from early September.

All enquiries and bookings for this event should be made through the Grants Secretary, Joanna Norman, email grants@furniturehistorysociety.org.

The FHS Research Seminar is generously supported by the Oliver Ford Trust and the Wallace Collection.

Occasional Visits



Firle Place

Firle Place, Firle, Lewes, Sussex BN8 6LP

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2015,
10.30 AM–3.30 PM APPROX

This visit was advertised in the May 2015 edition of the newsletter. At the time of going to press there are still some places remaining. Please contact the Events Secretary for further details.

COST: £65 LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS

Goldsmiths' Hall, Foster Lane, London EC2V 6BN

MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2015, 5 PM–7 PM

The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths was founded by royal charter in 1327. It acquired its first Hall, a merchant's house, in Foster Lane in 1339 and has been on the same site since that date. The second Hall, designed by Nicholas Stone, the King's Mason, with assistance from Inigo Jones, was erected in the mid-1630s and was badly damaged internally by the Great Fire of 1666.

Restored, it survived until the early-nineteenth century, when it was beginning to show its age. Several reports were made and discussed before the decision to create a third Hall was taken. A young architect, Philip Hardwick, was chosen



Goldsmiths' Hall

and building work began in 1829. Six years later the new Hall was opened — to great acclaim — in the summer of 1835. This is the Hall which you will be visiting.

This private visit will include a tour of the main reception rooms and an opportunity to view, *in situ*, the nineteenth-century furniture made by

George Seddon and by W. & C. Wilkinson. In the Court Room, drawings of the furniture, from the Hardwick archive, will be on show together with some accounts.

COST: £25 LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER 2015

Overseas Event

Madrid

MAY/EARLY JUNE 2016 (EXACT DATES TO BE CONFIRMED)

The last FHS trip to Madrid, organised about ten years ago, offered members a broad overview of the major furniture collections in and around the city and an opportunity to meet with Spanish furniture scholars. The focus of a new study tour to this city being planned for the late spring or early summer of 2016 will be eighteenth-century furniture, interiors and collecting. Participants will be able to see royal palaces and museum collections in the company of the curators in charge and access some private collections. A number of guided visits tailored specifically to the topic of this overseas event are being planned, as well as an informal gathering with short presentations by scholars whose research ties in with the subject.

Further information will be posted in the November *Newsletter*.

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, and for participation in FHS foreign and UK study trips. Please contact Jo Norman at grants@furniturehistorysociety.org for further information and grant application forms.

Geoffrey Beard

Members will be saddened to hear of the death of Geoffrey Beard. Geoffrey was co-founder of the Furniture History Society in 1964. He edited the *Journal* for the first ten years (1964–73), frequently contributing himself. Following a career in museums, he became Director of the Visual Arts at Lancaster University 1972–82, during which time he published many seminal books including *Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain* (1975). He was Director of the Attingham Summer School for the Study of Historic Houses and Collections from 1986–94. He was awarded the OBE in the New Year's honours list for services to Heritage in 2008.

A full obituary will be included in the 2016 issue of *Furniture History*. There will be a memorial service in the autumn. Details will appear on the Society's website.

Publications for Sale

The Society has two sets of *Furniture History*, its annual journal, available to purchase.

1. A full run from 1965 (Vol. I) to 2014 (Vol. L) with all indices, very good condition, £250 negotiable.
2. Run from 1966 (Vol. II) to 1996 (Vol. XXXII), with appropriate indices, good condition except for some marks to

spine of some early volumes. £200 negotiable.

Both these runs of *Furniture History* are available for collection from Fulham, London sw. Expressions of interest should be addressed to Clarissa Ward, Hon. Secretary, Furniture History Society, 0207 384 4458 or email secretary@furniturehistorysociety.org

The FHS Needs You!

The Society is seeking a volunteer to take on the rôle of Publications Secretary. The post is not arduous. It is expected to take up a maximum of 4/5 hours per month and you are able to work from home. It is an ideal opportunity for a member who would like to help the Society, to be involved with it on a voluntary basis and who possesses simple organizational skills. All your out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed and you will have your own FHS e-mail address. Ideally you will be able to start by the end of September.

The job involves taking orders for the Society's publications, processing the payment either by cheque or credit/debit card (don't worry, we will show you how to deal with these) and passing the order onto the Society's printers, Oblong, for dispatch.

