

The Furniture History Society

Newsletter 219

August 2020



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'A specimen of what British wood may be brought to': A Cabinet Made for George IV

The Morning Herald, 13 July 1826, printed a note taken from the *Bury Gazette*:

Our townsman, Mr Hancock, who requested permission, some months ago, to present to His Majesty a beautiful cabinet of his own manufacture made from an elm tree of Suffolk growth, has been munificently rewarded. Mr Hancock has received a letter which we have permission to transcribe:-

Carlton House, 10th July, 1826.

SIR, — I am commanded to acquaint you, that the King has been graciously pleased to comply with your desire, and to accept the Cabinet, prepared by you and forwarded to Carlton House, for the purpose of being presented to his Majesty. His Majesty is gratified with your dutiful attention, and has further commanded me to transmit to you a draft (which I enclose) for one hundred guineas, as a mark of his Majesty's gracious approbation,

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your very obedient servant,

THOMAS MARRABLE

To. Mr. Hancock, Bury St Edmund's.

A note of the draft of £105 is in the Royal Archives (Fig. 3).

George IV's indefatigable Inventory Clerk, Benjamin Jutsham, recorded the cabinet's arrival on 1 November 1825 and described it in his receipts Ledger (Receipts II, pp. 208–09) thus:

Mr Hancock Cabinet Maker Bury St Edmunds, A Cabinet of superior beauty



Fig. 1 (before restoration) Cabinet, by William Hancock, 1825, burr-elm, burr-walnut, ebony, cedar, mirrored glass, giltwood, gilt-metal, 170 × 98 × 53 cm. RCIN 471. Royal Collection Trust / © HM Queen Elizabeth II 2020

& workmanship, made of British Elm, it of Upright Square Form 5' 7½ high 3' 10½ wide — by 1' 3¾ deep the Cabinet is formed into Long Panels with Carved and Gilt Leaf Mouldings - the upper part of



Fig. 2 The cabinet after restoration, closed, with doors reattached. RCIN 471. Royal Collection Trust / © HM Queen Elizabeth II 2020

the inside of the Cabinet forms a Recess with looking Glass Back & Sides with 4 Columns and 4 half Columns — the Columns have Gothic Arches to them at Top the Columns are multiplied by reflection in the Glass /

A secret Spring Slider under the Columns — the Centre of the internal part of the Cabinet is fitted up with 8 Sliding Shelves lined with Red Velvet — and 3 Drawers — the Wings of the Cabinet is of Circular form with 7 Drawers for Papers on Each Side in the Centre of Each Wing is a Recess with Doors the Recesses Contain 6 Small Drawers Each — the Doors of the Recesses are Covered with Crimson Velvet and ornamented with Carved & Gilt Ivy wreaths & Spears.

In the column under 'Remarks', Jutsham recorded: 'This Cabinet was Presented by Mr Hancock to His Majesty as a

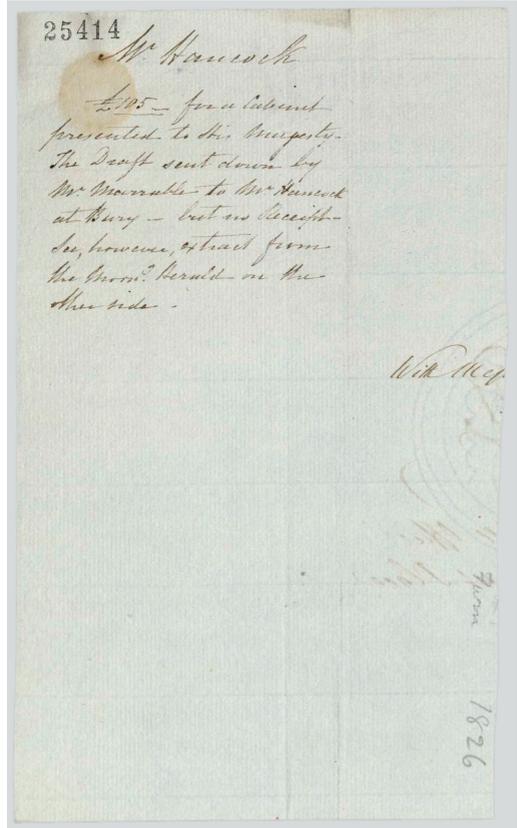


Fig. 3 A note of the draft. RA GEO MAIN 25414.a. Royal Archives / © HM Queen Elizabeth II 2020

specimen of what British wood may be brought to — and its perfection shewn if manufactured under the management of a skilled workman'.

The Hancock family were an enterprising brood: James Hancock was a cabinet-maker in Marlborough and his wife Elizabeth bore him twelve children. William Hancock was born in Marlborough in 1789 and died in Milton, Gravesend in 1848. His elder brother, Thomas (1786–1865), was a founder of the English rubber industry, and another, Walter (1799–1852) was the first to build steam carriages designed for use on public roads.¹ William

established a cabinet-making firm in Bury St Edmunds in 1815 but was declared bankrupt in 1821. His sole-recorded piece is this cabinet. Thereafter, he may have worked in the rubber manufacturing business with his brother Thomas and is thought to have made the first set of rubber cushions for the Houses of Parliament between 1834 and 1840, and in 1836 patented a method for binding books.²

The cabinet in the Royal Collection made by William Hancock was, until recently, in a bedroom suite in the East Wing of Buckingham Palace, which since Spring 2019 has been vacated of all moveable contents to facilitate safely the re-servicing of that wing of the Palace, the first of the four wings to be entirely rewired and other services replaced. Such an event has provided staff at Royal Collection Trust, the department of the Royal Household

which cares for the Royal Collection and which manages the public opening of the Palaces, with an opportunity to bring certain objects into conservation workshops for maintenance or a full overhaul. In the case of Hancock's elm cabinet, marks on the plinth caused by (absent) hinged doors had always caused a certain amount of bafflement to curators and conservators. It was only when the cabinet was brought into the conservation workshops and dismantled that the doors were reunited with the cabinet. The doors of the Hancock cabinet were removed at an unknown date and put into storage. In 1988, a section of the elm veneer was removed from these doors and used for veneering part of the elm writing-desk by Jacob Freres, now at Windsor (Fig. 4).

The doors were kept in store and during the course of the restoration were reunited with the cabinet, and



Fig. 4 Jacob Frères, Writing table, c. 1796–1815, elm, oak, gilt metal, 92.7 × 193.7 × 109.9 cm. RCIN 29931. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020

the columns reattached to the doors (see image on front cover). The missing veneer from the front of the doors was covered with well-matching elm veneer, missing mouldings were newly carved and gilded, and the crimson silk velvet drawer-linings and backing to the panes was replaced with a stock of nineteenth-century crimson silk velvet.

It was through the course of conservation that the excellent craftsmanship and quality of materials used in the making of the cabinet became evident. In addition to marks from the previously fitted doors on the base, the brass capitals at the top of the columns suggested past alteration. These components especially seemed out of place, as metal was used solely

for handles or escutcheons and these capitals did not match the architectural order of the miniature columns in the recess. The original capitals (turned from solid elm burr and partially water-gilded) were also in store. Throughout the cabinet the gilded wood elements are of high quality (Fig. 5) — carved from lime, water-gilded and enhanced with burnished details, such as the small berries on the inner cupboard door wreaths. The ribbon ends from both delicate wreath mounts were missing and were replaced with water-gilded carved lime.

Where mahogany was used for the carcass construction, solid burr-elm had been used generously throughout as the show timber; for example, the



Figs 5 and 6 RCIN 471, details. Royal Collection Trust / © HM Queen Elizabeth II 2020

cornice mouldings, miniature columns and concave drawer fronts. Due to the irregular figure of this timber and temperature and humidity changes in the environment, dimensional distortions had occurred over the years, and were corrected during the recent restoration.

The consolidation of the original, thick 2 mm veneer also served as an indicator of the quantity of elm used in the cabinet. Notable are the edge panels of the doors, which are veneered in continuous sections (over 144 cm).

When imitating these qualities for replacing the missing veneer, it was most important to source a successful match to the original burr-elm. However, modern knife-cut stock was thinner than historic sawn-cut veneers, and only available in smaller sections. The thickness was made up by laminating two layers of veneer — effectively making 2 mm three-ply veneer. These sections were then fitted so that the join is discreet and the figure in the panel appears continuous.

When inspecting the surfaces, the usual characteristic of high gloss from

later applications of polish was evident on outer areas such as the plinth base, cornice and front of the columns.

However, when viewed under UV light and from microscopy analysis, a promising intact original surface was observed on the surfaces of the inner drawers and on the doors found in storage — perhaps a plant resin rather than shellac varnish, due to its fluorescence under UV light. The likely date of manufacture conforms with this choice of finish. These surfaces received minimal attention including a clean and wax and have been left largely intact.

