

## **AM Visit to The Depot of the Zuiderzee Museum, Enkhuizen on Thursday 27th September 2001**

The Museum consists of three parts: an open-air museum, a folklore museum, and a storage depot, where the main furniture collections are held. Our attention focused on this depot in a modern high-security industrial unit where the furniture was stored in aisles and arranged by type and form with the smaller pieces on shelving. There were many examples of klaptafels (fig 15), gateleg tables, kinderstoelen (fig 16), corner cupboards (fig 17), kasts (figs 18, 20, 21, 22), chests, stands, bed steps (fig 19), chairs, stools, sleighs and a few dressers incorporating racks: perfect for making comparisons.

The majority of the furniture was, or had at one time, been painted on a softwood carcass and was constructed in the vernacular tradition. However it was interesting to note that a few pieces of 17th century painted case

furniture used an oak carcass. We were told that even when painted furniture comes up for resale, it is still being stripped by the unenlightened. Some of the furniture in the depot was awaiting restoration before it could be made available for display in other museums.

The most imposing pieces were the standing cupboards or kasts<sup>11</sup>. Some were two-stage, with a pair of doors in each stage, and others incorporated an additional middle section, which had an opening at the front to provide a display area for the prized possessions of the household. The upper edge and rounded upper corners of this opening often had saw teeth cut decoration. Such furniture might well be compared with the Welsh tridarn, in that many families would have aspired to own one. Some examples had superbly painted biblical scenes on each of the door panels with the upper or lower frieze having a painted rural scene. The front and sides had large flower or plant designs painted on them. The combination of a cavetto moulded cornice, applied intermediate horizontal mouldings, a long shallow front drawer and bun feet, made these cupboards very attractive. One kast had a date of 1676 painted on the drawer front and reputedly came from Assendelft, just north of Amsterdam, a possible centre of manufacture.

The two-stage kasts had either a middle drawer, a base drawer, or no drawer at all. Some had a ventilated upper stage, with the two doors having baluster-turned spindles. They were decorated with biblical scenes, or sombre baroque schemes using a cartouche and fruit in the design, or were painted to simulate a hardwood.

There were about a dozen wall-hung corner cupboards (fig 17) stored on shelving. Most of the examples were bow-fronted, with single or double doors, painted with biblical scenes. They had pierced butterfly hinges, externally mounted, and probably dating to the first half of the 18th century, concealed hinges becoming common in the third quarter. It was suggested that the brass butterfly hinges were exported from England. The extent of the export trade to England of these cupboards still remains uncertain. A standing corner cupboard from the late 18th century, that looked as if it had been part of a room scheme, had a painted light blue background and, within a gold border, hung a bronze basket of flowers, trophy like, in the Louis XVI style.

There were a few pedestal tables and klaptafels, both types having applied oval moulded edged tops and wide but shallow ogee-shaped indentations along the perimeter. The pedestal type had a birdcage support, a baluster turned stem and three, square-section swept feet and a table top which had a biblical scene painted on it. The klaptafel (fig 15) type had three baluster turned legs, one of which was gated and because the table top tipped upwards (while out of use), its underside was painted with the same stylised flower and plant decoration as the top.

Low benches, that could also have been used as small tables, steps or cabinet stands, included ones of boarded construction, with silhouette shaped and pierced legs

and aprons. Another type had a moulded edged top with four baluster-turned legs and a lower edge to the apron which is very similar to the upper edge of the display area of certain kasts. All were painted in two colours or grained.

There were numerous pairs of trestle boards, similar to the examples in Leeuwarden Museum (fig 10). These were up to 2 feet in height and incorporated silhouette-shaped sides or sides with pierced decoration. Some were lavishly decorated with multi-coloured geometric designs or with damsels and garlands. These are sometimes offered for sale in England as 'summer andirons', when in fact they were widely used as cabinet supports. A low, boarded table had pierced lyre-shaped legs and a similar shaped top, apron and shelf. It was brightly painted in orange with gold linings.

Chairs were mainly turned with rushed seats and arched ladder-backs. The legs had ball-turned feet, two or three side stretchers and pronounced knops or finials. The wood looked like beech, but was painted with various small plant or flower patterns on a monochrome base colour. There was one small example of a three-legged turner's chair with a triangular rushed seat.

There was not enough time to look at all the collection, but we felt privileged to be allowed close access to many wonderful pieces, some of which could be considered to be minor works of art.

*Ian Phillips*

## **PM Visit to The Protestant Church, Twisk 27th September 2001**

The village of Twisk is about 20 miles north of Amsterdam and has a long, narrow cobbled street, on either side of which lie detached farms and houses. A stream runs down one side of the street and each dwelling on that side has a small bridge for access to its frontage. The earliest dwellings are 17th and 18th century farmsteads or Stolphoeven, each with a distinctive pyramid-shaped thatched roof and each with a large barn immediately behind. Over the years houses have been built between the farmsteads, which no doubt hastened the introduction of a preservation order to restrict further development.

The church dates from the 14th century, its brick tower from the 15th century, and the present nave with a fine wagon roof is from the 16th century. The first restoration was in 1880, but between 1977-1981 it was sympathetically restored under the direction of the architect Mr Jaap Schipper BNA, our guide. The pulpit had skilfully carved archaded panels with shields bearing sculptured biblical scenes, caryatids at each corner and a date of 1731. The oak baptistery screen of 1763 had single-bine twist balusters and corner posts surmounted by turned palisander finials. The corner posts were in two halves and held together with the original large dome-headed screwed bolts: an early example of this method of construction.



The village chest (fig 23), from the mid 18th century, was of boarded and nailed type, with a plank top having an applied edge moulding. It had eight iron corner straps, two long padlocks and was painted in a baroque design which included a cartouche containing a rural scene surmounted by two female figures. It sat on a low stand with baluster-turned legs and a pierced floral scrolled frieze painted to simulate marble. Scattered around this chest were very decoratively painted stools and stools.

During recent church restorations, remnants of a chair/table were discovered. The surviving seat components, made out of oak with the remains of a reddish brown grained finish, were reassembled. Following further research by Jaap Schipper, a new table top was constructed, based on 17th century illustrations of similar chair/tables in paintings by E. Boursse 1631 and Emanuel De Witte 1615-17 (refer to Technical Note 1). Jaap Schipper, standing to the left hand side of the table in illustration (fig 26), explained the details of this restoration work.

The tower attic room which housed the village museum comprised a fine collection of local antiquities with many examples of treen, slipware, Delft ware, metalware, paintings, bone, photographs and archaeological finds: a most appropriate meeting place for the local history society.

*I. Phillips*