

CONFERENCE & AGM: NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE Friday 9th to Sunday 11th July 2004

Hoghton Tower - Friday 9th July

The first visit of the weekend was the impressively situated Hoghton Tower, 'home of the Hoghton family since the Norman conquest,' and a refuge for Lancashire Catholic recusants in the 16th century. By the 19th century the house had fallen into a ruinous state, and was substantially restored by the antiquarian Sir Henry Hoghton who inherited the house in 1862.

Our briefing notes had promised a fascinating foray into 19th century antiquarianism through a close look at Sir Henry's highly atmospheric refurbishing project which remains largely intact. Unfortunately this was not the focus of our guides, who seemed unaware both of the significance of the furniture, much of which was made up in typical 19th century romantic style, and of the specialist interests and knowledge of our particular group.

Instead of the detailed discussion and analysis of individual items that we usually enjoy in the houses we visit, we were treated to fanciful tales about the origins of many of the pieces: a long-case clock with late carving of animals on the doors was said to have been commissioned as a result of James I's visit to the house in 1617; the drawers in the bottom of a made-up press cupboard with hanging space above were explained away as a solutions for clearing dust falling from the clothes above; a small cupboard which may or may not have been substantially 16th century was described as 'Henry V period', and we were told that a good late 18th century four-post bed was 'made by Hepplewhite in 1742'. These were just a few of the fables, while some especially interesting items, such as a long-duration clock by Daniel Quare, a pair of genuine late 17th century carved walnut chairs with caned backs and seats, and mid-18th century mahogany secretaire with a superstructure of fretted shelves in the Chinese Chippendale style, were ignored.

Hoghton Tower offers much more than the Disneyfied interpretation we were given, and such misguiding, however well meant or apparently popular with some visitors, is a barrier to historical understanding. The truth may be more complicated, but it holds far greater rewards.

Noël Riley

Samlesbury Hall - Friday PM

A charitable trust was set up in 1926 to save the medieval timber-framed Hall at Samlesbury near Preston, which was our next visit. In order to generate income to maintain the Hall, it is used in part as antique shop and café, and it was here we lunched. Pevsner described Samlesbury as 'one of the outstanding Lancashire halls of the timber-framed variety', but its building history is very complicated and we spent considerable time examining the building and interior woodwork. The later history of the Hall, accommodating handloom weavers from 1678, an inn

from 1830 and a girl's school from 1846-62, has meant continuing alteration to the building.

The Southworth family, who lived at Samlesbury from 1330 to 1678, are thought to have begun building on this site following the marriage of Gilbert de Southworth of Warrington to the local heiress Alice D'Ewyas in about 1330; the earlier manor house, on a riverside site lower down the valley, having been destroyed during a raid by Robert the Bruce in 1322. At one time there were buildings around three sides of a courtyard but only two of these ranges remain, a 15th century hall and a 16th century wing to the south of the hall. At some time the service range, which ran east from the north end of the hall, has been demolished and the adjoining end of the hall altered. The highlight of the interior woodwork of the house is the 'moveable' screen, dated 1532. This has been moved from its original position, much chopped about, and the remnants incorporated with later, possibly 17th century, work. Much of the three massive finials remain, now part of a gallery overlooking the south, previously 'high', end of the hall. The design, possibly ram's horns, strikes an exotic, perhaps even barbaric note but the screen is not unique; a very similar screen remains in situ at Rufford Old Hall near Ormskirk. Here it continues to impress, as originally intended. When Thomas Hesketh of Rufford died in 1523, he left his estates to his illegitimate son, Robert who, once his inheritance had been confirmed, built a new Great Hall at Rufford. Sir Thomas Southworth of Salmsbury had been one of the two overseers of Thomas Hesketh's will; this close connection between the two families may have meant the same tradesmen being employed at both houses. Our thanks are due to Victor Chinnery, Linda Hall, David Smith and Peter Thornborrow for their comments during these most interesting discussions.

Polly Legg

Whalley Church - Saturday AM 10th July 2004

Few churches can boast even one 'Celtic' cross, but the graveyard at Whalley contains no less than three! Having been overturned and thrown into a ditch in the Commonwealth era, they were replaced on their original bases in the mid-18th century by one of the many Vicars of this parish with an interest in the history of the church.

Inside the church, one is confronted with a wealth of interesting woodwork dating from medieval times through to the 20th century.

Most striking are the magnificent choir stalls dating from about 1430 and transferred from the nearby abbey at the Reformation. The fine crocketed canopy has suffered from some alterations over the years, but the stalls retain many original misericords. The most unusual of these depicts a man shoeing a goose, an expression used to indicate a silly and fruitless task.

