

## TALKS PROGRAMME

*A Pleasant Happy Alive Sort of Place: Britain on Show at the 1937 Paris Exhibition* was the second in the 2014 series at the Gordon Russell Design Museum. The speaker, Alan Powers, is an expert on British twentieth-century architecture and design and he quickly prepared the scene for us.



The modesty of the British approach was illustrated by his first image – not showing the British Pavilion at all – with the German and Soviet pavilions squaring up to each other on either side of the Eiffel Tower together with Alan's comment that Britain was one of the few countries to stick to the rules in terms of spending. Britain's contribution was masterminded by Frank Pick, the champion of modern British design who stamped his mark on the London Underground. For the Paris exhibition Pick presented a view of Britain as south-east England – a nation of weekend retreats, traditional sports and crafts, and rural industries – and also highlighted some of Britain's main exports such as leather luggage. The architect of the British Pavilion and one of the key people involved with the exhibition was Oliver Hill. Alan's photographs showed how Hill's displays of everyday

objects such as farm tools were presented in a visually dramatic and memorable fashion inspiring his later exhibition at Cirencester as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain.

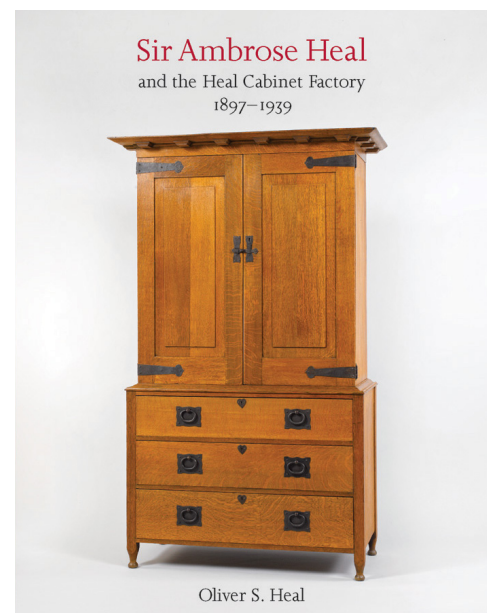
This stimulating talk gave rise to a wide-ranging series of questions culminating in what was for me the most inspiring moment of the afternoon when Ray Leigh thanked Alan for bringing the career of Oliver Hill to life and recalled the impact of seeing Hill's 1930s masterpiece, the Midland Hotel, Morecambe, as a twelve-year-old. It was this experience which he claimed as the beginning of his interest in architecture and design – the rest, as they say, is history.

*Report by Mary Greenstead*

## UPCOMING TALKS

On Monday 19 May at 4pm, Oliver Heal is visiting the GRDM to give a talk about his grandfather, Sir Ambrose Heal and the Heal Cabinet Factory, the subject of his recently published book. Heal was a contemporary and friend of Gordon Russell and Oliver Heal has kindly agreed to sign copies of his authoritative account with over 580 illustrations after the talk.

Admission £10 payable at the door (includes glass of wine). To reserve a place please email [grdmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:grdmuseum@gmail.com)



# SIXTY FORMER GORDON RUSSELL EMPLOYEES HOLD A REUNION IN THE MUSEUM

Following the talk by Martin Blakeman of his experience as a Gordon Russell craftsman, 60 of his former Gordon Russell colleagues held a reunion party in the museum. A visitor, Ed Auger, recently wrote to say how much he and his wife had enjoyed their visit: "What made the experience come alive was the enthusiastic and knowledgeable commentary Martin provided. He turned what could have been a run of the mill museum trip to a visit which left us enthused about Gordon Russell and his legacy."



# BROADWAY'S "DOWNTON": PRE-WAR LIFE AT THE LYGON 31 MAY TO 27 JULY 2014

The GRDM's contribution to the 2014 Broadway Festival 'Changing Times' is an exhibition featuring a slice of Edwardian life before the outbreak of the First World War. Ten years before this fateful date Sydney Russell and his family began their Broadway Adventure turning the then ailing coaching inn, the Lygon Arms, into a country house hotel offering visitors an experience not dissimilar to that enjoyed by guests at 'Downton Abbey'. Patrons included HRH Princess Henry of Battenberg and TRH The Prince of Wales, HM The Queen of Romania, Henry Ford and the author A.C. Benson.



The Lygon proved a great inspiration to the young Gordon and the current owners have kindly agreed to lend items for the exhibition. The furniture exhibits will be dressed with objects from the period, as well as Edwardian fashion and examples of Gordon's calligraphy. There will also be a display of related work by members of the Gloucestershire Guild.



## MODERN BRITISH FURNITURE: DESIGN SINCE 1945 BY LESLEY JACKSON, LONDON:V&A PUBLISHING, 2013.



In this authoritative account on modern British furniture Lesley Jackson brings her focus on design ingenuity. She looks at the most inventive British designers and companies from 1945 to the present-day, and not surprisingly this includes Gordon Russell Ltd. In the first chapter on post-war designers she includes a whole section on Gordon Russell and Dick Russell, and the company's prestigious commissions, including work for Basil Spence at Coventry Cathedral. This well illustrated and informative account includes the work of other designers who worked with Gordon Russell Ltd, such as Robert Heritage, Ron Carter, Ray Leigh and Trevor Chinn. The work of iconoclastic figures such as Ernest Race, Robin Day, Ron Arad, Jasper Morrison, Rodney Kinsman, Lucian Ercolani at Ercol and Terence Conran for Habitat are also considered, as well as foreign born designers who have adopted the UK as their base and injected their influence into British furniture design. ISBN 978-1851777594.

## ALEXIA MONROE JOINS THE GRDM AS MUSEUM MANAGER

Alexia Monroe grew up in North London with an English father and Italian mother. She moved to Bourton-on-the-Hill in 1999 where she lives happily with her husband, three children and two whippets. She graduated with a degree (joint honours) in history and politics and has worked in a variety of industries; one highlight included having dinner with Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple. Having retired as Clerk of Blockley Parish Council she joined the Museum in January; she continues to be Clerk to Bourton-on-the-Hill Parish Council and a director of the engineering consultancy, Monroe Brothers Ltd. Her main interests include cycling, returning to Italy as often as possible and being part of St David's Church, Moreton-in-Marsh.



## GRDM LAUNCHES A MEMBERS FORUM



To help secure the financial future of the Gordon Russell Design Museum the Gordon Russell Trust has launched a Members Forum.

Annual subscription is £25 for a couple, or a single person with a friend. Benefits include free access to the museum, priority booking for museum exhibitions and talks. 10% discount on museum publications and a summer garden party.

For an application form email [grdmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:grdmuseum@gmail.com)