

# Furniture for Crown and Court

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In spite of the sharp division between the late Tudor and Jacobean periods – Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 – it was inevitable that the early years of James I's reign should have been overcast by an aura of aggressive heroics, all done in the name of the Queen. Within the domestic sphere, however, there was a growing awareness of the kind of settings furniture needed. The Vitruvian ideals of harmony, symmetry, decor and suitability of rooms for 'office, entertainment or pleasure' were to be lauded years later in Sir Henry Wotton's *Elements of Architecture* (1624), but patrons were already eager at the turn of the 17th Century to understand foreign ideas. The fortunes of the nation were nevertheless still linked to ministers of the late reign, particularly Sir Robert Cecil, the builder of Hatfield House, and Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset, Lord Treasurer, and a friend of Cecil's father (and Elizabeth's principal officer), William Cecil, 1st Lord Burghley. Lord Dorset lived at Knole in Kent. Both were lavish in their support of the furniture-makers.

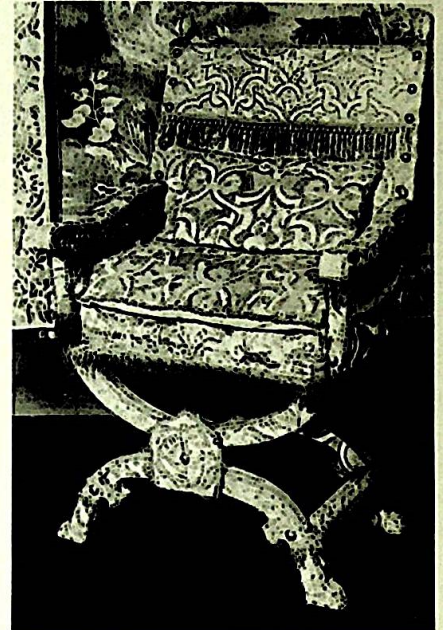
The 1st Earl of Dorset had come into possession of Knole at some time between 1603 and 1605, and began to alter and add elaborate new buildings to it. However, his official duties as Lord High Treasurer often kept him in London at Sackville House. He died in 1603; the 2nd Earl of Dorset died within a few months of succession, and the 3rd Earl, despite his marriage to the celebrated but shrewd Lady Anne Clifford, castle builder in the north of England, was noted above all for wild extravagance. Add to these calamities a disastrous fire at Knole in 1623, and something of the nature of events which prevent the

ready survival of furniture can be appreciated.

The important items of furniture at Knole were acquired by the 6th Earl of Dorset, Lord Chamberlain of the Household to William III, but the presence of some earlier pieces allows us to note here a significant category of furniture, 'Canopies, Couches and Chairs of State'.

From whatever source it came the upholstered furniture at Knole provides adequate testimony both to the use of rich fabrics, and as an announcement of rank. There are five 'chairs of state' intended to be set under a canopy for important persons – the Mytens portrait of James I at Knole shows him in such a chair – made between about 1610 and 1625. One, (Plate 1), circa 1610–20 is covered in red silk and gold appliqué, whilst another, of slightly later date, has a white and red painted frame with arabesque decoration. This obviously complemented the original scarlet and silver cover. Yet another of the 1620s is upholstered in crimson and silver damask and is stamped with the Hampton Court inventory mark and the date of the inventory '1661'. It is an indication that a leading court official such as Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset (?1642–1706) had the right to take 'perquisites' – furniture for his private use at the death of the sovereign.

The ravaging of property, the dispersal of the Royal collections, and the imposition of severe restraint on luxury and ornament during the Commonwealth period in the 1640s and '50s was disastrous for the creation, or survival, of upholstered furniture. Moreover, the King, Charles II, was in exile abroad. His



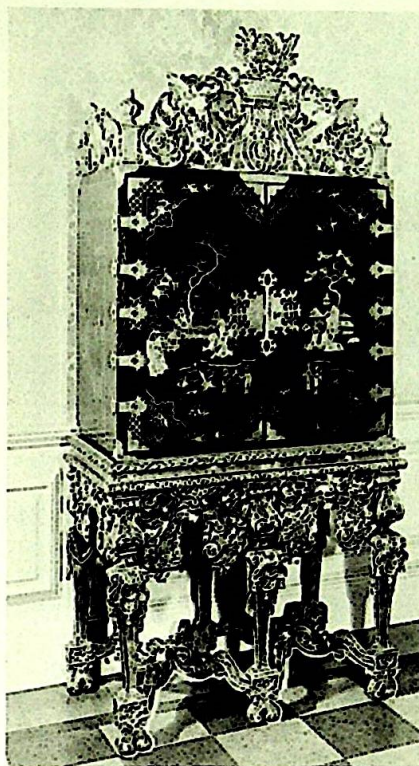
1 Armchair, circa 1610–20 upholstered in red satin with cloth of gold appliqué (Knole, Kent, The National Trust)

journeyings, together with those Royalists who had also fled abroad, were of immense importance at their return in heralding a new mood in the decorative arts in England. They had observed, questioned and even commissioned craftsmen to produce furniture. They saw to it that when Charles II returned to England in 1660 Italian and Dutch ideas in particular were likewise given a lively reception – Samuel Pepys wrote at the end of May 1660: 'This day the month ends . . . and all the world in a merry mood because of the King's coming'. He had come a few days earlier, fresh from a final banquet at the Hague given by the States of Holland. But within a few years an additional interest in what Portugal and its territories, such as Goa, could produce was evident after the King married the Catholic Catherine of Braganza by proxy in May 1661. She remained in Lisbon and did not come to England for the formal

