

A 1794 Gower *coffor bach*

In 1992 Philip Havard published an article about this variant of the *coffor bach* and documented five examples.¹ Subsequently, Tony Conybeare recorded three others.² They are of nailed construction and, unusually, have a shallow-carved front (rather than being plain or inlaid) suggestive of the 17th or early 18th century. The front shows a pair of stylised urns or vases with five or seven flowers (tulips alone or with daisies) and leaves or commas against a punched background. In the centre below the escutcheon they have a decorative feature (e.g. tulip, fleur de lys, pinwheel, twin hearts), and/or in some cases initials (presumably of their owners). They are of nailed construction, usually have bun feet and where they have full width drawers the drawer fronts are decorated with two pairs of birds (doves according to Tony Conybeare).

None of the above eight examples of *coffor bach* were dated but Philip Havard referred to examples in pictures with dates 1770 and 1782. Subsequently another 1770 example was reported.³ A further example came to light at the April 2014 sale at Rogers Jones Auctions, Cardiff. This had seven flowers in each vase, two birds on the drawer, the initials 'AD' and a 1794 date which makes it the latest thus far recorded.

This example doubles the range of dates over which the Gower *coffor bach* have been reported. It poses even more sharply the question of why carved decoration lingered so long in this type of piece, and whether all were the product of a single maker or workshop.

Chris Pickvance

1 Philip Havard, 'The Gower *coffor bach*', *Regional Furniture*, 6, 1992, pp. 86–91.

2 A. J. Conybeare, *A Discourse on Boxes*, Rosca Publications, Hanley Swan, 2002.

3 Chris Pickvance, 'Dating Gower *coffors bach*', *RFS Newsletter* 52, Spring 2010.



Fig. 1 1794 Gower *coffor bach*. Reproduced with permission of Rogers Jones Auctions, Cardiff