RUFUS BIRD AND MICHELLE KIRK

- 1 R. B. Prosser and Anita McConnell, 'Hancock, Thomas (1786–1865), Rubber Manufacturer and Inventor', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 4 October 2007 (Oxford University Press), <https://www.oxforddnb.com> (accessed 22 January 2020); and R. Prosser and R. Harrington (25 May 2006). Hancock, Walter (1799–1852), engineer and inventor of steam carriages. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://www.oxforddnb.com> (accessed 22 January 2020).
- 2 <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/people/ap30251/hancock-william> (accessed 22 January 2020).

Lecture: Gillian Wilson Memorial Lecture

THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2020 TBC
6.30 PM

Anna Somers Cocks will give a lecture in honour of the life and achievements of the late Gillian Wilson at the Hochhauser Auditorium, Sackler Centre, Victoria and Albert Museum. By kind permission of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum with support from the Gilbert Trust and Adrian Sassoon.

The lecture will be followed by drinks in the foyer of the Hochhauser Auditorium.

Tickets for this event are free and will be available to reserve, please follow this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/furniture-history-society-9817476624>

This event will possibly be live-streamed.

Membership Subscription Reminder

Membership subscriptions were due on 1 July. If you have not paid please do so as soon as possible. In order to reduce administration costs the Society prefers to receive payment on line using the following link:

<https://www.furniturehistorysociety.org/membership/renew/>

You will need your membership ID and email address to log in. You can pay by debit/credit card or set up a direct debit (only available to members with a UK bank account).

If for any reason you are unable to pay using this method you can either pay by

1. BACS to Furniture History Society at Barclays, Sort code 20-49-76, Account no. 40950238, IBAN GB96 BUKB 2049 7640 9502 38, SWIFT BUKBGB22.
2. Sent cheque payable to Furniture History Society, c/o 37 Railway Road, Teddington TW11 8SD, UK.

If you have any questions please contact Keith Nicholls, Finance Officer, email: finance@furniturehistorysociety.org; tel. (44) 7951 211996.



John Evan Bedford FSA (1941–2019)

John Evan Bedford and his elder brother, William, were the sons of a leading cardiologist, Evan Bedford CBE (1898–1978), who was also a historian of cardiology and built up a great library of over 1,100 items on the subject. In 1971 he donated this collection to the Royal College of Physicians, who regard it as one of their great treasures and published his catalogue in 1977. In a 2002 letter to the writer John referred to his father as ‘the cause of my book collecting obsession’. In the 1960s John, who had become Company Secretary of Smith’s Industries, used his spare time to help his brother, who had been unwell, run a stall selling antique glass at the Kensington Antiques Hypermarket. Any remaining energy was devoted

to motor-racing, much to his father’s disapproval; he enjoyed much success, winning trophies at Brands Hatch, Goodwood and many other courses. Noting that the furniture on which glass was displayed was more profitable than the glass itself, John moved into period furniture, and in 1970 formed William Bedford plc. Operating from 15,000 square feet of the Merchants Hall in Essex Road, Islington, close to the Camden Passage Antiques Market, the business thrived and became one of the first antiques companies to be listed publicly on the London Stock Exchange. The original focus of John’s book collecting was English furniture pattern books, which he pursued with great energy and considerable resources before and after 1997, when he moved to a handsome house opposite the Maison de Victor Hugo in Rue Hauteville, St Peter Port, Guernsey (his business was finally wound up in 1999).

The bedrock of John Evan Bedford Library of Furniture History, as John named it, was formed by the pattern-books, a comprehensive collection including many rarities: its only rival is that in the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum. His holdings extended to nineteenth-century trade catalogues. But this was only the beginning. One supporting genre, which he called ‘cabinet-makers’ eccentric productions’, included W. Cauty, *Natura*,

Philosophia, & Ars in Concordia (London, 1772), and Sheraton, *Scriptural Subjection to Civil Government* (London, 1795). He also accumulated a considerable number of foreign pattern-books, including, for instance, a superb copy of La Mésangère's *Meubles et Objets de Goût*, complete in four volumes. He was also a voracious — and highly discriminating — purchaser of every kind of cabinet-makers' ephemera, trade cards, bill heads and accounts. Curiosities, such as an illustration of 'Mr Curtis's Acoustic Chair and Telescope Hearing-Trumpet' from the 1837 *Mechanics Magazine*, abound, and the collection also incorporates design drawings, including over a thousand for Edwards & Roberts. He also assembled a very large holding of trade directories.

At no point was the John Evan Bedford Library dormant. It was continually being developed and John made excellent digital images available to all who asked him, without payment, only asking that their provenance be acknowledged. He enjoyed answering enquiries and did so meticulously and at length, always in his clear handwriting. His only publication was a notice in *Regional Furniture* (15 (2002), 75–76) identifying a portrait in his possession as George Smith, the Regency furniture designer. But many authors benefited from his research. In Guernsey he was a generous and conversable host, who loved displaying his treasures to the cognoscenti. He was also a munificent donor to this Society, contributing £5,000 to the Fiftieth Anniversary Appeal, and he was one of the major sponsors of Susan Stuart's *Gillows of London and*

Lancaster (Woodbridge, 2008).

Where would the Library go? During his life John had explored several possible destinations, but less than a month before he died representatives from Leeds University came to inspect his library: they were impressed by what they saw and John was impressed by them. After his death there was understandable concern that this unique and irreplaceable ensemble might be broken up. Fortunately, his Trustees were determined that this should not happen and, with good will on all sides, the John Evan Bedford Library of Furniture History has found its permanent home in the Brotherton Library of Leeds University, where his estate has paid for cataloguing and digital projects and financed a John Bedford Room for reading and research, where it finds sympathetic company in the large collection of antique dealers' records being assembled under the aegis of Dr Mark Westgarth, and will be not far distant from the significant holdings of complementary material at Temple Newsam House, built up by the late Christopher Gilbert and his colleagues. This happy ending will ensure that John's great achievement will stand as his memorial and that, more importantly, it will serve as an inspiring research resource, as he would have wished.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

See 'Other Notices' for a paper on the project to catalogue the John Evan Bedford Library of Furniture History now in the Brotherton Library of Leeds University.

Future Society Events

Coronavirus Update

Sadly, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has affected many of our planned events and will continue to do so for the coming months. We are postponing many of our visits and holding others entirely online. At the time of going to press, the events advertised here are scheduled to take place. If any events need to be postponed, we will offer to those who have expressed interest, the option of a refund or the chance to re-book at a later date. Please also check the website for changes.

Bookings

For places on visits, please apply to the Events Secretary, Beatrice Goddard, providing either a separate cheque for each event or indicating that you wish to pay by card or online. For online payments, you will be provided with a link to a payment page and an event reference. Where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched by email, so please remember to provide your email address if you have one.

Applications should only be made by members who intend to take part in the whole programme. No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting

list, please 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 email events@furniturehistorysociety.org to apply for events or telephone 07775 907390.

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.

The visits to Wrest Park & Stores and Ampthill Park House are now fully subscribed. However, there are still spaces on the visit to Preston Manor and Royal Pavilion, Brighton. Unfortunately, both these visits had to be postponed, and new dates will be advised.

The Annual Lecture and Annual Symposium will be presented online this year, and the AGM will be held either online or in person with live streaming, to be confirmed. We will be sending all members emails with the links to follow in due course. For more details, please see below.

Meanwhile, we have arranged a series of free online Sunday evening lectures available to all during June and July, in collaboration with the BIFMO team, and plan to continue online lectures

as a regular feature of our events programme. The first lecture, by Dr Wolf Burchard, on 14 June, attracted an audience of 338 from around the world.

Visit to Goodwood House

GOODWOOD, CHICHESTER, WEST SUSSEX PO18 0PX

POSTPONED

Goodwood, one of England's finest sporting estates, lies at the foot of the South Downs. Its three façades with copper-domed turrets look out across a well-wooded park and it has been the seat of the Dukes of Richmond since the late seventeenth century. Originally a Jacobean hunting lodge with gabled wings, it was given a classical makeover when the 2nd



Tapestry Drawing Room, Goodwood House. Photograph James Fennell

Duke of Richmond employed the architect Roger Morris to remodel the great hall (now known as the Long Hall) in 1730. The house was then extended by Matthew Brettingham in the 1740s, who added the Palladian family wing. James Wyatt added a north wing in the 1770s, nearly all of which was demolished in the late 1960s, except for the Tapestry Drawing Room with its beautiful figural chimneypiece by John Bacon and set of Gobelins tapestries. Wyatt also added two new wings at the beginning of the nineteenth century, primarily to house the art collection from Richmond House, which had burnt down in 1791. The new wings include the Egyptian Dining Room, one of the first rooms in this country to embrace the fashionable Egyptian style. The Stable block was designed for the 3rd Duke of Richmond by Sir William Chambers. The house has a mixture of English and French furniture, including a set of seat furniture by Louis Delanois with its original Lyons silk cut-velvet upholstery. A highlight of our visit will be the Card Room, which contains the famous set of Sèvres porcelain commissioned by the 3rd Duke when he was ambassador in Paris.