At present, the Publications page of the website simply lists the titles and prices of the Society's publications (mainly back

numbers of *Furniture History*), but the next phase of the website's development will include more details of individual publications and the facility to pay online for both members and non-members. Currently there are approximately 5–6 orders per month, but with better publicity, we are hoping that this figure will increase.

We shall ask you to make a sales return on a regular basis (perhaps monthly) to the Society's Finance Secretary (Keith Nicholls) so that he can report quarterly to Council. In addition we would like you to attend Society events, such as the Annual Symposium, the AGM and the Annual Lecture, to take orders and payments. You will be able to attend such events free of charge where appropriate.

Publications are one of the Society's key activities of the Society (and new ones are planned) and if the new appointee wished to become more involved with their production this might be possible. However this is not a requirement of the position being advertised.

If you are interested and would like to know more, please contact the Hon. Secretary, Clarissa Ward, at secretary@furniturehistorysociety.org or the Hon. Treasurer, Martin Williams, at mail@mbmwilliams.co.uk

Call for contributions for the 2016 Journal

The Hon. Editorial Secretary of the Society will be preparing the 2016 Journal in the following months and would welcome contributions from members. Articles can be 3,000 to 5,000 words in length with up to twelve illustrations, although longer papers will be considered. For further information please contact the Hon. Editorial Secretary, Lisa White, via the Society's website.

Other Notices

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

Study visit to temporary exhibition 'Transparent Art: Milanese Rock Crystal Carving' at the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

FROM 13 OCTOBER, 2015 TO
10 JANUARY, 2016 (EXACT DATE TO BE
CONFIRMED)

The Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid is currently preparing a new permanent exhibition display scheduled to be completed in September 2016 for 'The Dauphin's Treasure', its outstanding collection of 119 sixteenth- and seventeenth-century vessels and other objects crafted from precious materials. These came to Spain as part of the inheritance received by Philip V of Spain (r. 1700–1724) from his father, Grand Dauphin Louis of Bourbon (1661–1711), the eldest son of Louis XIV of France. In the interim, the museum is organising a temporary exhibition that will feature fourteen carved rock crystal and smoky quartz objects from The Dauphin's Treasure, all of which are attributed to the

foremost Milanese stone carvers of the period, as well as comparable pieces on loan from the Louvre and the Museo degli Argenti. The exhibition is being curated by Letizia Arbeteta, author of the catalogue raisonné for this collection, and scientifically coordinated by Leticia Azcue, Senior Curator and Head of the Department of Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Prado. This study visit will offer interested individuals the opportunity to see the exhibition under the guidance of some of the museum staff members responsible for developing the project.

For further information please contact FHS member Daniela Heinze at: daniela@artoffice.eu.com

Call For Papers ICOM-CC Joint Interim Conference: 'Historic and Modern Assemblages: Treatments of Wood based Multimedia Artworks/ Interiors in Context'

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
POTSDAM, POTSDAM, GERMANY,
8–10 APRIL, 2016

Set within the historic gardens and palaces of Potsdam, this three-day conference will bring together an

international roster of conservators, art historians, conservation scientists, and artists to share new research, past experiences, and their specific and varied expertise. The conference will focus on site-specific wooden works of art of a composite nature. Included in this broad theme are the exploration of the purpose and the complex means used to create these works consisting of multiple elements and mixed materials as well as the conservation strategies designed to preserve and display them. Relevant topics include, but are not limited to, secular and religious interiors or assemblages (in situ or removed from their original setting), composite works of art, architectural elements, and historic and modern artist installations.

Submissions related to completed and in-progress treatments, newly developed treatments and preventive conservation are especially encouraged. Authors interested in presenting a paper, please submit an abstract (400–600 words, 1–2 images) by 1 August 2015 to assemblage.potsdam.2016@gmail.com

Exhibition: 'Asia in Amsterdam: Exotic luxury in the Golden Age'

RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM,
17 OCTOBER 2015–17 JANUARY 2016;
PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM, SALEM,
27 FEBRUARY–4 JUNE 2016

With 170 objects from China, Japan, India and Batavia, this exhibition tells the story of the excitement created by the Asian

treasures that were shipped to Holland in the Golden Age. Lacquer work, ivory, silver, silk, ebony, jewellery and enormous quantities of porcelain poured into Amsterdam to enrich the interiors of the increasingly prosperous Dutch bourgeoisie. The exhibition includes many still-lives and portraits of citizens who had themselves painted among their newly acquired items of Asian luxury. With loans from Moscow, St Petersburg, Versailles, London, Oxford, Madrid and Stockholm.

