

The Furniture History Society

Newsletter 212

November 2018



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George Seddon and his Pioneering Role in Lighthouse Illumination

Until the early modern period, coastal lighting was haphazard at best and non-existent at worst. Local shipping hugged the shore, and in the daytime mariners could steer a course using groups of cliff-top trees, prominent church spires and other characteristic features of the landscape. Navigating at night was extremely hazardous, though efforts were made to provide some form of primitive lighting such as swape lights, where a basket of lit fuel was swung from a pole at a cliff edge or a fire burned in a brazier on a cliff top or on a purpose-built tower. However, as trade and shipping began to proliferate, it became imperative to find a more reliable method of marking dangerous shallows or reefs.

In 1776, the Corporation of Trinity House of Deptford Strond, the English and Welsh lighthouse authority since 1566, embarked on a project to develop a new lighting system in which George Seddon (c. 1727–1801), cabinet-maker of Aldersgate Street, London, played an integral role. By this date, there were about twenty lighthouses round the English coast, though none round the coast of Scotland. About half were owned and managed by Trinity House, while the rest were privately owned or leased from

Trinity House.¹ They were lit by tallow candles, primitive oil lamps or coal fires. Coal fires were more visible than the flicker of candles or lamps, but were not without their drawbacks, 'now shooting up in high flames, again enveloped in dense smoke, and never well seen when most required'.² Furthermore, coal fires were occasionally confused with the light of industrial installations such as lime kilns, luring ships to disaster.

It was the poor condition of the upper Lowestoft lighthouse that finally galvanized Trinity House into taking action. Lowestoft is situated on the extreme easternmost point of the British Isles, and there had been a pair of leading lights here since 1609, enabling the rapidly expanding coal traffic from the North East to London to steer a course. They are thought to be the first lighthouses erected and managed by Trinity House.³ The failure of either of them, particularly the upper light, was potentially serious for the treacherous navigation of this part of the coast, and it was decided to experiment with reflector lights as a possible replacement for the coal fire.⁴

Two attempts had been made, independent of Trinity House, to intensify the feeble light of oil lamps by using

reflectors. In 1763 and 1764, Captain William Hutchinson, Liverpool Dockmaster, installed reflector lights at Leasowe and Hoylake lighthouses on the Wirral coast,⁵ while Ezekiel Walker, natural philosopher, designed reflector lights for the privately owned Hunstanton lighthouse in early 1777.⁶

Both used conical-shaped reflectors in the form of a parabola, known to concentrate the light source into a powerful straight beam, but in order to exploit this characteristic it was necessary to place the light source in the focus of the parabola, well back from the mouth of the cone. However, the smoke from primitive oil lamps then in use quickly blackened the surface, rendering the reflectors virtually useless. In an attempt to avoid this, Hutchinson placed the burners clear of the mouth of the cone, while Walker used burners with very small wicks but placed in the correct position. Although these solutions may have obviated the problem to some extent, the full potential of the parabolic reflector would have been largely lost.

It must have been for this reason that the Elder Brethren of Trinity House commissioned one of their own members, Captain Michael James, to design a completely different apparatus from scratch. His concept involved a copper cylinder, 4 feet high and 3 feet in diameter, consisting of six rectangular panels arranged as a hexagon. These panels were covered with 4,000 pieces of mirror glass, each an inch square. The light source came from a circular hollow tube, or wheel as it was usually referred to, placed about

18 inches away from the hexagonal cylinder, well clear of the mirrored reflecting surface. Oil was conveyed to it from a reservoir in the centre of the reflecting cylinder via six pipes that passed through the intersections of each segment of the hexagon. Set into the wheel were a series of small tubes, each containing a cotton wick, the lower end of which soaked up the oil, referred to as lamps or burners. Furthermore, the concept also included a new style of lantern. Earlier lanterns generally had thick masonry or timber mullions and small latticed windows obscuring much of the light within. In contrast to this, James designed a lantern using large plates of glass held in place by small section copper glazing bars and covered by a pitched copper roof, with a fan to allow dispersal of heat and smoke. It was described as 'a glass lanthorn', for the same reason the Great Exhibition building of 1851 was described as 'the Crystal Palace', to emphasize the overall impression of lightness and airiness. The lantern was 7 feet high and 6 feet in diameter.⁷

At this period there were no specialist constructors of lighthouse equipment, and local artisans provided most requirements, such as fire grates. Indeed, an entry in the cashbook for the period records payment of £55 1s 3d to Willson (*sic*), a smith, for a lantern to enclose the Lowestoft reflector.⁸ However, it seems likely, given the novelty of the design, that Trinity House felt the need for something altogether more sophisticated, and turned instead to George Seddon to make the whole thing.

Seddon's firm was the largest furniture manufacturer in London during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. It operated out of a two-acre site in Aldersgate Street and employed 400 'cabinet-makers, wood-carvers, gilders, mirror-workers, upholsterers, brass-founders [...] and locksmiths'. There was also a basement where mirrors were cast and polished.⁹ All this must have made George Seddon an attractive choice of contractor, able to provide a variety of skills transferable to the lighthouse service. Furthermore, it seems evident that he contributed more to the new lighting apparatus than merely building it from a specification, because he was paid for 'experiments' as well as 'for making a reflector & lanthorn (and models thereof) & fixing at Lowestoft'.¹⁰

The apparatus was complete by May 1778 when the following notice appeared in the press:

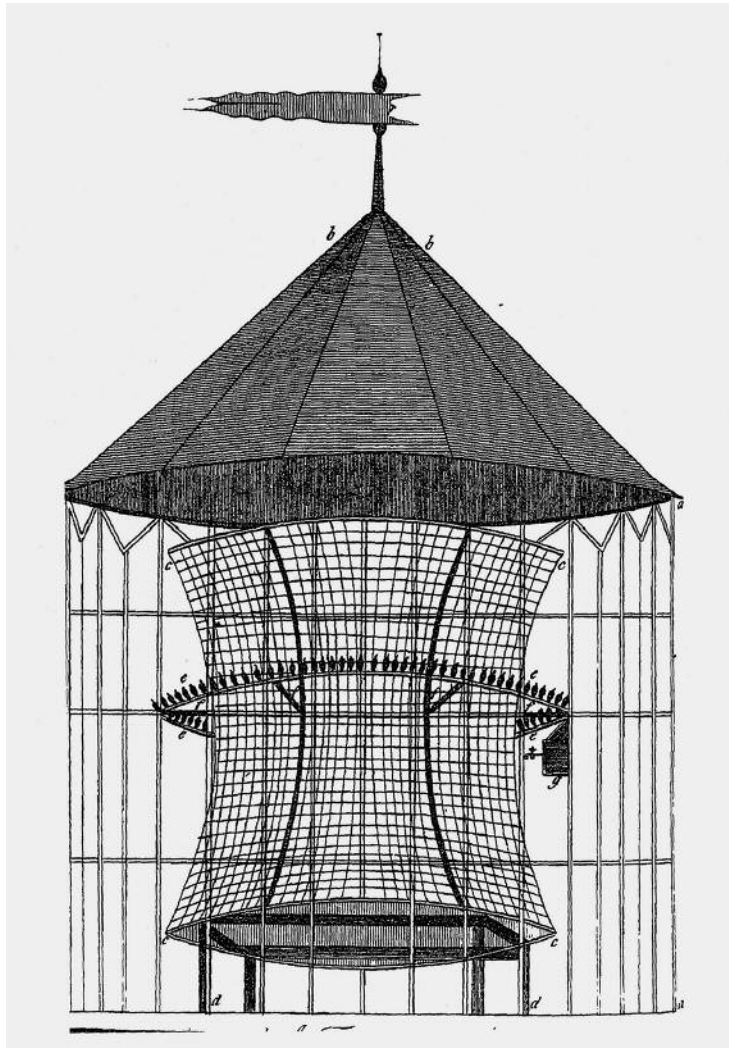
A very ingenious contrivance has been lately finished at a Cabinet-maker's in Aldersgate Street, as a substitute for fire placed on the top of a light-house: it consists of a large lanthorn, the framework of which is made of iron and brass, and covered with copper, over which is fixed a fane; the frame is glazed with large panes of plate-glass. In the centre of the lantern is a hollow cylinder, as a reservoir for oil, which flows from thence through several horizontal tubes, which support a circular one at mid-distance of the lantern and cylinder, in which last tube are contained a great many burners: the front of the cylinder is covered with small square mirrors, fixed close to each other, by which means such magnificent light is reflected as will (it is supposed) be seen twenty miles at sea. A very considerable expence will be saved by the above contrivance as, it is said, a gallon of

oil will be equal to three chaldrons of coal. The whole is upwards of a ton weight. It has been lighted up several times, and the effect is amazingly grand.¹¹

In the middle of June 1778, the whole thing was erected on a temporary scaffold close to the upper Lowestoft lighthouse and its coal fire for purposes of comparison, where it 'was found to answer beyond conception, exhibiting a globe of fire of a steady and most vivid brightness'.¹² In July, it was moved onto the lighthouse itself and could be seen from a distance out to sea of 7 leagues (about 24 miles), whereas the range of the coal light was less than 5 leagues (about 17½ miles).¹³ Such was the interest generated that a full description, together with an illustration, appeared in *Town and Country Magazine* for August 1778. It was written by Thomas Hunt, who was probably a Lowestoft resident.