The nave still contains several old family pews. The most striking of these is the 'cage', so called from its form; it being screened like a small chapel on all four

sides. This finely carved edifice dates from 1534, although later dates 1610 and 1697 attest to changes of ownership and alterations. However the latest date carved over the door, 1830, bears witness to the resolution of a long running legal battle over its ownership until a judgement was finally given that neither party had sole rights to the pew. Since the families involved refused to share it, they each built a gallery with separate staircases on the south side of the church. Despite attempts by some later incumbents to remove the 'cage' from its rather dominating position in the nave, it has fortunately remained in situ, although the 19th century galleries that superseded it are now gone.

The Starkie pew, across the aisle from the cage, is a more standard box pew, but with superb panelling and carving typical of its date of 1702.

This was a truly fascinating church with a Vicar whose keenness to share his knowledge and enthusiasm made our visit all the more interesting.

Keith Pinn

All Hallows Mitton - Saturday AM 10th July 2004

Nestling in the Ribble Valley, we were warmly greeted here with a cup of coffee. On entering the church, unusually one steps down into it and the Nave slopes away towards the Chancel. The building dates from the 13th century and the Nave shows the Early English Gothic style. The Chapel was knocked down in 1594 when the present Shireburn Chapel was built. Divided from the chancel by an Elizabethan screen, it contains monuments to the Shireburns (who lived at Stonyhurst) including the alabaster tomb of Sir Richard (d.1597) and Dame Maude. There is also a large oak chest here, helpfully dated 1637, which has three locks, for which the Vicar and two Churchwardens would each have had a key.

Also of interest are the early stone font with its trapezoid carved cover inscribed "Sir Richard Molyneux 1593"; the Chancel screen which is believed to have come from Sawley Abbey after the dissolution of the monasteries; and outside a 14th century Cross-head found in the churchyard and mounted on a new column in 1897, as well as a sundial dated 1683.

Since 1594, the church has not been rebuilt until 2000, when the West end was extensively reordered with better facilities including a new gallery and organ.

Simon Green

Chipping and Browsholme - Saturday PM 10th July

Well prepared by Susan Bourne's lightning tour of the next day's highlights on Friday evening, we enjoyed the scenic coach ride from Burnley to Chipping, which took us through the Forest of Bowland (pronounced Bolland) and past the whale-shaped Pendle Hill. Our chief focus at Chipping was Kirk Mill, site of the traditional furniture-making enterprise of H. J. Berry, makers of furniture 'from cradle to coffin' since the mid-19th century.

Much of the firm's output, particularly traditional North-west regional types of rush-seated chairs, (fig. 4),



Fig 4

are still produced using hand methods, and we were able to wander freely round the factory, where table frames, shaped chair parts and turnings were stacked, and the process of rush seating could be scrutinised.

The firm maintains a careful policy of supporting local forest regeneration and sourcing all its timber – predominantly beech and ash – from sustainable sources. This is stored, seasoned and prepared in the yards around the factory building, formerly a 15th century corn mill which was rebuilt about 1785 as a cotton-spinning mill. It is the earliest Arkwright-designed mill remaining in industrial use in Lancashire. Near the entrance we marvelled at the huge water wheel which once powered its machines.

Berry's employees still have the opportunity to rent the attractive terraced houses near the mill: once in residence, their rents remain fixed until they leave the firm. Many of us were impressed by their beautiful front gardens, maintained to best-kept-village standard.

Chipping offered additional treats, including the church and its surrounding streets of picturesque stone cottages. One of these retained its medieval garde-robe, placed across a corner at first-floor level, but apparently no longer in use. We were grateful to our members Barbara and Peter Demaine, who live in Chipping, and Pauline Patterson, also a member of Chipping Historical Society, who were our guides. After coffee and jumbo-sized scones in the Cobbled Corner café, we embarked in our coach for the next destination.

At Browsholme (pronounced Broozam) we were welcomed by members of the Parker family and Simon Jervis (half-brother of the present owner) who guided our visit. Browsholme has been home to the Parkers, named for their office as park-keepers in the Forest of Bowland, since the house was built in 1507. There have been alterations over the years, including the introduction of sash windows, but the sandstone building retains its original H form, with a central

three-decker portico or 'frontispiece' displaying the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders of architecture.

