

# Visit to The Burrell Collection, Glasgow

Tuesday 18 October 2022

A group of 15 members and friends, both local and from further afield, were welcomed to the Burrell by Glasgow Museums staff, Laura Bauld, Curator of Decorative Arts (1603–1800), Lindsay Gordon, Conservator of Furniture and Frames, and Ed Johnson, Curator of Medieval & Renaissance Art. We started in the gallery which tells the story of the family as collectors, hearing about the gift of the collection by Sir William and Lady Constance Burrell to the City of Glasgow.

One of the highlights is the oak dresser made c. 1540 for John Wyn ap Maredudd, which in English translates as John Wynn, or Wynne, of Gwydir Castle at Llanrwst in the Conwy valley, North Wales. The dresser (I4.436) was probably made for the castle, which was being built at that time. It is richly carved on the front with Renaissance-style grotesques and motifs, John Wynn's initials 'I' and 'W' and heraldic armorials of both the Wynns' Welsh ancestors and the roses of York and

Lancaster, as the family were connected by marriage to the royal house of Tudor. These decorative panels were probably originally painted in bright colours. The dresser was purchased by Sir William Burrell in 1939 from the collection of the American newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst.

Another item formerly in Hearst's collection is the Bridgwater ceiling (32.4), thought to have been made in Bridgwater, Somerset, c. 1500. It is composed of sixteen panels made of oak planks and divided into quarters by delicate ribs. Many of the bosses are carved with ecclesiastical subjects among carved and pierced vine leaves, with additional decorative carvings mounted on the beams and panels.

A welcome development that brings the reality of hand and machine craftsmanship closer is a series of spaces where skills to make objects are demonstrated on interactive screens and participation is encouraged. Painting, woodworking, silversmithing, lacemaking, embroidery, weaving cloth and tapestry weaving, glassmaking and ceramics are among the Makers Galleries. In the woodworking area there are sections on turning (a child's walnut and cane chair, London c. 1690 (14.79), armchair, ash, possibly South Devon c. 1685 (14.117) and ebony and cane chair, Southern India, Ceylon or Indonesia c. 1670–1725 (14.177)) and marquetry (two chairs, oak, possibly Southwark c. 1580–1620, 14.93 and 14.98). A large display of chests and boxes includes a domed chest, c. 1400–1500 (14.375), probably produced in parts of Poland or Germany which were then Prussia and imported to England through eastern ports (see *RFS Newsletter* 71, Autumn 2019, pp. 7–8).

Following the major refurbishment, the display spaces are greatly enlarged, with new galleries on both the first floor and the lower ground floor, where an exhibition explores the Burrells' legacy, giving further insight into their approach to collecting and the care of objects.

Sincere thanks go to Laura Bauld, Lindsay Gordon and Ed Johnson for making the visit a very special one for furniture enthusiasts. It was a splendid day and an



Lindsay Gordon demonstrating the mechanism of the imprisoning chair. *Photo Laura Bauld*



Marquetry armchair, walnut, oak, elm and ash, England, possibly Southwark (Anglo-German) or Exeter, c. 1580-1620. *Photo Ian Deakin.*

excellent opportunity for members and friends to meet north of the border and to enjoy an exchange of ideas.

To access the online object database for catalogue information and images of the collections, see Glasgow Museums Collections

Navigator: <https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/webside.html>

Click on Advanced Search and either enter an object number, do a keyword search or click on Furniture under Collection Type.

*Crissie White and Liz Hancock*

*Ed. Next summer's conference in North Wales will include a visit to Gwydir Castle, where members will be able to see the panelled room found, after much detective work, in a New York storehouse holding some of William Randolph Hearst's vast collection, and since restored to its original location in the castle. Panelling from a second room is still missing.*