It seems that Seddon came to think of the reflecting apparatus as his personal achievement. At the end of 1778, a letter arrived at Trinity House from the office of the Attorney General to inform them 'that application has been made for a patent for a cylinder to multiply and reflect light, which if not opposed will pass of course'. Although Seddon is not mentioned by name, it seems inconceivable that it could be anyone else. The Corporation's solicitor was instructed 'to take the proper measures to oppose the said patent'.¹⁴ This refers to what was called a caveat hearing, whereby an objection could be lodged and the case heard by the Attorney General who, in this instance, clearly came down in favour of Michael James and Trinity House and no more was heard of the patent.¹⁵

The lantern, reflector and wheel of lights at the Lowestoft upper light as installed in 1778 and illustrated in *Town and Country Magazine*



The apparatus had a number of teething problems, but these were quickly overcome and the design was successful enough to be used over the next decade, during which period several other lighthouses owned or managed by Trinity House were converted. Nevertheless, Seddon was never again employed by Trinity House, though he later supplied a new table for the clerk's writing room in the Corporation's London headquarters in Water Lane which cost £3.¹⁶ There are

probably several reasons for this, one of which may include his attempt to patent the apparatus, but it is more likely that his bill, for £580,¹⁷ must have seemed very high, and at the time there was nothing against which to compare this figure.

Lowestoft low light, first lit in October 1779, was converted next, but this time Trinity House employed James Lukin, a London iron founder with works on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge. While Seddon was paid an inclusive sum,

Lukin's costs were broken down. The lantern, reflector and wheel of lights cost £103 14s,¹⁸ and the glass plates for the lantern were ordered from the British Cast Plate Glass Manufacturers at Ravenhead, Lancashire, at a cost of £13.¹⁹ Even though the apparatus was smaller than that of the upper light, these figures must have been extremely appealing. As it turned out, Lukin was able to offer such a competitive price because he made the wheel out of tin rather than copper, resulting in the drying of the wicks and the extinction of the flames. The melting point of tin is low and its thermal conductivity only about a seventh that of copper, so presumably the tin overheated and distorted, thus starving the wicks. Later wheels were again made of copper.

However, Lukin continued to be employed by Trinity House, manufacturing and fitting the James/Seddon apparatus to the three Caskets lighthouses off Alderney (1779), Portland (1780), St Agnes Scilly (1782) and to the three lighthouses built in 1784 at the Needles, Hurst and St Catherine's Point on the Isle of Wight.

This first period of reflector lights lasted for about a decade, until a delegation of Elder Brethren went to France in 1787 to inspect the lighthouses there, finding 'the effect [...] is infinitely superior to those at present establish'd in any of our lighthouses'.²⁰ This was because the French had begun to use parabolic reflectors combined with the recently invented Argand lamp, the most revolutionary improvement in lamp design since ancient times.²¹ These lamps had a cylindrical wick, which provided a double current of

air, producing a tenfold increase in the light obtainable from a single wick,²² while the glass chimney increased the draught and drew off the smoke. This meant that the lamps could be placed at the correct focal point within the parabolic cone without blackening the reflecting surface, as well as hugely increasing the power of the reflected light. As the nineteenth-century lighthouse engineer, Sir James Chance, put it:

the chimney that was essential to perfect combustion, served likewise the indispensable purpose of carrying off the gaseous products, which in previous forms of lamp, by tarnishing the surface of a reflector, rendered its adoption quite futile.²³

Shortly thereafter, in 1788, Trinity House began a series of lighting experiments, eventually resulting in the replacement of all the James/Seddon apparatus with parabolic reflectors.

The work of Trinity House in attempting to improve lighting before the introduction of parabolic reflectors with Argand lamps, which remained standard for well over half a century, even after the invention of the Fresnel lens, has not been recognized until now, and neither has Seddon's pivotal role in the first truly successful lighthouse reflector.

To a large extent this lack of recognition can be attributed to the historical disciplinary categorizations that have hitherto persisted. On this analysis, cabinet-making and the lighthouse service do not seem to go together. However, by studying the Trinity House archive and near-contemporary histories of Lowestoft, particularly Edmund Gillingwater's *An historical account of the ancient town of*

Lowestoft, in the County of Suffolk (1790), a very different story can be told of the transfer of skill from cabinet-making to lighthouses. It also illustrates that the lighthouse service was not simply confined to the coast, but required resources drawn from the metropolitan centre.

JULIA ELTON

- 1 As listed in Joseph Cotton, *Memoir on the Origin and Incorporation of the Trinity House of Deptford Strond* (London, 1818), p. 77.
- 2 David Stevenson, *Lighthouses* (1864), pp. 70–71.
- 3 John Whormby, *An account of the Corporation of Deptford Strond* (1746, though not published until 1861), p. 117; Cotton, op. cit. (see note 1), p. 141.
- 4 Minutes of the General Court of Trinity House, 1 June 1776. London Metropolitan Archives, CLC/526/MS0004/012.
- 5 Philip Woodworth, *A Brief Introduction to the Microfilm Edition of the Hutchinson Journals* (n.d.), p. 4. Also, William Hutchinson, *A treatise on practical seamanship* (1777), pp. 148–55.
- 6 William Richards, *History of Lynn* (1812), pp. 208–09.
- 7 *Town and Country Magazine*, 10, August 1778, 406.
- 8 Trinity House Cash Book in the section entitled 'Bankers Accounts', 5 September 1778. LMA CLC/526/MS30032/015.
- 9 Sophie de la Roche, as cited in Martin Levy's ODNB entry on the Seddon family.
- 10 Trinity House Cash Book in section entitled 'Bankers Accounts', 3 April 1779, op. cit. (see note 8).
- 11 *Oxford Journal*, 23 May 1778.
- 12 *Town and Country Magazine*, 10, August 1778, 406.
- 13 Trinity House Minutes of the By Board, 5 August 1778, LMA CLC/526/MS30010/016.
- 14 Trinity House Minutes of the By Board, 9 December 1778, ibid.
- 15 The mechanism for a caveat hearing was described in 'Report of the committee on the Signet and Privy Seal Offices; with minutes of evidence and appendix', London, 1849, pp. vii–viii.
- 16 Trinity House Cash Book, 29 December 1779.
- 17 Trinity House Cash Book, in section entitled 'Bankers Accounts', 3 April 1779, op. cit. (see note 8).
- 18 Trinity House Minutes of the By Board, 16 October 1779, op. cit. (see note 13).
- 19 Trinity House Cash Book, 20 November 1779, op. cit. (see note 8).
- 20 Trinity House Minutes of the By Board, 6 September 1787, LMA CLC/526/MS30010/019.
- 21 W. T. O'Dea, *The Social History of Lighting* (1958), p. 49.
- 22 Ibid., p. 49.
- 23 James Chance, 'On Optical Apparatus used in Lighthouses', *Minutes of Proceedings of the Institute of Civil Engineering*, xxvi (London 1866–67), 464.

FHS Annual General Meeting

BRUNSWICK ROOM,
THE GUILDHALL, HIGH ST, BATH
BA1 5AW

SATURDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2018

11.00 AM–1.00 PM, TOUR AT 2.15
PM APPROX.

The Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2018 will be held in the Brunswick Room at the Guildhall, Bath. The AGM will start at 11.00 am (coffee from 10.30 am).

Admission to the AGM is free, but all members wishing to attend should notify the Events Secretary at least seven days in advance. Further information about the day will be sent via email nearer the time

to all those who have registered their attendance.

Talks

The British and Irish Furniture Makers Online (BIFMO) database is in the process of being enhanced with new information and the Institute of Historical Research is developing an advanced search option to allow for complex and detailed searches of the online resource. Dr Laurie Lindey will update us both on the development of the database and on ongoing research, which will generate case studies, biographies and interactive material for publication on the BIFMO database and website.

Dr Jenny Saunt, who joined the V&A's Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department in December, will give a brief update on her work in the new role of



The Guildhall, Bath

Curatorial Research Fellow, which was created with support of the Oliver Ford Trust and focuses on British furniture of the long eighteenth century.

Matt Thompson, Head Collections Curator, English Heritage, will speak on 'English Heritage: From Rutupiae to Rembrandt. An Introduction to the Scope and Scale of the National Heritage Collection'.

Leela Meinertas, Curator, V&A, will speak on displays she has organized at the V&A of drawings by Thomas Chippendale, in celebration of his 300th anniversary.

Tickets for a cold buffet lunch with a glass of wine should be booked at least seven days in advance.

The meeting will be followed by a private, furniture-orientated tour at the Holburne Museum, led by their Decorative Arts Curator Catrin Jones. The tour is free, but members must register their attendance at least seven days in advance with the Events Secretary.

The 43rd Annual Symposium: *Pietre Dure*

THE WALLACE COLLECTION,
MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON
W1U 3BN

SATURDAY 30 MARCH 2019

10.00 AM–5.00 PM

The Annual Symposium in 2019 will focus on *pietre dure*. Organized in association with the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection at the V&A, it will bring together an impressive line-up of international scholars, who will share fresh research from Britain, India, Italy, Spain,



Circular table of black Ashford marble, inlaid with specimens of Derbyshire marble, designed by J. Randall and made by Samuel Birley for the London International Exhibition 1862

Russia and the United States, illustrating recent acquisitions for museum collections and exciting discoveries on the international art market. There will be a demonstration of *pietre dure* materials and techniques by Florentine-trained Thomas Greenaway. The event coincides with new publication and exhibition projects from Washington DC and London, and coincides with the British Royal Collections Trust exhibition at the Queen's Gallery, which includes Russian hardstones.

