

Small can be Revealing

In the new *Threads of Time* display at Hardwick Hall there are about forty 1:12 scale miniatures of early furniture which would not have existed without the help of the Regional Furniture Society.

When I began making these in 1982 my knowledge of the subject was scanty but I had the good fortune to meet Victor Chinnery at an early stage and through him to join the Society. I should like to express my thanks to him and the many other members who helped me to create this collection.

It was he who encouraged me to make the miniatures not as the originals appear today, darkened with age and with inlay colours faded, but to show people what they looked like when they were new. Later, when lecturing, he used photographs of the miniatures to illustrate this point; and it is also a theme of the display at Hardwick.

When I wanted to shrink the Seadog Table (Fig1) to a length of 6in he introduced me to Charles Wright who restored it in the 1950s. He told me that the top rails were joined with secret mitred dovetails – an unusual joint at this early date. This was a challenge not to be resisted, although the miniature would have looked the same if I had butted the joints! He also said that he had found traces of gilding on the seadogs themselves and this led to interesting discussions about the extent of the original gilding. If the gilding on the miniature is wrong the fault is mine.

I made a number of discoveries when studying the originals. The most interesting one related to what is known at Hardwick as the 'inlaid and painted panel'. I made two versions of this, one with and one without the paintwork (Figs 2 and 3). Close examination showed that the picture had originally consisted purely of inlay work. Anthony Wells-Cole had already identified it as based on a



Fig 1. Ivan Turner's miniature version of the Seadog Table at Hardwick Hall.

woodcut of Solomon's Palace by Jost Amman (Fig 4).¹ In its inlaid form it was closer to the woodcut than the overpainted version. So why was it overpainted? Some of the paintwork conceals faults in the inlay design; for example the inner wall of the palace vanishes into the sky. But why should merlons have been painted on to the outer wall? They are very like those on the outer wall of Hardwick Hall. Could it be that the inlaid version was at Elizabethan Chatsworth and that when Bess built Hardwick she said to John Balehouse, 'I am going to move that panel to Hardwick. Paint over the design faults - you could conceal the one in the inner wall by increasing the height of the building; and paint some merlons on the outer wall like the ones I am having at Hardwick?'

Ivan Turner

¹ Anthony Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, Yale, 1997, p252.



Fig 2. Ivan Turner's recreation of the inlaid panel from Hardwick, in its original form, without paintwork.

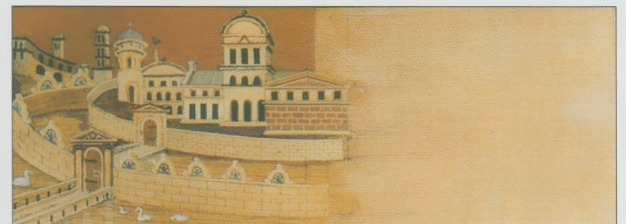


Fig 3. The recreated panel showing the added painted details.



Fig 4. Jost Amman's woodcut view of Solomon's Palace in Jerusalem, from his *Neuwe Biblische Figuren* (Frankfurt, 1564).