

A Tudor Cupboard at Cotehele and Associated Carpentry Work from the Welsh Marches

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1 Cotehele cupboard front as it is today.
The author

INTRODUCTION

A substantial piece of carved woodwork, the Cotehele cupboard front is displayed in the Victorian Breakfast Room at Cotehele, Cornwall, a house that is now in the care of the National Trust (Figure 1). The woodwork forms the remains of a large piece of furniture from the mid-Tudor period, which was designed to be placed in a prominent part of a house, most typically a hall, and used to display important household possessions such as plate.² The Cotehele cupboard is one of a small number of similar pieces of furniture, all of which appear to have been associated with either Welsh families or

¹ The text has benefitted from substantial interventions by and discussions with Chris Pickvance, the late Victor Chinnery and Richard Suggett, to all of whom I am most grateful. I am especially grateful to Rachel Hunt for her assistance in the writing of this paper.

² Eames (1977); Suggett (2006/2007), p. 249.

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2 The Wynn cupboard, reproduced from Percy Macquoid, *The Age of Oak* (1904)



3 The cupboard frame stripped of panels, fixtures and fittings. Tankerdale Ltd

come from Welsh contexts. The most notable of these are the Wynn cupboard, now in the Burrell Collection in Glasgow (Figure 2), and the Herbert cupboard that was formerly in Raglan castle.

During investigations of the cupboard front at Cotehele in 2002–05, it was taken off display to enable the back to be examined; this revealed a pressing need for some conservation work to be undertaken on it. Rachel Hunt, House and Collections Manager at Cotehele, organised a programme of fund-raising to this end. This enabled conservation work to be undertaken during 2010 at the studios of Tankerdale Ltd, of Petersfield, Hampshire. The cupboard was partially dismantled and all the panels and drawer front fillers were removed from the cupboard frame (Figure 3). Detailed observations were then made of all parts of the frame, and of all sections of work fitted into it. Whilst the cupboard was at Petersfield the opportunity was taken to carry out an extensive dating programme of dendrochronology, which was undertaken by Dr D. W. H. Miles of the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, whose report is given in Appendix 1.

Although the dating and use of the piece have been questioned from time to time,³ no substantial research had been undertaken on this piece until 2002–05, when the author and Rachel Hunt carried out a wide-ranging research project that explored many aspects of the cupboard. Their report was published in the *Archaeological Journal* in 2006.⁴ This was followed in 2007 with a discussion of the cupboard by Richard Bebb, in his book on Welsh furniture, which was written before the Riall and

³ Chinnery (1979), p. 415; Saer (1991), p. 12; Bebb (1992); Lord (2003).

⁴ Riall and Hunt (2006), pp. 147–79. We were helped and advised by many specialists, some of whom contributed to both this and our earlier report.

Hunt paper was published.⁵ He renamed it the Newcourt Cupboard and dated it to c.1515–30, suggesting it came from a now lost manor house — Newcourt — in the village of Bacton, Herefordshire. Specific points concerning Bebb's commentary are considered below.

This paper offers a complete re-evaluation of the Cotehele cupboard front, taking into account the tree-ring dating of the object, alongside a revised assessment of the costumes displayed on the cupboard which, with the physical evidence from the cupboard itself, together provide an entirely new view of how this cupboard and its imagery was brought into being. The paper is organised in four main sections in which the main aspects of the cupboard will be described and discussed in turn. First, the construction and originality of the surviving cupboard front, and its dating, will be explored to show that this is not a single piece of work but the result of the amalgamation of two sets of work. Second, the carving will be considered to show that it was all the work of the same carver-craftsman (apart from the drawer front fillers). Third, the carving and iconographical details of the panels are considered to show that these emanated from another piece of furniture, possibly from an ecclesiastical setting. Lastly, the wider context of the cupboard front is explored to set it, and its panels, into an art-historical and geographical setting. The most important point to emerge from this re-assessment of the cupboard front is that it is a real piece of furniture; it is not a later period fake created to house genuine Tudor panels or *vice versa*.

No further light has been shed on how the Cotehele cupboard came to form part of the furnishings at Cotehele, although we can confidently say that it was in the house by c.1865, as it can be seen in a photograph of that approximate date.⁶

HISTORIOGRAPHY

A two-part article on Cotehele which appeared in *Country Life* during 1924 mentioned the cupboard for apparently the first time in print: 'There is in the breakfast room a huge reredos-like mass of old oak, probably the tester [sic] of an old bedstead, carved with the strangest medley of Elizabethan and Gothic symbols. Linenfold panels, heraldry... and the mystic legend, probably in Cornish...'.⁷ The next documented reference to the cupboard takes the form of a letter that appeared in *Country Life* on 3 February 1950, written by the 6th earl of Mount Edgcumbe. The letter enquired about the mysterious inscription in a 'foreign' language and stated that the earl had no knowledge of how the 'large reredos or tester' came to be at Cotehele.⁸ Amongst responses to this letter was one from W. J. Hemp of Criccieth, who recognised the inscription for what it was, explained that it was in late medieval Welsh, deduced from heraldic details on the piece that it might be associated with Sir Rhys ap Thomas's family and

⁵ Bebb (2007), I, pp. 161–68. Whilst Richard Bebb's work did not draw upon the Riall and Hunt paper he had contact with both authors prior to publication of his work and was aware of the general conclusions they had reached.

⁶ Personal communication from Rachel Hunt, who noted that the cupboard appears in a photograph of the Victorian Breakfast Room c. 1865, which is preserved amongst Victorian images in the Mount Edgcumbe albums.

⁷ Hussey (1924), p. 366.

⁸ Edgcumbe (1950).

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suggested that the tester [sic] was brought to Cotehele by Catherine, the widow of Sir Griffith ap Rhys, who married Piers Edgcumbe in 1524/5.⁹

It is possible that the cupboard was referred to in the later eighteenth century. George Edgcumbe, the 1st earl of Mount Edgcumbe, was an enthusiastic antiquarian and a friend of Horace Walpole, with whom he shared a fascination for research into, and the re-creation of, Tudor-styled interiors. Indeed there is some suggestion that George did much to create and embellish a 'Tudor' style at Cotehele.¹⁰ The Cotehele cupboard may have featured in this context. Walpole wrote in 1777, 'I never did see Cotchel, and am sorry. Is not the old wardrobe there still? There was one from the time of Cain, but Adam's breeches and Eve's under-petticoat were eaten by a goat in the ark'.¹¹ Does this refer to the Cotehele cupboard? It seems possible given the presence of the Adam and Eve figures on the cupboard. Further, the wording of Walpole's comment suggests that the cupboard had been at Cotehele for some time, rather than intimating that Edgcumbe, who might have discussed the piece with Walpole, had newly bought the cupboard to add to the house's furnishings. However, Rachel Hunt points out that there is another piece of furniture at Cotehele that has a claim to Walpole's comment, a smaller and later cupboard of c. 1600, which in the 1840s stood in the Old Drawing Room. This seventeenth-century cupboard formed part of Cotehele's famed interior that was much visited in the Georgian period. Hunt also observed that the East range was remodelled in 1862 by the fourth earl to accommodate his widowed mother, Caroline Edgcumbe, who was known to have a penchant for old carving. It is therefore possible that the cupboard was brought to Cotehele in the mid-nineteenth century.¹²

DESCRIPTION AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Only the cupboard front has survived, although this too is incomplete as the legs have been cut off, whilst parts of the frame back have been reduced in thickness. The front has overall dimensions of 2.015 m wide by 1.645 m high. The cupboard legs were probably around 0.30 m long, on the basis of figures carved on the frame, thus giving a total height for the cupboard of about 2.00 m. The cupboard frame is covered overall in low relief carvings depicting huntsmen, hunting animals and their quarry, together with heraldic badges, symbols of religious iconography and an inscription in Welsh, which surround a series of carved panels that were executed in a very similar style of carving (excepting the style of the drawer space fillers that are quite different). The cupboard was organised as a four-tier piece of furniture with a display shelf at the top, and three tiers within the cupboard formed by a pair of drawers in the middle with shelved cupboard spaces above and below. The upper and lower tiers have three panels apiece, the corner panels being static whilst the centre panels served as doors. Neither of the two doors has retained any door fixings or locks, and moreover, both doors have additional pieces of wood set beside them. The upper tier features: panel 1 — a display of the Symbols of the Passion; panel 2 — the Royal arms; and panel 3 — a pair of minstrels.

⁹ Hemp (1950)

¹⁰ Cornforth (1990).

¹¹ Lewis (1974), p. 294.

¹² Personal communication from Rachel Hunt.



4 The reverse side of the cupboard front before conservation in 2010. *The author*

The drawer spaces, panels 4 and 5, are filled with parchemin work of early to mid-Tudor date, but these have no readily apparent connection to the cupboard. The lower tier features three further panels: panel 6 — a scene showing St George slaying the dragon; panel 7 — Adam and Eve being ejected from the Garden of Eden; and panel 8 — another scene from the legend of St George, showing the princess leading the dragon into a city with a lamb tied to her girdle.

THE CUPBOARD FRAME

The framework is jointed utilising true-mitre joints that are pegged with single large wooden pegs.¹³ These are quite visible on the front of the panel. Three sets of mortises and peg-holes remain cut into the sides of the stiles; one set would have been lost when the legs of the cupboard were taken off. The pegs are surprisingly large, ranging in diameter from 16–18 mm. When viewed from the back, the cupboard frame has remnant details of its internal construction, with grooves and mortises remaining for shelf supports, dust boards, drawer runners and side panelling (Figure 4).

The frame has a single bead edge-moulding that defines the edges of the cupboard front, while each of the openings has multiple-layered bead mouldings that define each aperture, adding a level of sophistication to the work. There are traces of jointing that suggest there was an apron or spandrels beneath the bottom rail. The cupboard may originally have had a canopy that over-sailed it, such as that on the Wynn cupboard. This provided a setting and backdrop to the top shelf that would most usually have

¹³ Victor Chinnery suggested that true-mitre joints were introduced in c.1540, although he would have been the first to agree that this requires further detailed study.

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been used to display the household plate and/or important ceramic pieces. The still-complete Wynn cupboard has linenfold panelling filling its sides; a piece of linenfold found in the back of the Cotehele frame may be an original portion of similar panelling used in the Cotehele cupboard.

The remnants of jointing on the stiles, where mortises and peg holes survive, indicate that the sides of the cupboard were probably organised with a similar pattern of rails as the cupboard front.¹⁴ The sides were likely to have been filled with linenfold paneling; vertical grooves show these were slightly inset from the edges of the cupboard. There are traces of grooves and jointing in the top rail and stiles that show top boards capped the cupboard (Figure 4), and which formed the base of the display shelf, but very little more can be said about these.

Looking at the back of the cupboard, it can be seen that the lower parts of the rear faces of the stiles, muntins and, in part, the top and bottom rails have been roughly and crudely thinned down, with either an adze or a broad chisel. We are unable to say why the timbers were treated like this, but it is suggested that the cupboard became damaged through dry or wet rot which necessitated quite drastic remedial action to prevent its further spread.¹⁵ This reduced the thickness of the frame members but left sufficient material to permit a reconstruction of the general form of the cupboard. Many of the joints are numbered; some chisel-cut Roman numerals can be observed on adjacent timbers. It is possible that some of these marks were lost when the faces of these timbers were adzed down. Additionally, there is a circle scratched onto the back of the cupboard frame, this having been clearly done using a compass and point, with arcs cut across the circle from edge to edge of the circumference to create a school-child's geometric flower. There is also a carved motif that resembles a crow. These marks may be apotropaic (evil averting) marks that were often used to protect a building from evil spirits, witches or their familiars.¹⁶

DOORS, HINGES AND LOCKS

As had been anticipated in the 2006 report, evidence was found for the hinging of the two original doors, these being the central panels in the top and bottom tiers of the cupboard.¹⁷ Until 2010 it had generally been assumed that the door panels in the cupboard were original to this piece, even though it was clear (from the additional sections of wood beside them) they were replacements for earlier doors on the basis that the panels used were not as wide as the apertures into which they were fitted. Dismantling the cupboard revealed that they were not original to the cupboard, and what is more, they had been cut down and fitted to serve as doors as a secondary usage.

Although the original doors do not survive, evidence was found for their hinging. Pin or pintle holes were found to have been drilled into the rails and set approximately 400 mm from the right-hand muntins (as viewed from the front). It is likely that these

¹⁴ It is not possible to tell how the sides were further subdivided, if at all, from the surviving remains of the frame.

¹⁵ It may be noted that some 'thinning' of the cupboard front may have been necessary prior to its being displayed at Cotehele.

¹⁶ Hall (2005), pp. 150–52.

¹⁷ Riall and Hunt (2006), p. 152.

pivots were made of wood; doors hung in this manner were occasionally termed as 'harr-hung'.¹⁸ Few exemplars have survived, but this hinging technique appears to date from before the mid-sixteenth century and was still used in the seventeenth century.

Neither of the present 'door' panels was originally intended to be used as a door. No holes were drilled vertically into them to permit the fitting of pin-type hinges, although this was the original hinging method for the cupboard. Also, neither door was or could have been fitted with the more typical strap hinges of this period, as both are covered in carved detail from edge to edge. Doors in contemporary cupboards, such as the Wynn and Herbert cupboards, have spaces provided for hinges and locks, but the Cotehele doors do not. Further, the two doors supposedly *in situ* also show evidence of having had feather-edge tongues around all sides. Thus both have been cut down, which shows that these panels were previously fixed in place as static panels in another work. Nevertheless, both served a secondary purpose as usable doors, as can be seen from the wear along the bottom edges of the door, and the vestigial presence of locks and hinges on them.

When the original doors were replaced, hinging of the doors was achieved through the use of iron hinges, possibly of the butterfly-type, fixed to the front face of the cupboard frame.¹⁹ There is considerable evidence for the secondary refitting of the doors. This comprises evidence for more than one set of door hinges having been fitted to the frame, scars of which can be seen on the right-hand muntins where part of the carved detail on the frame has been distressed. The evidence indicates a possibility that a last set of hinges with a rectangular frame-mount was used, alongside a larger hinge that may have been of the butterfly-wing type. There are traces of hinge scars on the lower door, panel 7, but not the upper door; neither of the pieces of wood set beside the doors shows any trace of hinges (these too are pieces of muntin, but these were not associated with the cupboard previously). No trace was found on the inner faces of the right-hand muntins of hinging. Insufficient detail is known of the development and dating of hinge types, thus it follows we cannot learn much about when the cupboard was remodelled from the types of hinges used.

