

EDITORIAL

As *Regional Furniture* XII was reaching proof stage this year, the news came that Christopher Gilbert had died. Characteristically, Christopher had been very supportive in the production of this volume; encouraging and motivating the contributors, producing essential pieces of information and photographs from his files and generally providing the cement that keeps us furniture historians together. He had been the first to welcome an anthology conceived as a forum for Gillow writers and researchers and, needless to say, was the first to submit his own article on the subject: 'Gillow at Denton Hall, Yorkshire' which arrived with the customary lightning speed and with his good wishes for the success of the number. As the founding editor of this journal and the author of its manifesto, Christopher was strongly committed to making a place for the study of fashionable as well as common furniture from the regions. Gillow and price books were two topics that he was particularly keen to encourage others to research, and it is to be hoped that Christopher's successors will not fail him in publishing appropriately high-standard work in these fields.

Gillow of Lancaster have been the subject of two *Regional Furniture* articles, in 1988 and 1995, but this volume is entirely devoted to the firm. It is not intended to be the last word in this gripping subject area, but it will certainly help Gillow studies to be carried forward in several important ways. The articles that follow will help in the accurate identification of furniture at both ends of the Gillow chronology through illustration and discussion of newly-discovered unmarked work made by the company prior to 1780, and by the provision of a key to the firm's coded date stamps used in the nineteenth century. There is a comprehensive survey of Gillow's work in Scotland, which illuminates the similarity between furniture preferences in the north of England and in Scotland, and also important discussion of exactly what was made in London and Lancaster. Several scholars have turned their attention to Gillow because the company's business archive, by far the most complete to have survived from any eighteenth or nineteenth century cabinet making operation, can reveal so much about the dynamics of regional furniture. Adam Bowett's lengthy examination of the mahogany trade, for example, demonstrates that this is just one area into which a detailed study of the Gillow archive can throw more light than just about any other source.

There are broad issues that lay beyond the scope of the current volume. For example, it would be a very useful exercise to reprint, in their entirety, the eighteenth century books of prices that were produced privately by Gillow; and a study of the firm's work in Ireland would be a worthwhile project. Whilst providing the impetus for such new work in the future this volume must stand, also, as a tribute to Dr Lindsay Boynton and Mrs Davidson How, both pioneering Gillow scholars who sadly died before they could realise their separate ambitions to produce major monographs on the subject.

David Jones