

### 1. Coincidence: Dr Bill Cotton.

In his lecture, Bill described a fieldwork project in rural Carmarthenshire that had been occupying Gerry and himself during the summer – the search for the Cilycum dresser. Not only did the lecture bring us up to date with this research but Bill also included much information on the method of undertaking fieldwork, such as the use of articles in local magazines and newspapers and on local radio to advertise the research and appeal for information and examples, and, of course, documentary research in local archives. Bill used this lecture to emphasise two important elements in fieldwork: firstly the importance of properly recording articles that a researcher finds, even if the provenance is unknown at the time, and secondly, that furniture studies on the ground are about putting people in the centre and that inevitably elements of coincidence and luck are involved. In Bill's stories and slides we met some of the individuals who had contributed to this project.

The dresser which is the subject of this research is of potboard form with a rack and the diagnostic feature of over-sailing circular lobes or 'ears' to the front corners of the dresser base top (fig 10). In April, at the eleventh hour, Bill happened across a catalogue entry for Hy Duke of Dorchester's sale, which contained some information contributed by a vendor; "The 'ears' on the surface of this dresser are indicative of the work of the Williams brothers of Cilycum". Bill and Gerry had seen this feature before but this was the first time it had been associated with a particular workshop. A dawn drive on sale day brought them to Dorchester, where Matthew Denney opened the saleroom early to allow them to photograph and record the dresser.

In their research files, Bill and Gerry had already recorded five examples of dressers with this feature. One had turned up in a sale at Aldridges in Bath; a second is in the Carmarthen Museum. A third was from the National Museum of Wales records in Cardiff, recorded as from Troedrh Farm in the Doethe Valley in Cardiganshire, a neighbouring county but in the same valley sequence as Cilycum and only about 12 miles away. Bill and Gerry had recorded a fourth on a farm at Painscastle, some 15 miles north-east of Brecon. This example was to prove to be outside the cluster forming around Cilycum; it also differed from the others as it had the tapered legs of a Breconshire dresser rather than a potboard. A fifth example was a most fortuitous recording amongst the complete contents of a household, recorded when in Gloucestershire. The father of one of Gerry's teaching colleagues had moved from Wales to be near his daughter. Amongst the furniture brought to Gloucestershire by David Jones, who had been a Regimental Sergeant Major in the Welsh Guards, was an 'eared' dresser (figs 11 & 12).

David Jones's furniture had come to England from the village of Rhandirmyn, the neighbouring village to Cilycum. Coincidence?

A visit to the area put Bill in touch with Leslie Jones in Llandeilo, a woodwork teacher, antiques dealer, restorer and cabinetmaker. He concurred with the attribution to the Williams brothers and was able to put Bill in touch with other owners of dressers from their workshop. Entries in the local press produced yet more examples. These, mainly located in farmhouses, were visited and the dressers recorded along with their detailed oral histories. The family workshop was at the Drovers Arms Public House in Cilycum and perhaps the most closely provenanced of these dressers is the one in the house across the road from the Drovers Arms. It dates circa 1860 and is believed to have been in the house since it was made. The dressers seem to date from the mid 18th century to the mid 19th; after this date the form changes to a glazed cupboard. Who were making the 'eared' dressers before the Williams brothers and where their workshop was remain to be discovered.

Our thanks are due to Bill for a most informative lecture and also for the enthusiasm he always brings to the subject. There was much of very serious note in this work but another useful tip I learned is that enjoying a cup of tea is a most useful asset for researchers in the field.

*Polly Legg*



**Fig. 10** Example of a projecting lobe on the flat top of a Cilycum dresser



Fig. 11 Above: Cilycum dresser

Fig. 12 Right: Detail of a projecting lobe on the flat top of this dresser

## 2.0 Interior domestic arrangements of early 18th century textile workers in the cottage industry

Valerie Bryant introduced her talk by saying that she was the Textile Co-ordinator at Quarry Bank Mill, a large cotton museum near Manchester, where she was responsible for the Handspinning and Weaving Gallery and the Textile Workshop. She started there some 25 years ago and had seen it developed by the Mill Trust from an empty building to the exciting place it is today with early textile machinery, water and steam power. It was at the Mill that Valerie has gained her extensive knowledge about cotton. More recently the Mill has been taken over by the National Trust. The Handspinning and Weaving Gallery features a 'cottage setting' c. 1720 and a 'loom shop' c. 1760, with a team of interpreters to demonstrate their use to the public.

