



*Slate Miniature*

## SLATE MINIATURE CHEST OF DRAWERS front cover illustration

Dimensions: 200 x 90 x 160 mm. Mid 19th century.

This type of miniature originates from the locality of the Ffestiniog slate quarries in North Wales. The range of 19th century miniatures includes representations of bureaux, dressers, chiffoniers, long-case clocks and a variety of ladies shoes. Many were used as doorstops, others as ornaments and nowadays are found throughout worker's own homes and doubtless many others. A number of slate miniatures are housed in the National Museum of Wales, St. Fagans, Cardiff.

Surviving slate miniatures are highly prized and appreciated today as evocative reminders of the social history of their era and the tough, bleak day to day existence of much of the local population. These craft skills were more widely employed in the preparation of fireplace surrounds, door lintels, and tombstones.

Some examples are particularly significant since they incorporate regional devices commonly found in 18th and 19th century furniture from Anglesey and North Wales. Corded or rope twist quarter columns are typical embellishments which are to be found on many oak dressers and other case furniture originating from North Wales.

There appears to be scope for an in-depth study of this craft activity and an appraisal of the links between the social and material culture associated with this aspect of the slate industry.

An oak chest of drawers (figure 1) has recently been found in the Bala area which incorporates distinct corded or rope twist features. This rugged chest of drawers comprises two short and three long graduated drawers. The corded quarter columns have been crudely, but effectively, hand carved, as has the most unusual mock-dentil decoration to the base (front and sides). Of note is the unusual thickness of timber used throughout, including the pine drawer linings. Drawer fronts have a slight lip moulding and for decoration rely on simple linear scored lines and elongated diamond shaped escutcheons. There are no lockplates. Bun handles probably later replacements, otherwise condition is original. Colour: dark reddish brown with excellent patina.

Dimensions: 1120 x 530 x 1010 mm. Mid 19th century.

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Fig. 1 Oak chest of drawers from Bala