

BOOK REVIEWS

E. J. Warne: Furniture Mouldings (295x210 mm, xvi + 140 pp.)

Originally published in 1923, re-issued in paperback September 1989 by Roy Arnold, 77 High Street, Needham Market, Suffolk. IP6 8AN, England. UK Price £10.95. Post Free £12.05.

"In the course of many years spent in studying, designing, and preparing drawings for the manufacture of English furniture, I have always been struck with the lack of measured drawings of mouldings taken from authentic pieces of old English cabinet work."

These words, from the start of the author's brief preface, are his justification for making detailed studies of all the mouldings on 130 pieces of "authentic" furniture, "from the 16th to the early 19th centuries", a total of over 500 detailed sections. Each piece of furniture is illustrated by a small sketch showing overall measurements and style. Sections of the mouldings, however, are drawn full size and include where necessary sections through legs and frames, and details of carving and turnings. Some things Warne had to omit, such as the bulbous upper supports of a Court Cupboard or the scrolled feet of a "Walnut Marqueterie Table", too large to be compacted onto a page. However, the information given is generally enough for a

knowledgeable manufacturer to make up the various pieces completely. Some of them appear to be of dubious authenticity, due partly to the tiny scale of some of the sketches; the author only acknowledges the sources of six of the pieces chosen.

Furniture Mouldings is thus a textbook for the maker of reproduction furniture. It would have served both the craftsman making meticulous copies, and the manufacturer of machine-made furniture who wished to be faithful to old styles and proportions. It ranges widely, from large cabinets to bracket-clock cases; most importantly, it illustrates the possible scope of the reproduction market in the early years of the present century.

Since this book first appeared in 1923, the welter of literature on furniture has included a number of facsimile reprints, notably by Tiranti and Dover, which have made the works of at least some past designers and craftsmen available in paperback at reasonable prices. Sadly, many of them are now out of print, and Roy Arnold's venture into this market is greatly to be welcomed. As a complete and original text, Warne's book stands on its own merits, but I do feel that it needs and deserves a modern preface as well. We need to know something of the writer's life and history in the furniture trade. Some information on the sales volume and distribution of the 1923 edition is necessary too, to help us to assess its influence on the

reproduction market in the 1920's.

The modern maker of period style pieces should still be able to benefit from the mass of information packed into its pages.

Roy Arnold is a member of this Society.

Luke Millar