



All Saints' Church was designed by George Frederick Bodley to replace the medieval church on another site in Cambridge. Bodley's oak stalls and benches, of 1864, are similar to the functional seating in several of his later churches. *Photo Jeremy Bate*



Kettle's Yard – a mahogany and fruitwood tripod table, probably East Anglian

Kettle's Yard, Cambridge

We are very grateful to the staff at Kettle's Yard for the opportunity to visit on an otherwise closed day and also for their enthusiastic sharing of their knowledge of the house and its contents.

It is very difficult to describe Kettle's Yard and its founders, Jim Ede (1895–1990) and his wife Helen, in a few words. As a boy, Jim Ede had a great interest in art, which led in 1922 to him becoming Curator and

Assistant to the Director of the National Gallery of British Art (later the Tate Gallery), specialising in working with contemporary art and artists. Friendships developed with many contemporary artists including Winifred and Ben Nicholson, David Jones, and Christopher Wood and Jim Ede joined in the encouragement of the Cornish artist Alfred Wallis. There are 44 works by Ben Nicholson and over 100 works by Alfred Wallis in the Collection.

By 1954 Jim Ede was 'dreaming of the idea of somehow creating a living space where works of art could be enjoyed, inherent to the domestic setting, where young people could be at home unhampered by the greater austerity of the museum or public art gallery and where an informality might infuse an underlying formality.' He was persuaded by the President of the Cambridge Preservation Society to do this in four condemned slum cottages at Kettle's Yard and the Ede's home and collection was soon open to university students every afternoon of term time. In 1966 it became part of Cambridge University. The Edes continued to live at Kettle's Yard until Helen's poor health obliged them to retire to a more private life.

So, what furniture did the Edes chose to furnish a home which was in itself a work of art, where balance was key, where 'pebbles are as important as anything else', and where also the budget had to be considered? This last issue was eased somewhat while Jim was Honorary Curator with a grant towards purchases for



Kettle's Yard – the main gallery, with high splat-back Windsor armchairs, attributed to Nottinghamshire

the house from the Gulbenkian Foundation. Many of the items are East Anglian or Lincolnshire, particularly chairs. Two of our members, Robert Williams and John Coleman, worked for the Cambridge antiques dealers W. Stockbridge & Sons in the 1960s and 70s when Jim Ede had been acquiring much of the furniture for Kettle's Yard. They were able to tell us that Stockbridge's had regular buying trips to East Anglia and South Lincolnshire; the new stock would usually arrive in Cambridge at opening time in the morning, just as Jim Ede would be walking past on his way to the baker to buy his morning rolls, so he was often the first customer to see the new stock. Robert remembered thinking that Jim picked chairs with good proportions, although he was not too worried by something like a replaced leg, a reduced price being an added attraction. Another item in the house which may well be from East Anglia is a tripod table with a mahogany top and

fruitwood stem; seeing this caused Keith Pinn to remark he had seen many of these as a young dealer in East Anglia and had been surprised when he heard dealers from outside the area question if the top and stem belonged together. An unusual form of oak chest on stand caused much discussion. The cabriole leg stand supported a chest of 2 short and 3 long drawers but the lowest of the long 'drawers' did not pull out, instead the front pulled down to provide a writing surface and reveal a bureau type fitment of small drawers and a central cupboard. This is probably the 'tall-boy bureau' listed in Jim Ede's own inventory of furniture at Kettle's Yard and, although there is no provenance for this article, it could possibly be attributed to East Anglia.

Many thanks are due to Robert Williams and Jeremy Bate for arranging a most interesting and enjoyable day in Cambridge.

Polly Copperwheat