Valerie explained that in the cottage industry, prior to the industrial revolution, many thousands of people worked for a living, spinning and weaving from home on simple textile equipment. Spinning was done by the women and girls on simple 'hoop rim' spindle wheels, and weaving by the menfolk on foot power looms. To prepare the cotton for spinning, young children carded it using a pair of hand carders to straighten the fibres, and then make it into a roving. The spindle wheel on a simple frame standing on three legs was turned by hand, driving a spindle at high speed through a cord connection. In spinning, the thread was first spun off the tip at an angle and then moved across towards the wheel for collection. This was repeated over and over to make enough thread for the loom. By the time girls were eight years old they were spinners. Valerie showed examples of the simple rustic stools which spinners sat on whilst working their wheels.

The foot power loom was a strong timber framework connected by cross beams held in place by wedges. The 'linen warp' running from front to back was mounted on wooden beams and rollers. Within, 'heddle frames' were raised and lowered by foot pedals to form a 'shed', while a shuttle filled with spun cotton 'weft' was passed through to weave the cloth. The weaver sat on a high stool with a seat sloped slightly downwards so he could reach the foot pedals. Valerie briefly mentioned quill winders which look like spinning wheels, but are used to fill small quills or bobbins loaded with weft before they were put into the shuttles. This task the boys would do.

As demand for woven cloth increased during the eighteenth century new inventions were developed. In 1733 John Kay introduced the flying shuttle to enable 'broadcloth' to be woven, where the weaver used a picker to send the shuttle back and forth. In 1764 Hargreaves invented the 'spinning jenny' to enable the cottage workers to meet the increased demand for spun thread. In the Handspinning and Weaving gallery there is an example of a 16 spindle jenny reconstructed from the original patent. Valerie explained that this was rather like a spinning wheel dropped on its side and driving many spindles operated by one person.

Valerie concluded her talk by showing slides illustrating aspects of the original sample books in the Nathaniel Hyde archives held at the Mill dating from 1771.

David Bryant

## 3.0 Jay Robert Stiefel: John Head (1688-1754). A Suffolk Joiner Makes Good in Philadelphia.

Jay Robert Stiefel is a Philadelphia lawyer who has studied history and art history at the University of Pennsylvania and Christ Church, Oxford, and decorative arts with the Attingham Trust. He collects Philadelphia furniture and in 1999 was looking through an extensive collection of family papers given to the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia by George Vaux, a descendant of a prominent Philadelphia family of Quaker merchants. Jay was searching for any information on two pieces of furniture he had purchased from the sale of George Vaux's estate, when he came across the account book of the joiner John Head.

Although John Head was a recorded furniture maker – he has a one-line entry in William Macpherson Hornor's *Blue Book: Philadelphia Furniture* published in 1935 – his prominence had not been recognised. He was not otherwise known, except to his family, where a circa 1900 note remembered him not so much as a joiner, but as the father of one of the wealthiest Philadelphia merchants at the time of the Revolution, John Head, Junior, and the progenitor of other eminent Philadelphians.

Head's account book, which covers 35 years from 1718, shows John Head to have been one of Philadelphia's most prolific and prominent furniture makers. It is currently the earliest known account book of a case furniture maker in British North America and contains much specifically furniture information, much of it previously unknown or undocumented.

Among these is an earlier date for the introduction of 'tea tables' to Philadelphia. Hornor had thought them to date from 1732. The earliest mention Jay could otherwise find was in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for that same year. John Head trumps these, by recording the repair of a tea table as early as 1721.

The account book also permits comparison of relative prices. For instance, it would have taken the plasterer Thomas Pierce 12 days' work to acquire a chest of drawers from Head, who was crediting Pierce's work at 5s per day. The book also provides details as to the finishing of furniture, such as the staining of legs. Jay showed an image of a dressing table, attributed to John Head's shop, which had its maple legs stained to match the mahogany of its case.

Analysing the detail has allowed Jay to make certain suggestions regarding Philadelphia fashions, including the wood in favour at certain times. For example, of Head's most expensive clock cases, the four cases in cedar were ordered in the early 1720s, the three in

mahogany in the mid- to late- 1720s, and all but one of the four cherry cases in the 1730s.

A shortage of currency in early Philadelphia meant much of the economy relied on barter and exchange. As such accounts often took years to settle, Head had to record his transactions in minute detail, which proved a boon to Jay's research. Also, as Head conducted business relationships with many other tradesmen and merchants, not just furniture makers, his account book is a cross-section of commerce throughout the community, providing much fascinating information for the early history of colonial Philadelphia.