Inside, the predominating influence is that of Thomas Lister Parker, friend of the antiquarian Charles Towneley and a pioneer collector of early oak furniture in the 1790s: he was the dedicatee of Henry Shaw's *Specimens of Ancient Furniture* (1836), and a 16th century carved bellows, illustrated by Shaw, can still be seen in the Hall. This room is an outstanding example of an early antiquarian interior, resplendent with turners' chairs, carved press cupboards, treen, antlers, guns, armour and Cromwellian relics such as pikes, boots and a leather coat. We discussed the large centre table supported on cup and cover legs with Ionic capitals, given to Thomas Lister Parker by the fellow antiquarian, Walter Fawkes of Farnley Hall, and the regional carving style of the Towneley cupboard and others, some of them made up in the 19th century (for more detail on these, see Susan Bourne's contribution to *Regional Furniture*, 1987).

The 17th-century chevron-patterned panelling and the 16th century carved overmantel in the Library both came from local houses, and a number of other oak cupboards in different parts of the house were of regional interest; as always, the carved oak beds were scrutinised with the expert guidance of Victor Chinnery. Clock specialists found plenty to interest them too. The Drawing Room is an early Elizabethan revival interior, which includes work by Gillow.

One of the most interesting puzzles was a mid-18th century mahogany cabriole-legged armchair of unusually generous proportions. Its magnificent carved back in the leafy rococo style with a chinoiserie cresting was somewhat incongruously matched with a hollow boarded seat reminiscent of East Anglian examples. A number of bone and mother of pearl inlaid oak and cocus wood chests of mid-17th century type also gave food for discussion, and we admired an outstanding pair of children's department chairs made of beech, painted to simulate rosewood, with turned spindles and carved decoration in the backs.

The house was a feast, not only of individual items of furniture, too numerous to describe here, but also of documented interiors, and we much appreciated the informed guidance of Simon Jervis and Susan Bourne.

Noël Riley

Gawthorpe Hall - Saturday 10th PM July 2004

Gawthorpe Hall at Padiham near Burnley was built from 1600 to 1605. Like some of the other houses we saw during the weekend it was extensively remodelled in Victorian times in line with prevailing taste. Sir Charles Barry, the architect of the House of Parliament, was responsible for the 1850s transformation. Gawthorpe Hall is owned by the National Trust and houses the Kay-Shuttleworth needlework collection though this was closed during our after hours visit.

If the RFS had visited in 1860 no doubt we would have admired the nineteenth century improvements. As

it was, we studiously avoided them in search of the original interiors. The best of these were the drawing room with its original oak panelling of small heavily moulded squares with inlay in the upper two rows and a fine enriched ribwork plaster ceiling and frieze with hanging bunches of grapes, and the long gallery with its plasterwork ceiling, friezes and simple dated overmantel of 1603. Research has revealed that the moulds for the plasterwork had been previously used in local houses and that the plasterwork design even incorporates symbols of other families such as owls.

The furniture which belonged to the house was mostly 18th and 19th century or else Victorian made in 17th century style. Among the former a possibly Gillows child's correction chair attracted interest.

The most interesting early furniture was brought in by the National Trust. Of this the first piece of interest was a long low narrow 14th/15th century plain boarded coffer in the entrance hall with five iron strap hinges with split trefoil endings strengthened with ridges.

In the long gallery the two most interesting pieces of furniture were made-up pieces which included intriguing dated 16th century elements.

The first was made up of the upper two parts of a 1596 press cupboard (the legs were missing) now sitting awkwardly on top of a base with a spindle-fronted bread cupboard door. The upper stage was flat fronted and set back and had two turned column supports. Small carvings of a tulip, goat and lion had been applied to the central opening door and the two fixed panels which were no doubt of heraldic or symbolic significance to the original owner. On either side of the door were pilasters, the left one of which swung aside to reveal a key-hole in the style. The middle stage comprised another three panel front with the 1596 date and a rectilinear geometric design on the central door.

A second interesting piece was also composite. The upper two stages were wide canted cupboards of the type which usually has an open plinth base below. Each had fluted cup and cover turned supports. The lowest stage had a full width plain front. What distinguished this odd piece was that each of the seven panels was decorated with simple pictorial inlay. The upper three panels and lower panel showed birds sitting in a tree. The middle three panels showed flowers growing from a mound, one of which was dated 1577. Victor Chinnery gives the mid 16th century as the date of the inlay in England so this is quite an early example. The fact that all seven panels are of similar style suggests all three stages came from the same set of cupboards.

This was an interesting house, worth a visit for its needlework collection, as well as for what we saw.

Chris Pickvance