The house was extensively redecorated in the 1990s under the direction of the current Duke of Richmond. The family wing, which is still occupied by the Duke and Duchess of Richmond, includes the Large and Small Libraries. The latter contains

Napoleon's campaign chair, given by the Duke of Wellington to the 4th Duke and Duchess of Richmond as a thank you for hosting the famous Duchess of Richmond's ball in Brussels just a few days before the Battle of Waterloo.

Our visit will be led by James Peill, Curator of the Goodwood Collection.

At the time of going to press this visit has been postponed.

The Forty-Fourth Annual Symposium

GEORGE IV — 1820 TO 2020:
FRESH PERSPECTIVES ON THE
KING'S FURNITURE

SATURDAY 3 AND SUNDAY 4
OCTOBER 2020

We now plan to hold this event as a two-day webinar. Please contact the Events Secretary for details. Existing ticket holders will automatically be refunded and information on the new online event provided.

Visit to Middle Temple

TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2020

2.00 PM–4.00 PM

Middle Temple, one of the four Inns of Court, is located at the western border of the City of London. At its heart is the great Elizabethan Hall, a survivor of both the Great Fire and the Blitz. Its most spectacular feature is the double hammerbeam roof in the Perpendicular tradition, and the 1570s screen, which



West end of Middle Temple Hall

was reconstructed after enemy action blew out the east gable in 1941. The elaborately carved doors, reminiscent of Ham House, are a century later. The walls are lined with the coats of arms of the successive Master Readers of the Inn starting in 1597. The stained glass windows display the coats of arms of distinguished members, including Walter Raleigh and two Princes of Wales. The first recorded performance of *Twelfth Night* took place here in 1602, thus making it the last surviving venue of a Shakespeare 'first night'. The high table, at 29 feet 4 inches, is the longest table made from a single oak, the tree being floated down the Thames from Windsor Great Park, as a gift from Elizabeth I.

The Hall and adjoining Bench apartments contain an eclectic collection of furniture — chairs, side tables, clocks — which have accrued to the Inn over the centuries, often in historicist styles. Meals are still taken daily on the 1720 dining tables and new barristers sign the register on the hatch cover of Sir Francis Drake's *Golden Hind*. A previous FHS visit stimulated useful conversations about attributions.

COST: £25

LIMIT: 20

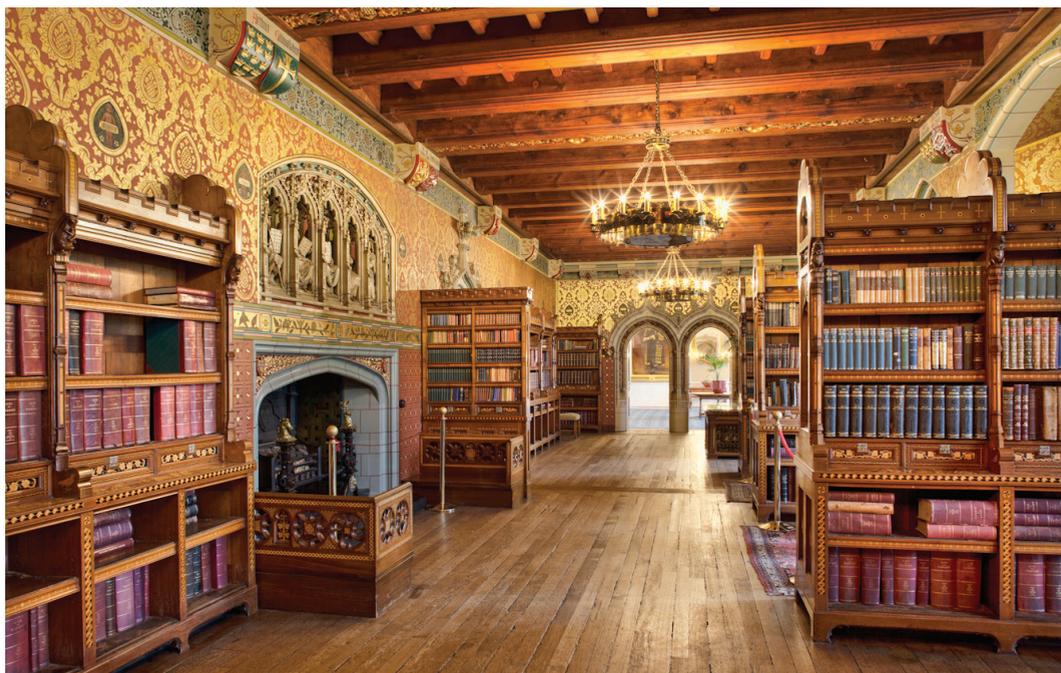
CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2020

Autumn Study Trip to Cardiff

This two-night, three-day Study Trip will focus on William Burges and on Welsh furniture. Our visits include Cardiff Castle, remodelled in a spectacular Victorian Gothic style by William Burges for the 3rd Marquess of Bute, and Lord Bute's country retreat Castell Coch, where Burges created a Victorian dream of the Middle Ages. We are fortunate that Matthew Williams, former curator at Cardiff Castle, will speak to our group.

We will visit the nearby St Fagans National Museum of History, an open-air museum of buildings from across Wales, and winner of the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2019. After an introduction by the furniture curator, we will tour the site, which includes farmhouses furnished with vernacular Welsh furniture, industrial ironworkers' cottages, a school and many others. We will also visit the Museum's recently opened and excellent galleries of Welsh furniture and crafts.

Other visits will include Tredegar House, one of the most significant late seventeenth-century houses in Britain, with its magnificent state rooms, and the small but important group of furniture commissioned by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn held by the National Museum of Wales.



The Library at Cardiff Castle

This Study Trip is led by Kate Hay, V&A Department of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion and FHS Events Committee Co-chair.

N.B. The whole weekend will be strenuous, including many steep and narrow spiral staircases, and long distances to cover on foot at St Fagans.

Please contact the Events Secretary for further details and an application form.

At the time of going to press we have decided to postpone this Study Trip to 2021, however please contact the Events Secretary if you wish to express interest and for further details including new dates.

Annual Lecture — to be held via Zoom

THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER 2020

6.00 PM TBC

We are delighted to welcome Bertrand de Royere, who will speak on Pelagio Palagi, decorator of the royal palaces of Turin and Piedmont.

Following Pierre Arizzoli-Clémentel's publication on the Napoleonic decorations of the Palazzo del Quirinale, Rome, and Hugh Roberts's description of George IV's private apartments in Windsor Castle, Bertrand de Royere has studied the decorative schemes commissioned by Charles Albert, King of Sardinia (r. 1831–49) for his three main residences in Piedmont: Palazzo Reale, Turin, the Castello di Racconigi and the Castello di Pollenzo. Pelagio Palagi (Bologna 1775–Turin 1860), already well established in Milan as a history painter



Pelagio Palagi (design), Benedetto Cacciatori (cast), Lerolle (bronzes), Manfredini (gilt), Console table, 1834, Castello di Racconigi, Piedmont

and portraitist, was appointed by the young King in 1832 as designer and impresario of the palace decorations.

Royere based his research on the Palace archives in Turin, on Palagi's correspondence and drawings which were bequeathed to the *Archiginnasio Comunale* in Bologna, and on the surviving decorations and furniture made by highly talented craftsmen in Turin, Genoa, Milan and Paris, such as the cabinet-makers Gabriele Capello and Henry Peters (a native of Windsor), the bronze-makers Colla e Odetti in Turin and Lerolle in Paris, and the silversmith Charles Nicolas Odiot.

Palagi's decorations range from the Gothic to the Etruscan and the

neo-classical, in an interesting mixture of styles typical of the 1830s and 1840s. His style is often a tribute to the interior decoration of Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, but also to the eclectic models of Claude Aimé Chenavard and his *Nouveau Recueil* (1833–35) and to the highly talented Venetian Giuseppe Borsato (1770–1849), not to mention the *scuola d'ornato* (ornate school) from Brera, in Milan.

Royere's lecture will provide an opportunity to study the plethora of Palagi's designs for furniture, juxtaposed with pictures of the furniture itself. The designs were in competition with the latest Paris fashions and in some cases influenced French models, as seems to have been the case with the cabinet-maker Jeanselme.

Bertrand de Royere published his research in *Pelagio Palagi, Décorateur des palais royaux de Turin et du Piémont* (1832–1866) (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2017), 400 pp.

This will now be an online event. Please express interest by contacting the Events Secretary.

Annual General Meeting and Works in Progress

SATURDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2020

11.00 AM–1.00 PM

The Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2020 will be held at 11.00 am on Saturday 28 November 2020 either virtually, or physically in London. Further information will be sent to members in due course.

Talks will include Helen Jacobsen, Senior Curator and Curator of French Eighteenth-Century Decorative Arts at the Wallace Collection, on her current project on Jean-Henri Riesener, court cabinet-maker to Louis XVI. Final details on the meeting and other accompanying talks will be published in the November *Newsletter* and on the FHS website.