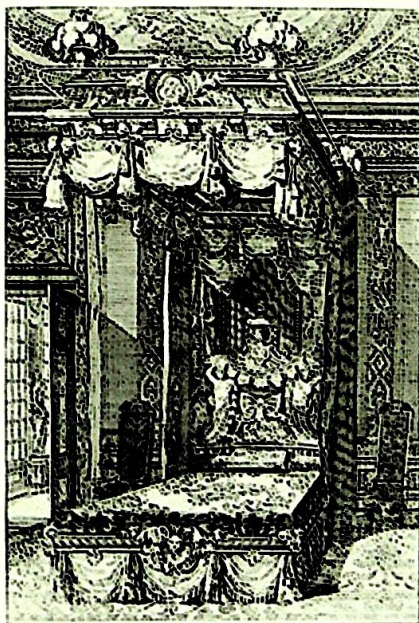
ceremony until a year later. The furniture-makers soon had to create appropriate furniture to take account of the Queen's predilection for drinking tea. The introduction of a new fashion or the revival of an old one was always good for trade – tea tables, tea kettles, cups, to use with what the poet Edmund Waller in 1680 called the 'best of herbs'. It was a fashion which furniture-makers did their best to encourage and to serve.

The overwhelming influence on the King and his courtiers, however, came from Holland. Its successful East India Company had long imported lacquer cabinets, and English makers soon set these on elaborate gilt-wood stands. (Plate 2).

In France Louis XIV revoked in 1685 the Edict of Nantes, by which, in 1598, Henri IV had granted religious toleration to Protestants. It caused many craftsmen, particularly silver-smiths, tapestry and fabric weavers, furniture-makers and upholsterers, to flee to other countries, and in particular to come to England. The accession to the English throne of the Protestant, William, Prince of Orange, in 1688 as William III not only allowed these craftsmen a home, but encouraged the adoption of ideas and influences they brought with them. One of the travellers, and one of seminal importance to decoration and furnishing, was Daniel Marot the elder (1661–1752). He had sought refuge in Holland the year before the Edict was revoked, and entered Prince William's service. His designs, of a highly decorative baroque character, were soon engraved, and whilst available in parts, had an even greater influence in England when they were issued as a collection at the Hague in 1702. Styling himself 'architecte de Guillaume III, roy de la Grande Bretagne', Marot made at least four visits to England in the 1690s, and worked for King William III at Hampton Court and elsewhere at the head of the Anglo-



2 Cabinet, japanned inside and out with partly raised chinoisiene scenes, circa 1690. (Temple Newsam House, Leeds)



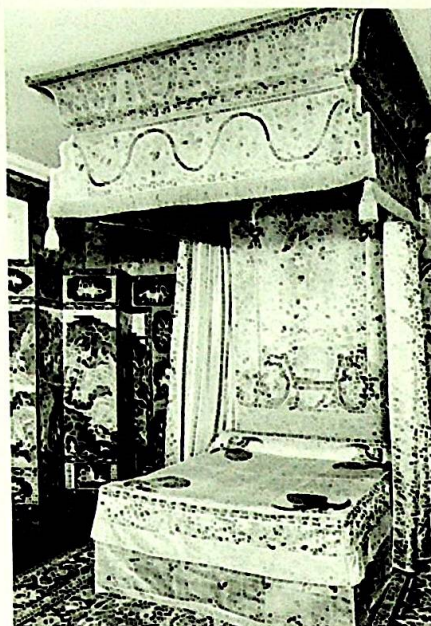
3 Daniel Marot (circa 1663–1752). A state Bed. Plate from the Second Livre d'Appartements, circa 1700

French and Anglo-Dutch furniture-makers and embellishers.

Marot's engraving of a state bedchamber, (Plate 3), plate 34 in his *Second Livre d'Appartements* (circa 1700), show a 'lit à la duchesse' or State Bed, which was already popular in Holland and was immediately so on its introduction to England. Making the elaborately draped tester and flamboyant head and footboards were severe tests even for specialist craftsmen. Something of the abilities needed can be seen in the enchanting fragments surviving at Hardwick Hall from the bed supplied by Francis Lapierre in 1697 to the 1st Duke of Devonshire for use at Chatsworth. The superb flying or 'angel' tester allowed the front posts to be dispensed with, and skilfully cut fabric set over carved wood shapes on the headboard imitated baroque flourishes unknown in England. The decoration follows closely plate 29 in Marot's book and caused the Duke to pay the not inconsiderable sum of £497, of which the crimson hangings alone cost £470. The bed was paid for at the instalment rate of £6 a week.

Francis Lapierre was a talented upholsterer, who with the fringe-maker Dufresnoy, had also worked in the 1690s for the Crown and at Burghley House, Northamptonshire, seat of the Duke of Devonshire's brother-in-law, the 5th Marquess of Exeter. Another of William's courtiers, the dour William Blathwayt, also ordered a State Bed from Lapierre about 1702 for his Gloucestershire seat, Dyrham Park. By his industry Blathwayt had become a Secretary of State to the king, and after his marriage to the Dyrham heiress in 1686, spent several years transforming and furnishing the house. He controlled much of the work from Holland where he served as one of William's diplomats at Amsterdam and The Hague. He was therefore an ardent supporter of Dutch ideas, and was fluent in the language having served the Stuart court in Holland

served the Stuart court in Holland in earlier years, and before he was twenty. The Dyrham State Bed is covered with yellow and crimson velvet and has an interior of sprigged satin. Marot had indicated in his book that costly hangings should be protected from sunlight and dust by a case curtain (*tour de lit*). The 1710 inventory of the Dyrham contents describes the original case curtains as in a light woollen fabric called 'red cheney', and the present ones approximate to that.