Exhibition: 'The World of Charles and Ray Eames'

BARBICAN ART GALLERY, LONDON,
21 OCTOBER 2015–14 FEBRUARY 2016

Charles and Ray Eames are among the most important designers of the 20th century. This extensive new exhibition, produced in collaboration with the Eames Office, will survey their careers and extraordinary work at the Eames Office. It will present the world of Charles and Ray Eames through objects and projects produced during their lifetime including film, multi-channel slideshows, photography, furniture, products, drawings, sculpture, painting, graphic design, models, props, and exhibition and installation artefacts.

The Society is arranging a short private tour of the exhibition in January. Date to be confirmed on the website and in the November *Newsletter*.

Symposium: Retail Realms: Shops, Shoppers and Shopping in Eighteenth-Century Britain, c. 1680–1830

FAIRFAX HOUSE AND HILTON HOTEL,
YORK, THURSDAY 22 AND FRIDAY
23 OCTOBER

This symposium, the third Fairfax House Symposium in Georgian Studies, aims to bring together interested parties from curatorial, conservation, academic and other backgrounds with an interest in the history of shops and shopping to explore the nature and significance of the retail realm in the long eighteenth century.

The eighteenth century was a transformative age for shops and shopping in Britain. Between the late seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries far-reaching changes took place in the ways people shopped, the things they bought, the shops themselves and the ways in which they were run, and the systems of distribution and marketing which made possible the shopping experience. For an increasing portion of Georgian 'polite society', shopping, from being primarily a matter of obtaining the necessities of life, became a pleasurable leisure activity in its own right, associated with sociability, sensory experience, the fashioning of selfhood and the expression of individual and collective identities.

For further details email
fairfaxhousesymposium@gmail.com

Conference: Lambrequins and Luxury: Ornament in the time of Louis XIV and beyond

V&A MUSEUM, LONDON, SATURDAY
5 DECEMBER 2015 10.30–17.00

Marking the tercentenary of the close of Louis XIV's reign this one-day conference will explore the tenets, impact and dissemination of the Louis XIV style in Britain and Europe. Papers given by a range of international speakers will examine the work of key designers, ornamentalists and craftsmen who contributed to this style including Charles Lebrun, André-Charles Boulle and Daniel Marot.

TICKETS ARE £25, £20 (CONCESSIONS)
& £15 STUDENTS

To book visit <http://www.vam.ac.uk/whatson/type/conferences-symposia/>,
or telephone the bookings office 020 7942
2211

Reports on the Society's Events

FHS Annual Symposium,
28 March 2015 at the
Wallace Collection,
Manchester Square
London: 'Rustic
Adornments': furniture
for the Garden

The Society's 39th Annual Symposium, organised by Kate Dyson and Sarah Medlam, was chaired by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, garden historian and garden designer. Garden furniture is not a subject that had previously been examined by the Society in a symposium, perhaps because it falls between the two disciplines of furniture history and garden history. The

eight speakers offered papers that explored aspects of the subject from the classical period to the twentieth century and covered furniture designed by architects and named makers, and also rustic traditions and the exploitation of new techniques and materials. Two question-and-answer sessions produced lively discussion and the day ended with a plea from Lisa White for the setting up of a mechanism to record the rare and threatened survivals of early garden furniture in Britain.

EDWARD HOLLIS, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART

The Seat of Inspiration: garden furniture in ancient Rome

... as you lie on the couch you have the sea at your feet, the villa at your back, and the woods at your head, and all these views may be looked at separately from each window or blended into one prospect. When I betake myself into this sitting-room, I seem to be quite away even from my villa ...

(Pliny the Younger, Letter to Gallus)

Garden furniture turns nature into interiors, and, sometimes, interiors into nature. Edward Hollis's lecture showed how the Romans themselves understood this problem, and how they have influenced the work of furniture designers and users after them. The Romans imagined three types of gardens: courtyards of houses, fields on farms, and, lastly, the *hortus* or pleasure ground. The paper explored some of the promiscuous pieces of furniture associated with the

hortus: couches that had rivers running through them, artificial forests filled with golden birds, and thrones hidden in grottoes. There is very little left of them, and we must look for evidence in paintings, sculpture and particularly in literature. In the post-Roman centuries, people have attempted to reconstruct them: in the Great Palace of Byzantium, in the Ummayyad palaces of Damascus, in the *hortus conclusus* of the Middle Ages, and the scholarly villas of the Italian Renaissance. The ambiguous spaces of the *hortus*, half nature, half artifice demanded furniture that was similarly ambiguous and the lecture considered how the line has been drawn between the two over a millennium of garden and house design.

