

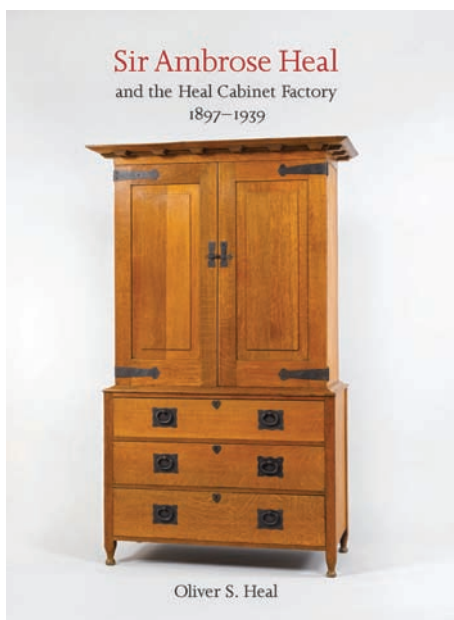
## TALKS PROGRAMME

Oliver Heal came to the Gordon Russell Design Museum on 18 May to give the third talk in the 2014 Programme on the result of ten years' research which resulted in his recently published book, *Sir Ambrose Heal and the Heal Cabinet Factory 1897-1939*. This detailed and comprehensive record of Heal's contribution to 20th century British domestic design is the result of ten years' research.

Oliver Heal bought to life the human aspects of the family business headed by his great grandfather Sir Ambrose Heal. Although Sir Ambrose was a friend and contemporary of Gordon Russell, and both of them contributed to the post-war resurgence of design after years of austerity, Heal's contribution is less widely recognised today. The speaker suggested that this was because Heal's was regarded as a shop rather than a specialist furniture designer; the artistic community distrusted Sir Ambrose because he was a successful businessman and the commercial community regarded him as a long-haired artist.

Combining the functions of designer, furniture manufacturer and shopkeeper Sir Ambrose Heal also paid great attention to detail in matters such as stock labelling and signage – the latter in calligraphic script, becoming an early exponent of branding to establish a corporate identity. He was also a patron of the arts. Heal's is remembered, therefore, not only for the furniture it sold but also for the exhibitions of contemporary art and crafts held in the shop's Mansard Gallery.

I encountered Sir Ambrose only once before his retirement as Chairman in 1952. I was a very junior member of Heal's staff working in the Craftsman's Market and Sir Ambrose took a look around the shop. His eagle eye discovered some hand woven fabric whose composition had been wrongly described; we were duly rebuked.



Oliver Heal provided a fascinating introduction to his great grandfather's life and work. The publication of this meticulously documented account ensures that Heal's place in the history of furniture design and manufacture is now on record, and recreates the ambience of life at the shop in Tottenham Court Road.

*Report by Margaret Bryan*

Oliver grabbed our attention from the start. He guided us through Sir Ambrose's highly complicated private life and then his business interests. He spoke about the influences of the Secessionist Movement on his great grandfather's early designs, how he used all the materials available to him and how he somehow caught the spirit of the age. With his wonderful advertisements he was selling to an every-growing clientele eager for change. Anyone with the slightest interest in the 20th century craft movement should have a copy of this book.

*Additional comment by David Pickup*

# LONDON CURATOR OPENS LATEST EXHIBITION

Seventy-two people attended the GRDM on 30 May to hear Dennis Nothdruff, Curator at the London Fashion and Textile Museum, open the GRDM's exhibition, Broadway's 'Lygon'; Pre-war life at the Lygon, curated by Jennifer Pieperit. Sir Roy Strong, who had come to open the Broadway Festival that evening, also popped in to see the show.

The exhibition tells the story of the conversion of the Lygon Arms, by Gordon Russell's father, from an ailing coaching inn to a fine country house hotel. Books, photographs, and objects complemented the museum's own collections to provide a window into the life and fashions enjoyed by the Russell family in Edwardian Broadway. The last section finishes with Gordon signing up with the Worcestershire regiment and his experiences in the Great War.



The exhibition runs until 27th July 2014. Opening hours 11.00am to 5.00pm (closed Mondays). Entrance charge £5 (Free for Members Forum ticket holders)

# FORMER GRDM INTERN IS A MARQUETRY MAESTRO!



GRDM Curator Jennifer Pieperit recently visited Bucks New University 'End of Year Degree Show' to see, in particular, the Gordon Russell stool and Utility Chair which had been beautifully restored by Amber Bailey as part of her MA Conservation of Furniture and Decorative Arts degree. Amber spent the summer of 2013 helping Jennifer with the conservation, cleaning, storage and recording of the last of the Gordon Russell design drawings. In return for all her hard work the GRDM was happy to let her have the rather worn out GR chair for conservation work.

Alongside her conservation work Amber displayed examples of marquetry work which she had produced using a 1920s treadle fretsaw. Amber demonstrated good design, dedication, perfectionism, an eye for detail and consistency in her work to the high level of 'Skill' Gordon Russell spent many years promoting in the design world.

'Well done Amber! Everyone at GRDM wishes you every success in reaching your goal of finding employment in your chosen field of marquetry.'

*Report by Jennifer Pieperit*

# RYCOTEWOOD FURNITURE COLLEGE - GORDON RUSSELL AWARD 2014

The brief for the 6th Rycotewood Furniture College/Gordon Russell project required students to design a piece of furniture which included a secret compartment to conceal precious items or important documents. The winning designer, Gustav Swanson created a side table in walnut and maple veneer. In recognition of the simple form and crafted subtle details which marked Gordon Russell's designs, Swanson detailed his design with brass holes and grooved end pieces, which also disguise the key to the secret drawer. He titled his piece 'Gordon's Table'. The Gordon Russell award is sponsored by Hands of Wycombe and the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers.



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. Also on display will be related work by members of the Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen.