John Head was nearly 30 when he arrived in Philadelphia in 1717. He was a joiner, a Quaker, and a married man. He came from a family of glovers near Bury St Edmunds, where his name appears in the minutes of the local Quaker meeting. He was listed as a 'joyner' in his 1712 marriage certificate, recorded at Beyton near Bury. In 1717, Philadelphia was just a few years older than John himself, having been founded in 1681. By the time of his death, in 1754, it was to grow to 2300 households.

The first furniture entry in his book is for a veneered chest of drawers, which is the only veneered article listed in the accounts. No veneered chest of drawers from Head's shop is known to survive, in part because the great variance in Philadelphia's seasonal temperatures is not hospitable to preserving veneered furniture. Given the abundance of highly figured native woods, Jay concluded that Head must have quickly adopted the local practice of working in solid woods, rather than veneers. Moreover, Jay pointed out that Head's most popular chest of drawers was priced at £3-0s-0d; the £8-0s-0d debited in 1718 for the veneered chest of drawers might simply have been too expensive for his then clientele.

Over 600 pieces of case furniture are mentioned in the accounts, with the over 300 chests of drawers being the most numerous. John Head also lists 61 dressing tables, 52 beds, 91 clock cases, some 45 desks, a few bookcases and many cradles and coffins. There are some 26 entries for 'a chest of drawers and a table,' ranging in price from £6-15s-0d to £13-0s-0d. Jay believes these to be matching high chests and dressing tables. He thinks it not coincidental that 15 of these 26 expensive pairs were purchased between 1723 and 1726, as there was then greater liquidity in Philadelphia's economy, owing to the first issuance of paper currency in Pennsylvania in 1723, and a further issue in 1726.

The primary woods John Head used in his furniture were walnut, cedar, cherry, maple and mahogany. The secondary woods mentioned are cedar and pine. (Head's extant drawers have yellow pine sides and white cedar bottoms.) Although Head may have bought poplar (and other secondary woods) among his transactions for unspecified wood, no specific purchases of poplar are recorded until 1743. Head then acquired it in 4" planks. Jay suggests that this poplar was for hat blocks, not furniture. He found a

contemporary joiner advertising poplar of the same dimension as suitable for hat blocks. Also, Head debited nearly 150 hat blocks in this period to the accounts of his son John and two of his sons-in-law, all hatters. Jay has found only a small amount of poplar in one of Head's pieces: the Caspar Wistar/Catherine Johnson high chest at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Brass hardware for furniture and coffins came from several sources, among them the Quaker pewterer Simon Edgell. By researching Edgell's advertisements and probate records, Jay has separately established that Edgell was also working as a brazier. See 'Simon Edgell (1687-1742) 'To a Puter Dish' and 'Grander Transactions of a London-trained Pewterer in Philadelphia' published in *The Bulletin of the Pewter Collectors Club of America, Inc.*, vol. 12, no. 8 (Winter 2002), cover and 352-388. Thus, at least some of the hardware found on Head's pieces, may have been Philadelphia-made.

John Head acted as a distributor for the products of other tradesmen, as is indicated by his sale of chairs. He sold some one hundred chairs, none of which he made himself. They came from six Philadelphia chairmakers - Cresson, Foreman, Hudson, Hugoford, Ranstead and Trotter. They were often sold in lots of six, priced at £1-10s-0d. He made no profit on these chairs. Rather, he employed them as a medium of exchange for his case furniture. Thus the case furniture which Head had 'sold' to the chairmakers could be 'resold' by them to their chair customers, while he in turn could 'sell' their chairs to his case furniture customers.

The numerous clock case entries illustrate Head's working relationships with several of Philadelphia's clockmakers, including John Hood, for whom no work survives and whose very existence had been questioned. (Some recent writers had dropped his name from the lists, believing it to be a misspelling of the names of John Wood, father and son, both prolific makers.) Head seems to have worked particularly closely with Peter Stretch, as 41 of the 91 clock cases sold by Head were debited to Stretch, and another four to his son William. Peter is also shown as delivering clocks to other customers who chose to purchase their cases directly from Head.

As Head bought few turned components from others, the characteristic shapes of Head's turned legs may be used as one way of attributing furniture to his shop. However, Jay included some words of warning regarding attribution based solely on individual bits of physical evidence, rather than a preponderance of it. He pointed out that Head's drawer construction and certain of his designs, such as cyma curves, were common for the period. Also, other elements, if popular, could easily have been copied by Head's competitors. Head even supplied some components to other joiners, such as the five legs he turned for Joseph Chatham. Head also sold a moulding plane, which could have been used by another joiner to create the

same moulding profiles as on Head's pieces. Head debited 'clock case freezes' (the blind fret in the clock hood) to joiner Thomas Maule, who later advertised such elements for sale. It is possible Thomas Maule had worked in the Head workshop at one time, as it was to him that Head, upon retirement in 1744, sold much of his stock of hardware, wood, and tools – even his joiner's bench.

