

Paul Bruce, *The Furniture of Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich: from the 16th to the 19th century* (Gresham Publications, in association with The Friends of the Ipswich Museums, 2019). 40 pp. ISBN 9780956108050.

RFS member Paul Bruce has written an excellent short guide to the history of English furniture structured around the superb collection at Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich. Paul, a retired furniture dealer and volunteer at the museum, encouraged us to visit to study the

furniture as part of our Coastal Suffolk Conference in 2017.

As Sarah Medlam states in her foreword to the book: ‘The collections have developed steadily over the last century. Only a handful of pieces of furniture remained in the house when it passed into public ownership. The greater part of the furnishings reflects the careful collecting of the museum throughout the twentieth century - the kind of collecting which has been very difficult to sustain in the last thirty years.’

Responding to the questions visitors ask frequently, Paul has skillfully used the collection to tell the story of the history of English furniture, organizing the oak, walnut and mahogany pieces into groups which, as he observes, neatly correspond with the changes of ownership of the Mansion. The book is illustrated with examples from the collection including the extraordinary mid-eighteenth-century pieces cross-banded with veneers cut from horses’ teeth. Subjects that are difficult to describe, such as the cutting of timber to maximise the decorative aspects of the grain, are clearly explained with the aid of specially commissioned drawings.

*Jeremy Bate*