An Apologia

At a time when the Society's Events are in limbo, thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, it seems opportune to recall happier times and to inject a note of frivolity: 'dulce est desipere in loco' (Horace). So, with the Editor's imprimatur, there follows some doggerel written towards the end of the Society's visit to Paris in April 1986 (the footnotes and the *Author's Note* were also composed at that time). To provide extra context, the visit was organized jointly by Geoffrey de Bellaigue, Surveyor of the Queen's Works of Art, shortly to be knighted, and Gillian Wilson, Curator of Decorative Art at the J. Paul Getty Museum, both alas now dead. The many highlights included visits to the Hôtel Lambert, where the Baron de Redé dispensed Dom Perignon; to the Château de Groussay, before the dispersal of the interiors created by Charles de Beistegui; and to the Château de Courances, the seat of the Marquis de Ganay, with its enchantingly watery gardens.

The excursion on a *Bateau Mouche* preceding the delivery of the verses below had its awkward aspect: the Society's guests were M. and Mme

Pierre Verlet, he the very conventional and elderly doyen of French furniture studies, dressed in the soberest of black suits, and she an equivalently staid presence. An indifferent meal was perhaps to be expected, but deafening pop music and dancing in the aisles were not. Suffice it to say that sang-froid prevailed, and the social niceties were preserved. This episode apart, the 1986 Paris visit was a triumph, rich, varied and convivial. After thirty-four years the significance of various facetious allusions in the following is obscure, but perhaps they meant something at the time.

Ave Maria

Bring Me a Muse of Wood, a Reed with Ormolu Tip't.
Of S——g's¹ Praise I Sing, whose Gilding's Never Strip't.
Garde-Meuble of All the Virtues She Opens ev'ry Door,
Where there's Riesener beyond Reason, too Much Thomire and More,
Where All the Cs are Crownéd, and each *Chenet* bears a Date,
Where All the *Champagne's* Perignon, and the bus is Never Late.

Her Hotels are *Particulier*, tho' the Beds are Sometimes Short.
Her Planning's *Impeccable*, tho' the Timing can Be Fraught.
French-Polish'd are Her Programme Notes, of Erudition Full,
They've Taken Us to Oeben, To Montigny and Boule,
To This Commode and That One: *Style* Eriksen, What Date?
G——n² Wants It for the Getty, and the Bus is Never Late.

When M—y *Donne une Réception* our Appetite's Unjaded,
She's Dress'd in *Bois de Violet*, Her Marquetry's Unfaded.
And F——o's³ Spreading *Scandale*; that's

the Fifteenth Hand He's Kiss'd.
 'Si, E Vero : Dans un Lit Bateau wiz a
 Menuisier Ébéniste'.
 And R——r⁴ Fondles a Sèvres *Soucoupe*: of
 his Eye it the Apple is.
 'Too Dreadful': Deaccessioned by Boston
 it's reserved for Minneapolis.⁵
 And G——e⁶ is Signing Another Book,
 Most Likely a Duplicate,
 And J——n's⁷ Wearing A Comic Mask. My
 God, the Bus is Late.

Striding Rainswept Round each *Parterre*
 it's M——y who Leads our Ranks,
 While G——y de B——e⁸ Distills one
 more Elegant Vote of Thanks.
 J——n H——y's⁹ Crack'd the Garden Code
 — Arcadia and Bacchus.
 He's spotted Flora in the Hall; his
 Deconstructions Rack Us.
 But D——y,¹⁰ Escap'd to a Bar in the *Place*,
 is Deeply Immers'd in Gibbon.
 Discreet, Sardonic, Not a Hair out of Line:
 Surely He Hasn't a Wig on?
 And C——n's¹¹ Discovered, *Was für ein*
Rärität!,
 A *Biedermeier Lieu Anglais*. That Bus is
 Really Late.

Mais, Courage Mes Braves, our *Chair's* not
Triste,
 We've Found the Best Accompanist.
 Let Trumpets Sound Her Celebration!
 Let's Make a Stop to this Oration!
 Let's Firmly *Estampille* Her Worth!
 Let's Finish ere This Verse gets Worse!
Enfin, I'm Proud to ask You, on this
 Memorable Scene,
 To Raise Each Glass and Toast Our S——g
 Leaderene!

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

- 1 Mistress Mary Stirling, *Cicerone, Philosophe,*
and Friend.
- 2 Miss Gillian Wilson, '*La Piranha di Malibu*'.
- 3 Signor Fausto Calderai, a Florentine
Gentleman, Sometimes a Waiter.
- 4 Meinheer Reinier Baarsen, a Dutch Toy-Man
in the Royal Cabinet in Amsterdam.
- 5 Masters Jeffry Munger and Michael Conforti,
two Art Collectors from the Former American
Colonies.
- 6 Master Gervase Jackson-Stops, A Scribbler,
long in Washington, Now Serving the
Nation's Trust.
- 7 Master Jonathan Bourne, one of Messrs.
Sotheby's Auction-Men.
- 8 The Queen's China- and Cabinet-Man,
Geoffrey de Bellaigue Esquire.
- 9 Master John Hardy, a Flower- and Cabinet-
Man, Often at the Banker's House by Osterley.
- 10 Master Dudley Dodd, a Servant to the
Nation's Trust.
- 11 Herr Christian Witt-Doerring, A Cabinet-Man
from Vienna, Now Resident at Chicago in the
Former American Colonies.

(*Author's Note*: This was composed in
haste on the evening of 24 April 1986, and
delivered in a bus in the *Bateau Mouche*
'parking lot' on the evening of 26 April 1986.
Uncorrected and unpolished, it displays
the usual features of such *vers de société*,
bad scansion, false rhymes and gratuitous
personal insults. *Mea culpa!*)

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.

St Thomas's Salisbury Nave Altar

Matthew Burt writes about the design of St Thomas's Salisbury nave altar, made in his workshop in Hindon, Wiltshire.

The church is a summation of the care and contribution of each generation, a

manifestation of centuries of love and care. I was keen to reflect that love and support by contributing our times in an unashamed but not confrontational way. The concept of the altar is very simple. All things spring from one source. The design is a metaphor for that straightforward premise. The altar emanates from an explosive centre, directly beneath the dais that supports it. From this notional centre, expanding upwards and outwards, seemingly spring 1,152 pieces of English oak, which I refer to as 'staves'. The staves emerge from the dais as the base of the altar, in the form of a rectangle of only 480 × 240 millimetres, each visible stave being 10 mm wide at this point, 48 front and back and 24 on each side. They continue to expand upwards and outwards, reaching towards the altar's surface until each is 40 mm wide/square. Here they culminate as the altar's surface. Each stave represents the individuals of the church, springing from one source culminating into a cohesive whole. The altar's surface, consisting of 1,152 40 × 40 mm squares, is made from the polished end-grain of the expanding staves. End-grain looks into the tree's growth, the annular rings. It is like looking into time, a narrative of the tree's life, showing the lean, the good and the indifferent years, each one manifesting its individual story; the myriad of experience that makes up the people of the church



represented by the end-grain picture of their lives led. The staves are made from English 'Tiger' oak, the roots of which have been colonized by *Fistulina hepatica*, the beefsteak fungus. The oak's timbers, which are rich in a natural preservative, called tannin, react with the colonizing fungus in the form of streaks of darker colour, running through an otherwise pale grain, creating a rare and maverick tree. I enjoy mavericks. The floor beneath the altar consists of radiating boards in natural coloured English oak, expanding away from a rectangle of polished copper that the altar sits upon. Light is directed at this copper to reflectively illuminate the altar's staves in a warm golden hue.

For further information, see: www.stthomassalisbury.co.uk/whats-on/nave-refurbishment

Cataloguing the John Evan Bedford Library of Furniture History

The John Evan Bedford Library of Furniture History covers all aspects of the English home, from interiors and furnishings to lighting and metalwork, drapery and upholstery to architecture and garden design. The books, which also touch on household life and management, date from the seventeenth century onwards. They comprise over 3,000 printed items, many of them extremely rare and in several cases unique. The manuscripts include furniture pattern books, ornamental designs and inventories of country houses. The archive is rich in ephemera

including trade cards, labels and pamphlets, many unknown.

The John Victor Bedford Will Trust is funding a cataloguing project to make the collection fully searchable and accessible to researchers. We have appointed a team of four staff to catalogue the books, manuscripts, artworks and ephemera, and work on the project started in March this year.

Significant items include *The ladies amusement, or, Whole art of japanning made easy*, by Jean Pillement and other masters. This is the second, enlarged edition, published in c. 1762, and is the only known complete and coloured copy in existence, containing upwards of 1,500 drawings and designs.

Another important item is *A description of the villa of Mr Horace Walpole [...] at Strawberry-Hill* (1784). This is Horace Walpole's own copy, left in his will to Paul Sandby, the English map-maker turned watercolourist, who has painted his own bookplate.