This brief review has not begun to do justice to Jay's research on John Head. The detailed information in and duration of the account book, when combined with other documentation ferreted out by Jay, has allowed for a study in a depth not normally possible. Jay has provided insights into the workshop production, the manner of living in early 18th century Philadelphia, and about other merchants and tradesmen, some of whom were previously unknown. Two very detailed articles by Jay on John Head are available on the Internet, courtesy of the American Philosophical Society, at [www.amphilsoc.org/library/bulletin/2001/head.htm](http://www.amphilsoc.org/library/bulletin/2001/head.htm). These are 'Philadelphia Cabinetmaking and Commerce, 1718-1753: the Account Book of John Head, Joiner' and 'The Head Account Book as Artifact'. The Society owes Jay a great debt of gratitude for coming over to Oxford and giving a most interesting paper at this year's Research in Progress.

*Polly Legg*

#### **4.0 Domestic culture in early 17th century Oxfordshire**

Probate inventories provide a resource for the examination of the historic home and its furnishings, which is at the same time full of both potential and frustrations. Potential because no other source, apart from the rare documented survival of historic furniture in its original domestic location, itemises furniture in the home in its room setting, giving an indication of value, along with the name and status of the householder, and that, moreover, of the middle ranking households which tend not to be represented in surviving houses and their furnishings. Frustrating, because the survival of these documents varies enormously from place to place around the country, and each inventory was compiled to slightly different standards of accuracy and description. The terminology is that in use at the time, a joined table being a 'table and frame' and bedstead being only the frame now called the bed, whilst 'beds' were the feather, flock or straw filled mattresses, for example. Moreover, apart from the indication of the presence of the items of furniture, there is usually little description of size, construction, materials and decoration. However, these records are some of the best that endure from middle ranking homes of the late 16th and 17th century, when they were mostly employed for the winding up of estates, at a time when the use of space within a house was changing from the feudal pattern of extended households, all dining together in the hall for example, to the more selective use of space represented by the family unit eating alone in the dining parlour.

The making of an inventory was a process which dates from medieval ecclesiastical law whereby any estate generally valued at over £5 was proved in the local archdeaconry court. The inventories of Thame in South Oxfordshire, a prosperous market town serving London butchers with the produce of the local livestock trade, provide a rich resource for analysis as a relatively large number survive from the 17th century, even though these represent only some 15 to 20 % of the total adult population. Nevertheless, this means that it is possible to try to find out the norms of furnishings of houses of different size and wealth, and link this to householder's status, answering such questions as: what size and room layout did the houses of the period have, how were the rooms furnished, what do the furnishings tell us of the use of those rooms and how was the wealth and status of the householder reflected in his furnishings? When some idea of the average furnishings is established, it is possible to use this to select typical individual households for more intensive analysis. (The temptation otherwise is to pick a nice descriptive inventory and present its contents as typical, which it may or may not be). The association of items of furniture in a room, as for example a 'table and frame' along with stools, cushions, a number of pewter platters and candle sticks, might indicate a large family or dining socially. A single bed and chair, small table and number of chests in the parlour might indicate the private retreat of the head of the household. Interpretation of this kind needs to be cautious, as we tend to ascribe use to furniture which we are familiar with today, but a careful observation of inventories enables us to build up a better picture of how furniture and rooms were used in 17th century houses.

In Thame, the wealth represented in furnishings broadly follows expected status, with minor gentry, yeomen (those owning over 40s worth of land) and prosperous merchants concerned with the livestock trade (butchers and tanners, and inn keepers serving the weekly market) owning the largest and most lavishly furnished houses of four or more rooms. These consisted of a hall still furnished with a table and frame, stools, chairs and cupboard for communal eating, a parlour generally as the householder's private retreat, the kitchen now possibly the location for the cooking of food (in place of the original central hearth in the hall) and upstairs the principal chamber also now used for more ceremonial entertaining with tables, seating and the best beds of the house. Other chambers upstairs contained bedsteads, (sometimes truckle or trundle beds on wheels slid under the main bedstead when not in use, for family or servants) and chests and coffer for the household valuables, especially the costly linen. Husbandmen (wealthier tenant farmers) and middle ranking tradesmen (merciers, blacksmiths and joiners, for example) occupied houses generally of three to four rooms; a hall, sometimes a parlour and kitchen downstairs, with one or two chambers upstairs

similarly furnished but to a lower value. In these houses there was often some indication of economic activity – the workshop, or dairy production. The inventories of the lowest value represent the poorer tradesmen and agricultural labourers often in one or two rooms, a hall, used for all daytime activities, from cooking on the only hearth to eating and possibly sleeping on a straw ‘bed’ on the floor, and possibly also a chamber and small kitchen used for storage of cooking utensils. Widows – an important part of the community usually surviving their husbands by on average around ten years – could be found with wealthier and poorer households.