TICKET PRICES: £55 MEMBERS, £30 MEMBERS UNDER 30 YEARS, £70 NON-MEMBERS

Tickets to the Symposium will go online in February 2019.

A detailed programme for the day, including details of the additional events organized by the V&A, will be available on the website in the New Year (www.furniturehistorysociety.org).

Volunteer required

To coincide with a recruitment drive and the launch of new subscription features on the Furniture History Society website, the Society would like to recruit a volunteer to assist with extending and improving its online presence and use of social media. If you would be willing to help manage and curate the contents of FHS Twitter and Instagram accounts, please contact FHS Website Officer, Megan Wheeler, website@furniturehistorysociety.org

Early Career

Development, New York

Early Career Development, New York, is currently looking for an aspiring young professional with special interest in furniture history, furniture-making or the decorative arts, to help organize the Society's ECD events in New York. If you or someone you know might be interested and would like more information, please contact Grants Secretary, Jill Bace, grants@furniturehistorysociety.org

A Tribute

JOHN H. BRYAN, JUNIOR (1936–2018)

John Bryan was well known to many members of the Furniture History Society. The former CEO of Sara Lee Corporation, and one of Chicago's leading patrons of the arts, he served as a Trustee of the Art Institute of Chicago for over thirty-five years, and as Chair from 1999 to 2006. In addition, he was an active supporter of Departments of European Decorative Arts (as Chair), Textiles, American Art, and Architecture and Design. John and his wife Neville endowed positions in the Architecture and Design department, established an endowment for acquisitions in the European Decorative Arts Department, and established an endowment at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. As the *Chicago Sun Times* recorded (4 October 2018):

[John Bryan] is credited with having raised hundreds of millions of dollars for philanthropic projects including Millennium Park and the Modern Wing of the Art Institute, renovations to Chicago's Lyric Opera House and Orchestra Hall and protecting Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's landmark Farnsworth House.

In September 2007, the FHS enjoyed a legendary tour of the Bryans' wonderful Crab Tree Farm at Lake Bluff. In addition to the eighteenth-century English furniture, paintings and works of art that filled David Adler's Blair House where the Bryans lived, buildings around the property contained careful accumulations of beautifully displayed American Arts & Crafts material, and British design, 'from Pugin to Mackintosh', as well as the work of contemporary makers such as John Makepeace. John Bryan contributed to the British Galleries at the V&A, funded, and

therefore made possible, the Belinda Gentle Metalwork gallery at the V&A, and supported the FHS Fiftieth Anniversary appeal.

In 'retirement', John was enthusiastically energetic in continuing to publish and support volumes on aspects of the decorative arts. Contributions include Eloy Koldeweij, *The English Candlestick: 500 Years in the Development of the English Base-metal Candlestick 1425–1925* (1999), followed by Linda Parry et al., *Arts and Crafts Rugs for Craftsman Interiors* (2010), Karen Livingstone, *The Bookplates and Badges of C.F.A. Voysey* (2011) and Adam Bowett (ed.), *100 British Chairs* (2015). Ongoing projects include an exhibition of dated objects, in conjunction with the Yale Center for British Art, and a major survey of the collector Percival Griffiths.

But for all his public achievements, it is John himself who will be longest remembered by those who had the privilege to know him, whether discussing civil rights over a whisky at The Connaught (a very fond personal memory), aspects of the museum world, his latest acquisition during long walks around Crab Tree Farm, or simply benefiting from the sheer quiet wisdom of his experience. John Bryan was always discreet with his opinions, and open to those who sought his wise counsel, given with deep thought and generosity. The world has lost a great patron, and many of us have lost a true mentor. But the loss is greatest of all for his family, to whom we extend heartfelt sympathy.

MARTIN P. LEVY

Future Society Events

Bookings

For places on visits, please apply to the Events Secretary, Beatrice Goddard, tel. 07775 907390, with a separate cheque for each event, using the enclosed booking form. Where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched by email, **so please remember to provide your email address if you have one. There is no need to send an SAE if you provide a clearly written email address.**

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

Please note the Events email address: events@furniturehistorysociety.org

Cancellations

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £10.00

or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted up to seven days before the date of a visit, but refunds will be subject to a £10.00 deduction for administrative costs. Please note that in the rare instances where members cannot pay until the day of a visit, they will still be charged the full amount for the day if cancelling less than seven days before the visit, or if they fail to attend. This is necessary as the Society has usually paid in advance for a certain number of members to participate in, for example, a tour / lunch. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours, and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

Spring Study Weekend to Kent

FRIDAY 17 MAY–SUNDAY 19 MAY
2019

This Spring Study Weekend will be led by Dr Tessa Murdoch, Deputy Keeper of the Department of Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

We shall be staying at the Canterbury Cathedral Lodge Hotel, situated in the beautiful grounds of the cathedral and where we will be having dinner on the first night. Highlights of the weekend will include a visit to Penshurst Place. The Queen Elizabeth Room, named after



The Queen Elizabeth I bed, Penshurst Place, which featured in the V&A exhibition in 2010, *Baroque 1620–1800: Style in the Age of Magnificence*

Queen Elizabeth I, who often held audience there during her many visits, has a remarkable display of early eighteenth-century upholstered furniture.

We will have a private tour of Canterbury Cathedral, Archives and

Deanery, as well as of St John's Hospital, an almshouse near the cathedral. The weekend will also include dinner on Saturday night at a private home with an inherited collection of English furniture and textiles. Our hosts are keen members of the Irish Georgian Society. On the Sunday, we will conclude the weekend with a visit to the Maidstone Carriage Museum and several churches.

LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2019

Application forms will be available later in the year. Please contact the Events Secretary to express interest.

Occasional and Overseas Visits

Visit to Freemasons' Hall

60 GREAT QUEEN STREET, COVENT
GARDEN, LONDON WC2B 5AZ

THURSDAY 24 JANUARY 2019

2.00 PM–4.00 PM

Freemasons' Hall in London is the headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England and the Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of England, as well as being a meeting place for many masonic lodges in the London area. A masonic meeting place since 1775, there have been three masonic buildings on the site, with the current incarnation being opened in 1933.

The group will have privileged access to the collection of eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century masonic thrones held in the museum and will have the opportunity to view the ceremonial areas with the curator, including the Grand Temple and view a newly created replica of Sir John Soane's design for the 'Ark of the Masonic Covenant'. There will also be a short introduction by Master's graduate Kathryn Haddock, whose dissertation was on Masonic Ceremonial Chairs.

For more information about the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, please visit the website:

www.freemasonry.london.museum

COST: £28

LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:

FRIDAY 14 DECEMBER 2018



© The Library and
Museum of
Freemasonry, 2004

Blythe House

23 BLYTHE ROAD, LONDON W14 0QX

WEDNESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2019

2.00 PM FOR 2.15 PM START–4.15 PM

This year is our last visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum Study Collections at Blythe House before it moves to the V&A East — Collection and Research Centre on the Queen Elizabeth Park in East London. The visit will focus on the theme of 'Painted Furniture', with a team of V&A curators giving us the much-valued opportunity to examine a wide range of pieces closely and to discuss them in small groups.

COST: £28

LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 11 JANUARY 2019

Visit to 2 Willow Road and the Isokon Gallery, Hampstead

2 WILLOW ROAD, LONDON NW3 1TH
THE ISOKON GALLERY, LAWN ROAD,
LONDON NW3 2XD

WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL 2019

11.00 AM–4.00 PM

We start with a guided tour of 2 Willow Road (National Trust), which houses many of the treasures, furniture and objets d'art of one of the most influential figures in the British Modern Movement, Ernő Goldfinger. A Hungarian-born architect with a dynamic vision, Goldfinger's life and career was one of continent-spanning variety. His furniture is full of innovation and style, and embodies his design philosophy. Much of 2 Willow Road's



Cassone with 'The Meeting of King Salomon and the Queen of Sheba', Florence, Circle of Apollonio di Giovanni, 1450–1500, restored c. 1855, V&A Museum no. 7852-1862



Ernö Goldfinger (Budapest 1902–87), 2 Willow Road. © National Trust/Geoff Lowsley

furniture is bespoke, and full of interesting touches and trademarks, including his black laminate top desk, featuring stylish pivoting drawers.

After lunch, we will visit the Isokon Gallery, which is a permanent exhibition telling the remarkable story of the Isokon building, the pioneering modern apartment block opened in 1934 as an experiment in new ways of urban living. Also known as the Lawn Road Flats, the daringly modern apartment block was the epicentre of North London's avant-garde circle during the 1930s and 1940s. The gallery, once the residents' garage, also features furniture produced by Jack Pritchard under the Isokon furniture brand. Throughout the 1930s, he collaborated with many of the building's architect residents, among them Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and László Moholy-Nagy, to create pieces for the flats. Originals such as the 'Penguin Donkey' bookstand by resident Egon Riss and Breuer's 'Long Chair' are on display. Our

short talk will particularly focus on the furniture.

COST: £60 INCLUDES A SANDWICH BUFFET LUNCH

LIMIT: 20

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 15 MARCH 2019**

Study Trip to Lisbon

**THURSDAY 9 MAY–SUNDAY 12 MAY
2019**

This Spring Study Trip seeks to provide an overview of the extraordinary cultural wealth of Lisbon and its collections of furniture and decorative works of art. As a global power, Portugal entertained close links with the rest of Europe, Asia and South America, which are reflected in the wide array of materials and techniques employed in their furniture-making. Amongst other visits, the trip will include tours to the major royal palaces, Ajuda, Queluz and Pena, the Fundação Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva (FRESS), with its exceptional furniture collection and conservation studios, the newly re-opened furniture galleries at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, the *pietre dure* chapel of St John the Baptist at the Igreja de São Roque and the elegant eighteenth-century French galleries at the Gulbenkian Foundation.