The rare British and Continental furniture pattern books include around thirty unique copies. Fifty-three plates, twenty-three taken from the first edition of Thomas Sheraton's *The cabinet-maker and upholsterer's drawing-book* (1791) and thirty from the first edition of *An appendix* (1793) to the same are bound together in a contemporary half red leather binding with marbled paper over boards. According to the book label on the front pastedown, it was owned by James Newton (1760–1829), 'upholsterer, cabinet-maker, appraiser and undertaker', who traded independently from 63 Wardour Street, Soho from 1789.



The ladies amusement

Thomas Sheraton (1751–1806), based at 106 and also 98 Wardour Street during the 1790s, was his neighbour. There is also a copy of the extremely rare German edition of Sheraton’s drawing book (*Modell- und Zeichnungsbuch für Ebenisten, Tischler, Tapezirer, und Stuhlmacher*), printed in Leipzig in 1794 by Gerhard Fleischer the Younger, bound in two volumes and still in its original boards, as well as the English 1793 edition published in three parts.

The Bedford collection is rich in British and Belgian trade cards and ephemera, with other examples from as far afield as America, France, Germany, Holland and Japan. Prior to the introduction of street numbers in the 1760s, they also served as an important means of direction to a



Sheraton’s alcove bed

business location. Trade cards are one of the earliest examples of commercial advertising. The beautiful Belgian trade cards in the collection document Belgium's abundance of nineteenth-century furniture-makers, traders and auctioneers in bright colours and gold leaf. Traditional lithographic trade cards exist alongside 'cartes porcelaine', made using an iridescent printing technique which changes the colour of the card when the holder angles them. Several examples are by the notable printer Edouard Alexis Daveluy (1812–94) who created cards for many chair manufacturers and cabinet-makers in Ghent and Bruges, many bearing the legend 'Lithographeur to the King'. Well

known for the manufacture of playing cards for which he held a patent, he exhibited in Paris at the Universal Exhibitions of 1855, 1867 and 1878.

From wire-workers and brass-founders to ormolu-makers and silversmiths, trades associated with metalwork are also well represented, with a geographical focus on Birmingham and London. One such company is that of R. W. Winfield (1800–69), the eminent Birmingham brass manufacturer whose patented artistic metalwork was presented at the 1851 and 1862 Exhibitions with huge success. Best known for metal bedframes and military furniture, illustrations of metal furniture are delicately engraved on his trade card.



Lacourt trade card

The gift also includes a portrait by T. Bradley, acquired in 1996 from the antique furniture dealer, Andrew Jenkins. John Bedford identified the sitter as George Smith (1786–1826), the illustrious contemporary of Thomas Chippendale the Younger, publishing his findings in *Regional Furniture*, xv (2001). These were based on Smith's *Cabinet maker & upholsterer's guide* (1826), also present in the collection.

We aim to make the John Evan Bedford Library of Furniture History fully accessible to researchers within two years and look forward to sharing our latest findings as work progresses.

ROSIE DYSON, *Collections Officer*

DR RACHEL ECKERSLEY,
Rare Book Specialist

RHIANNON LAWRENCE-FRANCIS,
Collections and Engagement Manager
(*Rare Books and Maps*) *Special Collections,*
Leeds University Library

For further information on the life of John Bedford, see the Tribute at the beginning of this *Newsletter*.

Job vacancy: Head of Historic Carving Department, City and Guilds Art School

Following the retirement of Master Carver Tim Crawley, the Art School is seeking to appoint a new Head of Department to work with the exceptional team of specialist practitioners who teach on the carving courses. For further details about the role and how to apply, see: www.cityandguildsartschool.ac.uk/job-vacancy-head-of-historic-carving-department/

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).

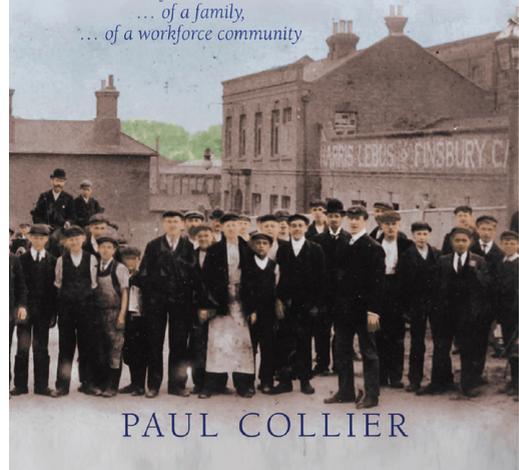
PAUL COLLIER, *Harris Lebus, A Romance with the Furniture Trade* (Faringdon: Green Frigate Books, Libri Publishing, 2019). 234 pp., 233 illus. ISBN 978-1-911451-06-8. £19.99

The first illustration in this book is an advertisement from *The Cabinet Maker Furniture Guide, 1949* with 'LEBUS' across a globe supporting the slogan 'The Largest Furniture Factory in the World'. Paul Collier became interested when in 2007 he moved to the Ferry Lane Estate in Tottenham, to a property on the site of the Lebus veneer shop. He traces the venture from its founder, Harris Lebus (1852–1907), the son of an immigrant cabinet-maker who moved from Hull to Whitechapel in about 1855. Harris established an enlarged and ever-expanding business at Tabernacle Street, Finsbury, in 1885, before purchasing a 13.5 acre site at Tottenham Hale in 1900; this had grown by 1955 to 45 acres (their procurement a saga in itself). Harris Lebus took his brother, Sol (1866–1926) into partnership in 1892, but his sons, Louis (1883–1974) and Herman (1884–1957) oversaw the firm's progress, the former retiring

A Romance with the Furniture Trade

HARRIS LEBUS

the story of a life ...
... of a business,
... of a family,
... of a workforce community



in 1947, the latter, who was knighted, dying in harness. Sir Herman was briefly succeeded as Chairman by Sir Lawrence Wilkinson, but in 1961 his second son, Oliver Lebus (1918–2009) took over. Within a decade profits fell and in 1970 Lebus closed down. The name survives in Lebus Upholstery, with a factory in Scunthorpe.

Collier's book, not always easy to navigate, lacking an index, incorporates a mass of information, enlivened by a kaleidoscope of images from furniture catalogue plates to lorries and trailers (barges and railways

also crop up) and many images of workshops and machinery. Numerous themes are addressed. The account of design includes an episode when Jack Pritchard, appointed a director in 1948, resigned when simple designs by Dick Russell were rejected by the sales force, despite approval in an opinion survey. Multiple aspects of materials and production are discussed from carving to spray painting, taking in Lebus's part in aircraft production in both World Wars: Handley Page bombers and the Vickers Vimy in the First and the Horsa glider and the De Havilland Mosquito in the Second, when landing craft were also produced. Then the workforce approached 6,000 and it was still over 3,000 in the mid-1960s, before major redundancies signalled the end, when a thousand jobs went.

The role of the Lebus dynasty is chronicled, including charitable works: Harris Lebus was a founder of the Furniture Trades Benevolent Association in 1903, Sir Herman Lebus helped found the Furniture Makers' Guild in 1952, serving as its Master, while his sons, Anthony and Oliver, were Masters of its successor, the Worshipful Company, recognized in 1963. But *Harris Lebus* is not top-down history. Using a multiplicity of sources, including oral recordings, it evokes the experiences and feelings of workers at many levels, covering topics from unionization, pay and training to health, catering and celebrations. No academic tome, it is nonetheless a revealing panorama of the Lebus phenomenon, and a tribute to Collier's enthusiasm and energy. In 1907

the young Herman and Louis Lebus visited the furniture factories of Grand Rapids, Michigan. They went to learn, but in terms of scale and efficiency the Lebus enterprise was already at least an equal. Its trajectory to global primacy — in scale — and to dissolution is a significant episode in British furniture history.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

SARAH INGLE, *William Ince — Cabinet Maker 1737–1804*, 2nd edn (2020). 176 pp. with illustrations by Derry Mountford and Jennifer Evans. ISBN 978-1-9163387-0-8

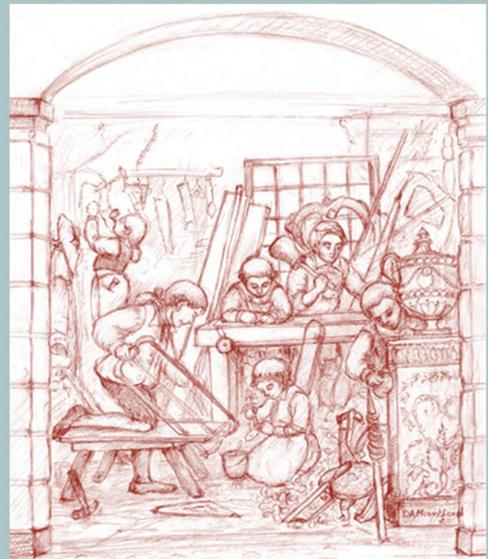
This is a welcome second edition of a monograph first published by Sarah Ingle in 2016 — at that time with a

WILLIAM INCE - CABINET MAKER

1737-1804

Sarah Ingle

SECOND
EDITION



Foreword by Sir Hugh Roberts

Second Edition Foreword by Lemnox Cato

foreword by Sir Hugh Roberts, Surveyor Emeritus of the Queen's Works of Art, and this time by Lennox Cato, Antiques Roadshow Furniture Specialist. The new volume is expanded to include more information and images of the furniture produced by William Ince and his partner John Mayhew during their long and distinguished partnership between 1758 and 1800, which sadly ended in acrimonious lawsuits after Ince's death in 1804. In addition, Ingle has added a full chapter on John Mayhew (1736–1811) and his descendants, and more information on the lively careers of Ince's descendants in America, India and South Africa as well as at home in their native Worcestershire during the nineteenth century.

