

Luke Millar 1937-2010

Luke Millar, a founder and active member of the RFS, died suddenly in June at the age of 73. Born in the Essex village of Little Sampford, Luke's love of history was nurtured by his parents who restored and furnished Tewes, a local manor house. As an adult, Luke joined his father on expeditions to antique shops and auctions, buying and selling to upgrade the house contents. Under the guidance of his brother, Sir Oliver Millar, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, Luke developed an interest in and aptitude for both restoration and research. Like his father, Luke began his working life as a brewer, an occupation that eventually took him to south Wales. In the mid-1980s, circumstances forced a change of direction and he established himself as a furniture restorer in Cowbridge. He quickly gained a reputation as a cultured, skilful and trustworthy craftsman.

I met Luke when he walked into my shop 25 years ago with cameras strapped around his neck and a tripod under each arm, hoping to photograph my stock of farmhouse chairs. Not the sort of person dealers really want: I need people to buy my chairs not take pictures of them. But we struck up an immediate accord and that was only the first of many meetings discussing our shared passion.



Luke Millar with his wife, Freda, at a furniture event last November.

Luke was unusual in combining the eye of the craftsman for details of timber and of construction, with an impeccable concern for scholarship. He carefully recorded the pieces which passed through his workshop, always searching for the implications for regional

attribution or trade practices thrown up by the slightest detail. The thoughtful lectures and meticulous articles that resulted were always of the highest order and made a significant contribution to our subject. His chief focus was on the craftsmen, and he was engaged with an ongoing project to produce a directory of Welsh cabinet makers. Over the last decade he concentrated on the productive workshops of David Morley of Carmarthen and William Owen of Haverfordwest, the evidence for which was fast disappearing. His research has illuminated the craft and social histories of west Wales and benefited

scholars with interests beyond our own.

There are many in both furniture history and local history circles who will remember Luke for his modesty and for his generosity in sharing information and contacts. We have lost a true gentleman and extend our sympathies to his widow, Freda, and his children, Edward and Jane.

Richard Bebb