Both of the doors show traces of evidence for locks. Evidence for lock tongues was found on the inside faces of the left-hand muntins. The upper door has vestigial remains of the lock position on the back of the panel, while the lower door retains a key hole. All the door fittings were removed at an unknown date, with no hinges or locks remaining *in situ*.

Substantial wear can be seen on the lips of the second and third rails, along the bottom edge, in both of the central bays, whereas those on either side remain as square as they were originally cut. This confirms that in the Cotehele cupboard only the two centre openings (for panels 2 and 7) provided access into the cupboard. There was a discernible lip, or drop, between the framework rail and the shelf behind it, which is somewhat surprising. The 'wearing' on the frame edge extends beneath the muntins either side of the centre panel. This indicates that the carpenter eased the rail inner upper edge, perhaps with a spokeshave, prior to assembling the framework, and this may in part account for the depth of wear on the rails.²⁰

¹⁸ Hall (2005), pp. 194–97.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁰ Victor Chinnery drew my attention to this aspect of the cupboard.

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5 Grooves for panelling in the framework. *The author*

THE CARVED PANELS AND BACKING BOARDS

One of the key questions posed prior to conservation work on the cupboard was to determine what relationship there was between the corner panels and the wooden panels (backing boards) set behind them; and to discover, if possible, if they were of the same date. Although the backing boards are of varying thickness, and do not precisely match the carved panels in front of them either in shape or overall dimensions, Daniel Miles shows in his report that analysis via dendrochronology has established that the backing panels and the carved panels are of the same date and, in one case, made from wood taken from the same tree (Appendix 1). That said, although the two sets of panels may be coeval, they are not necessarily original to the cupboard.

Removal of all the panels from the frame revealed details of the construction of the cupboard, and in particular how the four corner panels were originally fitted into grooves cut into the framework. The grooves have an approximately square profile and are between 15 and 23 mm wide, and 16 and 26 mm deep, averaging at around 20 mm wide and 22 mm deep (Figure 5). We therefore expected the panels in the frame to have had edges that fitted, even approximately, these grooves; this is not the case.

Removal of the carved panels from the frame revealed that each of them had been sawn down (Figure 6). The remaining saw-marks show this was done crudely, and that no attempt was made to run a plane over the edges to smooth them down. This resulted in the removal of all the edges in the case of the two doors, and almost all of three edges from the four corner panels, leaving each with one intact edge. The remaining edges on the carved panels showed that these were originally feathered to a narrow edge, or tongue, less than 10 mm thick and up to 17 mm deep. From this, it is clear that the carved panels were originally provided with tongues to allow them to be mounted into a frame, tongue and groove fashion, which had framing grooves less than 12 mm wide, or thereabouts, whereas the surviving cupboard frame has grooves much wider and deeper. The combination of carved panel and backing panel allowed these panels to be fitted into the grooves cut in the Cotehele frame. The backing boards, which are described more fully below, are plain sections of riven oak that are approximately square in shape having presumably been trimmed to serve their secondary function as backing boards set behind the carved panels.



6 Carved panel with cut-down edges; note holes in surviving left side feather edge. *The*

The surviving feather-edges of the carved panels show that one or more holes had been drilled through them (Figure 6). It has been suggested that this was to allow the panels to be pinned to a work surface whilst they were being carved; there is otherwise no obvious function for these holes.²¹

ALL OF A PIECE OR TWO SETS OF WORK?

Analysis of the construction of this cupboard, and a detailed examination of the fitting of the carved panels into it, show that this cupboard as it stands today is not all of a piece even though, as shown by the tree-ring dating, all of it dates to about the mid-sixteenth century (including the parchemin panels in the drawer spaces). It is however apparent that the carved panels, and by extension therefore also the backing panels, were brought from another work to be fitted into this cupboard after it had been fully

²¹ I am grateful to Victor Chinnery for this suggestion.

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assembled. There are a number of pieces of evidence that can be used to show that this.

There are cut marks on the framework around the apertures for the corner panels that demonstrates the panels originally here were removed probably using a toothed-tool; a saw of some type. It is not known why or when the original panelling of the cupboard was removed, or what became of these panels. It is unlikely that this remodelling of the cupboard was carried out by its original maker. We can show this from the crudity of the recut panel edges. A craftsman skilled enough to produce framing of this quality, along with the fineness of his mouldings and carved work, would have been more than capable of framing the panels more capably than is the case here. Moreover, no self-respecting craftsman would have stripped down a series of high-quality carved panels such as these, roughly removing their tongues with a saw (this again suggesting removal from a frame that might otherwise have been left intact), without also running a plane along the cut sides. The carved panels were clearly originally intended to be set into a framework without backing panels, in a normal manner, as can be seen from the rounding-off of the carving on the back of them. If they were to have been laid on plain panels, and put in place with such backings, then there would have been no call to round off the carving.

DATING THE COTEHELE CUPBOARD AND PHASING ITS REMODELLING

A number of methodologies can be applied to the problem of dating the cupboard, and to the problem of suggesting dates for its phases of use and remodelling, of which dendrochronology arguably provides the most accurate method. However, because this is a piece of furniture, and one that was potentially created for the upper end of the market, the quality of wood used meant that much of the sapwood was discarded, leaving only the better-quality heartwood to be used. This in turn means that tree-ring dating offers only a date range of about thirty years, equating to 1520–50, for the period within which this piece may have been created. This can be slightly modified as the rail on which the inscription is carved comes from a tree felled after 1524. This contrasts with the situation with a hearth beam from Lower Spoad farm (which is discussed further below) that can be dated to a single year, 1546, because the entire series of tree-rings was present.

The dendrochronological date range can be modified and enhanced by reference to the costumes worn by the various figures that populate this work, where details of the drapery shown on these figures offers a key diagnostic tool for dating purposes. It is suggested that the figures on the frame, all of whom are huntsmen, indicate a date into the 1560s, although a date as early as the later 1540s is possible. The two musicians appear to be wearing costume that is more in tune with Henrician dress of the 1540s, their shoes being especially notable as probably being earlier than 1550 (see Appendix II). It is however very difficult to provide anything other than a generalised comment on the dating of these costumes. This is because of the overall lack of sources that offer a detailed typology for the dress of anyone other than the aristocracy, or those rich enough to be able to afford the sorts of costume we see represented in paintings and prints from this period. Whilst the presence of tall hats with feathers is generally indicative of a date later in the Tudor period, after 1560, such hats were worn in the 1540s

and before but were uncommon, flat hats such as the type often pictured by Holbein being the norm.²² A further point to note is that figures depicted in the Henrician period tended to be bulky creatures, whereas the human forms with pinched-in waists seen here are more to be associated with the later sixteenth century.²³

The Cotehele cupboard features many aspects of hunting, and includes three representations of longbows. Such weapons were still commonly in use into the middle of the sixteenth century, and were found aboard the wreck of the *Mary Rose* which was sunk in 1545. The absence of firearms may perhaps be an indicator that the cupboard was made before 1560.

The Wynn cupboard has been dated to 1525–40 on heraldic evidence and it may be that this type of cupboard, a type-series that includes the Herbert and Cotehele cupboards, should be dated to the later part of Henry VIII's reign. However, not a great deal of investigative work has been done on this form of cupboard, so such comparative evidence may perhaps be misleading.

A final possible means of dating comes from the content amongst the carvings of the panels fitted into the cupboard. Four of these panels — the Symbols of the Passion in the upper tier and the three panels along the bottom tier, and perhaps also the panel of the minstrels — would have been inappropriate in an Edwardian context (1547–53) following the Reformation; would have been acceptable during the reign of Mary (ruled 1553–58), and perhaps tolerated in a private setting in the reign of Elizabeth I.

With regard to phasing the creation and remodelling of this cupboard, and applying dates to these, we are on less certain ground. The combination of tree-ring dating, costume details and political activity indicate that the cupboard was possibly made during the reign of Mary, whilst the panels that were later introduced into the cupboard when it was remodelled might date to the end of Henry VIII's reign (he died in 1547) or to Mary's reign; their iconographical content being such that they cannot belong to the period between, but were unlikely to have been produced after 1558. We are unable to tell when the cupboard was remodelled, but it is conceivable this was later in the sixteenth century, although any subsequent date through to the nineteenth century is possible. In part, this problem cannot be solved at present owing to the lack of knowledge as to the cupboard's whereabouts.

THE COTEHELE CUPBOARD — THREE SETS OF WORK

It follows from the foregoing that three sets of work are presented in the Cotehele cupboard. These comprise: the frame which is the sole remaining element of the original cupboard, the six carved panels and four backing panels which come from another piece of work, and the cupboard as assembled and presented to us today. For the purposes of this paper therefore, the cupboard frame is described as Cotehele 1, the ten panels as Cotehele 2, and the remodelled cupboard front as Cotehele 3. The panels and backboards may be earlier than the frame, but this at present cannot be fully substantiated.

²² Personal communication from Ninya Mikhalia and Caroline Johnson.

²³ Personal communication from Margaret Scott, Courtauld Institute; the author is grateful to Caroline Johnson for her comments on this aspect of human figure depictions.

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THE CARVER, HIS CARVING AND THE QUESTION OF ATTRIBUTION

Prior to 2010 it was generally assumed that the Cotehele cupboard as displayed today was all of a piece and that it was the work of the same craftsman. Whilst it is now highly likely that the frame and the carved panels represent two different works, it is probable both came from the same workshop and were made by the same hands. There are a number of pointers that show a strong consistency between the two sets of work, and this is best demonstrated through the treatment of the human figures. Although the overall quality of the carving is of a high technical standard, it is the case that the carver was unable to handle human figures. The anatomical proportions are incorrect, the treatment of faces with bulging eyes and beaky noses more cartoon-like than natural, whilst the carver's idea of the shape of human bodies is idiosyncratic — as may be seen from his modelling of the waist and torsos. We can note that treatment of arms, in particular, is inept and overly plastic — there is no sense of elbow, skeletal structure nor of musculature. Nevertheless, the treatment of the bodies is consistent: the eyes, noses, faces and hands of the figures in the panels are the same as those on the frame; so too are details of the costume, where hats (especially hatbands and feathers) and clothes are generally similar. A particular feature that can be noted from close observation of the work is the treatment of the clothing worn by the figures, in particular the hose where it is depicted around the lower leg. Here the carver has stylised his work by indicating the stitching around the hems, and this is the same on both frame and panel subjects. Similarly, the treatment of hats, which appear to have a stippled surface that might indicate that the hats were 'thrummed', is the same on both frame and the hats of the two musicians in panel 3. Whilst it may be that this carver was unable to accurately or realistically convey the human subjects he carved, much of his work has an idiosyncratic quality that serves to help us establish parallels to his work in a wider context, and at the same time allows us to indicate other works that cannot or should not be associated with him.

The quality and style of this carver's work is such that we can establish a set of characteristic features, such as the positioning and form of his human figures, that allow us to define his work and, from this, to attribute to him all of the work in the Cotehele cupboard front. Moreover, from his styling and characterisation of the hunting dogs, we can link him to the Lower Spoad farm hearth beam and a communion rail at Llanfair Waterdine; other details in this screen offer further links that strengthen this attribution.

COTEHELE 1

All of the work provided by the Cotehele cupboard front as we view it today, aside from the parchemin panels in the drawer fronts, was apparently carved by the same craftsman, and this has until now led most commentators to suppose that the cupboard front was a single piece of work. The possibility that the cupboard frame might have been created by someone who copied the style of the carving displayed in the panels needs to be briefly explored. It can readily be seen that the framework cannot have been created to hold the carved panels now displayed in it, because if it had then the

framing grooves for the panel tongues would have been moulded to the correct size. As explained, there are sufficient parallels between the details of the carving on the frame and of the panels to show that all the work comes from the same carver or workshop. Lastly, all of the timber used in this work, for frame and for panels, is of the same generally approximate date, as revealed through tree-ring dating.

Cotehele 1 comprises the framework alone, none of its original panelling or drawers having survived. It remains the case that this was created as a large piece of furniture that would have served as a cupboard, and into which were fitted four static panels, created from oak boards around 20 mm thick, with two harr-hung doors swung on wooden pintle hinges and a pair of drawers. All these spaces showed signs of extensive wear indicative of considerable use over a long time. We can look to the Wynn, Herbert and other cupboards of this period for parallels, and suggest that the panels and drawers of the original cupboard were very decorative. Some at least would have borne armorial bearings, and quite possibly the names or initials of those for whom the cupboard was made, perhaps also along with a date.

The jointing of the frame is exceedingly accurate, surprisingly so given the substantial nature of the timbers used and the simplicity of the single-peg true mitre joints used in its construction. The quality of the joinery is further apparent from the mouldings set around each of the apertures in the cupboard front and which framed the panels, doors and drawers, adding a further level of sophistication to the work. This points to the cupboard having been an expensive commission and is indicative of a high-born patron, or certainly someone with a deep purse.

The frame of Cotehele 1 stands alone as a remarkable and unusual piece of workmanship that provides insights into religion and hunting, as well as offering clues to the people who were responsible for commissioning this work. It may be noted that the carving on the frame was carried out in low-relief and with limited detail or surface treatment that has an almost cartoon-like or silhouette style about it. There is a qualitative difference between the workmanship of the carving on the frame and amongst the panels that quite likely reflects the different original uses to which these pieces were put, and for which there were, or may have been, differing levels of expectation in terms of visual richness. That the frame was carved at all is very unusual, the more so given the content, but this should not be allowed to detract from its primary function — it was a piece of furniture, even if exceptional.

The entire face of the frame is covered in low relief carving, which runs from edge to edge and top to bottom, where it is bounded by a bead moulding (Figure 1). The side faces of the stiles and the top and bottom rails show no trace of any carving or moulded detail. There is an overall symmetry to the layout of the decorative detail in that it provides a balanced decorative ensemble of a range of motifs that are largely evocative of hunting. No doubt for practical reasons, the stiles and muntins house human figures, whilst the rails provide a setting for animals along with an inscription set on a scroll. The animals carved on the bottom two rails are depicted with minimal detail, they are almost akin to silhouettes. The carver went to some trouble to give a rounded portrayal to many of the objects and figures he depicted and while the carving is relatively simple, the carver seems to have faithfully represented the figures and objects he was carving.

