

A SALOP FRIENDLY SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP CARD

Simon Jervis

In her account of the London furniture trade Pat Kirkham illustrates a membership card on The United Society of Cabinet Makers, designed by Thomas Sheraton and bearing a pen inscription including the date 1801 (Fig. 1).¹ This note is to record the presence in the Print Room of the Victoria & Albert Museum of a similar card, issued by the Salop Friendly Society of Cabinet Makers, bearing the printed date 1807 (Fig. 2).²

The card, printed in blue ink, is much worn and abraded. It is irregularly trimmed to shape and about 3 inches (7.7 cm) wide and 4⁹/₁₆ inches (11.6 cm) high. At the top is a tablet bearing the engraved inscription 'SALOP 1807', flanked by drapes comparable to but simpler than those on the Sheraton card. Below in the centre is the all-seeing eye of God flanked by the town arms of Shrewsbury in duplicate, underneath which runs a ribbon with the engraved inscription, 'TO REPAIR THE LOSS OF TOOLS BY FIRE', raised in the centre to enclose clasped hands. The Sheraton card includes the same inscription on a tool-box and has the clasped hands twice, within oval frames in approximately the same position as the repeated arms of Shrewsbury on the Salop card. The main feature of the latter, below the ribbon, is a *bonheur-du-jour*, which has clearly been copied from the Sheraton card, and reversed and coarsened in the process. It is flanked by the engraved inscription 'The SALOP Friendly Society of CABINET MAKERS'. Between the legs of the *bonheur-du-jour* is the abbreviation 'No. .' for 'number', and below to the right the engraved inscription 'PRESIDENT'.

There are three pen inscriptions on the Salop card, not all of them, unfortunately, legible, despite efforts with infra-red and ultra-violet light.³ That at the top between drapes and arms reads 'January [not entirely clear] 1827 [clear]'. The second, on either side of the top of the *bonheur-du-jour* reads 'Thos. [clear]', 'Bxxxxx [illegible]', and the third, to the left of 'President', reads 'Edward Walsh [fairly clear]'.

A check of readily available sources has failed to reveal any information on Edward Walsh or the Salop Friendly Society of Cabinet Makers.⁴ From the evidence of the dates on the card this society must have survived twenty years at least from 1807 to 1827. Although it could have been a Shropshire society based elsewhere, Shrewsbury seems the most likely location. Holden's London and County Directory of 1809 to 1811 lists the following furniture tradesmen in Shrewsbury:

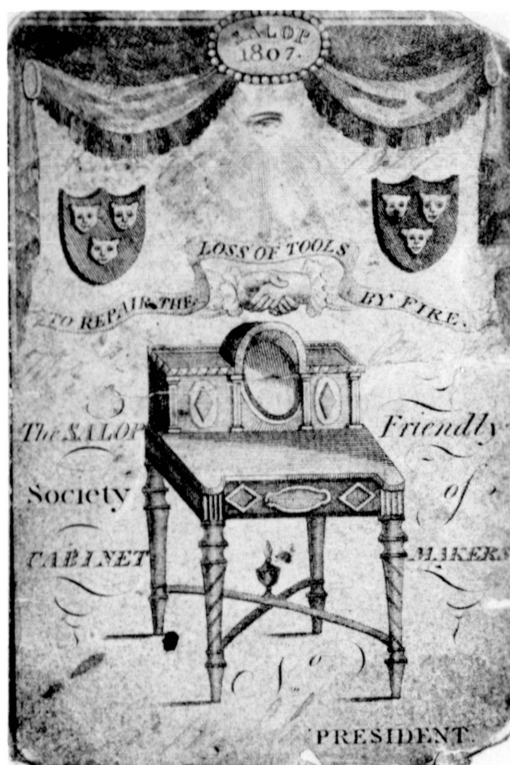
Cooper James, cabinet & chair mak. Wyle-cop
Davis Wm, upholsterer, Kiln-Lane
Donaldson Thos, carver & gilder, High-st.
Hill Hannah, furniture-broker, High-st.
Horley Wm. mahogany & timber merchant Mardol
Leake Edw. cabinetmaker, Wyle-cop
Lloyd Wm. upholsterer, Square
Peate S. furniture-broker, Castle-gates
Perry, J. upholsterer, Pride-hill

Tudor Samuel, upholsterer, College-hill
Wood Rich. cabinetmaker, Shoplatch

It is possible that Edward Walsh was a journeyman with one of these firms or their successors. But his identification must await further research. What is certain is that the designer and engraver of the Salop card, who may have been one and the same person, was aware of the Sheraton card, probably at first or possibly at second hand. It is interesting to speculate on the lines of communication which led to its production in this form.⁵

REFERENCES

1. Pat Kirkham, 'The London Furniture Trade 1700-1870', *Furniture History*, xxiv (1988), p. 148 and Fig. 1.
2. Museum Number E 429-1957. No information is recorded as to its provenance.
3. I am grateful to Susanna Edmunds for assistance.
4. Mr Anthony M. Carr, Local Studies Librarian kindly searched in the Shrewsbury Local Studies Library, and Miss R. E. Bagley, Head of Records and Research kindly searched in the County Record Office where neither the Shropshire Quarter Sessions Index of Friendly Societies articles deposited 1795-1840, nor the general subject index produced any information.
5. After this note was completed Christopher Gilbert kindly drew my attention to a card of the Haverfordwest Cabinet Makers' Society illustrated in L. Twiston-Davies and H. J. Lloyd-Johnes, *Welsh Furniture, An Introduction* (1950), Fig. 126. This incorporates a desk copied from Sheraton's *Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book*, pl. 58, dated 17 October 1792, 'A Kidney Table'.



1. Membership card of The United Society of Cabinet Makers, signed 'T Sheraton fecit'. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



2. Membership card of The Salop Friendly Society of Cabinet Makers. Victoria & Albert Museum, London