DR PAULA HENDERSON, LECTURER AND WRITER ON BRITISH HISTORY AND GARDEN HISTORY

Adorning the Arbour: Tudor and Stuart garden furniture

The study of antique garden furniture has concentrated on pieces dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, earlier examples being as rare as early English gardens themselves.

Dr Henderson showed, however, that there is much evidence — mostly literary and pictorial — of furniture created for gardens in the seventeenth century and earlier, that established important precedents. Medieval manuscripts include images of garden seats or 'roosting places' (often turfed with sweet-smelling herbs) and tables for banqueting and game-playing. These traditions continued well into the Tudor period and beyond.

While there are no surviving examples of purpose-built joined garden furniture before the middle of the seventeenth century, accounts from the Royal Works describe seats in Elizabeth I's gardens at Greenwich and Windsor, carved and decorated with the royal arms, then painted to look like stone. A drawing by Robert Lemyng for Sir Henry Hobart at Blickling Hall, inscribed 'the front of the banquetting house to the garden' shows one of the most architectural forms of the garden seat, and similar example can be seen today at Edington Priory. The three stone seats set dramatically into little alcoves at Bolsover Castle were positioned so those who 'roosted' in them could look back toward the Little Castle itself. The octagonal stone tables in Sir William Sharington's tower at Lacock Abbey, dating from the mid-sixteenth century, are evidence of the extremely fine pieces that were executed for banqueting houses, as are a number of the exquisite tables illustrated in the Lumley Inventory of about 1590. Chairs and benches used in later seventeenth-century gardens are exemplified by those at Ham House.

GEORGE CARTER, GARDEN HISTORIAN
AND GARDEN DESIGNER

Architects' Designs for Garden Seats
1700–1830

George Carter's paper aimed to categorise the types and forms of garden seat that were current in the eighteenth century. It identified their roots and illustrated designs for seats, as well as quoting contemporary commentaries on garden seats and their use. He traced garden seat

designs, such as the backless bench used in Versailles and elsewhere, as a repeating motif used as part of a larger design, rather than as an object important in itself. In the eighteenth century such benches as these were made in stone or timber. In England they were recorded in Chiswick in 1753. They were used by Kent in his pavilion at Rousham and in the loggia of cottages by George Repton, to be seen recorded in his Pavilion Notebook, of about 1805–1818. More ambitious designs included benches with backs of baroque outline, some made for the Villa Palagonia, Bagheria, Sicily in about 1720, as well as similar models at Houghton. Also considered were seats designed for garden pavilions, including a rustic seat of about 1750, designed by Thomas Wright for a recess in the garden of the Hermit's Park House at Badminton. Seats with canopies are shown in painted views of Claremont 1741–45. Tree seats include one designed by John Vardy for Kensington Gardens, 1754–61. Then there were Windsor chairs painted green, often depicted by Repton in his Red Books. Finally there were stone architectural benches *à l'antique*, such as a curved example in marble at Biddulph Grange.

BOB PARROTT, INDEPENDENT
FURNITURE HISTORIAN

The eighteenth-century Forest chair; the fashionable garden seat that influenced English and American chair design

This paper described research into the Forest chair, a novel and uniquely English form of seating (see *Regional Furniture*, vol. XXIV (2010) pp. 1–16). The story

started with a change in country house garden design in the early eighteenth century, when the formal baroque garden with its parterres and gravel paths began to fall out of favour. In its place came more naturalistic planting with grass walkways, lakes and ornamental garden buildings. As the garden became ever more a place for socialising there was a need for portable and weatherproof seating which was met by the green-painted Forest chair. Both literature and pictorial evidence indicate that Forest chairs were used by the nobility on their country estates throughout the eighteenth century. However, Forest chairs were sometimes also described as 'Windsor' chairs. This may have happened because Forest chairs made in the Thames Valley and shipped via the Thames from Windsor to the capital, were referred to by Londoners as 'Windsor' chairs. Also, the Forest chair design was so successful that indoor versions (Windsor chairs) were soon being made. Notably though, Forest and Windsor chairs share the same form of construction. This is characterised by a solid seat with legs mortised from below and back supports separately mortised from above (i.e. it is 'a stool with a back'). Illustrations of surviving early Forest chairs were shown and the transmission of the Windsor design to Colonial America was discussed. As the paper concluded, it was a garden design revolution that led to the Forest chair which, in turn, gave rise to the Windsor chair that has spread through the English-speaking world.