This visit will be organized and led by Dr Wolf Burchard.

LIMIT: 23

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2019**

Application forms will be available later in the year. Please contact the Events Secretary to express interest.

Thomas Chippendale (1718–1779): Musical Instrument Connections and New Insights

An article discussing a number of surprising new findings relating to the life and work of Thomas Chippendale is available as an e-print via the 'New Resources' page of Dr Margaret Debenham's website (see the link given in the citation below). [Materials published on this site are 'open access', provided as an educational resource for the purpose of personal research, subject to the author's copyright.]

Abstract

Revered as the greatest furniture-maker of his age, the name of Thomas Chippendale does not, however, immediately spring to mind in connection with the manufacture of musical instruments. So, in this the 300th anniversary year of his birth, it was fascinating to discover a newspaper advertisement placed by Chippendale and

Rannie in 1758 offering for sale a barrel organ housed within a 'handsome Piece of Furniture' at their shop in St Martin's Lane.

Other newly identified primary source materials relating to Chippendale's life and work include a report of a City of Westminster Coroner's Inquest into a suspicious death, which provides positive identification of four workmen employed in his chair workshop in 1772; and two records relating to his second marriage in 1777 — a Marriage Allegation and Bond, both personally signed by Thomas Chippendale.

To access a copy of the full article, follow the link below and download Article 7.

Citation: Debenham, M. (2018). *Thomas Chippendale (1718–1779): Musical Instrument Connections and New Insights*. Margaret Debenham website publication, New Resources, Article 7.
www.debenham.org.uk/personal/MDresource.php

Other Notices

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

Exhibition: The Shakespeare of English Furniture: Designs by Thomas Chippendale

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM,
GALLERY 102 AND NATIONAL ART
LIBRARY LANDING

TUESDAY 28 AUGUST 2018–SUNDAY
17 FEBRUARY 2019

In celebration of the 300th anniversary of Thomas Chippendale's birth, the V&A are showing two related displays drawn from the museum's rich collection of his furniture designs. The first includes drawings for the 3rd edition of *The Director* (1762) and a second will present a series of publications associated with Chippendale and his contemporaries. This display will be complemented by clips from a recently discovered silent film made in the 1920s when his work was undergoing a renaissance of interest.

Exhibition: Lost Treasures of Strawberry Hill: Masterpieces from Horace Walpole's Collection

STRAWBERRY HILL HOUSE,
268 WALDEGRAVE RD,
TWICKENHAM TW1 4ST

SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER 2018–
SUNDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2019

This exhibition brings back to Strawberry Hill some of the most important masterpieces in Horace Walpole's famous and unique collection — one of the greatest in the eighteenth century. Dispersed in 1842 and scattered to the winds, over the past three years Strawberry Hill's curators have been hunting down works using Walpole's detailed descriptions and the sales catalogue of 1842. For the first time in over 170 years, Strawberry Hill can be seen as Walpole conceived it, with the original collection in the interiors he designed for it. A staggering fifty lenders will loan works to the show, including fifteen country houses, with many of these objects being shown for the first time to the public.

For tickets, see: www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk/losttreasures/

Symposium: Sir Richard Wallace and his Age: Connoisseurs, Collectors and Philanthropists

THE WALLACE COLLECTION,
MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON
W1U 3BN

THURSDAY 15 NOVEMBER AND
FRIDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2018

This year the Wallace Collection is celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Sir Richard Wallace. Taking Sir Richard Wallace and his collection as its starting point, the two-day international conference will look at aspects of collecting and collections in London and Paris in the wake of the upheavals of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune in 1870–71, considering essentially the period between 1870 and 1900.

The first day of the conference will consider the impact on the Anglo-French art market of the political and social upheavals in France in 1870–71, including the dispersal of collections and the movement of collectors, as well as the curatorship of private art collections. The second day will focus on two themes: the subject of the morning session will be loans to exhibitions from distinguished collections and the motivations that drove them; the afternoon will showcase works of art in the Wallace Collection acquired by Sir Richard Wallace.

The conference will be followed directly by a round table chaired by the Wallace Collection's Director, Xavier Bray, in conversation with special guest speakers Olivier Gabet (Director, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris), Dr Emilie E. S. Gordenker (Director, Mauritshuis, The Hague), Christian Levett (Private Collector) and Ian Wardropper (Director, Frick Museum, New York), to explore what the future holds for institutions founded by bequests similar to those of the Wallace Collection, and how they are adapting to changes that could not have been foreseen by the original donors.

For more details, see:

<https://www.wallacecollection.org/whats-on/sir-richard-wallace-and-his-age-connoisseurs-collectors-and-philanthropists/>

Seminar: History of Collecting

Piecing together a collection: Sir William Holburne's display mounts (Catrin Jones, Curator of Decorative Arts, Holburne Museum, Bath)

THE WALLACE COLLECTION,
MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON,
W1U 3BN

MONDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2018

5.30–6.30 PM

For more details, see:

www.wallacecollection.org/whats-on/seminar-in-the-history-of-collecting-2/

Book Reviews

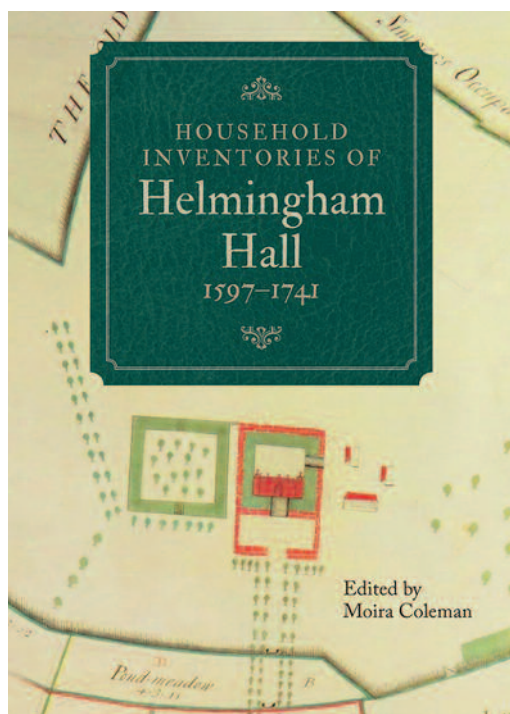
Suggestions for future reviews and publishers' review copies should be sent to Simon Swynfen Jervis, 45 Bedford Gardens, London W8 7EF (tel. 020 7727 8739; email: ss.jervis@btopenworld.com).

MOIRA COLEMAN (ed.), *Household Inventories of Helmingham Hall 1597–1741*, Suffolk Records Society, LXI (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018). 342 pp., 6 col., 24 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-1-78327-274-7. £35

Probate inventories, by law a necessary part of the probate mechanism, have survived in large numbers, but household inventories that continued in use as working documents are comparatively rare. Fortunately for the historian, the Tollemache partiality for recording the whereabouts of their household goods endured for generations. The earliest inventory of Ham House, written c. 1655 on the death of the 1st Earl of Dysart, was probably written, in part, at the suggestion of Lionel Tollemache, 3rd Baronet and 2nd Earl of Dysart (1624–69) of Helmingham and Fakenham Magna, Suffolk, who had married Elizabeth Murray (1626–98) of Ham House in the late 1640s. The 3rd Baronet's father and grandfather had lived at Helmingham when inventories were compiled in 1597 (extended by notes to 1609) and 1626 (with annotations until 1633), and his son and great-grandson would follow suit in 1708 and 1741. Remarkably, these four inventories survive

at Helmingham Hall amongst the household goods of their descendants, and are here transcribed and published in full for the first time. Spanning a period in which the Tollemaches were elevated from the gentry to the peerage, the inventories provide a fascinating insight into the effects of this change of status, of fashions and of fortune on the contents and layout of an early modern house and home.

The 1626 inventory is the longest, fullest and richest: its entries have an immediacy that many inventories lack. Written when the family were actually in the throes of transferring goods from Helmingham Hall to recently purchased 'Lugdens' at



Fakenham Magna — apparently their principal residence from c. 1631 until 1655 — the tenth entry records a ‘bundle of things packed up in a dornex coverlitt’ (p. 46). One room’s soft furnishings had, at time of writing, been ‘removed into Balls his chamber for feare of the ratts’ (p. 57) and a pair of boards were recorded as being ‘at Catchpooles’, who had borrowed them to use — presumably as a table — at his wedding (p. 101). The compiler recorded disputes as they arose — a pair of bellows, for instance, was claimed by Balls as his own, not household, property — raising interesting questions about exactly how inventories were compiled and agreed upon. Was Balls in his room, Coleman asks, when its contents were being listed? Or was the inventory read aloud to, or circulated amongst, the household?