Whilst not a perfect source of information for the reasons already given, these inventories provide a fascinating insight in to the middle ranking households and furnishings at this period. An understanding of how furniture was used can help us to appreciate its importance, and to build up a picture of how different parts of the house were used. My further research will consist of a comparison of the Thame inventories later in the century, to see how the use of furniture and houses had changed, and of inventories from other parishes in London and Wales to see how social manners spread, and how the environment affects furnishings.

Tony Buxton

### 5.0 Sir William Burrell’s furniture dealers: a progress report on provenance research

The objective of the research is to establish a secure history of ownership of the objects by documenting sale transactions and inventory records. This project has been supported by a grant from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.

Sir William Burrell (1861-1958), a wealthy Glasgow shipowner, gave his collection of eight thousand objects to the City of Glasgow in 1944. The furniture collection, comprising 526 records, mostly dates from c.1500 to c.1800 and was purchased between the 1880s and 1955. There is little documentation for the first 30 years of collecting but from 1911 Burrell kept detailed records. These Purchase Books provide dates, sources, descriptions and prices, with occasional reference to earlier ownership. These are the main resource, together with Burrell’s file photos, many of which were taken at the time of acquisition.

The institutional archives of Glasgow Museums, the V&A, and the Hunt Museum in Limerick are key primary sources, in addition to the business records of Partridge & Sons. Although little of Burrell’s correspondence survived with the collection, other institutions with which he and his dealers had business contain vital information, as do sale and exhibition catalogues and contemporary art journals. Richard Marks’ *Burrell as a Collector* (Richard Drew, Glasgow, 1983) is the principal secondary source.

Early in 1916, Burrell bought Hutton Castle in

Berwickshire, a 15th/16th century Border fortress that he totally refurbished in the late 1920s. His furniture buying was at a peak at this time, with 170 items acquired in the period 1925-26 alone. He bought mainly from dealers, chiefly in London, with Frank Partridge & Sons, Acton Surgey Ltd. and John Hunt as his principal sources.

Frank Partridge supplied him with a wide range of objects including tapestries, paintings and Chinese ceramics. Between 1917 and 1955, Burrell bought 54 items (or sets) of furniture from Partridge, including some with a noble provenance. A bureau cabinet c.1705, from the collection of the Countess of Carlisle at Castle Howard (14/331), was bought by Burrell in 1925.

Partridge’s regular clients included the collector Colonel Norman Colville (1893-1974), of Penheale Manor, Cornwall. He was one of the third generation of Colvilles, the firm that came to dominate the Scottish steel industry. A serious collector of antiquities and Old Master drawings, he subscribed to the first edition of the *DEF*, 1924, which is probably the best guide to his collection. *Country Life* published several articles between 1923 and 1931 on his 17th and 18th century English furniture. Three of the chairs featured in these articles were bought by Burrell in 1941, among six items he acquired that year from Colville.

The firm of Acton Surgey, established c.1920 by Frank Surgey and Murray Adams-Acton, specialised in architectural renovation and interior decoration. Both had worked for White Allom before setting up in London. Burrell bought 69 items of furniture from them between 1925 and 1942, mostly for the refurbishment of Hutton Castle. Many of the file photographs show interior views of the firm’s gallery.

John Hunt became Burrell’s advisor on medieval objects, especially enamels, ivories and bronzes. Between 1935 and 1939 Hunt sold him 24 items of furniture, bidding on his behalf at sales, including Madame Rahmet’s collection sold in Lucerne on 1st September 1937, where he purchased two French oak armchairs c.1500 (14/180 and 14/181). In the following year Hunt sold Burrell an oak cup board c.1525 from Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire (14/428), later altered by the addition of a raised shelf.