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THE INSCRIPTION

This is carved in capital letters on a long scroll, 115 mm wide, which runs the full width of the cupboard. It mimics a standard document type, a pipe roll, which was common for all manner of records before the general production of bound books filled with blank sheets. Similarly, the pointing hand or finger is frequently encountered in manuscripts and books of this period when a reader wished to draw attention to a particular phrase or paragraph. The individual words are separated by curlicues and read: *KYFFARRWTH~AIGWNA~HARRY~AP~GR*. The final letter R has a ligature over the top, indicating that this is a contraction. Daniel Huws, formerly of the National Library of Wales, commented:

The motto, in modern Welsh would be *Cyfarwydd a'i gwna*, that is, 'The expert does it', with the force 'If you want something done, turn to the expert'. *Harry ap Gr* is probably Harry ap Gruffudd (Griffith) but might be Harry ap Gronw (Goronwy). But to identify him, is rather a needle in a haystack, given the nature of Welsh names. This form of script appears in a manuscript written by Ieuan ap William ap Dafydd of Ruabon (Clwyd) with an alphabet copied in the year 1547.²⁴ The alphabet is headed '*llyma egwyddor or llythyrene Kanon ysledyrs*' (the first two letters of the word 'kanon' uncertain), that is, 'Here is the alphabet of the letters' followed by '*Kanon ysledyrs*'. '*Kanon*' is baffling, '*ysledyrs*' is hardly Welsh; it looks as though it contains English 'letters' in Welsh orthography. Could it be that this is 'Canon his letters' which equates to the 'Canon's letters'?²⁵

Richard Suggett has suggested that the meaning of *kyfarwydd* should be seen as 'master' rather than 'expert'.²⁶ By contrast, Richard Bebb considered that the inscription should be read as, '[A] craftsman makes it [for] Harry ap Gr[uffud]'.²⁷ He noted that the Welsh verb *cyfarwydd* can be translated as 'to guide', 'to direct' or 'to share with others'. He went on to suggest that the huntsman carved on the frame below the right hand end of the inscription may have been intended as a bard or herald proclaiming the inscription. This seems improbable as he is not, in any physical way, connected to the inscription, whereas there is a pointing hand and finger at the other end of the scroll. Further, this huntsman is clearly defined as a falconer, because he has a lure hanging from his belt.

The style of the lettering on the Cotehele cupboard reflects a sixteenth-century attitude to display lettering that was, in essence, a reaction against a full acceptance of Renaissance, particularly classical, Roman scripts. It is, to an extent, a continuation of a transitional style which, while rejecting the Gothic tradition, as exemplified by black-letter scripts, turns back to the Romanesque for its inspiration.²⁸ The treatment of the A and the H mirror twelfth-century lettering to be found, for example, in the Winchester Bible.²⁹ This Romano-Gothic script deliberately avoided Roman sans-serif classical forms. Typically, the A has a bar across the apex and often has a broken

²⁴ National Library of Wales, MS Llanstephan 117, p. 257.

²⁵ This piece was contributed by Daniel Huws in 2003; we have not since had any further comment on the text or its possible meanings.

²⁶ Suggett, (2006/2007), p. 250.

²⁷ Bebb (2007), I, p. 165.

²⁸ Gray (1986), pp. 147–50.

²⁹ Donovan (1993).

crossbar; the D is often lower case with the upright curled above and over it; the diagonal of the N is curved as are Y; occasionally, as in the N here, letters are reversed. Throughout all of these letters there was a tendency to splay the ends (a stylistic trait that is occasionally termed a fishtail-serif), as well as to add a bulge or some other effect to the middle of the stem or bar, as in the H in this inscription.

As a style, this form of decorative script found favour across Europe from the end of the fifteenth century and, in England and Wales, was still being employed in the later sixteenth century.³⁰ This form of lettering was extant in Winchester (Hampshire) from the earlier sixteenth century, where variants of the script occur in the cathedral on the presbytery screens of c. 1525,³¹ on the canopy of Prior Silkstede's stalls of c. 1515–25,³² and on a chest made for Prior Silkstede in either 1512 or 1519.³³ The slightly later Draper chantry in Christchurch Priory (Dorset), erected in 1529, features a similar script.³⁴ Inscriptions at Hampton Court palace, which can be dated to the 1530s, show use of a similar letter form.³⁵ A useful parallel can be seen in the screen at Marwood (Devon), which has an inscription in this letter style that names the parson, Sir John Beupel, who was the priest of this church from the 1520s.³⁶ Further examples of this form of lettering are to be found in north Wales, although dating from later in the century.³⁷ Fashionable styles of lettering used in circles close to the Crown and court in the 1520s are unlikely to have emerged in areas far from London much before the 1530s, and given the provenance of this work from the Welsh Marches, this may reflect something regarding the dating of it.

The twenty five letters in the inscription show a variation of cut, placement and style rather than a consistent and even flow of lettering such as we would expect from a good carver. This is particularly noticeable in his rendition of the letters A and Y. The As are all different, with apexes and bars in different places and different angles; the Ys are inept. Overall, the accuracy and execution of this inscription can best be described as of moderate quality. Lettering on objects, including furniture, became relatively prevalent during the sixteenth century although an inscription of this length and significance is unusual. It should be noted that vast quantities of ecclesiastical furnishings were destroyed by iconoclasts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thus we cannot tell with any certainty whether such inscriptions were usual or unusual. If, as seems feasible, the same man was responsible for the chancel screen at Llanfair Waterdine, which is discussed below, then it is possible he was semi-literate and not very comfortable cutting lettering.

³⁰ Gray (1986), pp. 148–50.

³¹ Biddle (1993), pp. 271–73 and figs 19.12 and 19.13.

³² Riall (2003).

³³ Smith (2002).

³⁴ Riall (2008).

³⁵ The letter style appears especially amongst the armorial plaques on the gatehouses, and in the spandrels of the great hall. I am grateful to Dr Kent Rawlinson, of the Royal Historic Palaces, for his comments on this topic.

³⁶ The inscription appears across four panels in the bottom tier of the church screen that is filled with Renaissance *all'antica* motifs that can, arguably, be dated to the later 1520s or perhaps and as is more likely to the 1530s.

³⁷ Parkinson (1975).

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7 Panel 2, the Royal Arms, with adjacent frame showing birds in the top rail. *The author*



8 Panel 1, symbols of the Passion, with adjacent frame showing *memento mori*, horse with oak fruit and pelican in piety. *The author*



9 Panel 3,
the Musicians,
with hairy dog
badge above.
The author

HERALDIC BADGES

Until the Riall and Hunt report of 2006 it was thought possible the cupboard had been brought to Cotehele in the 1520s, when Catherine, the widow of Gruffydd ap Rhys (the son of Sir Rhys ap Thomas), married Sir Piers Edgcumbe, *c.* 1524–5. The suggestion that the Cotehele cupboard could be linked to the family of Sir Rhys ap Thomas arose from the identification of the birds, carved on the central section of the top rail of the cupboard, as representing the three ravens that featured on his coat-of-arms (Figure 7).³⁸ This identification cannot now be sustained when details of dating, provided by both costume and by dendrochronology, are considered. Thus it is likely that these birds are examples of hunting birds or of quarry (it is difficult to say which is the more likely), and therefore similar to animals carved elsewhere on the cupboard as being representative of hunting.

Nevertheless, there are some identifiable heraldic badges carved on the cupboard frame and these offer links to the Welsh Marches, and especially to Shropshire. A horse ‘holding in its mouth a slip of oak fructed’ is carved at the top left corner of the cupboard (Figure 8).³⁹ This is the well-known white horse badge of the Fitzalans, earls of Arundel and, in the Welsh Marches, the lords of Clun and Oswestry. Opposite this badge, on the right-hand corner of the panel, is the hairy-dog badge of the Talbots (Figure 9). This, a heraldic pun, was based on the talbot, a medieval hunting dog. The Talbots were the earls of Shrewsbury and also long associated with the Welsh Marches. It may be noted in passing that the carving of the oak leaf and acorn fruct is strikingly similar to oak leaves and acorns on the Llanfair Waterdine communion rail.

³⁸ Griffiths (1993).

³⁹ Bebb identifies this as an iconographical representation of rebirth but did not offer an example of such usage.

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10 The double headed eagle
from the centre of the
frame. *The author*

At the central point of the panel, in the most prominent place, is a third badge: a double-headed eagle (Figure 10).⁴⁰ Michael Siddons, Wales Herald Extraordinary commented that ‘the best-known family which bore it is the Glyns of Glyn-llifon, Gwynedd, and it was also borne by Lloyd of Llwyn-y-Maen, near Oswestry, Shropshire’.⁴¹

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

Two overtly religious symbols appear on the frame, a *memento mori* and a pelican in her piety (Figure 8). Both were common in medieval art, and remained so after the Reformation (it may be noted that many of the screens and bench ends in Devon and Cornwall have been dated to after the Reformation, some of them from late in the sixteenth century, and these feature symbols of the Passion as well as other religious iconography). The *memento mori* is depicted wielding a spear in a downwards thrust. It is shown as a skeletal torso from the waist up, clutching a hunting spear and this may perhaps have been an ironic reference to hunting accidents or possibly expressing

⁴⁰ Bebb suggests the double-headed eagle was a religious motif, but this seems improbable in this context [Bebb (2007), p. 162].

⁴¹ Michael Siddons, personal communication, 2005; the ancestry of the Lloyds of Llwyn-y-Maen is detailed in Lloyd (1876); their double-headed eagle badge is illustrated on p. 113.

the hope that the hunter will continue his sport in the after-life. It was almost certainly intended to remind believers of the inevitability of death and the need for penitence, which, in the context of a framework filled with hunters and the hunted, may well have an intentional ambiguity about it. The considerable presence of 'wounding' imagery suggests iconographical connections to late medieval religious beliefs; this possibility remains to be studied in detail.

The presence of the pelican is more problematic and difficult to explain in what is otherwise essentially a secular arrangement substantially devoted to hunting. The present appearance of the cupboard with the panel covered in symbols of the Passion was perhaps prompted by the carving of the pelican on the top rail, but this relationship can now be seen to be co-incidental rather than part of a wider original design.

HUNTSMEN AND ANIMALS

Most of the carving on the frame relates to hunting. Nine huntsmen are depicted: three with bows, one of whom also wields a spear from aloft, two carrying large horns, while the remaining four carry staves. The horn-blowing huntsmen standing to the right of panel 8 has a hank of rope with a lure suspended from the belt around his waist. This matches a similar depiction in the Devonshire tapestries, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which dates to the late fifteenth century.⁴² The three huntsmen or falconers along the top of the panel all carry what would appear to be falcons or hawks, although it is not possible to determine which species are represented. The bird held by the falconer between panels 1 and 2 has a small bell attached to its leg. The carving of these birds is very like that of four other birds along the top rail, especially the three in the middle, and it may be that all these are also birds trained for falconry, rather than representing any type of quarry. The carver appears to have defined the beaks of the birds held by the falconers as being more hooked, and thus hawk-like, than the four birds that are grounded on the frame.

The huntsmen are all dressed alike and all appear to be wearing a 'uniform' style of dress. Five of the remaining full length figures are shown with chevron-like decoration across their upper torsos (Figures 8 and 9). This might equate with the heraldic 'bend' and possibly indicates that they belonged to a retinue or household, the head of which would have dictated what clothing would be worn by his retainers, and how this was to be decorated or styled. A further point to be noted is the complete absence of firearms, with only longbows being depicted. Alex Hildred, who worked on the longbows recovered from the wreck of the *Mary Rose*, Henry VIII's warship, commented that the bows shown on the cupboard conformed to those found in the *Mary Rose*. Bow staves would be expected to be around the same height as the man drawing the bow, which is as we see them depicted here. The absence of firearms might be a pointer to a mid-century date for this work.

The three falconers, set along the upper tier of the panel, all carry staves. Whilst these may have been used for 'beating' when putting up game, they may also have been used to carry hunting birds when on horseback. Three of the men are shown as being

⁴² Woolley (2002).

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11 Panel 8, the Princess with dragon on a leash, with adjacent frame showing huntsmen, dogs and quarry. *The author*

much older, with all having long beards, than the other huntsmen (Figure 11). This may mark them out as the senior huntsmen who had been in service all their lives, serving as the men who looked after the hunting animals, the coverts and parks that provided the necessary habitat for the quarry, and arranged the practicalities of hunting itself. Two of them have very large horns; these may represent life-sized instruments. On the central muntins of the lower tier are a pair of huntsmen who are both equipped with longbows, and one of whom holds aloft an arrow with an over-sized arrowhead. The same style of arrow occurs with the *memento mori* and is shot through the stag on the lower mid rail. This may reflect a reality. Illustrations in *Le livre de chasse de Gaston Phébus* show huntsmen using both longbows and crossbows and firing arrows with large arrow-heads.⁴³ We have seen earlier that the carver was accurate in his

⁴³ D'Athenaise (2002), pp. 80–84.

depictions, so that it may be his shot stag (and doe on the Lower Spoad hearth beam) were indeed shot as shown with arrows tipped with very large arrow heads that have wide tangs.⁴⁴

The two lower rails are covered in hunting dogs and their quarry (Figure 12). Deer, fox and hare are shown alongside two types of dog. One is an unidentified, long-limbed, hunting dog that would have been used in the long chase that wears a collar fitted with a ring, and which may be a buckhound; the other is a basset hound, of which seven are shown, none of which have collars. This parallels the depiction in the hearth beam at Lower Spoad farm (Figure 17). Here, basset hounds have no collars whereas the larger dogs have collars, although no leash rings are shown. The probable main difference between the two types of dog are that the first hunted by both scent and sight, whilst the basset hunted by scent alone. Hunting scenes, and both huntsmen and their dogs, frequently appear in later medieval manuscript drawings, paintings and tapestries; however, the basset hound appears in none of these. As such, the depictions of this type of hound on the Cotehele cupboard front and associated pieces comprise the earliest known images of the basset hound in Britain.⁴⁵

As a pack dog, the basset hound is described as perfect for rabbit and hare hunting, as well as boar hunting. It is not a fast dog, but moves decidedly, in a straight line, with its muzzle stuck to the ground. However, when the basset is in pursuit of a quarry it can exhibit a surprising turn of speed. Its smell and guidance senses are exceptional and it never disengages its prey. It moves effortlessly in a vigorous and regular manner, and its trot is characterized by a perfect co-ordination between its fore and hind limbs. It has a very particular way of hunting: it is slow and careful, but it is also very intelligent, using its instinct to search for places where the prey could be hiding, not caring about the terrain conditions.⁴⁶ The early history of basset hounds is obscure, especially so in the British Isles, whereas in France there is a longer tradition and better documentation for both their use as hunting dogs and for their breeding. It is possible that the basset hound was referred to in correspondence of c. 1305 written by Edward, the prince of Wales (later Edward II), who mentioned that he had 'low legged hare hounds of Wales who can well discover a hare after they find it sleeping. . .'.⁴⁷ The next documented reference to basset hounds occurs in a book on venery published in France in 1561, and illustrated with woodcuts, by Jacques du Fouilloux.⁴⁸

The earliest unambiguous English reference to the basset hound appears to occur in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, where, in Act IV, Scene I, Theseus says,

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;

⁴⁴ An arrowhead that is thought to have been used for hunting was found in excavations at Hunsgate, York, and has been dated to the fourteenth century. This has an overall length of some 100 mm, whilst the narrow tangs have a spread of about 120 mm.