LISA WHITE, FORMER DIRECTOR OF
THE ATTINGHAM SUMMER SCHOOL,
EDITOR OF *FURNITURE HISTORY*

Chinoiserie, Darly and the Root of the Matter

While the subject of eighteenth-century British Chinoiserie furniture is generally well-known and understood, the legacy of oriental influence in garden furniture is less researched. From the mid-1740s until the late 1760s, the so-called 'Chinese' style for garden furniture, alongside more sober classical, and equally frivolous Gothic, French Rococo and occasionally 'Indian' themes, encouraged the publication of an extraordinary number of designs for garden seats, from William Halfpenny's in 1750–52, to Robert Manwaring's in 1765 and 1766. The designers drew for inspiration on the visual evidence in imported Chinese lacquer, porcelain and textiles to create whimsical chairs and tables for gardens and garden buildings, making particular use of fretwork and lattice patterns, also used for ornamental buildings, fences and gates, all probably painted in bright colours. Nearly all of these quirky objects, however, seem to have been made of soft woods, so time, weather and insects have taken their toll, and the physical loss has been almost total. A second oriental influence on eighteenth-century British garden furniture was the Chinese tradition for root furniture, which inspired Matthias Darly to publish some extremely curious designs for chairs and tables in 1754, and which merged successfully with the developing taste for naturalism in the garden. By 1770 the taste had moved away from what Richard Payne Knight

referred to as the 'thin fragile Bridge of the Chinese/Light and fantastical, yet stiff and prim, /The Child of barren Fancy turn'd to Whim', to the dominating fashion for rustic designs.

JOHN POWELL, RECENTLY RETIRED AS
LIBRARIAN AT IRONBRIDGE GORGE
MUSEUM

*The Coalbrookdale Connection: cast-iron
furniture*

John Powell gave a brief introduction to the origins of the Coalbrookdale Company and its achievements in the eighteenth century, culminating in the erection of the world's first iron bridge, before explaining why and when it first began making ornamental castings in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Its period of great success following the 1851 and 1862 International Exhibitions in London was described, followed by a closer look at some of its best-known garden seat designs. Design registrations by the company were looked at, as was the gradual decline of the ornamental castings market in the late-nineteenth century, and its eventual demise in the early years of the twentieth century.

KATE HAY, ASSISTANT CURATOR,
FURNITURE, TEXTILES AND FASHION
DEPARTMENT, VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM

*Infinite variety: Victorian ingenuity in the
design of garden seating*

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an enormous increase in the production of garden furniture. The industrialisation of production, speed and

ease of railway transport, and spread of suburban houses, each with its own small garden, all contributed to the boom. The Victorian craze for gardening and home-making meant that many spent time planting and furnishing their outdoor space, and provided a ready market for outdoor furniture. The invention of the lawn-mower meant that many more could create a green garden to sit in. Garden furniture was remarkably conservative in design, and most nineteenth-century garden furniture would not look out of place in gardens today. It was also democratic, the same types used across economic groups. It fell into two broad categories: benches intended to be placed in permanent positions, of cast or wrought iron, wood or stone, as structural features or as points from which to admire a view; and portable, less weather-resistant furniture, which was stored under cover and carried into the garden in good weather. The range of nineteenth-century garden furniture was illustrated in contemporary commercial catalogues, in paintings and photographs of gardens, and is evident from many surviving pieces. Innovations were generally driven by the introduction of new materials such as cast iron or heavy duty ceramics, or the application of factory production to existing types. Wire, bent metal, bamboo, rattan and recycled ship's timbers were among the many new materials used for garden seats.