All three dealers bought material for Burrell from the collection of William Randolph Hearst when it came on the market in 1938-39 following Hearst’s insolvency, and then after his death in 1951. Items from St Donats Castle, Glamorgan, Hearst’s Welsh seat, include a hall draw table c.1600 (14/290), shown in The Armoury in a photograph published in *Connoisseur* (Vol. CIV July-December 1939, p.212). The series of sales started in New York in November 1938 (Parke-Bernet) and in London on 18 May 1939 (Christie’s), when Hunt bought for Burrell the Wyn cupboard, made for John Wyn c.1545, and kept in the family home, Gwydir Castle, until 1921 (14/436).

Among Burrell’s 1952 purchases from Hearst’s collection, acquired through Adams-Acton, is an oak

hall draw table c.1610-20 from Penrhyn Old Hall near Llandudno, sold at the hall by Knight, Frank & Rutley 17-18 June 1929 (14/313). A 15th century oak chancel screen (14/3) from a church in East Anglia indicates how active Adams-Acton was in the acquisition and installation of components for re-created interiors. In *Domestic Architecture and Old Furniture*, 1929, he illustrated the screen, installed by his firm in the billiard room at Denton Hall, Yorkshire for Arthur Hill, who converted the back of the house (by Carr of York c.1770) into a billiard room.

*Elizabeth Hancock*

## **6.0 David Morley of Carmarthen, 1760–1831** **A distinguished regional cabinet-maker.**

Carmarthen has always been known as a prosperous place, a hilltop town standing in rich countryside, at the head of a navigable estuary and at the meeting place of four roads. It prospered over the centuries by trade in agricultural produce, and was noted as a centre for the landed gentry of the area and for its 'polite society'. By the middle of the 18th Century, in common with other towns of the same status, it was the centre of a growing, rich and vibrant middle class society of tradesmen, religious and professional people, together with local industries and turbulent politics.

It was into this society that David Morley was born in 1760. His parents came from a long agricultural tradition, and earned a good living trading in Carmarthen market, but in 1764 his father died and the widow, then aged 35, subsequently married a man fourteen years her junior called David Morris, also in the same line. They both worked and thrived as merchants. Morris progressed into land agency, including the important Mackworth estate in Neath, and by 1792 he had combined with other businessmen to found Morris's Bank in Carmarthen, an achievement which placed him and his descendants in the top echelons of the town's middle class for a century to come.

There is no record of any connection with cabinet-making in the family's history, but in 1780, at the age of fourteen, David Morris sponsored his stepson to a six-year apprenticeship with John Owen, a cabinet-maker of Manchester, at a premium of £28. This event, and the character of his parents, is crucial to understanding Morley's subsequent career. Presumably he must have shown aptitudes for such work, but it must also be the case that his prosperous business-man step-father had identified the need for a new cabinet-making business in Carmarthen, providing better and more fashionable goods than were currently available. Hence he sent young David away to learn it in a different environment and bring his new-found abilities back to serve both the gentry and his own peer group.

Morley's activities immediately following his return to Carmarthen in 1780 are obscure, but his early involvement with St. Peter's Church affairs marked the

beginning of a lifelong commitment to public service. He received a small payment from St. Peter's vestry in 1785, but in 1793 he must have been well established, invoicing Vaughan of Golden Grove, a prominent gentry family, for £53-4-2 over three dates, covering a wide range of cabinet and upholstery work, including for example two mahogany chests of drawers, a mahogany bedstead with reeded pillars and all its furnishings, window curtains and fittings, and, interestingly, '12 elbow rush-seated chairs @ 6/10, and six of do. without arms @ 5/4'.

The last indicate that, from the start, Morley was supplying chairs across the whole range. In 1805 he sold '6 green Windsor chairs @ 6/-' to Lewis of Llandeilo, and rush-bottomed chairs again in 1821 and 1825.

In the early 1790s, or perhaps earlier, at about the time when his step-father was founding the bank, Morley established his famous premises in Lammas Street, making furniture both to order and to retail, together with china and glass, mirrors and general furnishings. His surviving Sun Fire Insurance certificate of 1795 describes his establishment as 'Of stone and slate' with dwelling-house, front shop and warehouse all interconnected. His household goods are valued at £50, utensils and stock at £200, china and glass at £50, and utensils and stock in the workshop at £200, all totalling a very respectable £ 500.

The first identified piece of furniture from his workshop is a mahogany veneered bow-front chest of four long drawers, bearing the label "MORLEY'S CABINET MANUFACTORY AND LOOKING-GLASS WAREHOUSE in LAMMAS STREET, CARMARTHEN, his only label found to date. This piece conforms closely in its proportions and style to a design for 'Dressing drawers' in Hepplewhite's 'Guide' of 1794 (plate 76). The likelihood of Morley using this work, following his presumed training in fashionable design, is reinforced by another plain chest-of-drawers with Hepplewhite proportions, signed 'Istance 1816'.