4 State Bed, assumed to be by John Belchier, with upholstery by Philip Hunt, circa 1720. (The National Trust, Erddig, Clwyd)

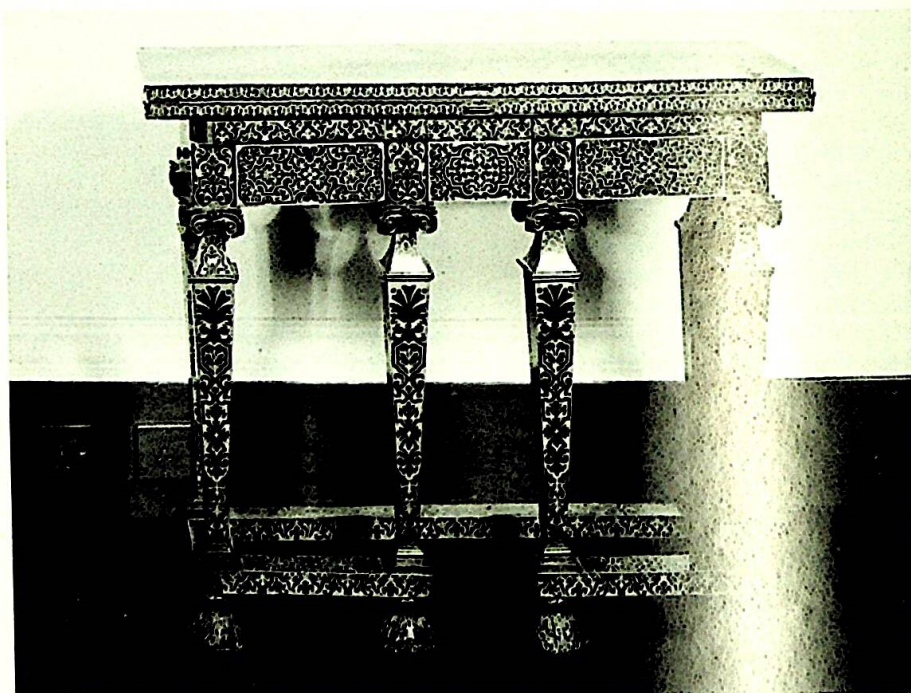
#### Royal Preferment

A specialist cabinet-maker to the Royal household was Gerreit (or Gerrit) Jensen. His activities extended from the reign of Charles II to the end of that of Queen Anne (circa 1680–1715). Of Dutch origin, Jensen was one of the

craftsmen engaged by the King at Hampton Court, and by the 1st Duke of Devonshire for the fitting and decoration of Chatsworth. The range of his activities at Chatsworth included the provision of glass for the South and East front windows, the silvered mirror glass for the Dining Room, and he was also paid for some doors, wainscot-framing, and carving in some of the State Rooms. Jensen's name is, however, more usually associated with furniture decorated with marquetry or Japan, and in some instances inlaid with metal. He was an accomplished technician, and almost had a monopoly in using the Boulle technique of metal inlay. Mentions of Jensen in the royal and certain private accounts has allowed a small but significant group of furniture at Windsor, Hampton Court, Kensington Palace, Boughton, Drayton, Clandon (Plate 5) and Deene to be credited to him.

In Queen Anne's reign the furniture supplied by Jensen became less elaborate and had to compete with that which was japanned or gilded. At his death in

In 1707 John Meller (1665–1733), Master in Chancery during the reign of Queen Anne, enlarged and refurbished his house of Erddig, N. Wales. He had contacts with London craftsmen, and in the early 1720s he was provided with a considerable amount of gesso furniture – some in silver gesso – by John Belchier, a London cabinet-maker at 'Ye Sun' in St. Paul's Churchyard. Only one Erddig bill by Belchier survives, but as it covers four years, 1722–6, it may be assumed he had been employed on the State Bed itself, which is dateable, by a further letter, to the early months of 1720. (Plate 4). John Meller was told in this letter, dated April 7, 1720, written by his nephew and heir Simon Yorke, that he had called about the bed on 'Mr Hunt' – presumably the upholsterer Philip Hunt who had premises in St. Paul's Churchyard. Hunt had been provided with a number of Chinese coverlets and hangings to use in covering the bed. They may have been a gift to Meller from his near-neighbour Elihu Yale (later founder of the college which became in turn the American university), who had worked for twenty years for the East India Company. In later years the bed suffered grievously from the depredations which were caused to the house by mining subsidence. It was restored with great care in 1968 as part of the extensive programme by the National Trust in reopening the house to the public.



5 Card table, seaweed marquetry in the manner of Gerrit Jensen, circa 1695. (The National Trust, Clandon Park, Sussex, Gubbay collection)

1715 his trade in supplying chimney mirrors and glass panels was taken over by Peter and Elizabeth Gumley and their son John, and in due course they were joined by James Moore, who was adept at incising and gilding gesso-covered furniture.

For reasons of continuity and convenience, a safe reliability, with adequate resources to withstand non-payment for long periods, the royal cabinet-makers followed one another in office. The Gumleys spanned in active years from the late 1680s to the late 1720s, and specialised in Japan cabinets, tables, stands, chest of drawers and writing-tables as any cabinet-maker might, but concentrated even more on providing looking-glasses. At Jensen's death the names of Gumley and Moore, often separately, start to appear in the Lord Chamberlain's records. John Gumley had inherited his father's business about 1694, and became free of the Glass Sellers' Company in 1704. A mirror at Chatsworth has the inscription 'John Gumley, 1703' scratched on it – one of two for which he was paid £200 for the pair in that year. More significantly a mirror at Hampton Court has 'Gumley' carved on a gilt slip intersecting the glass panels of one pilaster. The 'carved and gilt work' of the royal account entries related to incised or raised work in gilt gesso, for which James Moore became renowned. There is a small group of tables and stands in the royal collections (on one stand the name 'Moore' is incised) or in great collections at houses such as Boughton or Clandon.