JOHN DANZER, LECTURER AND
MANUFACTURER OF REPLICA GARDEN
FURNITURE

The Adirondack Chair: and Atlantic journey

Earlier designs influenced the first creation of Adirondack chairs, from the adjustable armchairs produced by Morris & Co. to the Campeche or plantation chair. Patent records show the early innovations and later evolutions in material, including present day models in recyclables and clear lucite. The Adirondack chair reveals how a chair can both embody the spirit of place and, for so many, hold emotional longings and memories. Designed 112 years ago, it is now an outdoor icon recognizable both in its pure form and in many derivative variations all over the world. Whether constructed from scrap wood and repainted annually or made from advanced laminates, the enduring design message of the Adirondack chair remains the same: 'free time in fresh air'. A globally devastating disease — tuberculosis — was the vital impetus for the chair's initial popularity, in sanatoria. With its large isolationist arms and tilted back, it suggests solitary repose more than social engagement, yet, we generally see Adirondack chairs grouped in outdoor spaces as essential gathering spots — though often still facing in the same direction, now for sun worship rather than the rest needed to recover from a deadly disease. The design has continued to develop and new ideas for the chairs continue to be forthcoming.

We are grateful to our organisers, to all our speakers for their varied and scholarly papers and for their lively contributions to discussions and to questioning. We are above all grateful to Todd Longstaffe-Gowan for bringing speakers and audience into such a profitable dialogue.

A Visit to TEFAF March 2015

As part of the support the FHS Grants committee is making towards the career development of furniture historians, a two-day study trip took place this year to TEFAF, supported by a grant from the Oliver Ford Trust. Our aim is to bring curators from UK collections to this international art fair so that they can encounter the work of art out of the context of an historic collection and to be able to examine it closely. The following gives some idea of their reactions.

As Anna Dewsnap (Harewood House) summed up: 'Our group of five enthusiastic young curators all met on 19 March, with an open mind and keenness to learn about the beautiful works of art we were to see during our two day visit to TEFAF Maastricht. With our two wonderfully informative course leaders, Adriana Turpin and Yannick Chastang, we embarked upon an extremely busy couple of days of study, which away from the practicalities of our day-to-day jobs, was a real luxury for all attendees.

'TEFAF's focus on European furniture, much of it seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century, is an area which is not



Fig. 1 An ebony, pewter and brass-inlaid centre table, almost certainly by Gerrit Jensen, c. 1690
© Carlton Hobbs LLC

a personal specialism, and it was therefore a huge privilege and wonderful learning opportunity to be exposed to such a range of beautifully crafted pieces, under the guidance of such knowledgeable teachers. With each object, the group looked in detail sharing ideas, thoughts and knowledge on the craftsmanship and provenance of the item, as well as considering the effects of later restoration and conservation to these pieces.'

For Hanne Faurby (V&A) it was also the overall impact of the fair that she found most rewarding: 'Well organised, both practically and aesthetically, TEFAF

was a celebration of things — a multitude of beautiful, interesting, unique and expensive things. The latter of these have played no significant role for me, either academically or in my current curatorial occupation. It was exactly this aspect, however, which was (and is) extremely relevant to tackle, not so much the monetary value of things but what it means for an object to be commercial rather than an institutionalised piece of cultural property. TEFAF was a chance to meet and mingle in the world of commerce and to try to get to grips with some of the mechanisms which guide this



Fig. 2 Rosewood, ebony and tortoiseshell cabinet by Herman Doomer, first half seventeenth century © Pieter Hoogendijk



Fig. 3 *Kunstkammer* cabinet arranged by Georg Laue, 2015 ©Kunstkammer Georg Laue, Munich

world. Further, the permissible closeness to objects, turning them upside down, touching and examining them with ungloved fingers became a unique opportunity to experience materials and surfaces, not to mention, relate immediately and physically with objects of my desire.

‘From practical to theoretical differences between the world of commerce and museology, much time was spent with my travel companions discussing the varying ideas of object originality in terms of conservation and restoration. Particularly the gilt bronzes seemed to divide dealers and buyers, favouring either the patina of surface oxidization or the brilliantly polished. We were, furthermore, challenged to recognise our twenty-first-century

aesthetics when examining historic pieces, such as the decorative (and practical) use of nails/screws in eighteenth-century French furniture which today may appear rather crude.’