Also, in both 1801 and 1818 he supplied 'Cabriole Chairs', an apparently rather ill-defined term, but one used by Hepplewhite to describe the sort of upholstered armchairs that Morley was evidently making.

The signing and dating of pieces by the craftsmen who made them is a common feature of Morley's case furniture, and is the principal means of identifying it. The practice was prevalent in the Carmarthen area, and may have originated with him. Certain journeymen, such as Thomas Davies and Henry Jones (and others working for Isaac Davies) later set up in business on their own, and there is some evidence to suggest that they may have been independent people who sold their services to him, and used his workshop, rather than simply employees. Richard Istance, born in 1799, was a Morley journeyman who started his own business in 1832.

The first chest of drawers was, surprisingly, of poor quality, the pine ground knotty and the bowed top warped, perhaps a cheap retail piece. Very fine,

however, are a surviving pair of Sheraton-style 'Mahogany vases to keep Knives Forks and Spoons' at 63/-, invoiced in 1801. A similar item is listed in the Glasgow cabinet-maker's price book for 1806 ('REGIONAL FURNITURE, 2002'); the work costed at 43/9. Also from this period is a remarkable mahogany night stool, probably derived from a Sheraton hollow-fronted 'Dressing Chest' design (1793 Supplement, plate 15; tentatively attributed by situation, family ownership, and originality). Apart from the one early chest-of-drawers, Morley's identified furniture is all of excellent proportions and makes creative use of contemporary designs. It is of first-class workmanship, with a meticulous attention to detail, even in ordinary pieces.

Morley probably began making Neo-classical Regency furniture at about the time of George Smith's first publication in 1808. In 1811 he invoiced Lewis for 'An ottoman footstool made up to order Lions Paws etc.', and a remarkable series of mahogany breakfront library bookcases survives, with glazing bars following an architectural arched window pattern, and cornices with a central pediment and unusual fan acroteria, taken from Smith's design for a wardrobe (plate 133, 'Designs for Household Furniture', 1808) His attachment to Smith's designs seems to have remained as long as these patterns were popular and re-printed. In St. Peter's Church a pair of gothic oak side-chairs in the 'Norman revival' style still stand next to the altar, made in 1826 to commemorate an event, and marked 'D.Morley Fecit'. They are slightly simplified from Smith, 1808, Plate 37, the upper of the two 'Parlor Chairs, fronts and profiles'.

The survival of gentry-house invoices and other records (Vaughan, Mansel, Lewis, Cawdor, etc.) might give the impression that this was Morley's principal market. His invoices always spanned several dates and covered the full range of furnishing items, such as smart mahogany chairs, sideboards, beds, sofas, 'sets of dining tables', and ranged from large pieces down to trays and stools, curtains, Venetian blinds, carpets and table linen; sometimes also repairing items on site. It was a trade which went well beyond the supply of 'backstairs' items which writers have claimed for local rather than metropolitan cabinet-makers in the greater gentry houses.

However, even in rich Carmarthenshire the greater gentry were too thinly spread to provide full-time work for such a firm, and the un-documented mass of middle and possibly vernacular custom must have provided the bulk of his work, which provided employment for twenty workmen in the early 1820s, when his son David threw a dinner for them to celebrate his election to the Town Council.

One classic and long-recognised Morley middle-class workshop pattern is a sideboard design, made in great numbers during the 1820s. It is straight, break-front, and stands on six turned legs, a form also associated

with Scotland and Ireland. The two outer parts, a cupboard on the left and cellaret drawer on the right, have radiused corners with diagonal-reeded panels. The centre has two drawers, the lower one with a double front, of which the outer part is in the form of two spandrels with a raised ebony edge decoration of two extended scrolls with a fleur-de-lys in the middle. The earliest, dated 1818, was signed by Thomas Davies, as were two more from the early 1820s. They have plain leg shafts, and brass ring handles, whereas later ones from the mid '20s, had reeded legs and turned knob handles.

The 1818 piece is owned by a descendant of the first owner, a farmer with three farms near Pontarddulais, one in hand and two let. From details of past ownership of other examples, and the veneration with which these pieces were bequeathed to later generations, they seem to have belonged entirely to middle-class owners.