⁴⁵ Broadly similar dogs can be seen on a fourteenth-century encaustic floor tile from Neath Abbey, West Glamorgan.

⁴⁶ www.dognames.org.uk/basset-hound.htm

⁴⁷ Musladin (1998), pp. 1–2.

⁴⁸ www.terrierman.com/GTRRabbit.htm

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Crook-knee'd, and dew lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
 Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
 Each under each. A cry more tuneable
 Was never holla'd to, not cheer'd with horn,
 In Crete, Sparta, nor in Thessaly.⁴⁹

These however seem to be the only references to the breed until the later nineteenth century, when much interest was taken in raising this type of dog. It is interesting to observe that on both the cupboard and the church screen, the basset hounds appear alongside images of a hare. By contrast, the hearth beam shows the basset hounds, six of them, at each end of the beam but with a pair of centrally placed deer. It is possible that basset hounds were also used to trail deer, even if it seems improbable that bassets could have pursued such a swift-moving quarry.

COTEHELE 2

In the 2006 study of the cupboard, it was suggested that the carved panels were probably original to the cupboard, but that the two central panels, panels 2 and 7, were not in their original settings.⁵⁰ It can now be shown that none of these panels are likely to be original to this cupboard. Panels 2 and 7 have long been noted to be insufficiently wide to fill the space required, and that additional pieces of timber had had to be introduced to fill the gap. It was also noted that the arrangements for hinging these doors was of poor quality in the overall context of the workmanship of this piece. Removal of panels 2 and 7 revealed that doors were always only in the two central bays, and, as previously speculated, that the original doors were harr-hung on pivot-type hinges.⁵¹ These had been removed and replaced with frame-mounted, butterfly-type, hinges at a later date. As previously adumbrated, neither of the doors — panels 2 and 7 — showed any trace of a pivot hinge nor much evidence for later hinges applied to the panel fronts. Both these door panels showed evidence for locks, but no locks or remnants of locks survive other than shadow marks on the timber with some traces of metal fixings. Less obvious, but confirmed by details more clearly visible on the four corner panels, is that these two panels were also reduced in overall size through the removal of their framing tongues.

The four corner panels, as noted above, were thought to be original to the cupboard. This can now be shown to be incorrect. Removal of the panels from the cupboard frame revealed that these panels were inserted a later date. Three points support this conclusion. First, the cupboard frame has grooves or mortises that are wider than would have been required to house panels with feather-edge tongues. Second, and not seen prior to 2010, there are saw-mark scars on the framework around the apertures for the corner panels that is suggestive of the removal of the original panels. Third, each panel has been given a backing board to bring it up to the thickness required to fit them into the grooves in the cupboard frame.

⁴⁹ We are grateful to Eva S. Balogh, of Yale University, USA, for her comments on basset hounds and drawing to our attention the reference to them in Shakespeare's work.

⁵⁰ Riall and Hunt (2006), p. 151.

⁵¹ Ibid.

All these panels have edges that have been cut down by the removal of the feather edges on three sides of each panel, the feather edge having originally served as the 'tenon' that held the panel into its original panel groove or 'mortise' in their former setting. It is thought the most likely explanation for the remodelling of these panels is that these they were still *in situ* in their original setting when a decision was taken to remove them, although perhaps but not necessarily so that they could be used in the Cotehele cupboard. The remaining feather edge did not need to be cut as this edge served as a 'hinge', allowing the panel to be removed from its setting. The edges of these panels retain their rough saw marks and this suggests that there was an intention to reuse them, otherwise it might have been expected that these would have been planed off to provide a clean edge. Further examination of panels 2 and 7 reveals that these too were recycled from a previous setting and that they also have cut-down edges. The presence of saw marks on both the panels and the cupboard frame, as well as the removal of the feather edges, militates against these panels having been modified for the cupboard at the time that the cupboard was made, even though the four corner panels appear to fit their settings well.

Most of the carved panels were executed in open work, that is, they were carved completely through the panel to allow varying degrees of view through the panel. This also allowed better definition of the figures and objects within each panel, offering them a degree of silhouetting, compared to panels where figures were carved in the solid. As noted earlier, the open work panels have, on their rear faces, a degree of secondary working so that edges cut through the panel were rounded off or finished on the back of the panels. This is a standard feature of work to be seen in church screens and choir stalls, where the view from the back of the setting was considered less important.

There is an overall design pattern to all the carved panels inasmuch that each is framed by a barley-twist style moulding; four have plant trails with flowers and leaves that are consistently rendered throughout; the plant trails all start from a comma-shaped motif set in a corner of each panel; whilst the human figures echo those on the frame. Amongst a number of decorative devices common to many of the panels is the use of pellets to enrich otherwise plain sections of work, for example: the edges of the shields in panels 1 and 2, the harp on panel 3 and the horse trappings in panel 6. Close inspection of individual panels reveals extensive use of fine chisels and punch tools to give texture to clothing and equipment; thus the leather straps of the musical instruments in panel 3 are edged with a series of fine punch or gouge marks to indicate needle holes — or was this a decorative idiom on the part of the carver? The same technique can be seen on the treatment of the costume, especially the seams and edges of the hose, which suggests a decorative trait rather than an observed characteristic.

A point to note about all the floral trails is that each emerges from a 'drop'-like, comma-shaped, form in a corner of the panel. Victor Chinnery suggested that this might relate to the propagation of plants, whereby pieces of parent plant are taken from the parent ensuring that a 'heel' is kept to allow the cutting to take root. He pointed out similarities to the Cotehele 'heels' to those in contemporary illustrations in herbaries. It may well be that there is a Biblical reference here that we are missing, especially so given the iconographical nature of the panel contents. One such would be to see these as representing the phrase 'rooted and grounded in love'.

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Removal of the carved panels during the conservation process revealed that backing boards had been introduced into the frame at the same time as the carved panels, and that each comprised a single sheet of plain riven oak. They would appear to have been a necessary introduction that ensured the carved panels were firmly held in the frame and, as a secondary reason, changed the function of the carved panels from being a decorative feature to a cupboard panel, thus serving as a closing for a container. We can further suggest that the backing boards were an essential introduction that had to be inserted into the cupboard to prevent the carved panels from falling out, as these now only had a single moulded feather-edge that could be fitted into a framing groove in the cupboard frame. Victor Chinnery, commenting on the backing boards, observed that they were taken from large oak trees, and that each board was a single piece. Such large pieces of material are indicative of the highest quality materials, pointing to prestigious and expensive workmanship, which reinforces the comments made about the quality of the carving and joinery made earlier. Daniel Miles has shown that it is probable that the boards were obtained from the same source as the carved panels, and that at least one set of backing board and carved panel can be shown to have been taken from the same tree (Appendix I).

The original use of the backing boards now in the Cotehele cupboard has not been established. Plain, unadorned oak boards featured in ecclesiastical furnishings, sometimes being set behind separately carved tracery, as well as in domestic furniture. It may be noted that the backing board behind panel 3 was inserted so that its grain ran horizontally, whereas most works of this and earlier periods generally has panelling where the grain runs vertically.

PANEL 1 — *ARMA CHRISTI* (Figure 8)

Panel 1 is filled with a shield, charged with a number of symbols from the *Arma Christi*, supported by a pair of recumbent angels, above and below which the wood has been carved away to provide an element of open-work. The treatment of the border of the shield, a series of demi-spheres, is a stylistic trait that re-appears in several of the other panels. It does not occur on the frame.

In medieval art, symbols of the Passion (the *Arma Christi*) served both a functional and a decorative purpose. They are most usually to be found in an ecclesiastical setting, often on roof bosses, and would not normally be expected on a piece of domestic furniture, although it has to be said that few pieces of furniture of this size have come down to us from this period. Featured here are the crown of thorns, two scourges, a crucifix, ladder, hammer and three nails, the lance and the five wounds, and a cup or chalice with, unusually, an imperial crown; the whole panel has carved drops of blood splattered across it. Such a display would have been common prior to the Reformation. Their presence in a later sixteenth-century setting is more unusual but not wholly unknown, with some Passion symbols to be seen on funerary monuments later in the century.⁵²

⁵² There is some suggestion that Passion symbols continued to be executed on bench ends in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall until late in the sixteenth century. However, it has to be said that dating such work is difficult.

The placing of Panel 1 may have been intentionally linked with the figure of mortality, a *momento mori* spear in hand, carved alongside on the frame post, and with the pelican in piety that sits on the rail above. However, it should be pointed out that the pelican and *momento mori* were probably carved on the framework before Panel 1 with the Symbols of the Passion was inserted into the frame, and that the conjunction of these should be considered a happy coincidence.

PANEL 2 — ROYAL ARMS (Figure 7)

This panel, like panel 7, the lower tier door, was not originally placed here and the original door aperture is wider than the door now in place. To fill the space a salvaged muntin was inserted between the panel and the framework on the right-hand side. As this lacks any scars left from the presence of hinges it is possible that this piece was introduced into the cupboard after it ceased to be used as a piece of furniture. Another piece of carved timber has been set beside this panel on the left corner where the original work has been lost. The lower door has a keyhole in this position, and it may be that both lock and some wood were broken off from panel 2. Traces of damage can be seen on the framework at the bottom-left and this may have been caused by a door-catch or lock previously fixed to the door.

No trace can now be seen on panel 2 (and minimally on panel 7) of any hinge, yet traces of wear along the bottom edge of both panels suggests they once served as a doors. Scars and traces of the fixings (presumably iron) for hinges can be seen on the frame adjacent to the right-hand side of both these panels. The lack of any evidence for hinges on these panels indicates that neither was originally intended to serve as a door. It may be noted that in both the Wynn and Herbert cupboards strap hinges were installed at the top and bottom of each of the doors, although these also may have been secondary fixtures. However, in both cases (and in other examples of sixteenth-century cupboards) blank space was left above and below carved work to allow the fixing of hinges. That no such space occurs on these panels further suggests these two panels were not originally intended to serve as doors. As previously observed, both panel 2 and panel 7 have been cut down, their original framing tongues have been removed and their edges smoothed to allow their re-use in the cupboard front as doors.

Panel 2 shows the Royal arms, although these are incorrectly displayed. The French and the English heraldic devices have been transposed. The shield is supported by a lion (dexter) and greyhound (sinister),⁵³ both of which, unusually, are outward looking (or regardant), with the Tudor rose set in the top corners of the panel. While such inversion of the shield quarters is uncommon, this form of display of the Royal arms is to be seen on various pieces of weaponry now in the Royal Armouries and on two majolica vases from London.⁵⁴ It has been suggested that this display of the Royal arms might offer a date for the cupboard, of c. 1515–30,⁵⁵ but this cannot be substantiated because these are not the Royal arms of Henry VIII. The lion and greyhound supporters were those used for Prince Arthur's arms (1486–1502) and can be seen on his

⁵³ Bebb identifies this as a Talbot [Bebb (2007), I, p. 162].

⁵⁴ Lankester (2002).

⁵⁵ Bebb (2007), I, p. 167.



12 The Royal arms on Prince Arthur's tomb, Worcester cathedral. *The author*

chantry chapel in Worcester cathedral, built in 1502–04 (Figure 12). They were not, however, used by Henry VIII or his successors. In the early part of his reign, Henry VIII used the dragon and greyhound that had previously been used as the supporters for the Royal arms in Henry VII's reign. Later, perhaps from the 1520s, but it is not precisely clear when, Henry VIII adopted the lion and dragon as supporters for the royal arms.

It may be noted that not only are the quarterings of the royal arms reversed in the Cotehele panel, but that the supporters are also on the 'wrong' sides. If the entire display of Arthur's arms from Worcester cathedral is reversed, we find that the lion is on the left, the greyhound on the right and the quarters in their incorrect fields — in other words, the same as the display of arms shown in the Cotehele panel. However, it may be noted that the lions are facing in the correct direction in the reversed Cotehele setting. Why these arms have been reversed is an enigma, and may simply be explained as a failure to reverse the cartoon (drawing) used for laying out the design on the blank panel when the carver began his work on cutting this piece.

The panel with the Royal arms was clearly an addition to the Cotehele cupboard, and as such offers no help in its dating or its early use. In any event, as they would appear to have been modelled on the Royal arms of Prince Arthur who died in 1502; this is less than helpful when we can show from tree-ring analysis that the cupboard timbers date to the later in the sixteenth century. Although Royal arms did occur in late medieval screens, they are more often found in post-Reformation work following a series of Royal ordinances amongst which was a demand that Royal arms were to be installed in churches.

PANEL 3 — MUSICIANS (Figure 9)

The depiction of the musicians provides the only surviving contemporary depiction of Welsh musicians, and from the hands of a carver based in the Welsh Marches, which may explain the close attention to the detailing of these musicians and their instruments.⁵⁶ The top left panel in the cupboard features two musicians, one playing a *crwth* and the other a harp. An unusual feature seen here is the harp tuning key, which is suspended from the harp by a leather strap. The musicians are dressed in costume that matches that worn by the huntsmen carved around the framework of the cupboard, but theirs is both more flamboyant and of finer quality. The background of the panel is filled with the trails of a rambling plant, probably a water-lily of some sort, and is complete with deeply bisected leaves and flower heads that also feature in the panels of the lower tier. The panel was originally carved as open-work.

Bethan Miles commented on this panel as follows:

What strikes one immediately on inspecting the carving of this panel is the great accuracy of the detail. Evidently the carver aspired to exhibit all the important features of both instruments and must have worked from direct models. The fact that the *crwth* is depicted being played whereas the harp is not shown in a realistic playing position suggests that he may have wanted to create a symmetrical design for this panel and therefore did not conceal the harper's face. Several pieces of foliage have been broken off and there is similar, obvious damage to the front of the yoke, the *crwth* player's hand and bow, a section of the lower three strings of the harp, and the lower arm of the tuning-key seen just below the centre of the panel.

