

Michael Dann, *The English Smile: English Furniture and The Renaissance 1490-1590*, Hatherleigh Antiques, 15 Bridge Street, Hatherleigh, Devon EX20 3HU, 2006 (£30).

For oak enthusiasts this is a most welcome publication. Although the 16th century is popular with art, social and architectural historians, we still know very little about the furniture and its evolution, and surviving furniture from this period is spread thinly, with virtually no dated pieces or makers' names to work on.

Through his eyes as an experienced dealer and collector, Michael Dann presents a detailed study of 16th century pieces he has had the opportunity to examine. Chests, buffets, settles, stools, chairs and tables, previously not known to the public, are discussed in detail, and many of these he attributes to specific west country towns. He illustrates each piece with large, clear, informative photographs and discusses them in conversational style.

He explains the transition from the flamboyant gothic style of the late 15th century to the renaissance classical style of the early 16th, through to the introduction of turned forms and carved allegorical figures in the second half of that century. He analyses each piece, making reference to documentary sources and extant woodwork to support his basis for dating them. He considers the social thinking of the owners and how they used their furniture. Most importantly he explains why the pieces are English, and how the adaptation of the renaissance style became *The English Smile*.

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