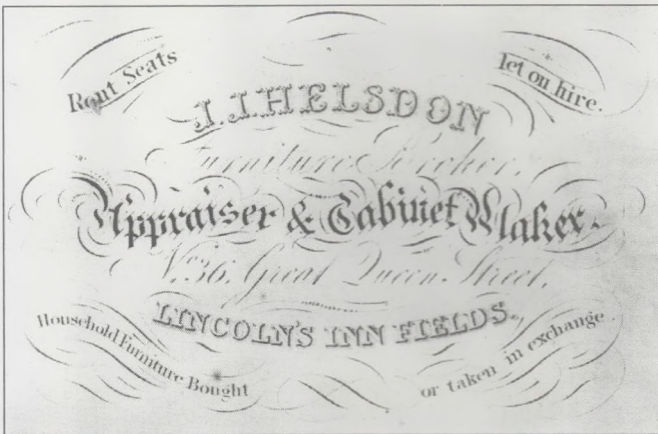


## RETAILERS' LABELS

There has clearly been a greatly increased interest in stamped and labelled furniture since the publication of the *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers* in 1986. It is, of course, an essential part of the study of the regional origins of furniture, be they London or elsewhere.

Further volumes, such as Christopher Gilbert's *Dictionary of Marked London Furniture* (1996) and our own *Anthology of Regional Furniture with Makers' Identification* (1993 Journal) have increased the reference material available. Besides the risk of fraudulent and transferred labels which profiteering can bring, and uncertainty on occasion as to whether a signature or label is that of the maker or an owner or a restorer or re-upholsterer, a good number of stamps and labels have been applied by retailers and second-hand furniture dealers, which have often been taken to be the makers by the uninitiated. The bulk of these relate to large London firms of the 19th or



**Fig. 3** A mahogany chest of drawers, circa 1840, labelled on a drawer lining J. J. Helsdon (courtesy of Christie's South Kensington, 29th April 1998, lot 196)



**Fig. 4** A George I walnut chest on stand circa 1725 (courtesy of Michael Wakelin and Helen Linfield)

early decades of the 20th century, such as Edwards and Roberts, Town and Emanuel or Gill and Reigate, many of whom manufactured, retailed, restored and embellished in the course of a complete wholesale and interior design service. The actual makers were often small firms whose identities were deliberately suppressed by the larger ones. Occasionally examples appear bearing two stamps, such as a mahogany side cabinet sold at Woolley & Wallis at Salisbury (26 August 1993, lot 17) stamped 'Gillow & Co No. 7957' as well as H. Mawer & Stephenson Ltd, London, who had large premises in Fulham Road as second-hand dealers.

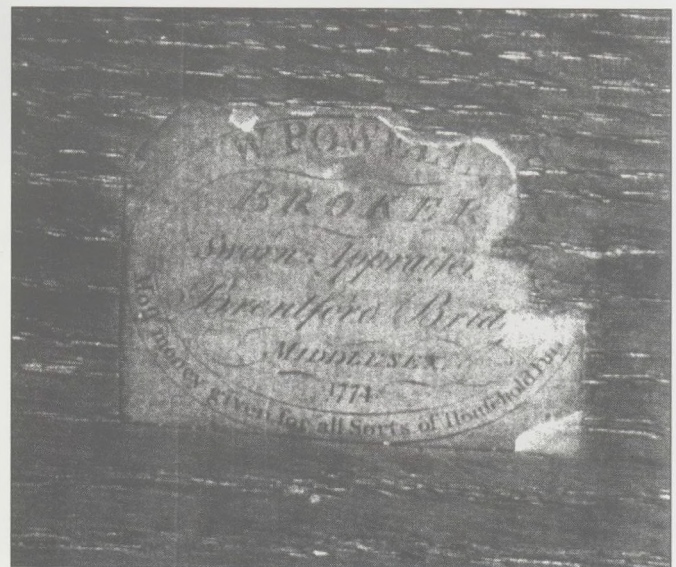
There is a lot more research to be done in this field, both on London and regional retailers, but two recent examples that have come to my attention are worth recording.

1) J. J. Helsdon or Helston of Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, who terms himself a Furniture Broker (i.e. dealer), Appraiser and Cabinet Maker, hiring out rout chairs and buying or exchanging household furniture. The label (fig. 3) is perhaps of the period of the chest, although earlier 19th century and later Victorian walnut furniture has been recorded, similarly labelled.

2) A regional example with the rare feature of a date, 1774: W. Powell of Brentford Bridge, Middlesex, who calls himself a Broker and Sworn Appraiser and claims 'Most money given for all Sorts of Household Furniture' (fig. 5).

The label was found on a walnut chest-on-stand (fig. 4) made perhaps fifty years earlier. It would be interesting to know where it was made and how far it might have travelled in the intervening period.

*Christopher Claxton Stevens*



**Fig. 5** A small printed label on the drawer lining of the chest on stand.