

A CARMARTHEN BOOKCASE

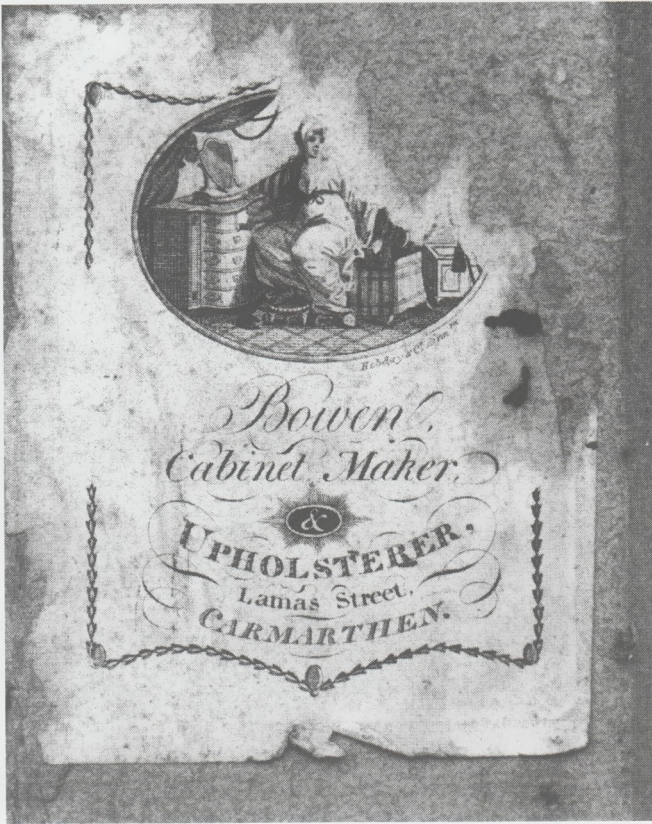


Fig. 5 Label from inside the drawer

An important mahogany bookcase fitted with a secretaire, has been acquired for the Carmarthen County Museum by Carmarthenshire County Council with the assistance of the MGC/V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

It appeared in a local saleroom in relatively untouched condition - but missing a few parts - from what was probably its original home in nearby Lampeter. Its significance lies in the presence inside the first drawer below the secretaire of the trade label of 'Mr Bowen, Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer, Lammas St, Carmarthen'.

Labelled pieces are rare in any area, and there are apparently no others in public collections in Wales. Lammas St is one of the main shopping streets in present day Carmarthen, and at the end of the 18th century contained several cabinet-makers' premises, including that of the leading firm of David Morley. The craftsmanship is of high quality, and provides further evidence of the thriving furniture trade in West Wales at this period. Mr Bowen is not listed in any of the Trade Directories, but his death and occupation were briefly noted in 'The Cambrian' on 10th January 1807. No doubt there is much more information waiting to be unearthed. Research into this piece and its maker underlies the fact that however time-consuming, the

sources for regional furniture studies have inevitably to be sought in the locality.

The bookcase has been sensitively restored by Luke Millar, who has written a full account for the forthcoming Journal.

Richard Bebb



Fig. 6 A recent acquisition by Carmarthen Country Museum