

EDITORIAL

It has been a policy of *Regional Furniture*, over the past eighteen years, to print important specialist material that would not be of interest to mainstream commercial publishers. Cabinet and Chair Makers' Books of Prices have been a major focus of this effort and price books for Glasgow and Whitehaven have now been reproduced in complete form. Excerpts from the chair makers' part of the *Norwich Cabinet and Chair Makers' Book of Prices* were reprinted in *Regional Furniture* volume II (1988). These ventures have succeeded in providing exposure of local characteristics of both common and up market furniture from the regions and have been used keenly by students and writers on our subject.

Although *Regional Furniture* has printed some introductory lists of craftsmen from defined areas (for instance; Edinburgh and Aberdeen), this is the first full *Dictionary* of furniture makers from a particular region to be published by the Society. The author of this *Dictionary of Norfolk Furniture Makers*, Dr John Stabler, makes full acknowledgement of the accomplishment of the *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers* (1986), indeed, he made a major contribution to the research for that epic publication, but he will be amongst the first to admit that such an undertaking could only be a beginning in the process of mapping our regional furniture makers. A study of a microcosm, in this case the rather large English county of Norfolk, using more extensive sources, and with plates illustrating the trade cards, bills, inscribed marks and examples of furniture by the makers themselves, must give a deeper insight into a region's furniture and the dynasties of men and women who made it, thus continuing the work that the DEFM began.

The once exceedingly wealthy and populous county of Norfolk established a strong furniture personality at a relatively early date; our member Anthony Wells Cole has made a study of that personality in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (*Regional Furniture* volume IV, 1990). Norfolk was prosperous, with a developed consumer culture, but far enough away from other areas of the UK to remain mysterious to many people. Therefore, it makes an excellent subject for this debut regional *Dictionary*. The fresh information in the dictionary's biographical entries will have a diverse appeal; we can find, for example, who was making 'India backed' chairs in 1740, information about an 'election chair' of 1829, the meaning of the term 'Tristram' and the identity of the man who gilded the exterior of Holkham Hall's Palladian glazing bars between 1810-11. This *Dictionary* is not simply a list of furniture makers, but a fascinating, living story of an evolving community of interconnected characters, their families and their frequently unruly apprentices. It is also perhaps the only recent furniture history publication in which Elizabeth Taylor and Robinson Crusoe are able to rub shoulders.

John Stabler has devoted a great deal of time to this project and has tackled it with customary attention to detail and mischievous sense of humour. Any errors are the fault of the editor.

David Jones