The trade Moore had learned under Gumley may have encouraged conservatism but in the case of his candle-stands there are similarities to those, also in the royal collection, by Jean Pelletier who had supplied furniture and mirrors to William III, and to those pieces of elaborate furniture made at Augsburg by Aberell and Eichler, but of course inlaid in silver and tortoiseshell. When

Moore gave evidence against Henry Joynes, the Comptroller of the Works at Blenheim Palace – Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, who called Moore her 'oracle', had gone to law against many of the Blenheim craftsmen in 1724–5 – he stated his age to be fifty-four. We can assume therefore he was born about 1670, and that his presence on jobs with the Gumleys came about 1690. There is no note of his apprenticeship but he seems to have set up about 1712 and been also active in royal commissions with John Gumley from 1714–15.

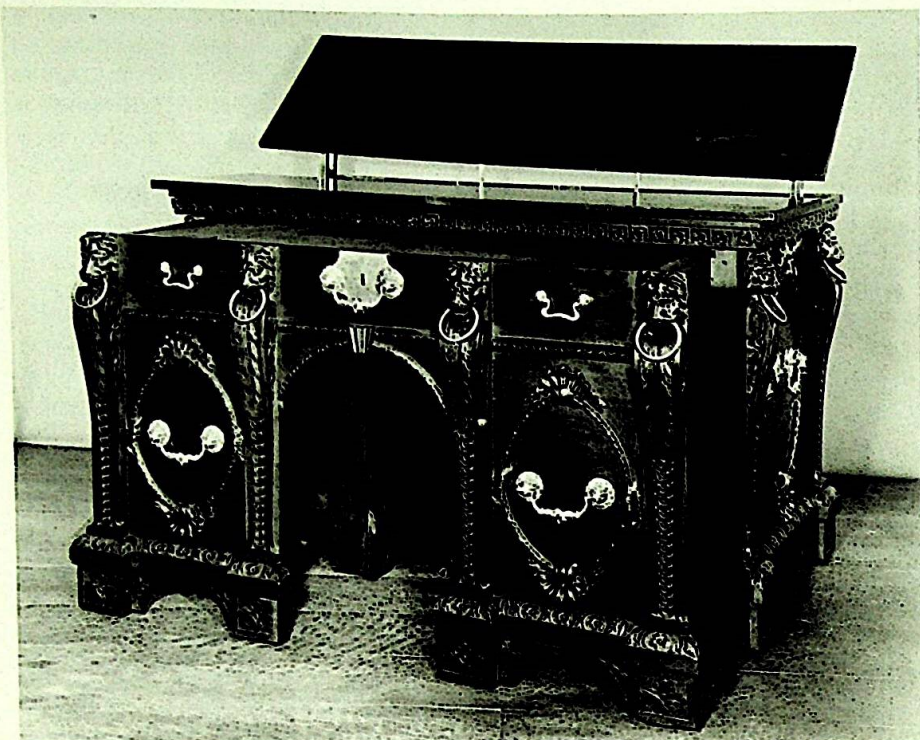
In 1720 he was working for the 3rd Earl of Burlington, then decorating Burlington House in Piccadilly, and his apprentice Benjamin Goodison received money on his behalf. Goodison also succeeded Moore in royal preferment soon after his master's death from a wound on the head, having fallen whilst out walking in October 1726.

Two significant private patrons whose confidence Goodison enjoyed were Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, who employed him at many of her houses, including her London residence in Dover Street, and her son-in-law, Charles 3rd Earl of Sunderland, at Althorp, Northamptonshire. When Sarah's granddaughter, Isabel, Duchess of Manchester, was left a childless widow in 1739 (she later remarried to Edward, Earl Beaulieu), Sarah purchased for her, with Goodison's assistance, the Dover Street house and gave it to her completely furnished. Goodison provided walnut elbow chairs at 18s.6d. each, chimney-pieces, pier-glasses, marble top tables with walnut frames and, through the upholsterer Sherard Paxton, 275 yards of green damask and enough white damask for a bed.

Cabinet-makers were always very nervous of fire in premises stacked with timber, glue, upholstery materials and so on and protected themselves by fire insurance. The various policies Goodison took out with the Hand in Hand Company,

1741–3, and the three apprentices recorded as put to him (including his nephew, Benjamin Parran), are perhaps but a partial indication of his success. He was putting money into property, and phrases in his will show him to have been an unusually pious man. He was not above the small commissions alongside the more considerable – £22 worth of furniture to Lady Monson for example in 1751 – and he attended to many minor and major tasks at Holkham for the Earls of Leicester over several years. In particular, a mahogany table press with wire doors for which Goodison charged £14.16s.0d. in 1757 and '2 card tables for ye Gallery' with 'white Frett workt round the tops and frames and ye feet ornamented with carveing and gilding' relate to items in the house. The table press has applied foliated ovals that have been regarded as a distinctive feature of furniture made by William Vile (*circa* 1700–67), but which I feel may have been supplied by the talented carver, Sefferin Alken, working for both Goodison and Vile on a sub-contract basis. (*Plate 6*).