The inclusion of a panel showing two Welsh musicians indicates that whoever commissioned the cupboard would have been very conscious of the role of the gentry as patrons of Welsh culture. The harp and *crwth* were the only instruments acknowledged within the bardic system for the performance of *cerdd dafod* (strict-metre poetry) and *cerdd dant* (string craft). The Welsh gentry were expected to attain some knowledge of poetry and music; playing the harp and declaiming poetry to the accompaniment of the harp are listed among the 24 accomplishments of a Welsh nobleman. Welsh musicians not only went on a circuit of their patrons but also travelled further afield; several Welsh musicians are mentioned in English royal court records.⁵⁷

PANELS 4 AND 5 — DRAWER FRONTS (Figure 1)

The two original drawers have been lost and four pieces of carved wood were installed in their place at an unknown date, perhaps in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. These panels have been cut down by removal of parts of their edges, jointed centrally, and set on edge. On one section are the letters RM, along with what may be at least one rebus.⁵⁸ This panelling was probably made in the early- to mid-sixteenth century and has been dendro-provenanced to the same general area as all the other timber used in the cupboard. No person with the initials RM can now be identified in association

⁵⁶ Suggett (2006/2007), p. 249.

⁵⁷ This is a shortened version of her original text which can be read in full in Riall and Hunt 2006, 157–60. Her comments were written before it was realised the carved panels were introduced into the cupboard from another work.

⁵⁸ Richard Suggett points out that the RM initials can be read in two ways: RM as an individual person, and R + M as husband and wife.

13 Panel 6, St George and the dragon, removed from the frame and without backing board.

The author



with Cotehele but we should note that throughout the eighteenth century the Edgumbees were apparently collecting further pieces of sixteenth-century (and later) carved work to enhance the furnishings at Cotehele;⁵⁹ the pieces now set in place of the drawer fronts may thus be part of that assemblage. Seen from the back, the structure of the cupboard frame shows vestiges of dust boards and runners for the drawers.

PANEL 6

The three panels in the bottom tier of the cupboard feature two episodes from the legend of St George, that are set either side of a scene from the Fall — the ejection from the Garden of Eden of Adam and Eve.⁶⁰ These were popular scenes in pre-Reformation England but, with the banning of religious images at the beginning of Edward VI's reign, would only have enjoyed a brief period of popularity thereafter, during the reign of Mary. Dr Samantha Riches has demonstrated that the themes illustrated in the lower tier panels were commonly encountered in ecclesiastical settings,⁶¹ whilst the panel with symbols of the Passion of Christ would not be at all surprising in church or monastic furniture. The musicians are perhaps more unusual, although they could be understood to represent David and the Psalms.

Panel 6 features St George clad from head to foot in armour of a type that would have been commonly used in the earlier sixteenth century (Figure 13). He has vanquished the dragon, which lies on its back having been severely wounded by St George's

⁵⁹ Cornforth (1990).

⁶⁰ A fuller discussion of the iconography of the three bottom tier panels, contributed by Sam Riches, can be found in Riall and Hunt (2006).

⁶¹ Riall and Hunt (2006), pp. 161–67.



14 Panel 7, Adam and Eve and the Expulsion, with adjacent frame showing huntsmen, hunting animals and quarry. *The author*

lance, which lies shattered around the beast. The victorious knight is shown with sword aloft and his horse rearing up over the stricken dragon. As with other panels in this series, the main imagery is laid over a background of delicate branches and foliage, and was carved in open-work. The virtuosity of the carver, and his attention to detail, is again apparent in this panel to the extent that even the horse-shoes are clearly depicted, right down to the nails that fix the shoes to the horse's hooves.

PANEL 7 (Figure 14)

This panel is closely similar to panel 2 in that it was used as a door when placed into the cupboard but had previously been a static panel in another setting. The remains of door locks can be seen through the presence of a keyhole on the left-hand edge of this panel, which also has evidence for wear along its bottom edge thus showing it was used a door in the present setting. The muntin placed to the right of this panel shows no trace of hinges, paralleling the situation with panel 2 described above.

This panel shows a depiction from the Book of Genesis, telling the story of the Fall when Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve are shown naked, standing either side of the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil' (Genesis 2:16–17). As is well known, the serpent encouraged Eve to eat the fruit of this tree, and she shared the fruit with Adam (Genesis 3:1–6). Adam and Eve were banished from the garden of Eden, and God placed cherubim on the east side of the garden and a 'flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life' (Genesis 3:24). The snake shown here is depicted like the dragons in the panels either side, although with a very much longer and sinuous tail.

Unlike the four corner panels, panels 2 and 7 are carved in the solid and are not pierced work. Both however have the same barley-twist edging and other details amongst the carvings indicating they were carved by the same craftsman.

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PANEL 8 (Figure 11)

This forms the pair with panel 6 and shows another scene from the legend of St George. As the story goes, a city was terrorised by a dragon and the king and the people of the city attempted to appease the dragon by offering human sacrifices. None was accepted, until finally the king's daughter was offered as a sacrifice, only for St George to rescue the Princess and capture the dragon which she leads into the city attached to her halter and watched by her parents and some of the citizens. An alternative reading is to suggest that this represents the story of St Margaret, because of the presence of a lamb that is tied to the same halter as the dragon.

The princess wears a costume that featured in a metrical psalter of 1563, and has a pair of shoes that would seem to be similar to those worn by the huntsmen. This panel was also carved in pierced work, like the other corner panels, and the main imagery overlies the same fragile network of branches and foliage seen in the other panels.

PANELS 6, 7, AND 8 — DRAGONS AND FLOWERS
AMONGST THE COTEHELE PANELS

The dragons that feature amongst the carvings on the Cotehele cupboard panels are worthy of some detailed comment. There are three of them: the dragon being slain by St George in panel 6, the dragon-like serpent in panel 7, and the dragon on a leash in panel 8. All these creatures are strongly defined by detailed carving. Thus the oval-shaped eyes beneath heavy brow ridges, ears and dentition, especially the prominent incisor teeth, of each creature are distinctively modelled, alongside the 'scaly-ness' of their bodies and the posture and positioning of their limbs and wings. The wings are modelled so that they unfurl anti-clockwise, with the wing covering the wing root and body; similarly, the dragon legs and feet are modelled in a particular style. The ears are rather porcine, projecting forwards over a muzzle with flaring nostrils. The dragons in panels 6 and 8 have also amphisbaena; that is, a head attached to the tail.⁶² Although the serpent between Adam and Eve has lost part of its head, it closely resembles the dragons either side. The serpent in particular parallels the dragon to be seen on the church screen at Llanfair Waterdine (Shropshire, Figure 18). This creature has an amphisbaena, the incisor and molar teeth, and the heavy brow ridge and oval eyes seen in the Cotehele dragons but it lacks the scaly skin. The body of the Llanfair Waterdine dragon has an overall decorative treatment achieved through the use of a pointed tool used to create a stippled surface, a sort of pointille, which is also a characteristic of the carving work across the Cotehele cupboard and its panels.

The closest analogues to these four creatures are the dragons that occur in the choir screens at Aymestrey (Shropshire) and Newtown (Powys). However, whilst the scaly body and the incisor teeth (but not the molars) parallel the Cotehele work, the Aymestrey dragon differs somewhat in the treatment of ears and eyes (Figure 15). Whilst these creatures may have been carved by the same craftsman, the remainder of the screenwork at Aymestrey offers little that parallels the work in the Cotehele cupboard. The Aymestrey and Cotehele dragon are strikingly similar to one from the screen of the former

⁶² For a detailed discussion of amphisbaena see Samantha Riches in Riall and Hunt (2006), 161–67.



15 Dragon and vine trail in the church screen at Aymestrey, Herefordshire. *The author*



16 Dragon and vine trail in the church screen at Newtown, Powys. (copyright RCAHMW)

parish church of St Mary's, Newtown (Figure 16). Of especial note is that in both these church screens the dragons share a range of characteristics, including an amphisbena. Of more interest here is that these amphisbena are modelled and positioned in the same way as that of the Princess's dragon, in panel 8 of the Cotehele cupboard. The church screens are probably rather earlier than the Cotehele, Llanfair Waterdine and Lower Spoad works but may well have been carved by the same craftsman.

Dragons or wyverns are frequently encountered in church screens along the Welsh Marches, and for some distance either side of the border between England and Wales. Many of these screens pre-date 1500, whilst some are perhaps of the sixteenth century. It is known that many screens were dismantled in the nineteenth century, with few being recorded in any detail. None of the surviving screens offers a convincing parallel to the workmanship of the Cotehele panels.⁶³ Dragons on screens such as those at Abergavenny, Llananno, Llandefalle, Llanfilo, St Margarets, and Patrishow differ markedly from the Cotehele dragons. None have large incisor teeth, and where teeth are carefully detailed these more closely resemble horse teeth than the carnivorous teeth of the Cotehele dragons. Moreover, heads are shown with mouths more open and eyes

⁶³ Bebb compares the dragons seen on the Cotehele cupboard to the dragons carved on screens at Abergavenny and Patrishow, but these do not have the incisor teeth or the scaly bodies that typify the Cotehele creatures [Bebb (2007), I, p. 163].

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rounder, and with ears that are laid backwards along the body in these screenwork dragons. Although amphisbaena do occur occasionally, dragon tails are longer and writhe and twine around the dragon bodies in a manner reminiscent of Celtic knot work. The Cotehele dragons stand apart, distinctive and different; as do the dragons at Aymestrey, Llanfair Waterdine and Newtown.

Dragons with amphisbena can be found on several hearth beams along the Welsh Marches. Amongst these are Bwlch (Llananno, Radnorshire), which has been tree-ring dated to between 1509 and 1544. This shows a green man between amphisbaena and Tudor rose. Gwernfyda (Llanllugan, Montgomeryshire), has been tree-ring dated to 1552. This has an amphisbaena, crucifix, dove (?), two quatrefoils, and a stag and collared hound although these are not like those on the Cotehele cupboard. Llwynmelyn (Trewern, Montgomeryshire), which is undated, closely resembles the beam at Gwernfyda. The carvings include two amphisbaenae, a figure with hat, Stanley legs, and possible initials. Green Farm (Winnington, Shropshire), is also undated but would be of the mid-sixteenth century. The carvings include two amphisbaenae, a figure with plumed hat that is faintly comparable to the Cotehele minstrels, Stanley legs, and possible initials.⁶⁴ The style of the carvings on the hearth beam from Bwlch might indicate work by the carver responsible for the Cotehele work; that on the other beams is far removed from his style and technique, and surely cannot be his.

The dragons that appear on church screens in the Welsh Marches are entwined and interlaced amongst a range of different sorts of foliage and fruit, comprising vine and other types of trails, that were intended to represent the Eucharist and provide further religious iconography. Thus bunches of grapes, vine leaves, flowers and tendrils all strongly feature in these works. Leafy trails with flowers also occur amongst the Cotehele panels. These are most obviously apparent in the panel 3 behind the musicians (Figure 9). Similar trails also appear in the lower tier panels behind St George and the dragon, Adam and Eve, and also behind the Princess (Figures 11, 13 and 14).

The flowers can be seen as harbingers of the vinous fruit, an evocation perhaps of birth and rebirth, thus reinforcing the Eucharistic message. An alternative reading, previously noted by Bebb, is to read these trails and flowers as that of the Passion flower.⁶⁵ This flower is said to have sprung up from Christ's blood to twine around the crucifix. Such a reading, while persuasive, is not paralleled in any extant church screen.⁶⁶ A further suggestion might be to identify this foliage as representing a thornless rose, which would identify this with a veneration of the Virgin Mary. She is sometimes called the 'rose without thorns' because she was thought to be without sin. Lastly, the trails might be a water-plant trail but the leaves on the Cotehele panel are not entirely suggestive of this.

The sinuous vine trails on the Cotehele panels offer largely bare stems with terminal leaves and flowers. A notable aspect of the stems is the treatment of the bark, which is cut as a twisted woody stem and offers a further example of this carver's skill. The

⁶⁴ For descriptions and discussion of the hearth beams at Gwernfyda, Llwynmelyn and Green Farm see Smith (1988), for Bwlch see Suggett (2005), p. 344.

⁶⁵ Bebb (2007), I, p. 163.

⁶⁶ It is possible that identification of the Passion flower with the Crucifixion was a seventeenth century idea and is thus not appropriate for a Tudor period work.

vine or rose trails, alongside the depictions of the *Arma Christi*, the legend of St George and the telling of the story of Adam and Eve would all be appropriate in a church screen but not in a cupboard intended for domestic use. The minstrels would perhaps be less obvious, but may reflect an interest in David and the psalms. Taken alongside the construction details that show the panels were removed from another setting, these particulars further indicate that the panels derived from a church screen or similar ecclesiastical setting.

Bebb commented on these flowers and noted they were popular in Breconshire and Monmouthshire in the fifteenth century.⁶⁷ It is, however, the case that flowers akin to these occur all over England and Wales, in choir screens as well as in other ecclesiastical furnishings and décor. Their very simplicity offers a multiplicity of iconographical meaning. Moreover, the flowers do not allow a sufficiently distinctive motif, or carving, to be used as a means of seeking parallels between one work and another. As with the depiction of the dragons, the workmanship and design of the trails with their leaves and flowers is idiosyncratic, distinctive and particular. No parallel to the heavily denticulated leaves has emerged from a study of the church screens, even though these leaves are especially recognisable.⁶⁸ However, as previously noticed, the Cotehele dragons have analogues in the central area of the Welsh Marches, and this may help to tell us where the Cotehele cupboard came from.

COTEHELE 3

We have termed the remodelled cupboard front Cotehele 3. As previously adumbrated, all the original panels in the cupboard front were removed and were replaced by the series of panels and boards taken from another work, which we have called Cotehele 2. This might indicate a change of ownership or of function, but we have not been able to determine this. We cannot say when the cupboard was transformed, but it seems possible that this took place later in the sixteenth century. The specifically religious content of the two St George panels and the Fall panel would have made them unacceptable during the reign of Edward VI, which may be when they were taken out of their original setting. The presence of the panels in a cupboard front may have had a specific religious connotation, inasmuch as they may represent a piece of furniture kept by a family who retained their Catholic faith; such people are generally referred to as recusants. It is the case that one well known family of recusants who lived in the central part of the Welsh Marches was the Lloyds of Llwyn-y-Maen, near Shrewsbury, whose double-headed eagle badge appears on the centre of the cupboard front; this interpretation is discussed further below.

It is clear that the craftsman who created the cupboard frame must also have created the carved panels, on the basis that the carved work is strikingly similar, and it follows that he would have created the setting from which the carved panels and backing panels were taken. More problematic is to show that whoever brought the two sets of work together was aware of both, but that this was not done by the craftsman who made

⁶⁷ Bebb (2007), I, p. 162.