Olivia Fryman wrote: ‘Through my work for Historic Royal Palaces at Kensington and Hampton Court, I am especially interested in furniture of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. At the fair we had the opportunity to examine a metal marquetry table attributed to Gerrit Jensen on the Carlton Hobbs stand (fig. 1). Made of ebony, pewter and brass inlay, the table is very similar in design a number of pieces that William and Mary ordered from Jensen for Kensington Palace that are documented in the Lord Chamberlain’s papers. We discussed Mary

II's patronage, how metal marquetry is made and surface treatments, such as the use of mercury to give the pewter greater shine resembling silver. It was also very interesting to consider this piece in relation to a slightly earlier cabinet attributed to Pierre Gole on Peter Mühlbauer's stand that was decorated with tortoiseshell, mother of pearl, *pietra paesina* or 'landscape stone', and ivory painted to resemble marble. The cabinet also contained a small mirrored and painted interior hung with a chandelier. The exceptional quality of this piece exemplified the sophistication of French cabinet making techniques that were assimilated into England at the end of the seventeenth century, particularly through the work of Gole's son Cornelius who also supplied furniture to William and Mary. As very few pieces of this furniture survive in the Royal Collection, it was an incredible opportunity to be able to see and examine the table and cabinet in detail.'

For Demelza Williams (National Trust) there was one piece of furniture that stood out: 'I was very excited when the dealer Pieter Hoogendijk showed us a cabinet by Herman Doomer (fig. 2). Back in 1998, Simon Jervis wrote an article for *Apollo* on a hitherto unknown candidate for another Doomer cabinet, hidden in the midst of Northern Ireland, at an unassuming property called The Argory. While the similarities between The Argory cabinet and the piece that Pieter Hoogendijk showed us were limited — the most distinctive similarities being the bold ebony ripple moulding and corner columns — it was really interesting to compare two examples of Doomer's work.

Christopher Rowell, the National Trust Furniture expert, is extremely keen to investigate The Argory piece further in order to answer some of the points raised by Jervis regarding the loose 'alien interior cabinet' and lining. We intend to explore these elements in the next few months with the help of our local furniture conservator. Hopefully, we will find more evidence to substantiate Jervis's discovery in time to be included in the National Trust's upcoming book on furniture.'

It was not just the furniture, however, that caught the imagination of the curators but also display. As Jerzy Kiercuk Bielinski (Kenwood House, English Heritage) discovered: 'The *Kunstzimmer*, *Wunderkammer* and *Kunstschränk* have all received a revival of interest by artists and by curators as early forms of collection display and as early manifestations of museological taxonomy. An understanding of the taxonomies and the frameworks (both architectural and small-scale in the case of the *kunstschränk*) in which examples of *naturalia*, *artificialia*, *mirabilia*, *artefacta*, *scientifica*, *exotica* and *antiquata* were displayed not only afford historic insight into the development of modern museums and collections but also can be used to question contemporary museology. An example of this renewed interest in this form of display could be seen at TEFAF Maastricht 2015 in the displays on the stand of Georg Laue where *objets de vertu*, themselves of certain intrinsic historic and financial value, were arranged in small-scale installations to evoke the type of display seen in bourgeois collections of the seventeenth century.'

As everyone agreed, it was an amazing opportunity to learn and to explore. As the participants appreciated, it was not just the fair. The dealers we spoke to throughout the two days were very generous in sharing their knowledge and allowing us to examine their exhibits. We

thank the Furniture History Society, the Oliver Ford Trust and all those who made this exceptional study possible.

ANNA DEWSNAP, HANNE FAURBY,
OLIVIA FRYMAN, JERZY KIERKUC-
BIELINSKI, DEMELZA WILLIAMS

The Oliver Ford Trust and Tom Ingram Memorial Fund

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

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

required to acknowledge the assistance of the Fund in any resulting publications and must report back to the Panel on completion of the travel or project. All enquiries about Grant applications to the Tom Ingram Memorial Fund or Oliver Ford Trust should be addressed to Jo Norman at grants@furniturehistorysociety.org or for further information and grant application forms see the Grants page of the Society's website, www.furniturehistorysociety.org

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:

15 September or 23 December.

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Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is **15 September**. Copy should be sent, preferably by email, to Elizabeth Jamieson

ea.jamieson@tiscali.co.uk or posted to Elizabeth Jamieson, 10 Tarleton Gardens, Forest Hill, London SE23 3XN.

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COVER PICTURE Fire surround and fender, Imperial Arms Factory, Tula, forged and cut steel with gilt brass ornaments, early nineteenth century © Victoria and Albert Museum. This has recently been conserved and will be displayed in the new Europe Galleries which open in December. Tula steel furniture will be the subject of the Annual Lecture by Dr Ludmilla Dementieva on Tuesday 6 October 2015.