It has been apparent for several years that many cabinet-makers included undertaking among their services. A noted case of Thomas Chippendale's involvement in this morbid duty has been recorded, but Goodison was involved in one of the most important occasions in 1751. He was required to help with the funeral arrangements after the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales in the late evening of Wednesday, March 20, 1751. The death chamber and the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey were set out with black hangings provided by the upholsterer William Reason and with eighty black sconces by Goodison, who also helped to embalm the body and lay the Prince in the lavish coffin provided by the joiner Henry Williams. As with all Royal craftsmen they had served Kings and Princes, faithfully, in life – Goodison had been employed by



6 The 'Ashburnham' Library table, attributed to Benjamin Goodison circa 1740-50, mahogany. (Victoria & Albert Museum, London W12-1960)

the Prince of Wales at Kew and elsewhere from 1735 - and they were not found wanting at the time of death.

#### *William Kent and the Cabinet-Makers*

The undoubted liaisons that William Kent, the influential architect, painter and decorator, had with the royal cabinet-maker Benjamin Goodison extended to a number of other cabinet-makers who also worked in a heavy Palladian style. Whilst it may never be possible to establish precisely what the links were, the influence which Kent and his noble patrons exerted on English decoration was considerable. All of them were eager to promote the ideas of form and decoration which they had seen on their Italian travels. In particular there was a revival of interest in the buildings of the 16th Century Italian architect, Andrea Palladio - whose importance Inigo Jones had recognised in the early 17th Century - and Kent also studied the baroque forms of furniture made in Italy by Foggini and others.

There is a small number of pieces of 18th Century English furniture associated with Kent which have remained confusing through the absence of exact facts about their manufacture. Some have heavy scrolled legs and shell motifs, and may have been made by the carver Matthias Lock, who certainly made drawings for furniture in the 'Kentian style'. There is more furniture attributed to John Vardy and Henry Flitcroft, who were primarily architects and decorators, and we must also reckon with Kent's involvement with the furniture-makers William and John Linnell.

#### *Thomas Chippendale*

Thomas Chippendale was born in 1718 at Otley, Yorkshire, and after training under his father and the York joiner, Richard Wood, left the north in the early 1740s for the wider opportunities of London. We know little of Chippendale's early years, apart from a small commission - the first recorded - from Lord Burlington (1747), and his marriage, a year later on May 19, 1748, to Catherine Redshaw.

By 1753 the young man had prospered enough to take premises in St. Martin's Lane, and a year later, in 1754, to publish his important pattern-book *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Makers' Director*. By this time he and his wife had two sons and two daughters, and five more children were born within the next seven years. The eldest son, Thomas the Younger, lived until 1822, forty-three years after his father's death, and also became an accomplished cabinet-maker.

The success of the *Director* encouraged Chippendale to move in August 1754 into larger premises in St. Martin's Lane which he titled 'The Cabinet and Upholstery Warehouse', adopting a chair for his sign. We have commented that all cabinet-makers feared fire at their premises, laden as these were with timber and upholstery materials. Such a disaster befell Chippendale and his partners when fire ravaged two of his workshops on a windy Saturday night, April 5, 1755. It also destroyed '22 Chests of the journeymens Tools' - an indication of the strength of his workforce. However, the damage was less than feared, and with insurance money forth-coming from the Sun Office, the opportunity to rebuild and enlarge the premises was taken.

Chippendale's ability as a designer and maker, coupled with a competent workforce, and his able partners, enabled the business to expand further. From the mid-1760s he was producing his finest Neo-Classical furniture, with superb marquetry pieces made for Harewood House and elsewhere in the early 1770s. Five years after his first wife's death, he remarried, in 1777, and had three more children, a total of twelve in all by his two wives. On November 13, 1779, he died of consumption, without making a will, but survived by his second wife and at least four of his children.

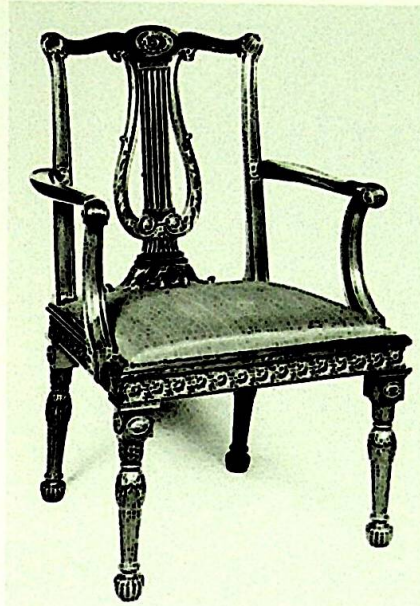
The praise which came to

Chippendale in his lifetime continued well into the 19th Century. The cabinet-makers Ince and Mayhew, who published their own patterns in 1762, called him 'a very ingenious Artificer'. Thomas Sheraton alluded in 1793 to 'Chippendale's extensive and masterly work', and George Smith in 1828 pronounced him 'the most famous Upholsterer and Cabinet-maker of his day'. What elements in Chippendale's work led to these points of high esteem? His pattern-book, *The Director*, was undoubtedly one important factor in his development.

### *The Successful Years*

Both Chambers and Adam had studied in Italy, and had returned to England in the late 1750s, intent on introducing a new repertory based on Classical precedent, and on outdoing each other in its realisation. Chippendale, as with all English cabinet-makers, lacked the early artistic education which came from seeing and learning of foreign lands and collections at first-hand, and had to make do with a later visit to France, and with looking at engravings. The introduction of Neo-Classical designs into the 3rd edition of the *Director* (1762) is therefore the more remarkable. He was able over the next few years, and into the 1770s, to submerge the sprite-like curves and flourishes of Rococo, within a fluent anthology of classical details. Chippendale worked for Adam's patrons in many houses designed by the architect and those, for example, in his native Yorkshire (Newby, Nostell and Harewood) contain furniture by him. It is of unqualified excellence with large-scale ornament, some inlaid into rich surfaces, and flanked by elaborate gilded ormolu mounts.