Repetitive definitions of the hundreds of terms (and variants) used by different compilers in 4,091 inventory entries are avoided by means of reference numbers, prefixed by the date, around which the admirably comprehensive and informative combined glossary and index is built. The inventories are supplemented by Appendix A (36 pages) which forensically charts the evolution of the house, its extent and layout, using evidence provided by the perambulations of the inventory compilers, supplemented by other sources, surviving plans and sketches. Interestingly, here, the position of locks (listed as either with or without keys in the 1626 inventory) is used to reconstruct internal routes about the house and the family’s idiosyncratic approach to security. Since these transcriptions shed a vast amount of light on what the Tollemaches

took to the house at Fakenham Magna, Appendix B discusses the circumstances of their acquisition of that property and their life there, using new sources, and including a list of all of the goods removed there from Helmingham Hall, extracted from the 1626 inventory.

Despite the occasional inconsistency or error,¹ this book is a very valuable addition to the corpus of published source material, which goes back to Gage’s *Hengrave* (1822),² and the additional analysis is informative and enlightening, adding considerably to what we know of two important Suffolk houses, their contents and the uses to which they were put.

MEGAN WHEELER

- 1 Lionel Tollemache, 1st Baronet, said (p. xv), to have been ‘created 1st baronet in 1611’, but later (p. xvi) ‘1612’; the genealogical table (p. xiv) dates the death of the 3rd Earl of Dysart to 1728 (also on p. xxxi), elsewhere (pp. xvii and xxix) given as 1727; on p. 113, the text of footnote 14 is missing. The photographs (a leaf of each manuscript is reproduced) reveal an error in the 1597 inventory: ‘ii chayers, lyned and seated with leather’ transcribed as ‘ii chayers, joyned and seated with leather’ (pp. 3–4, Entry 97.21, pl. 2).
- 2 A more recent addition, published by the Suffolk Records Society in 2006, was the 1636 inventory of Viscount Savage’s properties, including Melford Hall.

BERTRAND DE ROYERE, *Pelagio Palagi. Décorateur des Palais Royaux de Turin et du Piémont (1832–1856)* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2018). Hardback, 400 pp., 268 illus. ISBN 979-10-92054-67-5. €70

Anyone who has visited the royal palace in Turin and marvelled at the unconventional and imaginative neo-Classical makeover it received in the 1830s will want to learn more about the protagonist, Pelagio Palagi (1775–1860), a



polymath, who received his initial training in the household of Count Aldrovandi in his native Bologna, as his autobiography reveals. In 1806 he moved to Rome, and in 1815 set up a studio in Milan. Primarily a subject, portrait and fresco painter, he was also sculptor, collector of medals and antiquities and, above all, the designer of everything relevant to the restoration, redecoration and refurnishing of the royal palaces in and around Turin. He was appointed architect/designer to Charles-Albert, Duke of Savoy-Carignan, King of Sardinia, in 1831, with the broadest of remits. As part of his reorganization of the royal collections, Charles-Albert commissioned Palagi to design showcases in the Palazzo Reale, Turin, to display medals, armour and weaponry.

A brilliant draughtsman, the plethora of Palagi's beautiful designs for furniture, floors, ceilings and every other element of palatial interiors — copiously drawn upon in this book — was bequeathed with his

collections to Bologna, on the basis that a fair price would be paid to his family. Little is known about his private life, but his fellow painter, Francesco Hayez — represented in a recent exhibition at the Accademia, Venice — included Palagi in his self-portrait with his closest companions in 1827 (Poldi-Pezzoli Museum, Milan). Palagi's own self-portrait (c. 1810) is in the Uffizi.

Bertrand de Royere has studied the Piedmontese and Bolognese archives since 2008. The Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio in Bologna contains 4,000 letters, 4,000 drawings and much else, one basis of this masterly and beautifully produced volume. He concentrates on the years 1832–56, painting a clear picture of his subject. The book's arrangement is logical. The first three parts place Palagi's work in a regional and international context at a time of political turbulence, as Italy moved uneasily towards unification under the aegis of Savoy. He introduces the commission 'from the call of the young sovereign to a famous painter', describing, in a series of Appendices and Annexes, Palagi's transformation of the Turin palace and the royal castles of Racconigi and Pollenzo outside the city, where he also embraced Gothic. Not every courtier shared the king's 'Pelagiomanie', as the Rococo city palace was remodelled in 'greco' style.

Palagi has been addressed as an artist and painter, notably in the Bolognese retrospective of 1998. Furniture in his portraits anticipated his later designs. Students of furniture and interior decoration will know him from publications by Simon Swynfen Jervis,

Alvar González-Palacios and Enrico Colle, but now his design genius may be fully appreciated through detailed study of his principal royal commissions. The book's core is an in-depth room-by-room examination of the interiors over which Palagi had control, including entries on all the furniture. The most significant pieces are illustrated and juxtaposed with Palagi's designs, revealing that these were precisely copied by the various craftsmen. With typical thoroughness, the author provides photographs of the palace inventory numbers on the furniture.

During an increasingly eclectic period of neo-Classicism, Palagi was influenced by Piranesi, Giani, Albertolli and Borsato, as well as foreigners, including Thomas Hope. Percier and Fontaine's *Recueil* was influential in North Italy, being published in Milan as well as Paris. In Palagi's comprehensive international architectural and design library, Torinese designers were sparsely represented apart from two illustrated books by Carlo Randoni (1755–1831), a predecessor at the Savoy court. Palagi rivals Schinkel in the breadth of his interests and his devotion to archaeological accuracy, borne out in his marquetry Etruscan Room at Racconigi, which quoted from recently discovered Etruscan funerary paintings. Its 'Etruscan' furniture won prizes at the 1851 Great Exhibition. Gilt-bronze mounts were cast, finished and gilded in Paris, Milan and Turin after Palagi's designs. The court sometimes found it difficult to rely upon the quality of Parisian bronzes and furniture, but commissioned from Lyons the highest quality silks, designed by Palagi, for curtains, wall-hangings and top

covers, while also encouraging the native Piedmont silk industry. His fame led Stendhal in *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1838) to describe a series of seventeen palatial rooms hung with armorial silk designed by 'le célèbre Palagi, peintre de Bologne'.

De Royere's book brings into focus the names of the various Piedmontese and Milanese craftsmen, who worked on the palaces under Palagi, including the *ebanista* and marquetry specialist, Gabriele Capello, called 'Il Moncalvo' from his birthplace near Asti in Piedmont. Cabinet-makers, chair-makers, marqueteurs, bronze founders, gilders, painters and plasterers are identified (an appendix supplies biographical entries). Second only to Capello in furniture commissions was the Englishman, Henry Thomas (Enrico) Peters, born in Windsor in 1793, who came to Genoa in 1817 and set up a considerable workshop there, a vignette of which illustrates his trade card. Several pieces of furniture at Racconigi executed after Palagi's designs bear his label, 'Peters Maker Genoa'.

The author is to be congratulated on this volume, in which he is well served by his publishers. It is refreshing to have footnotes instead of endnotes. Minor quibbles are that materials and measurements are not given in the captions either for drawings or furniture, and that there is no general index apart from references to the *dramatis personae*. Shedding new light on Ottocento North Italian art, design, architecture, furniture, furnishings, collecting and patronage, this is essential reading on a universal man, whose genius in the applied arts will now be more widely appreciated.

CHRISTOPHER ROWELL

Reports on the Society's Events

Members will have noticed that the new *Newsletter* includes many more photographs than before. The Editor would be grateful if members could send **high quality digital photographs, 1MB minimum**, taken during Society visits and events that can be used to illustrate the reports. Where indicated, a longer version of a report is available from the Events Secretary, email: events@furniturehistorysociety.org

Visit to the City and Guilds Historical Carving Department

TUESDAY 15 MAY 2018

We were met by Magnus von Wistinghausen, the Vice Principal, who introduced us to the school's background, its philosophy and aims. The school has been at its present site, 114–24 Kennington Park Road, a mainly Georgian range of elegant, listed, late eighteenth-century former houses, since its foundation in 1879. At that time its relative proximity to Lambeth benefited those artist-craftsmen at the Doulton Potteries wishing to advance their arts education, and it was also used by the architectural masons and sculptors particularly favoured by George Gilbert Scott at Farmer and Brindley. The school has charitable status, receives no government funding, but has close links with City of London livery companies,

several of which can trace a lineage back to the medieval guilds, and whose philanthropic purpose allows for the support of students through bursary funding.

The school is an idiosyncratic blend of the old and new, and continues to invest in and upgrade its facilities. Recent work to rationalize circulation successfully retains the spirit of the place without compromising the building's listed status, and makes the internal spaces more suitable to the functioning of the school. The new entrance and creation of an internal street is respectful of the original fabric, and further work will upgrade the existing studio accommodation at the rear of the site.

The Historic Carving courses in Architectural Stone Carving and Ornamental Wood Carving are unique in that the teaching of the traditional craft skills of carving and letter cutting are complemented by the art skills of observational drawing, modelling and the study of the history of art, architecture and ornament.

Central to the school's philosophy is the Arts and Crafts concept of the artist-teacher, in which all tutors are employed part-time whilst continuing with independent careers outside the school environment, which means a practising artist, conservator, theorist, technical expert, writer or designer is on hand to motivate and inform, making the courses highly vocational for students.

We were shown the school's facilities by Robert Randall (Senior Woodcarving Tutor) and Ghislain Puget (Stone Carving Tutor) who introduced us to the ornamental woodcarving and gilding department and the architectural stone department. A number of students were on hand to answer questions about their work, and we were also informed that the school is involved with a number of collaborative projects, for instance with the Houses of

Parliament and Buckingham Palace. It has enjoyed a partnership with the Dean and Canons of St George's Chapel to replace a number of the grotesques. Working with senior tutors, students are invited to design their own pieces of sculpture, with those selected by the Dean and Canons and the Fabric Advisory Committee then being commissioned. The school's alumni have also recently been involved in the project to hand-carve four dragons for the eighteenth-century Great Pagoda at Kew Gardens.

