

EDITORIAL

The Regional Furniture Society has not been established lightly and the decision to publish yet another learned journal followed much serious thought. It was during 1984 that the idea was discussed of forming a group committed to the study and appreciation of regional traditions and all branches of vernacular furniture. It was also felt there was a genuine need to provide a focus for research on Welsh, Scottish and Irish furniture. Several informal meetings, lectures and a conference were organised to test the level of support for such an enterprise. The numbers and enthusiasm of those attending indicated widespread interest in the venture, so a committee was elected (see inside front cover) and a constitution drawn up.

The community of scholars has been well served over the past twenty-two years by the Furniture History Society and its excellent journal. But, while articles on provincial furniture have appeared, the contents, perhaps inevitably, tend to concentrate on the products of fashionable firms and, increasingly, continental furniture and interiors. It is surely a healthy sign of the versatility of English furniture studies that so many collectors, dealers, curators, researchers and well-wishers have declared a positive interest by joining the RFS. The membership is well aware of the urgent field work, archives research and recording that needs to be done on the provincial furniture trade and vernacular sub-groups generally. We trust that everyone who cares about furniture will welcome this brave new initiative which has already had a stimulating effect on levels of activity.

Our first volume has been conceived as a kind of manifesto of the RFS by illustrating, as best we can within the limits of a single number, something of the variety of topics encompassed by the subject. This is why the majority of contributions are fairly short. We hope in the future to publish important source material which is unlikely to interest a commercial publisher but which ought to be made available to students such as provincial price books, workshop inventories, albums of manuscript designs and trade catalogues featuring common furniture. We expect to be judged largely by the quality of our journal, so the editor would be glad to hear from any readers who wish to submit either an article or a shorter notice.

Being a young society we could never have afforded to publish this first issue of *Regional Furniture* without generous external funding, and the Council wish to thank in particular Christie's; Sotheby's; Phillips International Auctioneers; the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (London) Ltd and the Furniture History Society, each of whom made a substantial donation. We are also indebted to the following for generous contributions: Norman R. Adams Ltd; Booth American; Arthur Brett & Sons Ltd; Hotspur Ltd; H. W. Keil Ltd; John Keil Ltd; Ronald A. Lee (Fine Arts) Ltd; Charles Lumb & Sons Ltd; Mallett & Son (Antiques) Ltd; E. W. Webster Antiques; Timothy Wilson Antiques; Windsor House Antiques (Leeds) Ltd. We are infinitely grateful to our many benefactors.

CHRISTOPHER GILBERT