The elderly Morley remained active throughout the 1820s. From 1826 to 1830, the Carmarthen Corporation extended the back of the Guildhall to provide a new jury room and offices, and among the tradesmen paid for their work in 1830 was '£214-6s-00d to Mr. Morley for furnishing the new jury rooms'. The suite of 20 oak side chairs, 6 arms, 4 hall chairs and a three-pedestal 6-metre table still exist. The chairs, of classic Grecian form, have unusual raised fan acroteria on the back rails, and fan-patterned cross-splats, a design taken from P & MA Nicholson's 'Cabinet-Maker's Assistant', first published in 1826, a book which is regarded as reviving the then-flagging neo-classical style. Morley adapts it to suit his chair style, with reeded legs, and a distinctive arm support turning. This also occurs on a pair of oak armchairs in St. Peter's vestry, probably made at about the same time. Finally, a Nicholson pattern for a sideboard back can be seen on one of Morley's sideboards, dated between 1826 and 1831, on display in the Pembrokeshire County Museum at Scolton Manor, Haverfordwest.

David Morley died suddenly in 1831, aged 71, having apparently worked without cessation to the very end. His long obituary in the Carmarthen Journal speaks of him as a "highly respected tradesman, and universally respected for his sterling good qualities....the deep regret felt by all who knew him....as a parent, a neighbour, and an employer, it would, we are convinced, be difficult to see his like again". This is all the more remarkable because the Evans family, proprietors of the paper, were nonconformists, and disapproved of obituaries or eulogies of any kind.

It is rare to be able to attribute personality traits to historic cabinet-makers, but Morley's background and activities as an influential and respected townsman demonstrate consistency between his obvious personal integrity and his quality as a designer and maker of furniture. Records of his work are inevitably unbalanced and lamentably incomplete, but there is some evidence at least that he worked across the range from middle-class to good-quality vernacular furniture,



which indicates a broader scope for the quality cabinet-makers of the time than we may have realised.

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Luke Millar

## 7.0 17th century Gloucestershire furniture makers

This talk was based largely upon a series of distribution maps generated from John Smyth's manuscripts, now known as *Men & Armour for Gloucestershire* in 1608, which recorded the vast majority of able-bodied men in 1608 together with, amongst other things, their occupations. These maps indicated differences in the numbers of various types of woodworkers in different parts of Gloucestershire. For example, the number of carpenters in the east of the county, the Cotswolds, was far fewer than in the south and west, the reason being the low population of many of the Cotswold parishes brought about in the fourteenth century by the shrinkage or disappearance of many villages when their land was taken over for profitable sheep farming, an occupation which is not labour intensive. Consequently, the call for carpenters would have been minimal, and where their work might have been needed on occasions it would seem, from inventories, that such work would have been carried out by others, mainly husbandmen.

The total of 358 carpenters in Gloucestershire in 1608 contrasts markedly with the 43 joiners recorded in the same year, and so does the distribution. The east of the county has few joiners, no doubt for the same reason as its shortage of carpenters, but the south has only 6 joiners, probably because the work of joiners was being done by the large numbers of experienced carpenters in this area.

Only 16 turners are recorded for Gloucestershire in 1608, virtually exclusively in the centre and west of the county with only one in the east and none at all in the south. The reason for the low numbers generally of turners, but particularly in the south, would seem to be partly, as with the joiners, that other woodworkers, notably carpenters, were also turning, as evidenced in inventories which from time to time record lathes in carpenters' workshops.

Only 2 carvers are recorded in the county in 1608, one at Longhope in the Forest of Dean, and the other at Cirencester. Such a low figure might suggest that little carving was taking place in Gloucestershire in the early seventeenth century, but at this time it was

commonplace for joiners to carve, and there is inventory evidence for at least one carpenter having a collection of chisels and gouges sufficient for most aspects of carving. It is interesting, however, that at least two people were recognised as specialist carvers in 1608.

When all of the distributional evidence for the time is brought together, it is possible to suggest the probable main centres of furniture production in Gloucestershire in the early seventeenth century. Not surprisingly, the most likely are the major towns/cities of Gloucester, Cheltenham, Cirencester, Tewkesbury, Painswick and to a lesser extent Winchcombe. But perhaps the most striking area is that of the Forest of Dean, where the natural resources of timber combined with a broad range of woodworkers indicates great furniture-making possibilities.

Another series of distribution maps, this time for the period 1610-1740, and based upon more disparate sources, such as wills, inventories and churchwardens' accounts, show few differences in the distribution of woodworkers from the 1608 maps, apart from there being no turners recorded, and the two carvers, both late seventeenth century, are living in Cheltenham. The numbers for all woodworkers on these later distribution maps are lower than for those of 1608, but this may well be a reflection of the limited evidence rather than the situation on the ground.

*David Wilson*