Despite much of the nation believing that heritage has a permanence and inevitability, it does, periodically, require significant maintenance and renewal. We were privileged to hear how the school encourages, nurtures and trains their students to help preserve the world's most important monuments and buildings and, to quote Tony Carter, a previous principal, those same students 'entrust their creative well-being to the nurturing context of their peers but particularly to those they see as custodians'.

The visit encouraged reflection, was both rewarding and informative, and ended on a beautiful afternoon with tea and cakes in the courtyard.

SIMON KNIGHT



Visit to Dumfries House Ayrshire and Paxton House, Berwick-upon- Tweed

FRIDAY 8 JUNE–SATURDAY 9 JUNE
2018

In this tercentenary year, this joint two-day visit to Dumfries House, Ayrshire, and Paxton House, Berwick-upon-Tweed, offered FHS members the opportunity to celebrate two outstanding commissions by arguably Britain's greatest cabinet-maker — Thomas Chippendale (b. 1718, d. 1779). Elegant design and exquisite craftsmanship seemed an almost natural expectation. More than this, however, the visit offered the chance to examine two very particular periods of Chippendale's production, spanning several decades — one his early 'Director' style, the other his restrained brand of neo-Classicism. Moreover, the visit hoped to provide an insight into Chippendale's Scottish connections, such as the early financial backing of venture capitalist James Rannie, and the latter involvement of Chippendale's bookkeeper-cum-partner, Thomas Haig. Indeed, it is notable that such a high percentage of Chippendale's documented works survive in Scotland. Other eminent craftsmen would naturally be represented — Francis Brodie, William Mathie, Alexander Peter and William Trotter, to name a few. But, in this landmark year, Chippendale's celebrity would be hard to overshadow.

Dumfries House

Little introduction need be made of the dramatic events of 2007, which saw the

last-minute intervention of HRH The Prince of Wales and several charitable trusts in saving Dumfries and its collection for the nation. Built for the 5th Earl of Dumfries between 1754 and 1759, on the ancient Leifnorris estate, Dumfries stands as an important early work by Robert Adam. Still more important, perhaps, it stands as the first major commission by Thomas Chippendale, both richly documented and a unique exemplar of his early *Director* style. With only sympathetic alterations made in the late nineteenth century, successive generations ensured the house was well cared for — a key element in its salvation. From 1956 until her death in 1993, Dumfries was home to Lady Eileen, Dowager Marchioness of Bute, during which time the house gained a reputation as something of a 'hidden treasure'. Following the renaissance of 2007, a comprehensive restoration programme has seen both house and contents restored to former glory, as well as a campaign of regeneration in the wider estate and with local communities. In our host, Charlotte Rostek, Curator Emeritus, so instrumental in this vision from the start, we could not have wanted for a more generous guide.

The Blue Drawing Room, the principal reception room of the house, appeared glorious as we began our tour, the recently restored electric blue draperies and upholstered seat furniture contrasting starkly with the subdued mahogany and white painted walls. The pattern for the specially commissioned damask was taken from a fragment of eighteenth-century material found on a single chair. Chippendale's account records fourteen



armchairs of this type were supplied to Dumfries, divided between here and the Family Parlour. Today, thirteen are accounted for, local tradition maintaining that the last, suffering from woodworm, was put on the fire — a sobering thought. The two sofas from the suite may originally have been positioned at opposing ends of the room, ready for the lady of the house, enthroned, to receive guests. Today this space is occupied by a highpoint in the collection — the ‘rosewood bookcase’ invoiced by Chippendale in May 1759. Originally part of the best bedroom suite, perhaps no other piece generated such close scrutiny. Was this indeed a bookcase, or more likely a china cabinet, as Chippendale’s ‘Panshanger Cabinets’ now at Firle Place, Sussex, might testify? Equally, the ‘rosewood’ noted in the account appeared more like padouk: an eighteenth-century term for this new and exotic wood? Something unanimously agreed upon, however, was the unmistakable quality —

with even the backs of the brass handles displaying exquisite chasing. Lastly, in the middle of the room, corresponding closely to a design in Chippendale’s *Director* — a mahogany breakfast table by Samuel Smith. The lower section, with its pierced ‘Chinese fretwork’ cage, is sometimes cited as a means of protecting the contents from roaming dogs — a tale treated with some scepticism.

The adjoining Entrance Hall, lined with no fewer than eight longcase clocks, afforded a nod to the personal tastes and interests of the present Great Steward of Scotland. It also highlighted how fine craftsmanship at Dumfries extends beyond Chippendale’s often consuming reputation, with an elegant suite of hall chairs by Alexander Peter and striking giltwood eagle table by Francis Brodie.

In the Pink Dining Room, perhaps the most elaborately ornamented of all the interiors, Dumfries’ principle cabinet-makers were well represented: two elaborately carved giltwood pier glasses,



adorned with the 5th Earl's coronet, by Mathie; an extensive dining-room suite, including twenty-four carved side chairs, by Peter; and, familiar to all for gracing the front cover of Christopher Gilbert's seminal publication, *The Life And Work Of Thomas Chippendale*, a pair of virtuosic Chinoiserie girandoles. The importance of supporting documentation was again emphasized with a mahogany sideboard, conforming in almost every respect to a design from Chippendale's *Director*, but invoiced and supplied by Alexander Peter. The only minor deviation, a carved saltire to the lower leg — a subtle reference to the Scottish patron and his Scottish cabinet-maker?

The afternoon's session continued in Lord Dumfries's Study, dominated by the 'Mahog. Library Table of very fine wood' supplied by Chippendale in 1759. The 'Writing drawer at one End wt a double rising slider' illustrated and described in Chippendale's *Director* as a 'double horse' to stand to read or write upon, provided great interest. Naturally, a first edition of Chippendale's celebrated book was on hand to illustrate the point. Also dominating the space, topped by a bust of Apollo, was the grand mahogany bookcase described in Dumfries's guidebook as 'in the Chippendale style'. Despite lacking the supporting paperwork, in a house so dominated by Chippendale's presence, speculation could not be totally quelled.

The Family Parlour, designed as the principle living space and set directly behind the Entrance Hall, contained the remaining elbow chairs from the set of fourteen — here upholstered in vibrant yellow damask of the same historic pattern. The sofa, however, although conforming in almost all respects to those supplied by Chippendale, is a work by Alexander Peter. A notable hole in the arrangement was one of a pair of elegant Chippendale card tables, lined with original green baize, one of several pieces on loan to Leeds City Museum as part of the exhibition: *Thomas Chippendale, 1718–1779: A Celebration of Craftsmanship and Design*. Alongside such masterpieces sat the most functional of objects — a plain mahogany tea tray — which, notwithstanding the documentary evidence, might be so easily overlooked.

Something of a crescendo to the ground floor came with Chippendale's celebrated best bed, reinstated and meticulously restored to its former glory, a detailed account of which was published in *Furniture History* by our guide in 2012: Charlotte Rostek, 'New Light on Thomas Chippendale's Seat Furniture and "Best" Bed at Dumfries House, Ayrshire'. The carved palm fronds on the bed posts, echoing those on the fireplace and Chippendale's virtuoso overmantle mirror (uniquely inset with a carpet-pile panel, probably by Thomas Moore), offered particular accord to the scheme.

Leading off the Family Bedchamber, dressing rooms and closets bore further reward. A 'Japanned' clothes press, the first of its type to be supplied by Chippendale, and an important precursor to later work at Nostell Priory and Harewood House, bred much discussion. Discord as to whether the panels were genuinely 'Japanned', or used genuine Japanese lacquer, only spoke of the skill of the craftsman. The sliding shelves, miraculously saved from the attic where they served as storage to the 6th Duchess's mineral collection, revealed their original marbled paper linings — so familiar as coverings to numerous editions of *The Director*.

According with the Prince's vision that Dumfries should not rest in the past, the upstairs gallery, with its sequence of bedchambers, bathrooms and closets, revealed a more functional approach to the display of the collection. Highlights included abundant carved and gilded window cornices and bed pelmets by Peter; numerous monumental pier glasses

by Mathie and a diminutive 'Lady's Closet' by Brodie. Invoiced in 1753, before work at Dumfries had begun in earnest, this was surely a vestige of the Bute's compact Edinburgh Old Town house. Concluding day one — a day filled with appreciation for this unparalleled house and collection — we were left to reflect on the lorries bound for Christie's, diverted at the eleventh hour, just over ten years ago, and an unthinkable tragedy averted.

Paxton House

Like Dumfries, Paxton stands as a product of early Adam architecture — a well-proportioned neo-Palladian building on the banks of the River Tweed, built between 1758 and 1763, for Patrick Home — one-time suitor to the daughter of Frederick the Great. Patrick's London address, on St Martin's Lane, may have fostered initial contact with one Thomas Chippendale, although no evidence of any furniture survives. Unlucky in love, and after inheriting the neighbouring estate of Wedderburn from his uncle in 1766, work at Paxton lapsed, leaving it unfinished and only partly furnished. Leased and eventually sold to his younger cousin Ninian in 1773, it is largely Ninian's vision for Paxton we see today. Writing to Chippendale Haig and Co. in 1789, Ninian described the furniture he wanted for his new home as 'neat and substantially good' — something today christened 'the Paxton style'. Contrary to the grand commissions at Harewood and Nostell, this was a brand of understated neo-Classical elegance, devoid of superfluous ornament. This was also the brand of Thomas Chippendale the Younger (1749–1822). From his initial

influences on design, to later assuming control of the firm following his father's retirement, the younger Chippendale's career can be charted through Paxton's collections. Our guide to this fascinating commission and more — curator Dr Fiona Salvesen Murrell.