Chippendale's output of furniture in the 1760s included some splendid pieces of marquetry furniture. The pier-tables, commissioned for various rooms at Harewood House, Yorkshire, together with the sumptuous 'Diana and Minerva' commode there, circa



7 Library chair, one of six made in mahogany in 1768 for Sir Rowland Winn by Thomas Chippendale. (The National Trust, Nostell Priory, Yorkshire)

1773, might indicate his employment of a specialist marquetry-worker. London could provide the most accomplished craftsmen, who sub-contracted their time and skills to established makers. The evidence for Chippendale's use of specialists is too sparse to permit firm conclusions, but what is undeniable is that, with or without them, he produced some of the finest examples of English marquetry furniture. Let us note one earlier well-known item, made by Chippendale, as a guide to varied aspects of his patronage and business. This is the splendid lyre-back Library chair (Plate 7), one of six, made in 1768 for Nostell Priory, Yorkshire (1767-8), as part of the extensive commission given to the Yorkshire maker by Sir Rowland Winn, who had succeeded at his father's death in 1765. He had immediately engaged Robert Adam to work at his Yorkshire and London houses. Chippendale was probably introduced to Sir Rowland by Adam and formed part of the team of decorators from 1766. The commission spanned a further twenty years and gives, through the survival of both

documentation and furniture, a valuable indication of working practices. Recent researchers have established a considerable amount about Chippendale's upholstery trade and noted a number of small constructional details which, whilst no guarantee of Chippendale's involvement, do seem to occur on many pieces of authenticated furniture by him. These are the presence of S-pattern key holes, V-shaped cuts and slots under the seat rails to assist in holding the cramps used when glueing, and screw holes, found beneath the seat rails of high-quality chairs. When packing such chairs they were suspended by screws – hence the holes – from cross battens to keep the chair frames clear of the crate.

Despite Chippendale's eminence in the trade he only seems to have worked for the Royal Family on one occasion. He had explained the delay in supplying furniture to Sir Rowland Winn in 1768 was due to work 'mostly for the Royal Family', and the revised *Director* had been dedicated to Prince William Henry, 1st Duke of Gloucester. Two sofas and eight armchairs (as well as five single chairs of a different pattern), and indisputably from Chippendale's workshop, form a suite in the royal collections. They have the usual system of cramp slots, and show stylistic resemblances to the seat furniture made by Chippendale in the early 1770s for the 1st Viscount Melbourne for Bocket Hall, Hertfordshire.

If royal preferment on any scale eluded Chippendale it came, but late, to his successful rivals, the partners, William Vile (died 1767) and John Cobb (died 1778). They had avoided buying the *Director* and the risk of any charge that they had copied (as many of lesser status did) its attractive designs. They had enough ability in any case to survive by their own merits, but it is necessary, for reasons which are explained below, to consider their early work alongside that of their senior 'partner', the London

cabinet-maker, William Hallett, senior (1707–81).

The preference by Hallett, senior, to back William Vile says much about his lack of interest in the business of his own nephew, Samuel Norman (fl. 1732–82). Norman was a very successful carver and gilder, until he suddenly failed and went bankrupt in April 1768. There is, however, firm evidence for Hallett's continuing financial support to Vile and Cobb in the London bank accounts of all three, at Drummonds Bank. There is an inter-dependence, with regular payments to Hallett from his two partners from about 1757. As these payments were at the rate of £150 to £300 monthly in 1757–8, and regular payments totalling £500 in 1760, £2,350 in 1761 and £1,000 in 1763, the payments to Hallett were probably a 'share percentage' of the takings for his backing. As the 1761 and 1763 payments are higher they possibly reflect Vile's success with making a number of important pieces of furniture in these years for Queen Charlotte.

Vile and Cobb's royal service began late in their careers in 1761, when they were probably both aged in their late fifties or early sixties. Their Warrant of Appointment to the Great Wardrobe was dated on January 5, 1761 as the Master, Earl Gower, sent it to the Lord Chamberlain, the Duke of Devonshire. Significantly it described them only as 'Upholsters [*sic*] in Ordinary to His Majesty's Great Wardrobe', but the payments to Vile record fine pieces of mahogany furniture, and some survives. It has often been described and illustrated, and consists, briefly, in 1761, of the King's coin cabinet, a bureau-secretaire with pierced fret top and bombe base for Queen Charlotte, (Plate 8), together with her fine jewel cabinet, and a pair of mahogany cabinets for the King's Library.

In 1762 the Queen was supplied



8 Bureau-secretaire, provided by William Vile to Queen Charlotte in 1762 – Royal Collection. (Reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen)

with the large break-front bookcase of architectural form with four Corinthian pilasters, a broken pediment, with, on the stepped base, the distinctive ovals simulating laurel wreaths. The King also ordered a pair of writing tables. The following year, 1763, Vile re-fashioned an organ case of about 1735, probably by Benjamin Goodison, to form a cabinet. Again thick oval wreaths were applied to the base cupboard doors. The Queen was further provided in 1763 with a mahogany work-table described in the accounts as having:

“... shape Legs neatly Carved and a Scrole on the foot and a Leaf on the knee, a Carved finishing to the rail, one half of the top divided into 12 compartments, the other half open and the top made to fold over behind, supported with two Sides

made to draw out of the Rails, the whole on good Casters and a neat Link Plate Lock made to the Queen's Key £9.15s.

The compartments referred to in the accounts have been subsequently removed.

