

Early Scottish Furniture: an Indigenous Tradition? Material Evidence: 1450–1650

This is the formal title of the research project which Stephen Jackson, RFS member and now *Journal* Editor, began in February 2018. The project has this imposing title because it is generously funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, under their Small Research Grant programme. Stephen is currently writing up and this short notice simply sets out the background thinking. A first blog about the project can be read by searching ‘Jackson’ at <http://blog.nms.ac.uk>

Scottish furniture made before the Act of Union (1707) is poorly recorded in comparison with English furniture of the same period, or with Scottish furniture made during the eighteenth century. Michael Pearce's recent research into sixteenth- and seventeenth-century furnishing practices using documentary evidence only highlights this gap in our knowledge. We know that Scottish furniture existed in abundance but 130 years on from John Small's pioneering *Scottish Woodwork of the XVIth and XVIIth Centuries*, we remain hesitant about its physical characteristics.

This project, therefore, set out to survey as much as possible of the rather limited surviving corpus of Scottish furniture from the period. The resulting body of data, including measurements and photographs, will be

analysed in terms of materials, construction, stylistic development and regional variation. Additional provenance research is often required because many of these objects became antiquarian commodities after 1800.

The results will be interpreted in the light of research questions centred around national and regional identity, change over time, and the homogeneity of material culture. One critical question is whether there existed a dependency between Scotland and its neighbours: England, France and the Low Countries. Was Scottish furniture in this period a sub-group of something we can term British furniture or did it relate more strongly to French and Flemish than to English models?