Sarah Ingle's book is of interest to the furniture historian as well as the social historian, for she traces the lives of many members of the Ince family from the early sixteenth century in Elmley Lovett, near Kidderminster in Worcestershire, when the production of woollen cloth was the chief economic activity, to the famous cabinet-maker's father working as a glass grinder, his move to London and his young son's apprenticeship to John West in King Street, Covent Garden in 1752. Throughout, Ingle paints a convincing picture of the economic and social background for the family making its way from relative provincial obscurity to William Ince's pre-eminence in Britain's furniture industry in London's fashionable West End in the 1760s to the 1790s, yet still retaining their dissenting beliefs through attendance at the Whitfield Memorial Chapel rather

than St James's Piccadilly, and their links with clients through Freemasonry. She also contrasts the Ince family's modesty with the more socially assured, wealthy John Mayhew who financed the furniture business. Ingle draws on all the most recent published material relating to Mayhew and Ince's furniture, with useful photographs and a helpful list of the exotic woods they used in their finest pieces.

This volume serves as a reminder to all furniture historians to 'dig deep' into parish records, marriage bonds, wills, deeds and indentures, a practice which is well practised by our worthy scholars and researchers hard at work on BIFMO, and keeps the flame burning for Ince and Mayhew (or Mayhew and Ince? — Ingle discusses the point) until the publication of Sir Hugh Roberts and Charles Cator's long-awaited magisterial work on the partnership, due for publication in 2022.

LISA WHITE

Publications Received

REINIER BAARSEN (ed.), 'Drawings for European Decorative Arts', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin*, 68.2 (2020). ISBN 978-94-92660-19-0. €30

In July 2018, members of the Society, on a visit to Amsterdam to visit the 'Kwab' exhibition, were shown a group of furniture drawings recently acquired by the Rijksmuseum. Many of these are illustrated, with a scholarly commentary, in this issue of the Rijksmuseum's quarterly journal, which also contains

two further articles of interest to furniture historians.

Reinier Baarsen, 'Acquisitions: European Drawings for Domestic Furniture 1625–1810', pp. 166–69, 32 col. illus.

Katharina Schmidt-Loske and Kurt Wettengl, 'Framing the Frame: Frans Post's *View of Olinda, Brazil* (1662)', pp.100–25, 27 col. illus.

Achim Stiegel, 'Berlin Furniture Drawings by Carl Wilhelm Marckwort (1798–1875)', pp.126–45, 14 col., 2 b. & w. illus.

Furniture History Society members are offered a special discount on the price, reducing this to €24. To benefit go to www.rijksmuseum.nl, then to giftshop. The *Bulletin* will appear under boeken (books). Use the code 2020-2 to secure the discount.

GEORG LAUE (ed.), *Der Madrider Kabinettschrank/The Madrid Cabinet* (Munich: Kunstammer Georg Laue). 152 pp., 116 illus. ISBN 978-3-00-060237-5

The English subtitle, 'Renaissance Furniture from Augsburg for the Spanish Court', gives the context for this lavish account of a cabinet attributed to Bartholomeus Weisshaupt, described and analysed in an extensive essay by Dr Virginie Spenlé; a rich documentary appendix by Almudena Pérez de Tudela runs from 1551 to 1604 and includes reproductions of three for the most part easily legible documents of 1565, 1568 (?) and 1576.

Early Career Development Group

As part of its core aims, the Furniture History Society created an 'Early Career Development' (ECD) group to focus on younger members and emerging scholars, with a view to encouraging their interest in furniture studies and a deeper understanding of the object as well as providing a networking forum. ECD events focus on three main activities: evening visits and lectures, research conferences and curatorial visits to the European Art Fair at Maastricht ('TEFAF'). There is no charge for participation in the ECD group, but attendees must be members of the Society.

ECD News

Due to the necessary cancellation due to Covid-19 of Beyond Wood, the spring programme of workshops on furniture techniques, the Early Career Development Group has found new ways to meet and learn. Over the summer months, members have been engaged in an exciting and enterprising series of online Research Forums. Organized by Adriana Turpin, Chairman of the FHS Grants Committee, the aim

Display cabinet by Holland & Sons, 1864, Amboyna, mahogany, giltwood and glass, 292.0 × 247.0 × 78.8 cm (whole object). RCIN 55159. Royal Collection Trust / © HM Queen Elizabeth II 2020

of the programme has been to offer ECD members the opportunity to present and share their research interests with one another. At each forum, presentations featuring current research by members of the ECD group were followed by a question and answer session led by a respondent invited to lead the discussion.

We are looking forward to resuming the workshop programme, Beyond Wood, when once again we can safely gather at the Art Workers' Guild. In the meantime, these online sessions have been a splendid way to network with the core ECD group as well as reach international members. The success of the online programme during the past summer has resulted in plans to continue with a variety of online events in the autumn.

Anyone interested in joining these sessions should apply to Charlotte Johnson, coordinator of ECD events: ecdvisits@furniturehistorysociety.org



Reports on Society Events

Members will have noticed that the *Newsletter* includes many more photographs than before. The Editor would be grateful if members could send as separate files **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

Study Trip to the South Hams in Devon

FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER–SUNDAY 13 OCTOBER 2019

Antony

We began our West Country visit in grand style at Antony, welcomed by our host, Sir Richard Carew-Pole, to whom, together with Catherine Peck, ever-ready with the inventory, and Clare Dearden, we owe lavish thanks for their insights. We were also armed with a draft synopsis by Christopher Rowell of the necessarily time-constrained National Trust furniture catalogue.

We viewed Repton's *Red Book* in the Tearoom, then, in the Hall, the first of a remarkable series of family portraits in excellent frames of various periods, including an English antiquarian giltwood rarity of 1725–50, around a portrait of Lord Keeper Coventry by

Cornelius Johnson.

We honed in on a large oak chest said to have been made in Rouen, Normandy, in the early sixteenth century, but with the added interest of English 'romantic' alterations, probably carried out in about 1825–35, when it is possible that the whole chest was reduced in size and its decoration embellished.

More straightforward were a large pair of oak chairs with over-generous carved backs, entirely romantic, resembling a pair supplied by Samuel Luke Pratt for Gawthorpe Hall, Lancashire. Thus stimulated, into the Library, formerly two rooms and pine-panelled, where we saw an oval George II gateleg table distinguished by size, colour and surface. The mahogany seat furniture (of three single chairs and an armchair) was quietly distinguished by oval headed beading.

The Tapestry Room was filled with fine things: two walnut marble-topped side tables, English, early eighteenth-century, probably both by the same maker, with feather-crowned masks on the legs and leafy pad feet. They were uncommon and fine, but distinct from comparable work by John Channon. A small wood marquetry table, with a divided out-folding top, of the school of Gerrit Jensen, is similar to the Boulle examples in the Royal Collection or the Getty, and Sarah Medlam pointed out that the colour of the marquetry, when

unfaded, must have strengthened the similarity.

The Saloon, overseen by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, faced an elaborately marquetry fall-front secretaire, the interior remarkably unfaded. The gilded friezes of a pair of gesso side tables were in similarly untouched condition and had their original marble tops. Above hung a pair of tall pier glasses with quintuple bevelled borders and gilded crestings, again of about 1715.

Decanted into the Hall, we did not have time enough to attempt precision upon the oak and walnut side tables, the quirky cabriole legs of which featured in one of Nicholas Condry's interior views painted in 1825–50, but the tables were most probably made a century earlier. A tall-backed single chair seemed to have been made to fit a remarkably fresh tapestry cover of a parrot, with its tail piercing the oval frame.

The stairs are lighted top and bottom by two rare glass globes on brass arms, dating from the first half of the eighteenth century, and so precious that our host, as a child, was not allowed to play upon the stairs. On the landing is a piece of social history rather than a Kent table, redolent of late nineteenth-century transatlantic money, and equally interesting to furniture historians if it were to be so acknowledged. Nearby was a tall long-case clock, the hood of which had possibly Germanic-influenced marquetry, and which reminded Sarah Medlam of the work of John Kirkhoffer. The top passage and bedrooms were filled with fine eighteenth-century country house furniture.