The King and Queen had been crowned on September 22, 1761 and the carved crown on the bureau-secretaire (Plate 8) may have been a last-minute addition which did not form part of the original design, although the accounts record its provision. For the jewel cabinet, however, Vile strayed away from his use of mahogany to combine, as the accounts declared, 'many different kinds of fine wood on a mahogany frame richly carved'. The cabinet has veneers of padouk, amboyna, tulip and rosewood. The fact that it cost £138.10s.0d, together with £71 for the bureau-secretaire, and £107.14s. for the large break-front bookcase, goes a little way towards explaining the £3,738 in Vile's bank account in 1762, and his ability to pay £1,000 to Hallett on March 7, 1763.

#### Worthy Contenders

Two competitors to Chippendale and Vile and Cobb, who had set up a considerable business by the late 1760s, were William Ince and John Mayhew. In 1759, after coming out of their apprenticeships, and with the main input of money coming from Mayhew, they set up business together as 'Mayhew and Ince' at the upper end of Broad Street, Soho, near Carnaby Market. We know something of the firm's structure from the papers of a later disagreement. Ince was the designer, who had learned his trade as a cabinet-maker with John West, whilst Mayhew acted as manager, and dealt with the upholstery side of their activities: he had been apprenticed to William Bradshaw of Soho Square, an important maker and upholster.

In a similar manner to Chippendale, once Ince and

Mayhew had established the outline of a business, they decided in 1759 to issue designs 'in weekly Numbers'. They copied Chippendale both in the intended number of plates (160), and in the use of Matthias Darly as engraver. Underestimating the amount of work required and suffering from the build-up by Chippendale towards a 3rd edition of the *Director*, the venture foundered in the autumn of 1760, after the late appearance of part 21. The astute Robert Sayer, one of the most successful of 18th century print sellers, and not averse to plagiarism when it suited him, then issued a little over ninety of the available engravings in a large folio titled *Universal System of Household Furniture*. It was dedicated to George Spencer, 4th Duke of Marlborough, for whom the firm were later to work at Blenheim Palace, under the supervision of Sir William Chambers, Joint Architect to King George III.

The mixture of Rococo, with Gothic and Chinese overtones, formed the main style of the designs. Some were unashamedly copied from the 1754 edition of the *Director*, and explanatory notes were printed in both English and French. The firm's label on a mahogany china cabinet in the Museum of Decorative Arts, Copenhagen later announced that they had 'an Assortment of French furniture consigned from Paris' – the demand for which was typified by a remark of Lady Mary Coke in 1769:

I have got my chairs from Paris without being beholden to anybody, but I don't intend to have them covered with damask or have the frames gilt till after I return from abroad.

The partnership output was by this date considerable and of very high quality. Income in the years 1768–70 totalled £52,000, but their outgoings were a heavy burden and led eventually to discord and dispute. Lady Shelburne, engaged in 1768 in furnishing Shelburne



9 Cabinet made by Mayhew and Ince in 1775 for the Duchess of Manchester to provide a setting for eleven panels of marble intarsia. (Victoria & Albert Museum, London W43–1949)

(later Lansdowne) House, recorded in her unpublished diary that she had visited Mayhew and Ince's 'where there is some beautiful cabinet work'. She ordered:

two pretty glass cases for one of the rooms in my apartments, and which, though they are only deal, and to be painted white, he charges £50 for.

The high charges were a characteristic of the firm. Whilst Mayhew had a small private income which placed him a little apart from the penurious position normal to most craftsmen, he and his partner charged high prices. The rate for being apprenticed to them was also the highest of any comparable London business, attaining £157.10s. in 1766 by contrast to £50 with William France. Notwithstanding their charges they enjoyed the considerable patronage of the 6th Earl of Coventry in the late 1760s. Some twenty bills survive, recording their comprehensive services at Croome Court and the Earl's town house, 29 Piccadilly. These included papering walls, laying carpets and the ever-

necessary disinfecting and stuffing of mattresses.

The bills document the supply of some outstanding pieces of furniture – a pair of satinwood and holly commodes, two settees and six armchairs *en suite* for which two sets of dust covers (and 'stockings' to protect legs in transit) were provided. This suite is now in New York (*Metropolitan Museum of Art*), set out in the re-erected Tapestry Room from Croome Court for which it was made. The superb cabinet they supplied in 1775 to the Duchess of Manchester is illustrated here. (Plate 9).

#### *Gillows of Lancaster*

In the late 18th Century a northern firm who made up their own designs to such degrees of excellence that they soon had a very wide and successful practice was that of Gillows of Lancaster. Founded by Robert Gillow in about 1728 the firm was active in the West Indies trade and brought supplies of mahogany to Lancaster in their own ships, sending out all manner of goods in return; they were 'Licensed Dealers in Rum',





10 Cabinet on stand, circa 1760, attributed to Gillows of Lancaster (Temple Newsam House, Leeds)

for example. Their work of the 1760s, scantily available and lacking the benefit of exact documentation, is perhaps best demonstrated in a fine mahogany cabinet on stand (*Temple Newsam House, Leeds*) (Plate 10) carved in a florid, flamboyant style, with massive cabriole legs, apron with shells, and broken pediment. It represents the use by provincial cabinet-makers of a variety of pattern and instruction manuals, and in another context part of its form might act as an architectural frame to a picture, or, as in this case, incorporate a pictorial panel of needlework.

Much better known is the firm's output in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, made in dark Cuban mahogany, or by using exotic woods, veneers and inlays. Finally, there is an extensive archive which documents this later activity preserved in the Westminster Reference Library.