⁶⁸ In the course of research for the Riall and Hunt paper, Nicholas Riall visited large numbers of churches in the Welsh Marches, from Gwent in the south through to Shropshire and Cheshire in the north, taking in churches on both sides of the border.

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them. As noted earlier the carved panels were crudely cut down, and left roughly cut — no attempt had been made to run a plane over the cuts. Also, the manner of introducing the carved panels and backing panels into the cupboard frame was crudely accomplished.

Both sets of work are marked out by their apparent rarity — there is nothing much like them aside from the screen at Llanfair Waterdine and the beam at Lower Spoad; neither is seen as a potential original location of the re-used panels. Nevertheless, we suggest that the two sets of work were probably set up in close geographical proximity to each other.

PART II — ASSOCIATED WORKS

The unexpected presence of a second set of work, derived from an unknown source, set into this cupboard to create a third work, but probably created by different hands to those who crafted either the original cupboard or the carved panels, leads us to consider what other work was created by the craftsman who made the Cotehele cupboard and its carved panels. Two works in particular stand out — a hearth beam and a church chancel screen — but it is possible that our craftsman can be associated with other pieces of work along the Welsh Marches.

THE LOWER SPOAD FARM HEARTH BEAM (Figure 17)

Nikolaus Pevsner noted the presence of a carved hearth beam, which he described as an overmantel and dated as Elizabethan, at Lower Spoad Farm some four miles west of Clun (Shropshire).⁶⁹ He did not connect this beam to the church screen at Llanfair Waterdine (Shropshire), nor to the Cotehele cupboard.⁷⁰ In the spring of 2003, at the request of and funded by Nicholas Riall, Daniel Miles sampled the hearth beam for tree-ring analysis and dating. He concluded that the tree for this hearth beam was felled in the summer of 1546.⁷¹

The house at Lower Spoad farm stands directly on the line of Offa's Dyke and is reputedly the site of the 'castle' of Newcastle-on-Clun. Two cruck units are set at right-angles to each other; one is part of the house, the other appears to have been a barn. The most interesting feature in the house is the beam forming the lintel of an inserted fireplace in the hall. It is carved with images of hunting dogs, basset hounds and another type of dog (unidentified but possibly a buckhound) that is shown wearing a collar, and a pair of deer. The doe shown here has been shot with an arrow from below. The depiction of the deer, and especially the positioning of the arrow shot through the doe, offers a surprisingly close analogue to the animals carved on the Cotehele framework. A further parallel to be noticed is the treatment of the eyes; in both the beam and the cupboard these are somewhat bulging and rounded. It is perhaps pertinent to note here that although seemingly very large, the arrowheads shown on both pieces may indeed have been on this scale and have been carved from life. We may note the accuracy with which the musical instruments in panel 3, described above, were carved.

⁶⁹ Pevsner (1958), p. 217.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁷¹ Miles (2003), p. 115; see also Riall and Hunt (2006), pp. 171–72.



17 Hearth beam at Lower Spoad Farm. *The author*

Additionally, in *Le livre de chasse de Gaston Phébus*, huntsmen using both longbows and crossbows are shown firing arrows with significantly large arrow-heads.⁷² A final point to note concerning the treatment of the basset hound carvings on the Lower Spoad beam is that they are shown with their tongues lolling out of their mouths and have particularly distinctive feet; the basset hounds shown on the Cotehele cupboard have precisely these same characteristics.

The combination of basset hounds and deer that accurately mirror those carved on the Cotehele cupboard offers a persuasive argument to link the two pieces together, suggesting that both were the work of the same man. It is more than likely that the tree from which the Lower Spoad farm hearth beam was cut was taken down specifically for the purpose in 1546, and that the carvings were executed either that summer or shortly thereafter. The carvings on the Lower Spoad beam are crudely executed, almost naïve, whereas those on the Cotehele cupboard show a craftsman who has moved on quite considerably in terms of his ability to carve both human forms as well as animals.

THE CHURCH SCREEN AT LLANFAIR WATERDINE, SHROPSHIRE (Figure 18)

A further work that can be linked to this craftsman is to be seen in the church at Llanfair Waterdine. This is now a communion rail but is the remnant of a larger work, probably a chancel screen, which was dismantled about 1847.⁷³ A great deal of this screen has been lost, while the remnants offer a confusing piece of work. This screen remnant is worthy of note here because of the presence of carvings, especially of animals, that parallel those on the Cotehele cupboard.⁷⁴

There are no huntsmen on this work; indeed, given the setting, it would be surprising if there were. But, amongst the animals depicted are a basset hound, hare, deer, fox and several birds. A dragon that strongly resembles the pre-lapsarian creature curled around the tree between Adam and Eve in Cotehele panel 7 also features, along with a

⁷² D'Athenaise (2002), pp. 80–84.

⁷³ The screen was noted by Lord in his over view of Welsh culture, who described it as not the work of a specialist carver. Lord noted the transliteration of the inscription but was unable to discover where it had been published [Lord (2003), p. 240 and n. 34.].

⁷⁴ And see N. Riall, "Awaiting a Daniel for interpretation" — the Tudor church screen at Llanfair Waterdine', in preparation.

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18 Remains of the church screen at Llanfair Waterdine. *The author*

lion that closely matches those in the Cotehele Royal arms, portraits of a man and a woman with large hands and long fingers, and an inscription with a pointing hand and index finger. Looking at smaller, fine details, we find that oak leaves and acorns on the church screen are mirrored on the Cotehele frame. The church rail carving lacks the sophistication of cupboard frame and panel work, thus it is unlikely that Llanfair Waterdine was the original setting for the carved panels now in the Cotehele cupboard.

Antiquarian interest in Llanfair Waterdine, and its enigmatic inscription, began at least in the nineteenth century. However, this was not unravelled until the early twentieth century when Sir John Rhys examined it.⁷⁵ He recognised that the inscription was lettering that possibly dated to the fifteenth century, and was ‘an attempt, probably by an illiterate carver, to copy something written in the ordinary script of the time; that the language must be Welsh, probably bastard Welsh of the Border, and spelt phonetically according to the abrupt pronunciation of the district’.⁷⁶ Today we would describe the lettering as a particularly poor attempt at black-letter script. Rhys went on to transcribe the inscription, which is sub-divided by vertical marks akin to an exclamation mark that Rhys called knobsticks:⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Rhys (1916), pp. 90–91. This important paper has not been cited by any writers commenting on the Llanfair Waterdine screen.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁷⁷ These so-called knobsticks are not unlike musical notation of the sixteenth century.

Syr Made / a Muruc / Pinchgar / Col\
vnw / a gosod / o ddec / pund / cyrufudd\

Transcribed, this reads as: ‘Syr Made a m(e)uruc Pichgar colunw ae gosodes o ddec Pund cyrufudd’.⁷⁸ Translated, it can be read as, ‘Sir Mathew and Meuruc Pichgar of Colunwy [Clun] set it up for ten pounds between them’.⁷⁹ A second rail, now lost, carried an inscription that possibly identifies ‘Maria’ as having made either a contribution to the cost of the work or was the main sponsor for the whole work, to which Mathew and Meuruc also contributed.⁸⁰ Mathew has been identified as Mathew ap Jevan [Ieuan], and as the priest at the church from after 1485 until sometime in the 1520s.

The living was held by the monks at Wenloc and they had a somewhat unusual approach to appointing their choice of priests, in that a priest was nominated and awarded the living some time before he actually took it up. Thus, on 3 August 1485 it was formally recorded that Mathew would have the living when the then incumbent (David ap Ree or Rees) died, but that he would have to provide a substitute if he was away at Rome or attending an English university.⁸¹ This implies Mathew was appointed before he had completed his studies for the priesthood. Mathew’s successor (John Page) was nominated in January 1520 on the basis that he would have the living when Matthew died. It does not tell us when Matthew died or when John Page took up the living.

It would perhaps follow that the screen at Llanfair Waterdine was erected through the patronage of Lady Maria or Mary, and of Mathew ap Jevan and Meuruc Pichgar, and that they may perhaps have left money in their wills for this work. This in turn allows us to indicate that the Llanfair Waterdine screen may have been made in the 1520s, a date that the costume and stylistic details of this work supports. Such a date further allows us to ponder the possibility that the man who created this piece would some twenty to thirty years later go on to create the panels for another screen and the cupboard for an important household, as well as the hearth beam at Lower Spoad farm in 1546.

DISCUSSION

It was known from the outset that any result to emerge from a dendrochronological analysis of this piece of furniture was likely to be inconclusive, because the tree-rings necessary to arrive at accurate dating are not usually present in a piece of furniture, unlike a hearth beam such as that at Lower Spoad farm. Dan Miles commented that the last measured ring could be dated to 1509, and that because this was on the heartwood/sapwood boundary the timber could be dated to between 1520 and 1550. This is based on adding a sapwood estimate of 11–41 rings which, Miles states, is appropriate for the Welsh Marches. Further, because the heartwood rings are quite narrow, this points to later date, nearer to 1550 than 1520. Nevertheless, this remains an estimate.

⁷⁸ Rhys (1916), p. 93.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 105.

⁸⁰ This inscription was alluded to in Meyrick (1847), published briefly in 1848 [Anon, (1848)] and later explained by Rhys.

⁸¹ Rhys (1916), p. 106.

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Dendroprovenancing demonstrates that the timber was sourced somewhere in the Welsh Marches and an especially good match, based on probabilities, was found with Michaelchurch Escley. However, matches to areas further north, in the area around Ludlow and Welshpool, are only slightly less probable.

Sourcing building materials and tying them to a particular location when used is quite problematic, and even more so when pieces of furniture are concerned. It is highly probable that the massive oak beam used at Lower Spoad Farm was only moved a few miles, but wood for smaller objects such as furniture may have been moved large distances before use. It may be noted that transporting all forms, types and sizes of timber over many miles was readily undertaken in this period, in the same way that vast quantities of stone were carted many miles by road (and further still by ship or barge).

W. J. Hemp's response to The Earl of Mount Edgcumbe's letter in *Country Life* appears to be the origin of the idea that the Cotehele cupboard arrived at the manor house amongst the household goods and chattels that Catherine (née) St John brought with her from south Wales following her marriage to Sir Richard Edgcumbe in 1524–25. However, the dating of the cupboard both via dendrochronology and from the details of the costumes worn by the figures on the cupboard make it wholly improbable that the cupboard was commissioned for Gruffydd ap Rhys, Catherine's late husband.⁸² Given that there are no heraldic devices relating to the Edgcumbes, it is most unlikely that it was commissioned for the wedding of Sir Piers Edgcumbe to Catherine; the more so when there are heraldic devices that point to other families entirely.

The tree-ring dating and the costume evidence, has convincingly decoupled any suggestion that the Cotehele cupboard was made in the 1520s, and thereby ended speculation linking the cupboard to the family of Sir Rhys ap Thomas. Whilst tree-ring dating provides a strong, scientifically based, method of dating there still remains the problem of the costume. These, say costume experts, date the cupboard to later in the sixteenth century, which the tree-ring dating does not in fact altogether rule out. Archaeological sciences have developed enormously over the past few decades, and it may well be that new methods will emerge in due course that might offer a closer and more definitive dating for the cupboard. In the meantime, it seems that the best probability is for us to accept that the cupboard dates to the mid-sixteenth century, perhaps 1540–60 and probably towards the end of this date range. This may well have implications for the dating of the other cupboards, such as the Herbert cupboard at Badminton as well as the Wynn cupboard. Heraldic badges carved on the Wynn cupboard suggest this was carved in the period 1525–45.

The combination of the three heraldic badges offers a pointer towards the original owner of the cupboard. At the central point of the panel is a double-headed eagle and this may represent the badge of the Lloyds of Llywn-y-Maen, a manor south-west of Oswestry long associated with this family. More significant are the badges on the top rail of the framework: the horse with a fruct of oak representing the white horse badge of the Fitzalans of Arundell and the dog badge of the Talbots of Shrewsbury. Henry Fitzalan, 12th earl of Arundel (1512–80), and Francis Talbot, 5th earl of Shrewsbury

⁸² Discussion of the link between Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his family to the Cotehele cupboard is fully explored in Riall and Hunt (2006), pp. 174–75.

(1500–60), were important figures in the politics and governance of the realm in the reigns of Edward VI, Mary and the early years of Elizabeth. It was however during Mary's reign that both men worked most closely together, being identified as strongly supportive of the marriage of Philip of Spain to Mary, and in their continued support for Philip thereafter.⁸³ This might explain the style of the costume worn by both the huntsmen and the musicians carved upon the cupboard: all have a distinctly Spanish flavour, one that flourished briefly during Mary's reign but which, understandably, was swiftly extinguished following Mary's death in 1558.

The heraldic badges of these major figures suggest that their patronage, or certainly their influence in the Welsh March, has an important bearing on our understanding of this piece. It may probably be right to assume that the piece was intended to commemorate a wedding, the now-lost drawer fronts perhaps carrying inscriptions that might have identified the couple and offered a date. We can suggest, however, that if it is correct to see the double-headed eagle as the badge of Lloyd of Llwyn-y-Maen and place this geographically at either Clun or Oswestry, then this would associate the Lloyds with the Fitzalans. The Lloyds were a well-connected family of gentry descended from an illegitimate offshoot of the princes of Powys. Richard Lloyd, who died in 1508, married Margaret, the daughter of John Edward Hen, who was the receiver of Chirkland in the reign of Henry VII. Richard's son, Edward, was constable of Oswestry castle, and captain under either Thomas FitzAlan, twelfth earl of Arundel or his son William. Edward died in 1544, leaving three sons and six daughters, his eldest son, another Richard, marrying Elizabeth Tarbock of Oswestry.⁸⁴ It is possible that it was one of Edward Lloyd's daughters who was given in marriage, but to whom was she married? This has yet to be discovered.

The problem of Harri ap Griffith has been partially addressed above in the comments offered by Daniel Huws. The inscription on the cupboard provides us with an abbreviated name — Harry ap Gr. . . This may be a contraction for Harri ap Griffith, but as Huws noted, it may also have been Harri ap Gruffudd or Harri ap Gronwy. Opinion as to what the inscription infers ranges from those who see it as identifying the owner of the piece,⁸⁵ to others who suggest it refers to the maker.⁸⁶ The phrasing of the inscription is itself ambiguous and cannot be easily translated into modern Welsh and then into English. That said, the translation of the inscription suggested by Huws takes us away from identifying it with the maker of the cupboard and instead points us to the man for whom the cupboard was made. In this analysis, Harri ap Gr. . . was, by the terms of the inscription, some-one who fulfilled expectations — 'if you want something done, turn to the expert'. It seems reasonable to suppose from the context of the carvings on the cupboard that Harri may have been an expert huntsman, perhaps a member of a family of minor gentry who had charge and responsibility for tracts of countryside and the maintenance of its good hunting, whether it be with dogs or with falcons. Further, it seems possible that Harri ap Gr. . . was in some way

⁸³ On Fitzalan, see Lock (2004); on Talbot, see Bernard (2004).