Parish church of St Peter and St Paul, Ermington

At the parish church of St Peter and St Paul in Ermington we were met by the churchwarden, Peter Thurley, and by Dr Helen Wilson, a specialist on the woodcarver Violet Pinwill. Dr Wilson gave a fascinating talk about the woodcarvings, including those by Mary Rashleigh, Ethel and Violet Pinwill, the daughters of the Reverend Edmund Pinwill, who worked there and in Plymouth from about 1889. By the time Violet died in 1957, over 185 churches in Devon and Cornwall and several in other counties contained at least one item made by the Pinwill woodcarvers.



Dr Helen Wilson talking about the Pinwill Sisters, Ermington Church

Bowringsleigh, Kingsbridge

The owners, Michael and Nicky Manisty, members of the FHS, and their daughter

Victoria, welcomed the group and provided tea and a tour of the house. Bowringsleigh was acquired by William Ilbert in 1696 and since that date has been in continuous family ownership. The medieval house was modernized in the early eighteenth century, and the fine hall has a magnificent screen in the Mannerist style. The dining parlour has a moulded plasterwork ceiling with the Ilbert crest, probably dating from 1680. A serious fire in 1843 destroyed the east end of the house, and restoration was not undertaken until 1868. In the twentieth century, the house declined until the present family undertook the work of replacing the roof, providing central heating, plumbing and redecoration from 1984 onwards.

In the Hall and Dining Room there is a suite of six mahogany chairs and two settees supplied by Elizabeth Hutt and Son, with the original bill dated 1739 surviving at Bowringsleigh. Simon Jervis wrote about these pieces in *Furniture History*, xxix (1993). Also in the hall is an elaborate clock by Stumbles of Totnes, which came to the house when William Ilbert married Bridget Courtenay of Powderham Castle in 1735. There is a similar clock at Powderham. Much of the furniture in the house has been acquired by the family since 1984. In the library there is a three-legged mahogany 'Manx' table, the legs having shoes and stockings with a shaped calf.

Dartington Hall and lecture

The manor of Dartington, mentioned in a Royal Charter of 833, has been owned through the centuries by the Fitz Martins

and Holland families, two of Henry VIII's wives: Catherines Howard and Parr, and the Champernownes family, for nearly four hundred years. At the beginning of the twentieth century, much of the land was sold, and in 1925 Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst bought the remaining 800 acres and ruined hall, as the basis of their joint venture in rural regeneration and the arts.

Mary Bartlett gave us a fascinating talk on the history of Dartington and her own life there. She came to Dartington in 1963 as a horticultural student, and after her training was responsible for the glasshouses, nursery and walled garden. She is now the tutor in bookbinding in the Craft Education department.

Bradley Manor

We were greeted by Alexandra Woolner and her brother Peter, whose mother Diana Woolner FSA had given the Manor to the National Trust in 1938. Alexandra explained that the building had thirteenth-century origins. After the renowned Egyptologist Cecil Mallaby Firth bought Bradley Manor in 1909, he and his wife Freda Hansard, a fellow archaeologist, stripped away nineteenth-century Gothic Revival additions and exposed superb Tudor wall paintings and stencilled decoration in an upper chamber, and a section of a fine oak screen carved with 'Romaine' work of 1534 and the royal arms of King Henry VIII in the Great Hall, which are the glory of this lovely manor house. They furnished the house with a collection of furniture of many periods.

The entrance hall, which still retains

Bradley Manor



its lime ash floor, has a collection of Welsh oak furniture, amongst which is a much-admired cupboard of c. 1800 and a very plain 'hutch' or food cupboard, said to have been acquired in Kent. In the old Kitchen, now the Dining Room, stands a magnificent burr-elm secretaire designed by Ernest Gimson, commissioned by the Firths on their marriage in 1906. There is also a very simple oak chest of drawers, and a set of 'Clisset' ladderback chairs by Gimson.

Elsewhere in the house, there is an interesting early eighteenth-century long-case clock by Davie Steward of Newport with owls depicted in its marquetry-panelled door, two pencil portraits by Edward Burne Jones and a beautiful oil portrait of 1864 by Arthur Hughes of Alice Gertrude Waugh, the wife of the sculptor Thomas Woolner, together with its travelling case, as she always took the picture with her when visiting!

We enjoyed coffee and delicious home-made cakes to round off our memorable visit to a captivating and little-known house. Our thanks to Alexandra and Peter Woolner and to Elaine Ward and Alison Cooper, National Trust curators in the region.

Devon Marble Gallery, Torquay Museum

We paid a short visit to Torquay Museum to see its small but engaging display about the Devon marble industry. The trade boomed and declined within the nineteenth century, at the same time as its Derbyshire rival. The gallery is based on the ground-breaking research carried out by the geologist Gordon Walkden, who published the first book on the subject in 2015.

The production of specimen marble tables and small decorative items was a side-line to the principal trade in building stones, possibly helping



Display case,
Torquay

to advertise the variety of stones available. Devon limestones in bright tones of red, orange and green were sought after for the polychrome interiors of late nineteenth-century churches and official buildings across the country.

As in Derbyshire, Torquay makers produced a range of souvenir ware of dubious aesthetic merit. Most Devon items were simply inlaid with scrap-work, a few having small sprays of jasmine. These were almost all made by the two principle makers: Blacklers of Dawlish and Grants of Torquay. Among the items on display were candlesticks, ink bottles and thermometers, many inlaid with imported malachite, a speciality of Harry Grant & Sons. The display includes a small platter inlaid with a bird, originally supplied to Queen Victoria by John Woodley, one of the major Torquay makers, and a case of Devon marble brooches, mostly round or oval with geometric patterns in contrasting stones.

Ashcombe Tower

Ashcombe Tower stands on the hills above Dawlish commanding striking views of the English Channel. Our host, Ralph Rayner, explained that the house was built in the 1930s by Brigadier Sir Ralph Rayner MP and his wife Elizabeth (née Courtauld), around a tower built in 1832. The architect Brian O'Rorke was a bold choice, already well known as a 'modernist', and for his enthusiasm for designs for interiors on Orient Line ships, showing a lightness and attention to detail.

The established American designer Marion Dorn provided the inspiring textile designs, which today still add to the strong, integrated 1930s look, recalling those described by Osbert Lancaster as 'Vogue Regency'.

The Dining Room retains its original furniture: a burr-ash extending dining table, a set of high-backed chairs re-upholstered in red leather and a sideboard set within a mirrored alcove. The Drawing Room is painted in light colours and lit by large windows hung with copies of

Marion Dorn's original curtains. The three period carpets with abstract patterns are original to the 1930s house.

Sir Ralph Rayner's study, with walls clad in ash and walnut, has a desk placed to view panoramic views across Lyme Bay. The openness of the hall is a striking contrast, with circular alcove lighting used to great effect, a large mirror opposite the stairs reflecting the chrome ball finial on the newel post and 'ocean liner' lattice stair balusters.

The first-floor bedrooms and bathrooms are characteristically well fitted in ship-shape style. Attention to detail included engraved initial letters 'RR' (Ralph Rayner) on the door escutcheons.

Many thanks to our hosts and guides Ralph and Eleanor, who also provided us with an excellent traditional Devonshire cream tea. Society members felt Ashcombe Tower still retains its integrity thanks to the Rayner family and especially to our hosts.

Saltram Study Day

The weekend's events concluded with a visit to Saltram, one of Devon's largest and most celebrated houses. Together with the team of dedicated house staff and the expertise of Sarah Medlam, we were also guided by the National Trust's Assistant Furniture Curator, Dr Megan Wheeler, who had researched the collections as part of the Trust's Cataloguing Project.

Between 1743 and 1749, John Parker set about transforming an ageing Tudor manor into a fashionable Palladian country residence. Most famous are the

neo-classical interiors designed thirty years later by Robert Adam under Parker's son, Lord Boringdon. His son in turn, titled Lord Morley from 1815, created a smart Regency library. In 1951 Saltram and its contents were accepted by the Nation in lieu of death duties and transferred to the National Trust six years later. Its collection, accrued over generations, presents a rich and fascinating history.

In the Entrance Hall are set of hall chairs in *sgabello* form, the backs painted with the coat of arms of the Earl of Morley. The consensus was that the suite was probably contemporary with the furnishing of the house in the 1750s and the rather crudely painted arms added later. Two mahogany side tables of c. 1735 with similar carved decoration were a timely reminder of our education in Devon marbles at Torquay Museum, the marble slabs being formed of 'white veined Plymouth marble'. Indeed, the use of both local and foreign marbles is a recurring theme in the house in furniture, fireplaces and flooring.

Chippendale collaborated with Adam to create some of the most harmonious interiors at Saltram. Lord Boringdon's account book records five payments to Chippendale but remains silent on the details, leaving us to judge which are his pieces. In the Morning Room a pair of cabinets-on-stands betray several 'Chippendale traits', but have clearly undergone some alteration.

In the Saloon, Adam's highpoint at Saltram, the suite of giltwood seat furniture is attributed to Thomas Chippendale on the basis of similar

documented suites at Harewood. Two pier tables are surely an Adam conception, and made by Joseph Perfetti, who was paid £41 1s in 1771 'for Tables Frames for the Great Room Saloon'.