Gillows opened up a London branch in 1771 at '176 Oxford

Road'. Their charges were moderate (although the redoubtable Mrs Piozzi did get reduced their charges to her in 1794) and they became a firm of good standing. A judgement of them in 1807 by a German visitor to London, P. A. Nemnich, typifies much which can be observed, in more precise detail, in their estimate and rough sketch-books. He wrote that the firm were:

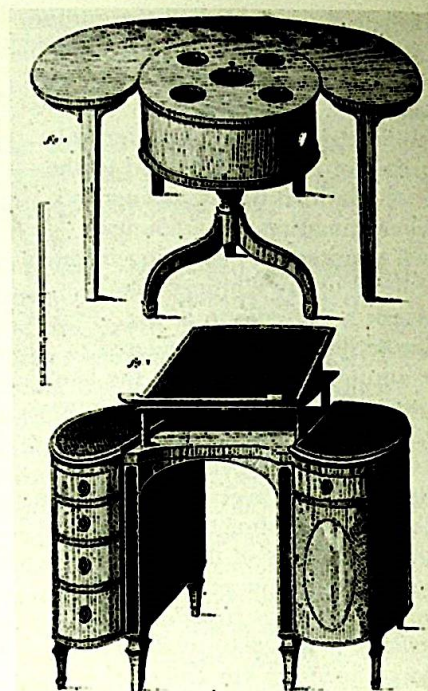
the first grade salesmen and manufacturers in London; they deal widely in land and foreign trade and maintain employes in different parts of England; their work is good and solid, though not of the first class in inventiveness and style.

Gillow furniture is often stamped with an incised mark in small capital letters 'GILLOWS - LANCASTER', on a drawer-edge, or back of a seat-frame. They were almost the only English maker to be consistent in giving this useful aid to the factors needing to be assessed in arriving at a conclusion on origin and date.

#### George Hepplewhite

George Hepplewhite is said to have been apprenticed to the Gillows of Lancaster, but no record of this appears amongst the surviving registrations. Nevertheless his name has endured, although the furniture regarded as 'Hepplewhite' was made by a host of other makers in a similar style to that set out in Hepplewhite's pattern-book, published by his widow in 1788, two years after his death. Titled *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterers' Guide* it was in a third edition by 1794, and declared on its title-page that it was a 'Repository of Designs for Every Article of Household Furniture - near Three Hundred different Designs . . .'

Hepplewhite's 'Book pieces' however - that is, furniture related directly to the book patterns - are rare. Leading makers, always nervous of reproducing published designs - although, for example, in earlier years plate 13 of Chippendale's *Director* (1754) for



11 Gentleman's social table (and dressing or writing table) from Thomas Sheraton's *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book*, 1794

chairs had been much copied - were wary of following too closely one who had a shop in an unfashionable part of town, and to whom no reputation of furniture could be credited.

#### Thomas Sheraton

When Hepplewhite died in 1786 Thomas Sheraton was but thirty-five years old; he had been born in Stockon-on-Tees in 1751, and his early years were undergone (as Thomas Sheraton, junior, later recorded) without 'the advantages of a collegial or academeical educational'. He came to London about 1790, and is said to have then 'supported himself, a wife and two children by his exertion as an author'.

The principal results of Sheraton's literary endeavours were *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book* (1791-4) and the *Cabinet Dictionary* (1803). The *Drawing-Book* was issued in 40 separate numbers, with Part I and II devoted to geometry and perspective whilst Part III started to be of more practical use by

exhibiting 'the present state of furniture' and giving 'the workman some assistance. (Plate 11). In whatever way he had acquired his knowledge Sheraton had a complete mastery in the technical aspects of cabinet-making, and his *Dictionary* has therefore had a lasting value. It set out to explain:

. . . all the Terms used in the Cabinet, Chair & Upholstery Branches, with Directions for Varnish-making, Polishing and Gilding . . .

and was illustrated with 88 handsome copper-plate engravings.

Sheraton's advertised readiness to provide designs to cabinet-makers probably means that he did find much business in this way. But the range and volume of his business are only surmised, and his activities merit detailed research. A correlation of differences between Hepplewhite's *Guide*, Thomas Shearer's *Cabinet-Makers London Book of Prices* (1788), and Sheraton's

*Drawing-Book* has been partially set out. The *Drawing-Book* was subscribed to by some 700 tradesmen, with about two-thirds of the subscribers resident in London, with most of the remaining third living in the north, and north-east, of England.

#### *Royal Patron*

At the turn of the nineteenth century the Prince of Wales – he became Prince Regent in 1811 and King George IV in 1820 – started the extensive transforming of Brighton Pavilion. He had already had experience of the vagaries of the Chinese style in the Drawing Room created for him by Henry Holland at Carlton House. The appearance of the room is recorded in Sheraton's *Drawing Book* (1793), and whilst the room is lost, some of the furniture survives at Buckingham Palace. In particular two pier tables of ebony were given supports of bronze Chinamen and there were ornamental dragons on

the frieze. At Brighton this mood was continued lavishly by the Crace family of decorators. Black and gold lacquered furniture was supplied, as well as the wildest excesses of Oriental styling. In the way even royal families have of re-using what was useful, Queen Victoria took many of the furnishings of the new east wing of Buckingham Palace, built by Blore in 1847, from the Brighton Pavilion. She may have had in mind the uproar which had resulted from the heavy expenditure John Nash had incurred when transforming the palace for George IV in the late 1820s. Later in her reign, when she had withdrawn to Osborne House on the Isle of Wight (after the death of her beloved Prince Albert) she used Holland & Sons. A principal Victorian firm, they worked with great care and attention to detail, as all their predecessors who enjoyed royal and noble patronage had loyally done.