

GRDM HOSTS VISIT BY 'OUT OF THE DARK' CHARITY



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The GRDM's educational team welcomed a group of young people from the charity **Out of the Dark** on Monday 17th February. This charitable social enterprise, based in High Wycombe recycles, restores and revamps salvaged furniture as a means of educating and employing young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. They learn skills like caning, re-varnishing and French polishing from local craftsmen. The restored furniture is sold online, or through a number of retail outlets. Amber Bailey, final year student at Bucks New University organized the visit. The visitors enjoyed a discussion around the furniture made by Gordon Russell and his company and the guides in their turn were very interested in the ways these young people were giving furniture a new lease of life. For more information on this charity see their website www.outofthedark.org.uk.

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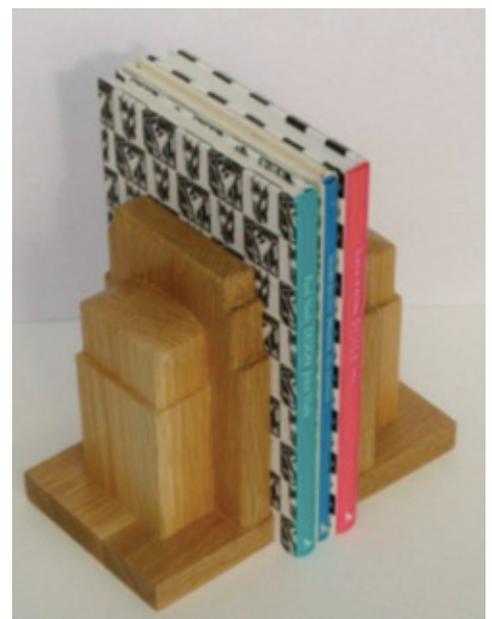
PRISONER REHABILITATION – HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

In the early 20th century Gordon's father took a great interest in the rehabilitation of prisoners in Worcester Prison – he even employed men from that institution.

Drawn to Design by Ray Leigh & Trevor Chinn, published last year, included a number of designs for small domestic items which it was thought would be suitable for sale in the GRDM shop.

An acquaintance of Laurie Wolder, former Joint Managing Director of GR Ltd, was a woodwork instructor at Long Lartin prison and he arranged for Ray Leigh, former company Chairman and Richard Paice, Chairman of Trustees to visit the prison workshops. They discovered that one of the three instructors had worked as cabinet maker for GR, and everyone was impressed by the quality of work achieved by prisoners with little experience of the craft the GRDM commissioned the prisoners to make bookends to a 1926 design by Gordon Russell. These are now available for sale in the GRDM shop and the museum looks forward to further collaboration with the prison workshop.

Prison governor, Tom Wheatley said: *Working closely with the Gordon Russell Trust has given our offenders an opportunity to apply their skills constructively whilst also providing genuine, quality products from our woodwork factories which the public can enjoy. We are proud to be associated with the Gordon Russell Trust*



GORDON RUSSELL TALKS PROGRAMME

A CRAFTSMAN'S VIEW

Twenty guests were held spellbound by the lively and fascinating presentation given by former GR craftsman Martin Blakeman. There could be no-one more qualified to talk on this subject. Martin first started work in 1959 as an apprentice and went on to spend his whole career with Gordon Russell Ltd, both as a craftsman and a manager. Following in the footsteps of his father, who had been with the firm since 1926, you could say that Gordon Russell is in Martin's blood.

After introducing the origin of the firm, as the repair workshop for the Lygon Arms, Martin went on to talk about Gordon's obsession with good design and quality production, which found favour in the market place. Martin then described some of the personalities who worked for the firm and took the audience on a photographic guided tour through the substantial factory buildings, and highlighting the numerous stages of the production process, from buying timber to polishing the finished product.

The best parts were Martin's personal anecdotes about life in the factory and his workmates. It really brings a piece of furniture to life to know that the man who made it, and whose name is on the label, was only 5' 3" tall and had to have a special low bench that none of the other craftsmen could use; and that every craftsman had his own trademark way of dovetailing (some better than others!). This was a most entertaining presentation which hopefully can be repeated regularly for our visitors. Our thanks to David Timson for this report.

'A PLEASANT, HAPPY, ALIVE SORT OF PLACE': BRITAIN ON SHOW IN THE 1937 PARIS EXHIBITION Monday 14 April 2014 at 4.00pm

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The second talk in the 2014 series will be given by Alan Powers, the well known and respected author, lecturer and authority on 20th century design. The company had a room setting designed by Marian Pepler and Curly Russell on show at the Paris exhibition. During an office trip to see the show Gordon, to the enjoyment of everyone, imitated a coarse French porter

Admission: **£10** payable at the door (includes glass of wine).

The upstairs gallery only holds **30** so please email grdmuseum@gmail.com if you wish to reserve a place

GRDM SAYS A FOND FAREWELL TO JENNIFER PIEPEREIT

At a gathering of volunteers at the GRDM on Friday 21st February the Chairman, Richard Paice paid tribute to the museum's Curator, Jennifer Piepereit who was leaving the museum. He thanked Jennifer for her patience and support. Thanks to her commitment and professionalism they had seen an increase in shop sales and visitor numbers over the years. At very short notice she pulled together the 2013 textile exhibition, locating exhibits and organising the display. Such was the quality of this show that its run had to be extended by a further month due to popular demand. Mr Paice was delighted to report that Jennifer had agreed to continue her connection by advising on stock for the shop and providing curatorial support for the museum's forthcoming exhibitions