⁸⁴ Lloyd (1876).

⁸⁵ Bebb (1992), p. 72; see also Bebb (2007), I, pp. 165–68. Bebb considers the possibility that Harri ap Gruffudd can be identified as a Welsh landowner and soldier from Ewyas Harold in Herefordshire. Unfortunately, the dates for this man do not fit the dates for the cupboard.

⁸⁶ Lord (2003), p. 269.

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associated with the Talbots of Shrewsbury, thereby explaining the presence of the Talbot badge.

Such an interpretation would mean that we cannot now name the maker of the cupboard, although we can associate him with other pieces of work. These include the hearth-beam at Lower Spoad Farm, a house that lies a few miles west of Clun and thought to have been a Fitzalan hunting lodge in the sixteenth century. By dating the hearth beam to 1546, through the application of dendrochronology, and noting the striking similarity between the animals carved on the beam to those on the cupboard, it becomes possible to suggest that the craftsman who made the cupboard worked in the Welsh Marches from the 1520s until perhaps the 1560s. He might also have created a screen for the church at Llanfair Waterdine, Shropshire, which has carvings of hunting animals, including a basset hound, and quarry including a deer and a hare. Also, amongst the carvings is a male figure similar in style to those on the Cotehele cupboard. The woodwork in the church was dismantled and reconstructed in the post-medieval period and much of the original has probably been lost (there have been suggestions that parts of the screen survive locally to Llanfair Waterdine, but nothing has thus far been discovered).

The panels in the Cotehele cupboard front can now be seen to have possibly emerged from an ecclesiastical setting, although where this was is not known, although it was perhaps in the Clun-Shrewsbury area. The same craftsman may also have worked on the church screen at Aymestrey (Herefordshire) and Newtown (Powys), where dragons similar to those at Cotehele may be seen amongst vine trails. If so, it follows that he was working in a tradition or style of church screen-making closely associated with central Wales by Crossley and Ridgway in their analysis of Welsh church screens.⁸⁷ Their screen type-I includes Newtown alongside screens such as those at Llananno, Llanidloes, Llanwog and Bettws Cedewain, all of which are in the central area of the Welsh Marches. Two more type-I screens were identified much further north, at Daresbury and Runcorn. The screen at Aymestrey was described as being screen type-XIII, and as the most southerly of a series of four screens with others at Hughley, Gresford and Astbury. It is unlikely that the carver of the Cotehele work was associated with the creation of all of these screens, but it is strongly suggestive that he worked in the mid- and northern parts of the Welsh Marches.

The recognition that the cupboard was refitted with the carved panels at some point after its original construction brings with it a number of problems relating to their origin. It is feasible that the panels and their backing boards were taken from a church screen. On the basis of the costume worn by the minstrels the work might conceivably date to the end of Henry VIII's reign. An alternative scenario, given the problems confronted by anyone who wished to erect furnishings or tombs inside churches during this period, is that such a screen would be better placed in the reign of Mary. Taken together, the iconography of the carved panels exudes a sense of Catholicism that is unlikely to have been approved of in the earlier part of Elizabeth I's reign, especially so the panel with the symbols of the Passion.

The early part of Elizabeth's reign was a period of religious strife and difficulty, with families divided in their view and their opinions. Some opted to remain Catholic and

⁸⁷ Crossley & Ridgway (1962).

would become known and officially registered as recusants. One such family was the Lloyds of Llwyn-y-maen.⁸⁸ Did they deliberately have their own cupboard partially dismantled and refitted with panels taken from a church, perhaps their own parish church, so that they might celebrate their faith? As yet we do not know the answer. Whatever the case, the cupboard remained in use as a cupboard, indeed it did so for a seemingly considerable period.

Something must be said regarding Richard Bebb's contribution to discussion of the Cotehele cupboard. A central plank to his commentary was his dating of this piece and, from this, to place it alongside other works of a similar period. Further, he suggested that it should be recognised as a pre-Reformation piece of furniture because of the explicit religious content amongst the cupboard's details. However, two independent methodologies — tree ring dating and changing fashions in costume — show the cupboard to be later than he proposed. Moreover, none of us were aware that the panels set into the cupboard were not original to it until it was dismantled in 2010.

The present writer believes that the presence of the three distinct heraldic badges — the double-headed eagle, the horse with its oak branch and the hairy dog — allied to parallels with the style of the carving and design of individual motifs or elements in the work on the cupboard, allow us to point to a geographical cluster in the middle part of the Welsh Marches. Does this entirely rule out Bebb's proposal that Bacton, Herefordshire, was the original home for this cupboard? Not necessarily, but a great deal more evidence must be produced before this suggestion can be accepted as an unequivocal solution. One of the defining features of the cupboard is the character of many of its carvings, which reflects the sport of hunting. Amongst the people mentioned by Bebb who were associated with the family from Bacton was James Parry, said to be 'Master of the Queen's Buckhounds'.⁸⁹ In fact Parry could not have been the Master, as this was a hereditary title which was in the hands of the Pexall family from 1514 until 1571, but he could have been the head huntsman. There is a thread here that might in due course prove profitable to pursue. Such is the nature of any enquiries into objects from the past, especially when we lack so much of the original evidence.

FUTURE WORK

The Cotehele cupboard front is a relatively small object but has attracted multi-disciplinary interest and analysis because of the profusion of carved imagery to be seen on it, alongside its use as a piece of furniture. This detailed research has revealed that it is an amalgamation of two sets of work that came from the same workshop, although the cupboard we see was created by other hands. Later pieces of work are commonly called into question as to their originality or authenticity, and it may be that earlier pieces require similar cautious consideration. Dating this piece remains an issue, and whilst dendrochronology has offered pointers it remains the case that this technique is not presently capable of offering a more closely defined date than that currently available. We can hope that refinement of this technique might bring a tighter dated range in due course. Dating the piece by reference to the costumes shown on it has been

⁸⁸ Welsh Biography Online, <http://wbo.llgc.org.uk/en/s-LLOY-EDW-1570.html>

⁸⁹ Bebb (2007), I, p. 167.

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shown to be helpful, but it remains the case that remarkably little is known of the details of earlier and mid sixteenth costume because of the lack of paintings and prints that depict the costumes worn by people other than the aristocracy or the very rich. Further research by costume experts that brings together information from other works, such as funereal monuments, may help to redefine when certain types of clothing were introduced and for long they remained in use. This has the potential to separate more clearly when the panels and the frame of the Cotehele cupboard were created. Lastly, no attempt has been made here to reconstruct the layout of the Cotehele cupboard, and how this compares with other cupboards from this period, such as the Wynn and Herbert pieces. This might prove to be a fruitful avenue of future work, which should also consider the problem of when true-mitre joints were introduced and the extent to which these were used with single, large pegs. We do not regard our report as presented here as a final or definitive statement but hope that others will take our journey forward sometime in the future.

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APPENDIX I

OXFORD DENDROCHRONOLOGY LABORATORY, REPORT 2010/53

THE TREE-RING DATING OF THE COTEHELE CUPBOARD FRONT

Dr D. W. H. Miles FSA

Summary

CALSTOCK, Cotehele Manor House (SX 422 685)

Cotehele cupboard front

Felling date ranges: After 1524 and 1520–50

Top rail 1509(H/S); Rails 1506, 1502, 1489; Stiles 1470, 1466; Muntins 1498, 1486, 1485, 1481, 1466; Carved panels 1485, 1476, 1472, 1467, 1446, 1436; Drawer panels 1496, 1489, 1481, 1464; Back panels 1498, 1461². *Site Master* 1327–1509 COTEHELE (*t* = 11.0 WALES97; 10.7 NORTH; 10.2 SALOP95; 10.1 MLCHRCH2).

The remains of a Tudor cupboard at Cotehele, Cornwall, a property in the care of the National Trust, has long attracted interest, partly because of the Welsh associations of the piece which include an inscription in Welsh and the unique depiction of two Welsh minstrels. It was formerly described as a ‘tester’ but recent scholarship has established that it is a cupboard of the type sometimes described as a ‘buffet’. Comparable cupboards are associated with Gwydir (Caernarfonshire) and Raglan castle (the Wynn and Herbert cupboards). Following a fund-raising programme organised by Rachel Hunt, the cupboard was sent to Tankerdale Ltd, near Petersfield, Hampshire, for conservation in autumn 2009. As part of the conservation process the cupboard was partially dismantled and examined by a number of specialists in the fields of art historical research, furniture history, and dendrochronology. The opportunity was taken after careful consideration to sample the cupboard with a micro-borer while it was fully accessible.

Dendrochronology has established that:

- The cupboard frame, the carved panels, and the backing panels are all relatively contemporary.
- The cupboard frame dates from the second quarter of the sixteenth century, with a felling date range of 1520–50 established from the heartwood-sapwood boundary on the top rail (coth3). The earlier part of the range is truncated by the *terminus post quem* of after 1524 by a sample from the rail with inscription (coth4).
- The felling date is probably (but not certainly) towards the latter part of this range as the very slow growth rate of the outermost heartwood rings suggests a higher number of missing sapwood rings than the normal sapwood distribution. However, the date of the piece should be given as 1524–50 rather than c. 1550.

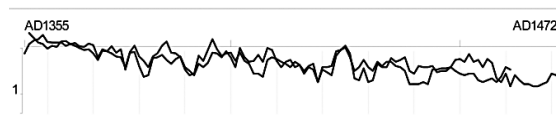
- Several same-tree matches were established for different elements of the cupboard front. Dendroprovenancing suggests that the timber would have originated within the Welsh Marches. An especially good match (*t-value of over 10*) was found with Michaelchurch Escley in south-west Herefordshire. Other *good matches (t-values of over 8)* occur throughout the Marches and into north-west England.

All timbers sampled were of oak (*Quercus* spp.) from what appeared to be primary first-use timbers, or any timbers which might have been re-used from an early phase. Those timbers which looked most suitable for dendrochronological purposes with complete sapwood or reasonably long ring sequences were selected. *In situ* timbers were sampled through coring, using the micro-borer developed for the Historic Royal Palaces at the Tower of London, whilst the carved panels were measured along the edges with a graticule. Details and locations of the samples are detailed in the summary table.

The dry samples were sanded on a linisher, or bench-mounted belt sander, using 60 to 1200 grit abrasive paper, and were cleaned with compressed air to allow the ring boundaries to be clearly distinguished. They were then measured under a $\times 10/\times 30$ microscope using a travelling stage electronically displaying displacement to a precision of 0.01 mm. Thus each ring or year is represented by its measurement which is arranged as a series of ring-width indices within a data set, with the earliest ring being placed at the beginning of the series, and the latest or outermost ring concluding the data set.

Eleven timbers comprising the cupboard front frame were sampled, and numbered **coth1** to **coth11**. In addition all of the panel edges were cleaned by the furniture conservationist and photographs taken of the edges. Virtually all of the carved panels were cut from large relatively fast-grown trees. However, the resolution of the photographs were not sufficient to allow adequate measurements to be made, therefore the carved panels and back boards were measured directly by graticule in the laboratory. Therefore an additional thirteen ring sequences were obtained in this manner, numbered **coth12** to **coth24**. The front carved door panels included samples **coth12** to **coth14**, and **coth19** to **coth21**. Panel 7 had a large crack in the edge and there the two sequences were labelled **coth20a1** and **coth20a2**. The two drawer panels were made up of two oddly-matched boards each and were numbered **coth15** to **coth18**, and the backing panels were numbered **coth22** to **coth24**.

All of the samples were compared with each other and a number of same-tree matches were found. Samples **coth1**, **coth2**, and **coth9** from the cupboard frame were all determined to have originated from a single parent tree and were combined to form the same-tree mean **coth129**. Similarly samples **coth3** and **coth7** were combined to form the same-tree mean **coth37**. Three of the drawer panel samples **coth15**, **coth16**, and **coth18** were combined to form the same-tree mean **coth1568**. Two of the carved panels **coth13** and **coth21** were combined to form the same-tree mean **coth1321**, and most significantly one of the carved panels **coth19** and one of the backing panels **coth24** were found to have originated from the same tree (Figure 1) and combined to form the same tree mean **coth1924**.



1 Comparison between **coth19** and **coth24** showing same tree match between carved front panel and backing panel.

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Sourcing the wood

All of these same-tree means were then used in the subsequent analysis and were found to match with 13 individual sample sequences. These were therefore combined to form the 183-ring site master COTEHELE. This was compared with the database of reference chronologies and was found to date exceptionally well, spanning the years 1327–1509 (Table 2). The best matches were found from sites in the Welsh Marches, with the match with Michaelchurch Ecsley, in south-west Herefordshire, being exceptionally high with a *t*-value of 10.06.

Date

Only one of the timbers retained a heartwood/sapwood transition — the top rail of the cupboard frame (coth3). This had a heartwood/sapwood boundary of 1509, which gives a felling date range of 1520–50 using the empirical sapwood estimate of 11–41 years. As the ring widths were becoming exceptionally narrow as it approached the sapwood boundary, it is most likely that the felling date would be towards the end of this range rather than at the beginning. This interpretation is supported by sample coth4, which had a last measured ring date of 1506, without evidence of any heartwood/sapwood boundary, but at least seven rings beyond this at the point of sampling were noted on account of grain drift, giving a *terminus post quem* date no earlier than after 1524. Hence it is most likely that the cupboard frame was constructed between 1524 and 1550, and probably towards the latter part of this range.

The date of the carved panels themselves is slightly more problematic in that none of these retained any heartwood/sapwood boundaries. However, the latest *terminus post quem* date given for a carved panel is after 1503, and the latest possible *terminus post quem* date for a backing panel is after 1509. Given that the carved panels and the backing panels are contemporary due to the fact that two of these originated from the same tree, the later *terminus post quem* date of after 1509 should be applied to both groups. Similarly the drawer fronts produced a *terminus post quem* date of after 1507, suggesting that these are virtually contemporary with the other carved panels. It is not really possible to say that the carved panels are significantly older than the cupboard frame, but it is possible for them to date as much as forty years earlier, as well as being coeval. However, given that they are from significantly faster grown trees than the cupboard frame, it does suggest that the timber originated from different sources, although still within the same geographical area given the cross-matches between the different groups of elements. The fact that they are derived from fast-grown timber also suggests that not too many years sapwood and adjacent heartwood would have been trimmed off the panels, making them unlikely to have been any later than the later part of the 1524–50 date range for the cupboard frame.