Moving through the temple-like portico, the Entrance Hall afforded a first glimpse of the exhibition: *The Paxton Style: Neat & Substantially Good*, of which our day would conclude with a private view. For now, we could admire the monumental sideboard table, invoiced by Chippendale in 1786, and on loan from a private collection. Full marks to the eagle-eyed member who noted the same idiosyncratic crosshatching and incised stars observed on a set of three pole-screens at Dumfries the previous day.

Beyond the Entrance Hall, Paxton's Drawing Room, adorned with delicate plasterwork, provided a contrast of richness and colour, as well as our first introduction to Thomas Chippendale the Younger. Three pier tables, with characteristic finely fluted legs and intricate marquetry tops, once brightly coloured and reflecting motifs on the ceiling, spoke of his later work at Stourhead. Also to be noted, pier mirrors, topped by gilded griffins guarding the sacred flame, and not unlike designs later published in Chippendale's *Sketches of Ornament*. The set of ten armchairs and single sofa, controlled and well proportioned, maintained a flourish of detail in the

inlaid, fan-shaped patera topping the leg. And, in the centre of the room, two tea tables with hexagonal tops formed of radiating triangular veneers, on finely scrolled tripod bases, familiar to many as something of a stock item for Chippendale. Following acquisition, one has recently returned to Paxton.

Outside the Drawing Room, the Ante Room introduced a further layer to Paxton's collections — works produced by Chippendale's workshop, but originating from the Home's London Gower Street house. A pair of diminutive, semi-elliptical pier tables, again displaying characteristic finely fluted legs, flanked the doorway. Four armchairs, in almost every respect identical to those in the Drawing Room, were betrayed only by subtle differences to the leg.

The Dining Room off bounds — the setting for the much-anticipated exhibition — we were guided through the series of second-floor bedrooms and dressing rooms, the furniture in which perhaps best characterizes Paxton's 'neat and substantial' style. In the collection of linen



presses, for example — each finely proportioned with simple, elegant, gilt-bronze handles — a popular model employed by Chippendale. Gone was the marquetry inlay of the Drawing Room, replaced by crisp, well-defined flourishes of carved detail. Not devoid of decoration, however, each exploited the rich, natural figuring of mahogany, specially selected and framed by bead mouldings, as if a silken panel.

In the series of serpentine commodes we indulged our interest in Chippendale's workshop practice. Evident behind each bracket foot was the oft-mentioned laminated blocking — a means of strengthening the carcase. There, too, were the characteristic wooden ball castors. Also evident was the famed 'red wash', proclaimed by some as proof of Chippendale's authorship. An indicator maybe, a more convincing argument seemed that it was merely a means of harmonizing lighter woods, such as pine, to the colour of mahogany, something also employed by other cabinet-makers. A theory put to bed?



The Principal Bedroom, with its floral chintz wallpaper and soft furnishings, contained choice examples including the famous set of painted 'star back' chairs and an elegant lady's writing table. Closely related to a more elaborate version, crossbanded in tulipwood and rosewood, supplied to Lady Winn for Nostell Priory in 1766, the plain mahogany veneers of Paxton's example typify Ninan's personal taste.

The bedrooms also served as a reminder of Chippendale's role as decorator and 'upholder'; that the firm responsible for the famed Diana and Minerva commode (supplied to Harewood House) were also responsible for supplying wallcoverings, bed linens and bed pans. A major art-historical discovery came with the de-attribution of some of the domestic linen airers once thought to have been supplied by Chippendale — analysis of screws and hinges indicating a nineteenth- or twentieth-century origin. Susceptible to damage, one Chippendale original survives in private hands.

A visit to the attics proved interesting and atmospheric in equal measure. A casualty of later alterations, but now carefully stored, were a series of pelmets and window cornices, painted in Chippendale's distinctive schemes still evident elsewhere in the house. One oddity was a somewhat hotchpotch table, clearly adapted, which, when viewed from underneath,

displayed defunct dishes for gaming counters.

After lunch came the opportunity to acquaint ourselves with Paxton beyond Chippendale. Between 1811 and 1814, following the inheritance of his uncle's significant picture collection, Paxton's then owner, George Home, embarked on a substantial extension to the house with a purpose-built picture gallery. To furnish the grand Greek revival interiors, rather than Chippendale Junior, and in keeping with George's local affinities, William Trotter of Edinburgh was employed. The suite, including fourteen armchairs, two Grecian sofas, circular centre table and two pairs of pier tables, cost £1,309, more than a quarter the cost of the entire building. The pier tables, with their exaggerated scroll legs and fleshy carved gadrooning, characteristic of Trotter's output, were made to accommodate specimen marble tops. The pair flanking the fireplace, of unusual, out-turned form, may have been designed for marble slabs once earmarked for serpentine commodes.

Concluding the day, *The Paxton Style: Neat & Substantially Good*, curated by our host and Dr David Jones, lived up to all expectations — a fitting tribute in this landmark year. In an exhibition so far-reaching — encompassing supporting documentation as well as Chippendale's unmatched furniture — it would be difficult to choose a highlight. Thankfully, all was documented in the neatly produced accompanying publication (causing a sudden run in the gift shop over lunch). Private loans, never before on public display, included furniture made for another Home residence —

Wedderburn Castle — including an unusual chest of drawers specifically designed for wigs and shoes. Who could do without? Loans from public institutions were equally far-reaching, with objects from the V&A, Dumfries House, Blair Castle, the Garrick Club and others being represented. It was equally rewarding to see pieces from Paxton's collection, removed from their usual context, viewed in new light. Particularly resplendent was the gentleman's shaving table, normally in the Principal Bedroom, and recently sensitively restored to former glory. A personal, unexpected highlight was the plain deal chest of drawers made for a servant's room at either Paxton or Wedderburn, retaining its original blue sugar-paper lined drawers. For his 'below stairs' staff, then, Ninian Home selected that same eminent maker as for his own apartments. A fitting end to an insightful, stimulating and above all celebratory weekend, *The Paxton Style: Neat & Substantially Good* stands as another high point in 'Chippendale 300'.

MICHAEL SHRIVE

Visit to Yannick Chastang's studio in Faversham, Kent

THURSDAY 21 JUNE 2018

Yannick Chastang keeps a beautifully ordered and clean workshop. On the ground floor, stocks of different timbers and veneers were sorted on shelves, including old stock from defunct workshops and material ready to recycle such as exotic materials and a mahogany

table top. Tools ranged from a huge table saw to a veneer press and marquetry donkeys, both historical and made in-house. As well as temporarily being home to some superlative pieces from historic house and private collections, there were pieces of Yannick's own design, such as an exquisitely crafted dressing table with a shagreen surface. The staircase was lined with Yannick's experiments in modern marquetry, framed abstract designs created from extraordinarily grained veneers. The workshop employs four conservators and manages in-house every aspect of the conservation process, be it the revival of any lacquer surface, the recreation of a missing gilt-bronze mount or the re-gilding of decorative surfaces. Yannick believes that collaboration is essential in today's conservation and that the best work is achieved through the application of shared knowledge. He himself was extremely generous with his expert knowledge and the session was enlightening at every point. Apart from giving detailed information on the method and decisions involved for each piece we

saw, the visit was also a reminder of the opportunity to learn offered by a dismantled piece of furniture. With the mechanics bared, the construction of each piece explained itself.

In progress was conservation of several pieces of Boulle-work marquetry. Side by side was one of a pair of coffers from Boughton of c. 1710 and a pair of early twentieth-century Linke pedestals. The difference showed not only the stylistic evolution of Boulle-work, but, as Yannick explained, the progress in constructional methods, Linke's work epitomizing the pinnacle of technical skill. Whereas the mounts on the earlier piece brazenly showed the fixings that secured the mounts to the carcass, on the Linke piece there were none to be seen. However, inside the pedestal was a forest of angled bolts securing the mounts invisibly to the outside. The uppermost section of ormolu, which adorned the circumference of the pedestal, was constructed in one piece, and hence had to be extremely carefully removed before proceeding with work on the veneer. Yannick told how Linke used a

cigarette paper to test if the mount was closely fitted enough — precision cabinet-making indeed! This precision means that the Linke pieces present more of a challenge to the conservator. The conservation of Linke's version of the Bureau du Roi took 7,000 hours of the studio's time.

Some pieces present challenges of other sorts. An enormous bureau with clock from Waddesdon tested the conservators in unexpected ways. Apart from having three different types of lacquer finishes, this colossal piece was almost unmovable. At Waddesdon the carpet had been installed around rather than under the piece, hinting at the awkwardness that its sheer weight presents. The studio used a ceiling winch to manoeuvre it. The carcass now lay on its side, lacquer doors removed, its interior exposed. Although of an extremely elaborate design externally, its construction was surprisingly poorly and haphazardly conceived. Yannick showed where, with afterthought, its creators had had to remove an internal oak brace to allow for the operation of the weight mechanism connected to the fall front. The internal walls of the carcass had then been thinned out, leaving an alarmingly flimsy carcass for such a monumental piece. For most of its life, no doubt, the pomp of the exterior has successfully dispelled any suggestion of second-rate work.¹

The next surprise revealed by a look at the interior was the Boulle-work base, dated c. 1780, for an earlier clock by Etienne Baillon, from the Ballroom at Knole (NT129615). Apparently exactly described in removal bills for Lord Whitworth's goods from Paris in 1803, the piece in front of us was clearly constructed far more recently.² The group speculated on possible explanations, including the likelihood of a replica having been illicitly made whilst the piece was in a workshop, a practice possibly more common than currently thought.

