

The Geffrye Museum, 24 October 2009

In celebration of David's long and distinguished association with the society as journal editor since 1992, it was highly appropriate that he should give this lecture, not least because of his particular respect for and personal links with Christopher Gilbert since the early 1970s when, as a young teenager, he became a 'furniture slave' at Temple Newsam House. One of the abiding features of Christopher's 'method' was his belief that furniture was inextricably associated with people and his constant acknowledgement of others, seeing himself as a link in a long chain of scholarship.

Accordingly, David set out to illustrate this human chain in relation to Scottish regional furniture studies. He saw it as beginning with Councillor John Small of Stirling, who published *Scottish Woodwork of the 16th and 17th Centuries* in 1878, recognising for the first time in print the mannerism of the east coast style focussed on Aberdeen and Fife. David had detected that the widely-used term 'caqueteuse' (of Aberdeen chairs) did not come in until around 1886.

Between the wars it was a sequence of women who continued regional studies. The formidable but gentle scholar I.F. (Elsie) Grant (1887-1983) wrote *Everyday Life on the Old Highland Farm* in 1924 and conceived the idea of opening a museum for her growing collection in 1934, which eventually became the Highland Folk Museum at Kingussie. Importantly she saw Scottish furniture as an interpretation of fashionable pieces, not as a debased version of them. Lady Jean Maitland (b. 1890) followed her example in the Lowlands where she collected from contacts at all levels of society and founded the Angus Folk Museum at Glamis, which was handed over to the National Trust for Scotland in 1974.

Greta Michie (1905-85) was also based in Angus, but concentrated on just one Glen, establishing the Glenesk Folk Museum in 1954, which she saw as a study centre and archive as well as a collection, relating furniture to its social context. Rachel Peterkin (b. 1916) is still continuing the tradition in Fife where she opened the Fife Folk Museum in 1968, while Elizabeth Benton (b.1926) was a pioneer of the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group and led the visit to record the valuable legacy on Stroma in the Pentland Firth in 1978.

Of the next generation, Ross Noble took over from Elsie Grant at the Highland Folk Museum from which he has just retired. He is both a collector and a developer of academic discussion around the subject, while Alexander (Sandy) Fenton (b. 1929), a poet, scholar and nature writer, has published a substantial seven-volume *Lexicon of Scottish Culture*. He emphasises furniture as an expression of the people who made and used it: an important maxim for anyone studying regional furniture.

This was an excellent lecture. Although his modesty would no doubt forbear him from claiming it, there must be a well-earned place in this Scottish pantheon for David Jones too.

Christopher Claxton Stevens