In the Dining Room, we saw a pair of painted pedestals, for which Adam's designs are in the Sir John Soane's Museum. The sideboard itself, occupying the curved niche, although lacking a design is also almost certainly to Adam's design. The mahogany furniture — the suite of exceptionally well-made dining chairs and the wine cooler — betray hints of the Chippendale workshop.

A Regency games table in the Library, with a backgammon board bearing the label of John McLean, sparked discussion about the abundance of labelled furniture at Saltram, including a *secrétaire*-bookcase by Henry Kettle, and a Regency drum table by McLean, which suggested that they were acquired later by an enthusiast keen on documented pieces. Unmissable in the Library was the magnificent Boulle marquetry bureau of c. 1700 by 'the Master of the Prince Elector's Desk', an account of which was charted by Christopher Rowell in 2011 in *Furniture History*.

In the bedrooms and dressing rooms upstairs, highlights included a late eighteenth-century French fall-front desk by Maurice-Bernard Evald, and a set of Chinese export Padouk chairs with 'trellis' backs and 'pagoda' top rails.

The culmination of an enlightening and enjoyable weekend, Saltram stands as one of many successes of the Trust's Furniture Cataloguing Project, which



Saltram bedroom

can be explored through NT collections online. Our utmost thanks to all involved.

Our thanks for Lisa White and Christopher Overton for planning and leading this study weekend.

JONATHAN HARRIS, BRIDGET TOWLE,
CHRISTOPHER OVERTON, KATE HAY,
ANDREW JENKINS, MICHAEL SHRIVE

Full reports for individual visits are available upon request to the Events Secretary.

Visit to 'Treasures of Osterley — Rise of a Banking Family'

TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2020

In glorious crisp sunshine, an FHS group congregated at Osterley for their second annual winter exhibition. This

time solely curated by the National Trust, the exhibition was divided into four components, entitled: 'Money', 'Dynasty', 'Curiosity' and 'Art', accompanied by a comprehensively written and illustrated catalogue, available online. Our group was given an insightful tour by the co-curator, Dr Megan Wheeler, and Ffion George, the National Trust Collection Manager.

The momentous acquisition in 2018 of the Italian Baroque portrait of 'St. Agatha', painted by Carlo Dolci around 1665/70, provided an impetus to explore the rest of the collection, and reunite pieces that were acquired by the Child family at the time of St Agatha's purchase by Robert Child I (1674-1721) in the early eighteenth century.

The Childs were significant shareholders in the East India and

South Sea Companies. Sir Francis I and his three sons were Directors of the East India Company with direct access to the tastes and commodities of south-east Asia through this powerful monopoly. It is possibly no surprise that Osterley has one of the largest groups of Chinese export armorial lacquer furniture in the country. Sixteen pieces in total, including ten lacquered hall chairs (1715-20) with later English seat rails and legs, and a magnificent eight-fold screen, now lacking feet, but the painted panels retaining a vibrancy and extraordinary detail. These rare pieces, made to order, vary in quality as a result of commissioning from differing Cantonese/Guangzhou workshops. All bear the arms of the Child family, granted to Sir Francis Child in 1700. Many of the pieces have not been



displayed together since their dispersal. The group reflected on the rarity of the large dome-topped chests, as opposed to the typical flat-topped chest-on-stand, used for the importation of porcelain and textiles. The rare lacquer table (top 1715–20), with japanned oak base, was also discussed as a rare piece in contrast to others, typically composed from sections of Japanese/Chinese screens or cabinets with bases made by in-house carpenters or commissioned.

Collector's cabinets were well-established, highly prized statement pieces of furniture, and the penultimate room displayed two contrasting types. The French ebony example, *c.* 1630, is one of the earliest pieces in the exhibition, acquired by Francis I either through his marriage, or possibly on the second-hand market towards the end of seventeenth century, when ebony was starting to slip out of fashion in England. The cabinet is constructed in the manner of the French *ébéniste*, Jean Macé, who had extensive links to Holland, and displayed with its doors open to reveal the splendid illusionistic inlaid interior, typical of collector's cabinet of this period and reminiscent of a Dutch interior. Discussion focused upon the abundant and detailed tulip-engraved panels of the exterior, enclosed by ripple-moulded bands. It was speculated that the piece could have been commissioned by an avid tulip collector at the height of tulip-mania, in the 1630s. The very similar cabinet owned by John (1620–1706) and Mary (1635–1709) Evelyn, and now in the Geffrye Museum, was illustrated in *Furniture History* (1986),

but incorrectly labelled as the Osterley example.

In comparison, the Japanese lacquer cabinet, *c.* 1675–1700, also displayed open, revealed the preserved beauty of its rich and varied surface decoration, layered with symbolic meaning, over numerous drawers. The Childs probably acquired this around 1700, through their trading network via the Dutch East India Company, and, like many grand collectors of the day, elevated their exotic trophy on the most fashionable of English giltwood stands. This particular example, probably dating to *c.* 1720, is noteworthy for an unusually prominent female mask to the frieze. Comment was made over the shape of the frieze and sizeable acanthus feet, comparable to early eighteenth-century furniture at Erddig, whilst the c-scroll sides were compared to Bradshaw's work at Chevening House.

This exhibition was a fascinating glimpse into the world of the new elite of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. A time of enormous dynamic change, partly brought about by an acceleration of global trade that the Childs were inextricably linked to and took enormous advantage of, which was reflected in many of the reunited objects, thanks to the return of 'St Agatha'.

PIPPA GREEN

Afternoon Visit to Hatfields Restoration

WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2020

The FHS visit to the Hatfields workshop was absolutely fascinating

in so many different ways. Anybody familiar with high-end conservation/restoration practice will have come across this firm, which dates back to the nineteenth century. According to their website, 'John Ayres Hatfield founded his company in 1834, referring to himself as a "bronzist" [...] His brother Henry Charles [...] worked as John's bronze chaser, and it was his son Henry John who continued the business in 1881, being granted a Royal Warrant by Queen Victoria in 1882'. The firm emerged as Britain's chief producer of gilded bronze (ormolu) and brass. While the company has, not surprisingly, changed ownership several times in its 186 years of existence, the name and world-class service remains the same.

The company has had to adapt to a varied clientele to keep ahead of challenging times. Each conservator has a kaleidoscope of different skills, for example, cabinet-making, polishing, gilding and painted finishes. The firm nowadays restores actual interiors as well as working on furniture pieces, and it is not surprising that they also work with interior designers and decorators and take commissions for bespoke furniture. They still manufacture gilded bronze mounts for many private and commercial clients, from drawer handles, door knobs, window furniture, hooks and decorative pieces, to ormolu mounts for collectable bronzes, handles, escutcheons and finger-plates.

Members of the FHS had the chance to see some highly skilled work being carried out by six incredibly

gifted conservation craftsmen and craftswomen. Obviously, we were all asked to be discreet about what we saw but we were encouraged to talk to the individual conservators about their current projects. These projects ranged from chests of drawers to painted table-tops, invisible repairs on marble structures, lacquer work and polishing. We examined a travelling bookcase with padouk wood, which previously had belonged to the Barings banking family, and a paper-topped table which had recently been painstakingly repaired from underneath. We were shown some beautiful veneers and encouraged to hold sections of wood including yew and lignum vitae, the 'wood of life', to feel the weight and texture and examine the different colours. We were also treated to a wonderful presentation about some unusual chairs, possibly French. The highlight for me was to see in the archive how many different types of beautifully detailed cast and chased mounts they had in stock, which they use now as templates and as examples of styles. To see their remarkable selection of sawn veneers was also a special treat.

We would like to thank all the Hatfield staff including James, Ifthy, Aki and Steve, also manager Isabelle Vaudrey, Richard Lloyd and Henry Neville for giving up so much of their time, providing us with an informative and stimulating visit, as well as a feast of cake, biscuits, tea and coffee to conclude our visit.

JURGEN HUBER

Grants

The Society makes grants to individuals and organizations from two funds that 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.

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)

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

Francis Bamford, *Dictionary of Edinburgh Furniture Makers 1660–1840*, £20

Jacob Simon, *Thomas Johnson's The Life of the Author*, £7.95

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

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

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

Morrison H.

Heckscher, 'Chippendale's Director: The Designs and Legacy of a Furniture Maker', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (May 2018), £15

The Chippendale Society, Thomas Chippendale 1718–1779: A Celebration of British Craftsmanship and Design, £5

Post and packaging for the above:

UK £5.00; Europe £7.50;

Rest of the World £10.00

- Index volumes for *Furniture History* Vols I–X £5, XI–XV £5, XVI–XXV £5, XXVI–XXXV £5 including post and packaging
- The following back numbers of *Furniture History* are available for purchase: XI (1975)–XIX (1983), XXII (1986), XXV (1989)–LIV (2018). A full list of articles published in these editions may be found on the Journals page of the website.

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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 Cabinet, by William Hancock, 1825, after restoration, open, with doors reattached. RCIN 471, Royal Collection Trust / © HM Queen Elizabeth II 2020