

GORDON RUSSELL DESIGN MUSEUM

Newsletter No.3

December 2011

Chairman's Report on a gathering to view a special collection of early Gordon Russell furniture on 8th November 2011

I arrived early and took the opportunity to pop into Westminster Cathedral and see the ebony and bone furniture in St Andrews chapel designed and made by Ernest Gimson in a Byzantine style

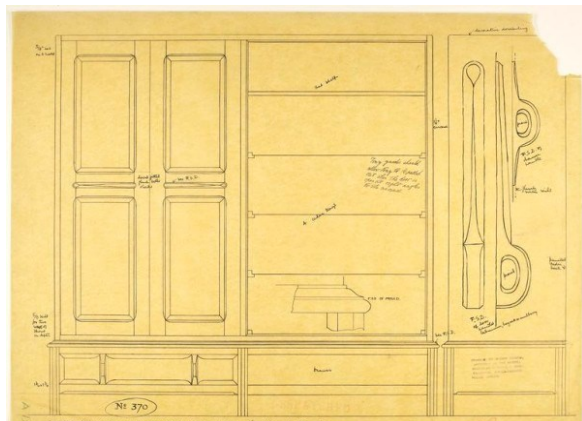
A couple steps away was the flat of Jonathan and Tara Gibbs, who had assembled a gregarious group of Gordon Russell enthusiasts including Sir Terence Conran and the 19th and 20th century curators of the V&A. Martin Grierson, from whom Jonathan had commissioned several pieces, was also there. We were able to spread ourselves through several rooms of amazing GR '20's creations and enjoy hearing the enthusiasm for the collection which all started by a chance purchase of a 1925 low wardrobe designed by Gordon, from the Fine Arts Society several years ago. I was also taken by the extraordinary paintings by John Armstrong, and the ceramics by John Ward. It was also a pleasure to overhear the founder of the museum, Ray Leigh, and his chief designer, Trevor Chinn explain some new details to the two curators, Sir Terence was particularly pleased to hear that the trustees planned to open up the top floor of the museum to rotating shows of 21st century furniture designers' work. Nibbles and a fine claret only helped to make the evening even more enjoyable. All in all it was a very special occasion, and the trustees thanked Jonathan and Tara for their generous hospitality

This will hopefully be the start of specialist visits to see niche collections in the future.

Richard Paice

A Must-visit Place

Sir Terence Conran recently said that when the new Design Museum opens in 2014 it will become a must-visit place like Tate Modern. The Trustees are working hard to make the **Gordon Russell Design Museum the must-visit place in Broadway**. To mark the 80th birthday of our new Patron the Design Museum have put on an exhibition which explores the way Conran's design and entrepreneurial flair have transformed the British way of life. *The Way we Live Now* runs from 16 November 2011 to 4 March 2012. (<http://designmuseum.org/exhibitions/2011/terence-conran>)



An oak wardrobe designed by Gordon Russell 1925 (drawing in GRDM collection)



Putting the museum on the map

On a rather wet Tuesday morning the museum's Treasurer/Secretary, Phil Whatmough, joined by a couple of brave supporters inspected the official museum sign which now features on the entrances to Broadway from Evesham and from Chipping Campden. This first step in raising the museum's profile is much welcomed. Councillor Liz Eyre added that in view of its national importance the Gordon Russell Design Museum needs to achieve brown sign status.



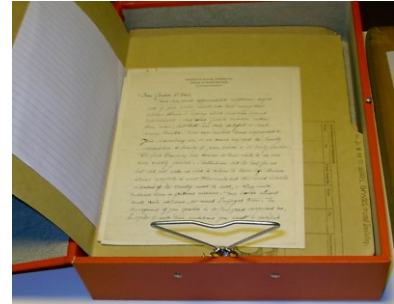
Volunteer Hilary Perkins showing Lady Quinlan the work being carried out in the archives

Blockley NADFAS Group Volunteer Heritage Project

On Tuesday 22nd November Lady Quinlan, the Heritage Volunteer Representative for Blockley NADFAS and the Group President Pamela Hudson-Bendersky paid a visit to the museum. They came to see the display, arranged by Trevor Chinn and the Curator, of the work being carried out by NADFAS Heritage Volunteers on the museum's archive.

Lady Quinlan was very impressed and expressed her thanks for all their hard work, and announced that Blockley NADFAS were in the process of compiling an

archive of all the interesting local projects in which they had been involved. An account of this work, she added, would be written up for the NADFAS *Journal* to promote national awareness of each Heritage Project. Volunteers will continue their work on the GRDM archive project next year.



Pre-War correspondence file in GRDM archive

Favourite Gordon Russell object or memory

The Chairman's favourite piece is the boot cupboard, so discrete, so simple and elegant, the interior is equally beautifully finished, but it is the date that wows me, 1925 - right up with the Bauhaus in its modernity. It is timeless, and would fit beautifully today in a modernist house or flat. A true symbol of the origins of Habitat and IKEA

Boot cupboard in Cuban mahogany with brass fittings, 1925. Gordon Russell's design is an early example of the use of manufactured laminated board material for the doors. (Thanks to Trevor Chinn for this information)



Tell us your favourite object in the Gordon Russell Design Museum. Do you have a particular memory of the man, or the company? Have you been influenced by his design ideas in your own work? Do let me have any memories/comments for future issues of the newsletter (susan@bennett.as).



For instance on his website the Designer/Craftsman Desmond Ryan states that he decided to set up a workshop to make his own designs following the experience he gained working in the design office of Gordon Russell Ltd. This had been his first job after completing his studies at the Royal College of Art, where he gained a first class honours diploma and the RCA prize for his three dimensional work.

Today he is based in East Sussex where he makes small batch production work, like this vase in walnut and beech and undertakes commissions and exhibition pieces.

Group visits

Experienced guides, many former employees of Gordon Russell Ltd, are on hand to provide an entertaining and informative tour of the museum's collections. Do encourage your interest groups to put a visit to Broadway and the Gordon Russell Design Museum on their calendar for 2012.

Please email Susan Bennett at susan@bennett.as with any suggestions for content for future newsletter, or any other comments you wish to make.