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# Obituary

## Polly de Courcy-Ireland 1946-2005

The antiques trade sadly lost one of its more interesting and respected specialists with the passing of Polly de Courcy-Ireland on 23 October 2005.

One of the country's leading treen specialists, Polly had boundless enthusiasm, knowledge and passion for her chosen subject. A dealer for over 25 years, she was elected a member of the British Antique Dealers' Association as a treen specialist, and not only exhibited at many of the more prestigious antiques fairs but hosted successful and well attended exhibitions of carefully selected and beautifully presented treen. Originally these were held in conjunction with her long-time friend and fellow dealer, Caryl Baron, and latterly on her own at her delightful cottage in Alresford in Hampshire.

Polly had an 'old school' academic approach to her business and expertise. She loved research and studied her subject in depth. Over recent years she had been suffering from a painful and persistent back problem, which limited her ability and desire to travel in order to source enough quality pieces of treen for her clients, and this had slowed down the commercial aspect of her business. She had instead started hosting treen seminars and day study courses at her home and was planning to develop the consultancy, valuation and research side of her business.

She specialised in European treen but always had a particular love and enthusiasm for English pieces. At one time she had a special interest in English 18th century and earlier coconut cups and goblets, raised on turned wooden stems and retaining original silver mounts. Using the silver hallmarks to date the various examples, she was able to

reach a closer understanding of the development in style and form of this somewhat neglected and esoteric area of English vernacular drinking vessels.

She had a discerning eye and a passion for early objects, especially pieces turned from *lignum vitae*. She also had a wide understanding of pieces as diverse as carved snuff boxes, hand whittled knitting sheaths, turned thimbles, pounce pots, decorated stay busks, carved pipe tampers, wooden platters, love spoons, muffineers, salts, spice boxes and tobacco jars. Polly often talked of collating all the information, photographs and knowledge she had acquired over the years and of putting them together as a publication, which sadly we will now never see.

A devoted daughter and loyal friend, having cared for her elderly parents in their twilight years, she had been hoping to spend more time on the banks of the Hampshire chalk streams enjoying her longstanding love of fly fishing and the company of her cherished dog Toffee. A sustained period of discomfort and ill health prevented her from realising these pleasures but she tackled her problems in a brave and tenacious manner.

Polly held a special place in the antiques trade as a dedicated, professional and honest dealer. She ran a tight ship and never diverted from her primary interest and discipline: it was always the objects that governed her decisions rather than a profit motive. She particularly enjoyed being affectionately known as the 'Queen of Treen', a nickname that she genuinely merited.

*Robert Young*

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