

REGIONAL FURNITURE SOCIETY AND WEAVERS, SPINNERS AND DYERS JOINT MEETING

at Quarry Bank Mill, (National Trust), Styal
17th March 2002

The day started with the usual coffee and registration. This was punctuated by the arrival of both participants and a vast array of spinning wheels. Valerie Bryant then gave a fascinating lecture on the history of spinning and the use of early drop spindles from antiquity. The development of the big or walking wheels from carding through twist and stretch to yarn bundles was covered. The use of wool, flax, cotton and silk was likewise explained.

David Bryant then followed with a scientific and methodical overview of the three main spinning-wheel types; upright, sloping bed and horizontal bed. Both technology and construction were covered in a most illuminating and informative introduction to such a vast subject. There followed a survey of various British examples, both where maker and/or provenance were known. Alan Raistrick then presented a study of Jersey and Channel Island wheels showing the use of a simple but effective decorative paint treatment, perhaps

unique to this area? Much more work needs to be done in comparing this decoration with the furniture of the region and that of neighbouring France.

After lunch, various examples were analysed for constructional details, woods used and dating information. This subject is still in its infancy and much of this analysis was subjective but the vast experience of the lecturers will surely lead to a more justifiable approach as more information is gathered. A guided tour of Styal Mill followed and much was gleaned from this brief but ordered tour.

In the final session, the remaining wheels or wheel remnants in some cases were analysed. We also managed to have a brief look at David's database and the possibilities for future research were clearly obvious. The concept of a standard database model for recording all furniture forms and their makers seems like an idealised dream but I am sure that this database and the one for the Cotton collection are definitely an important step forward.

All that is left to say is a great thank-you to all those who both organised and attended this fascinating day. It is a great pity that events north of Watford do not seem to attract as many members as the quality of these events justifies. Hopefully David et al can do a follow-on event further South in the near future which will be better attended.

Simon Feingold