Many thanks to Yannick and his team, to Wolf Burchard for background on the Knole clock stand and, of course, to Beatrice Goddard for organizing such an interesting visit.

VICTORIA BRADLEY

- 1 For an illustration of this piece, see Geoffrey de Bellaigue's *Waddesdon Catalogue* (1974), no. 66.
- 2 See C. Rowell and W. Burchard, 'François Benois, Martin-Eloi Lignereux and Lord Whitworth: Leasing, Furnishing and Dismantling the British Embassy in Paris during the Peace of Amiens, 1802–03', *Furniture History*, LII (2016), 181–213.

Visit to Masterpiece fair

SATURDAY 30 JUNE 2018

It almost seems unnecessary to describe the Masterpiece art fair, an event that attracts more than 150 exhibitors and offers everything from fine furniture to jewellery, rare books, paintings and antiquities. However, if it had not been for the FHS visit and its generous funding, I would have been one of those who have never visited the fair or even heard of it, and what a loss that would have been.

There were many fascinating pieces to see, but by far the most interesting feature of the day was the opportunity for FHS members to speak to the dealers. As the event proved quite popular, we split into two groups, led by Peter Holmes and Lucy Wood, to avoid hampering the flow of visitors to the stands. The dealers were enthusiastic about our visit, and generous with their time in presenting a selection of pieces from their respective stands.

We started our tour at the Apter-Fredericks stand, where Harry Apter

showed us an unusual English piece of furniture dating to around 1770, a form of dumbwaiter that was equipped with everything from a cellaret to a box for confectionery, and, of course, shelves for glasses. Its lower part is made up of three bombé drawers standing on ogee bracket feet, while the upper part consists of three stepped tiers with arched doors, below an octagonal box with a lid. Such an original piece was undoubtedly a special commission or an experimental item, and it was amazing to see such a caprice. Harry Apter continued his introduction to his stand by showing us a set of seven shield-back armchairs delicately painted to imitate inlaid decoration; the quality was such that we were almost fooled. We finished with a rather eccentric small table from around 1740, taller than usual and with rather splayed cabriole legs terminating in claw-and-ball feet. The double-shell-carved ornamentation added to its unexpected proportions, and led us to think that it might have been an Irish piece.

Our next visit was to the Thomas Coulborn & Sons stand where we discovered a delightful cabinet decorated by no less than sixteen *pietre dure* panels. Most of the group immediately thought we were in front of an Italian piece. It was amusing to learn that, although the *pietre dure* panels had been acquired in Italy as a souvenir of the Grand Tour, the cabinet itself was English from around 1755, made specifically to display the Italian panels. The Grand Tour was an eighteenth-century, predominantly aristocratic, tradition, during which the purchase of such souvenirs was almost an obligation,

and one has to praise the foresight of travellers in reducing unnecessary expense by bringing back such pieces. The other fascinating item we were shown was an incredible centre table by the Jamaican furniture-maker Ralph Turnbull. Made between 1846 and 1851, this table is inlaid with no less than eleven different woods, and represents a true *tour de force*. The marquetry includes various motifs: a ship, a lighthouse, several coats of arms and even a letter addressed to Queen Victoria! We were left in no doubt that this table was a statement piece of furniture that demonstrated the craftsmanship to be found in Jamaica.

We continued our tour to the stand of Godson & Coles, where those of us who attended the Chippendale Symposium in Leeds were delighted to see our first pieces by the cabinet-maker and his son, Thomas Chippendale Junior. We were shown a pair of semi-circular card tables of c. 1752 by Chippendale Junior. Standing on reeded legs, with a marquetry top and fluting on the sides, it impressed us with its central carving depicting a wheat sheaf in a laurel wreath; the quality of the carving rivalling the marquetry. We tried to imagine the original colours of the card table tops of white holly, yellow satinwood, green-stained sycamore and other colours that would have given the tables a truly modern and bright look. We then returned to the work of Chippendale Senior, and discussed a sofa attributed to the craftsman, praising its sinuous form and noting its strong French influences and sculptural quality. We finished with a table that was both inlaid and painted and had an Italian feel to it. The English maker

must surely have been to Italy and been influenced by what he saw there. We were impressed to discover that the gesso under the gilding had been carved and not moulded, making the carved gilt gesso festoons all the more admirable. If the satinwood inlaid top was pleasing, the central medallion on the frieze attracted the most attention, with its large size and its Classical scene evoking antique cameos.



© Apter-Fredericks

As we were slowly running out of time, we could only briefly stop at the sumptuous stand of the Steinitz Gallery, where we discussed a display of German beadwork on the walls, and a remarkable chimneypiece with Egyptian terracotta figures. We finished the morning at the Rolleston stand, where we discovered a wonderful example of early eighteenth-century giltwood armchairs with much of their original gilding and upholstery. Made by James Moore, they possessed a rather sculptural quality, enhanced by the Persian 'Turkey work' upholstery. They made quite an impression, and the fact that one of the set is represented in a watercolour of the mid-nineteenth century added an extra dimension to one of the final objects of the morning.

After a well-deserved lunch, we took some time to stroll around the fair on our own. This was an opportunity to discover other wonderful objects on display and to marvel in front of our personal favourites. We were able to discuss our finds with each other during that time, as well as discovering what the other group had seen. As the day was coming to a close, and with many fascinating images in our minds, we enjoyed some much-needed rest in a local pub, leading to a convivial talk about our highlights of the day and hopes for future FHS events. It was a delightful day, and I am deeply grateful to the FHS for funding my transportation and allowing me to attend the fair.

MARIANNE FOSSALUZZA

Publications

As a leading publisher in the field of furniture history, the Society offers for sale a wide variety of publications to both members and non-members. Among the publications that are currently available are the following:

Index to the Dictionary of English Furniture Makers, £20 (members £18)

The London Furniture Trade 1700–1870, Pat Kirkham, £20

Dictionary of Edinburgh Furniture Makers 1600–1840, Francis Bamford, £20

Furniture History Forty Years On, Nicholas Goodison, £7.95 (members £5)

Thomas Johnson's The Life of the Author, Jacob Simon, £7.75

Thomas Chippendale the Younger at Stourhead, Judith Goodison, £6.95

Makers, Dealers and Collectors: Studies in Honour of Geoffrey de Bellaigue, £24.95

John Stafford of Bath and his Interior Decorations, Simon Swynfen Jervis, £6.95

British and Irish Inventories, Simon Swynfen Jervis, £12 (members £10)

Furniture History

JOURNALS FOR SALE: Available volumes: XVIII (1982)–XXXIX (2003) inclusive and XLI (2005)–LIII (2017) inclusive, plus indexes for 1980–89, 1990–99 and 2000–09.

Offers, please, to Sally Watson-West at: sally.watsonwest@blubberhouses.net

Still available! Chippendale at the Met

Don't forget to order your copy of the May 2018 issue of the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, which features an impressive study by Morrison Heckscher of the work of this celebrated furniture craftsman, mainly drawings, in the MMA's collection. The 48-page booklet is a handsome publication and complements the many books and booklets about Chippendale being produced this year. It is available from the Society at £15, plus postage and packing.

Also on offer are additional copies of the booklet *Thomas Chippendale 1718–1779: A Celebration of British Craftsmanship and Design*, published by our sister organization, the Chippendale Society, and available at £5 plus post & packing.

To order these or any other FHS publication, contact the Society's Publications officer, Jill Bace, at publications@furniturehistorysociety.org or 21 Keats Grove, Hampstead, London NW3 2RS. On receipt of your order, she will send you an invoice. Upon receipt of payment (which may be made by cheque, debit or credit card), orders will be despatched by the Society's printers.

Grants

The Society makes grants to individuals and organizations 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 or at 21 Keats Grove, Hampstead, London NW3 2RS.

Grants News

As part of the ongoing effort to recruit new members to the Furniture History Society, the Grants Committee is dedicated to encouraging students and young professionals with an interest in furniture-making, furniture history, interior design and the decorative arts to join the Society and take advantage of opportunities to participate in a variety of Early Career Development activities.

Along with a recent mailing to universities and arts institutions outlining the benefits of Furniture History Society membership, a series of specialized ECD workshops is currently being planned. These evening events will focus on furniture-making techniques and will include talks and visits to dealers. Thanks to a generous donation from the Worshipful Company of Playing Card Makers, the Society will be able to fund these workshops, as well as once again offer three-year memberships to students and young professionals under the age of twenty-five who are currently working or studying in the fields of furniture history and the decorative arts.

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The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is 15 December 2018.

Copy should be sent, preferably by email to Sharon Goodman, email: sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk, or by post to 26 Burntwood Lane, London SW17 0JZ. Tel. 07855 176779.

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COVER PICTURE Library table made by Herter Brothers for William Henry Vanderbilt's Fifth Avenue mansion, 1879–82. © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accession no. 1972.47