

News from our American Secretary

The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, has just published two articles of interest to our members. The first is on the Scottish cabinetmaker, Robert Deans, co-authored by Stephen Jackson, senior curator at the National Museums of Scotland, and Robert Leath chief curator at MESDA. Entitled *The Nine Lives of Robert Deans: A Cabinetmaker and Master Builder in Edinburgh, Charleston and London, 1740–80*, the article traces Dean's 40 year career on both sides of the Atlantic through his furniture, building commissions and a series of recently discovered court documents.

The second article is by April Strader Bullin and is entitled *The Scottish Cabinetmaking School of Colonial Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia*. It identifies the work of George Donald and Thomas Arbuthnot, two other Scottish-born cabinetmakers in colonial America. These articles can now be accessed for free from the MESDA Journal's website: www.mesdajournal.org

Since 1975 the MESDA Journal has documented the material culture of the early American South. In 2012 the Journal transitioned from print to a more easily accessible online format, and back issues are now also fully accessible for free. Although American furniture may not be central to

the interests of all society members, the Journal's high standards of methodology and the research accumulated could inspire those working on British projects. Moreover, the MESDA Journal has often published information related to the lives of British cabinetmakers working in the South. Recent articles include:

Musings on a Scottish-Irish Desk form in Colonial Virginia: The Scrutoire by Sumpter Priddy III and *Scottish Bedroom Tables from Scotland to the American South* by Elizabeth Davison

In addition to its Journal, the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts is also home to the MESDA Research Center, where the MESDA Craftsman Database contains records of more than 85,000 pre-1860 Southern craftsmen, many of whom were British emigrants. The Database can be searched for places of origin, such as England, Ireland, Scotland and France. By the end of this year MESDA's Object Database of nearly 20,000 objects will also be available online, including those from a 1980's survey by Bradford Rauschenburg of British furniture. These resources are available to researchers for free at www.mesda.org

Daniel Ackermann
Stephen Jackson

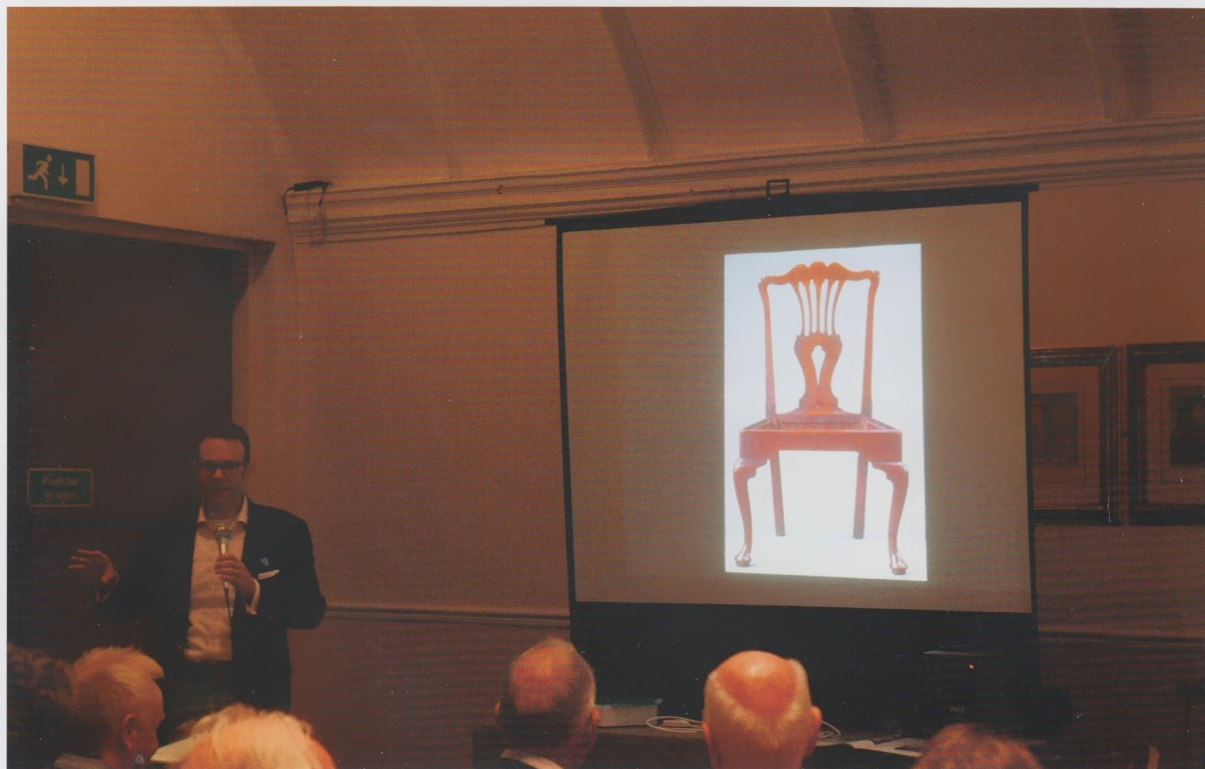


Fig. 1 Daniel Ackermann giving his lecture on the present state of American furniture studies at the recent Carlisle Conference