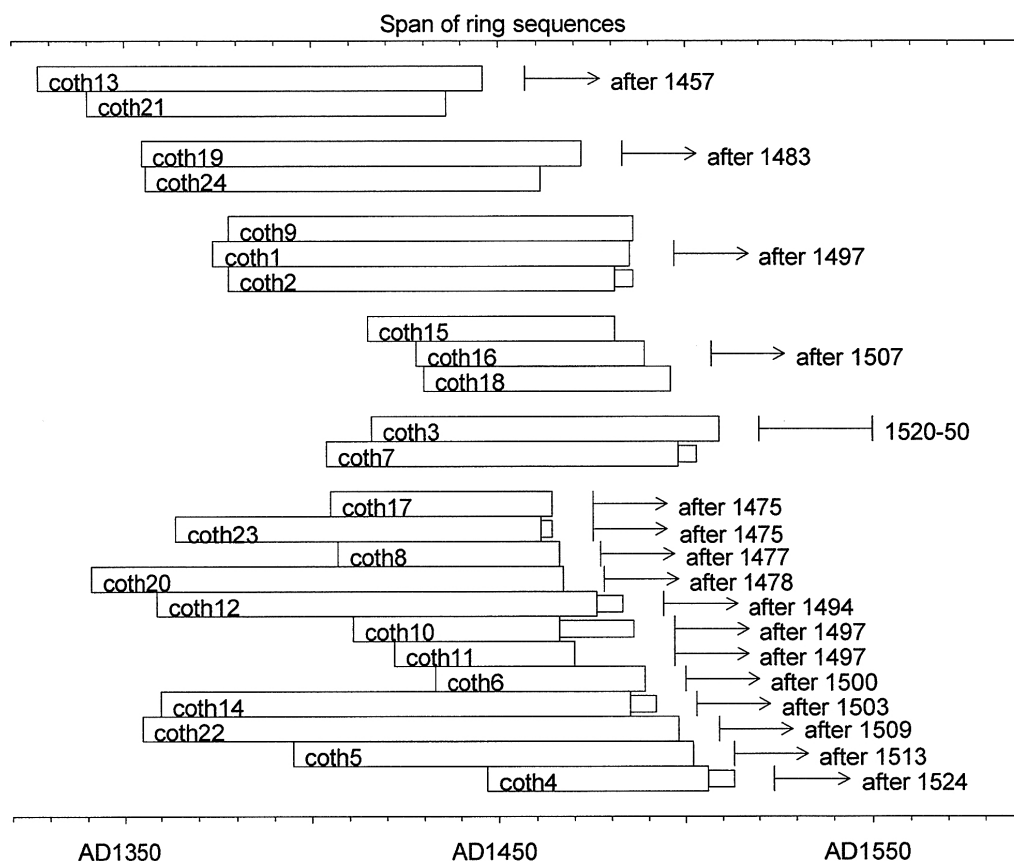
Table 1 Summary of Tree-Ring Dating

SAMPLE NUMBER AND TYPE	TIMBER AND POSITION	DATES AD SPANNING	H/S BDRY	+ RINGS FROM GRAIN DRIFT	NO. OF RINGS	MEAN WIDTH mm	STD DEV mm	MEAN SENS mm	FELLING SEASONS AND DATES/DATE RANGES (AD)
CUPBOARD FRONT									
coth1	mc	1374-1485			112	1.52	0.45	0.157	(After 1497)
coth2	mc	1378-1481		+5	104	1.63	0.40	0.162	After 1497
coth3	mc	1416-1509	1509	H/S	94	1.71	0.86	0.163	1520-50
*coth4	mc	1447-1506		+7	60	1.62	0.99	0.179	After 1524
*coth5	mc	1395-1502			108	1.57	0.49	0.161	After 1513
*coth6	mc	1433-1489			57	2.47	0.96	0.178	After 1500
coth7	mc	1404-1498		+5	95	1.78	0.72	0.156	(1520-50)
*coth8	mc	1407-1466			60	2.76	0.53	0.155	After 1477
coth9	mc	1378-1486			109	1.57	0.65	0.170	After 1497
*coth10	mc	1411-1466		+20	56	2.21	0.42	0.136	After 1497
*coth11	mc	1422-1470			49	2.62	0.51	0.151	After 1497
*coth129	mc	1374-1486			113	1.57	0.47	0.152	After 1497
*coth37	mc	1404-1509			106	1.72	0.80	0.157	1520-50
CARVED PANELS									
*coth12	g	1359-1476		+7	118	3.56	1.08	0.189	After 1494
coth13	g	1327-1446			120	4.01	1.09	0.189	After 1457
*coth14	g	1360-1485		+7	126	3.03	1.13	0.185	After 1503
coth19	g	1355-1472			118	3.18	1.30	0.199	After 1483
*coth20a1	g	1341-1416			76	3.94	1.16	0.195	
*coth20a2	g	1426-1467			42	3.10	0.99	0.140	After 1478
coth21	g	1340-1436			97	3.86	1.08	0.196	(After 1457)
DRAWER PANELS									
coth15	g	1415-1481			67	2.99	0.92	0.297	(After 1507)
coth16	g	1428-1489			62	3.09	1.16	0.283	(After 1507)
*coth17	g	1405-1464			60	3.33	0.90	0.294	After 1475
coth18	g	1430-1496			67	3.01	1.02	0.230	After 1507
BACK PANELS									
*coth22	g	1355-1498			144	2.49	1.39	0.191	After 1509
*coth23	g	1364-1461		+3	98	3.76	1.15	0.256	After 1475
coth24	g	1356-1461			106	3.32	1.42	0.173	(After 1483)
*coth1568	g	1415-1496			82	3.00	0.97	0.258	After 1507
*coth1321	g	1327-1446			120	3.98	1.08	0.182	After 1457
*coth1924	g	1355-1472			118	3.17	1.30	0.167	After 1483
* = COTEHELE Site Master		1327-1509			183	3.02	1.43	0.159	

Key: *, †, § = sample included in site-master; c = core; mc = micro-core; s = slice/section; g = graticule; p = photograph; ½C, C = bark edge present, partial or complete ring;
 ½C = spring (last partial ring not measured), ¼C = summer/autumn (last partial ring not measured), or C = winter felling (ring measured);
 H/S bdr = heartwood/sapwood boundary — last heartwood ring date; std devn = standard deviation; mean sens = mean sensitivity. Sapwood estimate 11-41 rings used (Miles 1997).

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Table 2 Bar diagram showing dated timbers in chronological position



APPENDIX II

THE COSTUME

*Catherine Richardson and Eleanor Lowe*⁹⁰

A particular feature of this cupboard front is its profusion of decorative carving, amongst which human figures in period costume proliferate. Four of the panels and most of the frame include figure-work, and this offers a potential useful means of dating this piece of furniture. However, contemporary illustrations of costume rarely show the dress of anyone other than the highest members of society, or the most affluent, thus there is a paucity of evidence for costume for people such as those depicted on the Cotehele cupboard. Additionally, it may be noted that this was a piece of provincial workmanship and this adds a further layer of difficulty to the problem. It is possible to show from many details on the cupboard, such as the musical instruments, that this carver was capable of representing objects accurately; nevertheless his human figures are

⁹⁰ This commentary has been taken from the 2006 report on the Cotehele cupboard and amended following discussion with Ninya Mikhaila and Caroline Johnson.

poorly represented which leads us to ask if he minimised or exaggerated certain features. Further, now that it can be demonstrated that the cupboard probably incorporates two phases of work, it can be seen that some of the costume reflects changes in fashion from the Henrician through to the Marian periods.

Tree-ring dating shows that the cupboard front can be dated to after 1524 and as late as 1550; in general terms the dates to emerge from an analysis of the costume supports a date in the mid-sixteenth century.

The musicians in panel three are dressed identically (Figure 9). Their tall crowned hats, with feathers and hatbands, have prompted confusion with regards to dating the panel. Such hats are more commonly associated with the later Tudor period, although not exclusively. Although previous discussion of the costume depicted on the cupboard suggested that the tall hats that proliferate throughout should be dated to the 1560s or 1570s, further research indicates that sugar-loaf hats (occasionally termed copataine or copintank hats) were mentioned in the earlier sixteenth century and can be seen in a painting dated to *c.* 1545. This shows the embarkation of Henry VIII at Dover on 31 May 1520, although it is now thought possible it represents a different, later event.⁹¹ Tall hats are not common in this image, where flat caps predominate. Hats of this sort begin appearing in paintings in the 1560s,⁹² becoming more common in the 1570s and beyond. As Margaret Scott has pointed out,⁹³ the musicians in Joris Hoefnagel's 'A Marriage Feast at Bermondsey' are wearing similar tall hats in a painting dated as *c.* 1570 by Roy Strong.⁹⁴ Like them, the Cotehele musicians are also wearing doublets with skirts, fastened with buttons; the doublets might be belted, but their arms hide this area. Small ruffs appear at the top of their doublets. The Cotehele musicians may also wear small ruffs at their wrists, as do the Bermondsey musicians, but this is difficult to discern since the two hands which would be visible have been damaged. Both sets of musicians also wear trunk hose, which in the Cotehele panel have been decorated with what could be vertical slashing or panes of material. Covering the remainder of the legs are hose which, given the carved lines on the ankle and lower calf, appear to have been pieced together from cloth rather than knitted. Their fitted sleeves combine a pattern of bands running around the arm, carved to suggest twisted material or a two-tone effect (which also appears in their hatbands), with slashes. Hanging sleeves fall from the musicians' shoulders, and are decorated with diagonal and vertical bands.

The buttons featured on the musicians' coats are more usually found on clothing from the 1560s onwards. Their high collars and small ruffs emerge in paintings of the 1550s and 1560s. Although hanging sleeves appear on official garments towards the end of the Tudor period, they had been a feature of an earlier time. However, King Phillip II of Spain appears to be wearing them as part of a jerkin over his doublet in 1558.⁹⁵ The vertical slashing, which might be depicted on the trunkhose, is another popular Spanish fashion adopted by the English during the 1550s.

At odds with these styles are the musicians' square-toed shoes, a fashion particularly in vogue during Henry VIII's reign. Perhaps they are intended as an antiquated, distinctive feature of dress linked with the musicians' profession, and identification with an old and traditional art form. Since clothing was a vital indicator of status, gender and profession in the period it was invested with symbolic as well as economic value. It is not uncommon to find that subjects of portraits have been painted wearing clothing which is unfashionable, yet its old-fashioned value lends the sitter an easily recognisable currency of authority and respectability.

⁹¹ Starkey and Doran (2009), p. 93.

⁹² Ashelford (1983), p. 79.

⁹³ Margaret Scott, personal communication to Nicholas Riall, 2005.

⁹⁴ Strong (1969), pp. 148–49.

⁹⁵ Ashelford (1988), p. 64.

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The doublets and trunkhose of the men who decorate the surround of the panels are decorated in a similar way to those of the musicians, either suggesting the limitations of the carving or the desire of the carver to represent these men in some sort of uniform. When considered with the musicians, the overall effect is of a unified livery. The doublets of the figures surrounding the panels lack buttons, and this suggests some form of hunting tunic whose deep stripes may indicate the particular livery of a household or retinue. All men carved on the panel wear codpieces, which were going out of fashion by the 1580s. One significant difference between the hunting men and musicians is that the former have round-toed shoes, while those belonging to the latter are square-toed. These round-toed shoes are more common from the 1550s onwards, so the hunting men's shoes are more in keeping with the clothing depicted throughout. They are also clearly carved as welted shoes, not turned: a newer emerging style. The musicians' square-toed shoes appear all the more antiquated in contrast.

The huntsman in the bottom left corner deserves special attention. His clothing differs subtly from his fellows in the special shape of his collar. This might represent some sort of stock being worn around the neck or a different collar-line on his doublet or tunic. His hand is also curiously obscured, possibly placed within one of the chevrons which decorate the huntsmen's doublets, as if protecting it. Another possible explanation is that he is wearing some sort of glove. The gesture is reminiscent of those made by fashionable and often melancholy young men in portraits and miniatures of the late sixteenth century (see for instance Hilliard's 'Young Man Among Roses' of 1587 or Oliver's 'Unknown Melancholy Young Man' c. 1590), although they more usually lay their hand upon their heart. In this instance, his distinctive portrayal may serve to mark him out as the master of the hunt. In an engraving entitled 'The Queen out hunting' from 1575,⁹⁶ the master huntsman is marked by his superior clothes: the slashing on his doublet, the prominent shape of the trunkhose, and the ruff which sits above his standing collar. An engraving of 'The Falconer' depicts a tall hat, ruffs and similarly decorated trunkhose to those of the huntsmen depicted in the Cotehele panel.⁹⁷

The princess's clothing in panel 8 bears stylistic similarities with that of the musicians. All parties have small ruffs at the neck (and possibly also wrists), buttons fastening upper body garments, and sleeves similarly decorated with elliptical slashes. The princess's head-gear is difficult to determine. It could be some sort of French hood, a 1530s fashion which continued to be worn into the seventeenth century. The princess's skirt seems to hang straight, suggesting that she might be wearing a Spanish farthingale, popular from 1545 when it was first mentioned in the royal Wardrobe Accounts. This correlates with identifiable Spanish fashions in the clothing of the two musicians. Despite our referring to this woman as a 'princess', she is depicted wearing a notably rural, rather than courtly, style of dress indicative of gentry rather than noble status. A similar version of the woman's dress, and head-gear, is illustrated in a woodcut published in 1563, which indicates the style of dress was almost certainly in vogue for a period before this, but we cannot be certain how long this might be.

Caroline Johnson points out that there is a distinction to be drawn between the silhouettes of the musicians, representing the figures in the panels, and the huntsmen portrayed on the cupboard frame. The general 'look' of the huntsmen, their body shapes and the manner in which they are dressed and the style of their shoes are all indicative of a date in the 1550s — they have a 1550s 'diagram'. By contrast, the musicians' costume, their body shapes and sense of dress, and especially their shoes, evince a diagram more appropriate to the 1540s. The musicians could however be wearing a household livery which in itself might reflect an 'antiquity'.

⁹⁶ Ashelford (1988), p. 88.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 89.