



# The name escapes me

Majestic designs live on, even if their creators' names fade into obscurity

IT is strange how the architects of some famous buildings are known to all, but others are familiar only to specialists. London boasts three great domes. Most people could pair Sir Christopher Wren with St Paul's and many might manage Sydney Smirke for the old Reading Room of the British Museum, but the Royal Albert Hall?

Perhaps because he was a professional soldier first and an architect second, Capt Francis Fowke (1823–65) of the Royal Engineers doesn't spring to mind. Having designed the hall, he died and construction passed to Maj-Gen Henry Scott (1822–83). Fowke was also responsible for the National Gallery of Ireland, the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh and parts of the V&A.

The creators of other well-known 19th-century London



Fig 1: Silver nef, imported by Berthold Müller, of about 1900. With Langfords

buildings have disappeared from general memory, despite being celebrated in their lifetimes. A further example is suggested by an exhibit to be offered by Atelier of Jersey at the LAPADA Fair in Berkeley Square, W1, from Friday to September 19. This is a watercolour measuring 8½in by 13in, showing

St Thomas' Hospital, the transfluvial *vis-à-vis* of its near-contemporary the Houses of Parliament (Fig 2).

Its original seven pavilions have been reduced to four—by the Blitz and redevelopment—but it was an influential building, as well as a striking one. The architect was Henry Currey (1820–1900), who worked closely with Florence Nightingale in the design, which was intended to lessen contagion between ward and ward. Their plan was not, in fact, unprecedented, but this was the first great hospital built to it. Currey also designed the Opera

House at Buxton in Derbyshire. The watercolour looks like a product of the architect's studio, perhaps drawn shortly before the hospital was opened by Queen Victoria in 1871.

Another indication of date may be the two red carriages, one entering the hospital and the other heading away. These may represent the first London ambulance service. In 1867, the Metropolitan Asylums Board acquired six vehicles for the purpose of conveying smallpox and fever patients from their homes to hospital.

These were designed to resemble private carriages, but were

Fig 2: Watercolour of St Thomas' Hospital. With Atelier of Jersey



## Pick of the week

Philip Carrol has been showing at fairs since the 1980s and has had a shop at Gargrave in the Yorkshire Dales since 2000, one of four worthwhile antiques shops in the village. Primarily a porcelain specialist, he has a most interesting, and rare, Japanese Imari moulded teapot painted in the Arita style in about 1700.



**Fig 3: A wool-work picture of a trooper of the 18th Hussars riding past the Sergeants' Mess and Library at Bangalore. With Witney Antiques**



equipped with rollers in their floors and large rear doors to allow for a patient on a specially designed bed to be loaded and decanted easily. There was enough room for an attendant and the compartment was designed to be efficiently cleaned and decontaminated. Anyone willing to pay the cost of horse hire could summon an ambulance by telegram or in person.

Another building that will be recalled at the fair, in a wool-work picture with Witney Antiques, might well have been designed by a military architect, but, if so, his name has disappeared even more completely than that of Fowke. The picture shows a trooper of the 18th Hussars riding past the Sergeants' Mess and Library at Bangalore (**Fig 3**).

Having embarked on its first Indian posting without horses, the regiment travelled from Madras to Bangalore by train in September 1864; there, it relieved the 17th Lancers and took over their mounts, before moving on to Secunderabad.



**Fig 4: Elizabeth I presentation ring. With Ancient and Oriental**

With only a short return to England in 1875, the regiment was stationed in India for most of the rest of the century, perhaps revisiting Bangalore. The city still has a very splendid Victorian library, but I can find no trace of this cantonment one.

When an elaborate Elizabeth I Armada presentation ring (**Fig 4**) came up for auction last year, there was much press speculation that it might have been given by the Queen to Sir Francis Drake. However, there was no evidence

for this; as with architects, only a few naval commanders have star power for headline writers and Drake resonates with those who struggle to recall Howard of Effingham, Hawkins, Fro-bisher or Winter.

The double-sided gold ring is now with Ancient & Oriental, otherwise known as C. J. Martin (Coins), which has not publicly named a price. It has an engraved portrait of the Queen on the bezel, perhaps taken from a Hillyard miniature, which has probably lost its original enamel. This is balanced by a carved fossil ivory or bone image of a man-o'-war; on the sides are Neptune and Venus.

If this ship is actually a portrait, then another possible recipient would be Walter Raleigh, even though he was a shore commander during the Armada. In 1587, he had sold his *Ark Raleigh* to the Crown and she was renamed *Ark Royal*; she was Howard's flagship a year later.

A grandly whimsical ship model that always fascinates is the silver table decoration known as a nef. It is thought that the idea originated in a votive model made for Louis IX's Queen Marguerite, which had survived a storm at sea. Some early



**Fig 5 above: Giltwood console table of about 1760. With Lennox Cato. Fig 6 left: Black Forest chair, with Butchoff Antiques**

urers' agent who supplied them between 1892 and 1911.

His son, Berthold Hermann (who politically changed his name to Miller in 1915), carried on the business to 1922. Langfords has a large and impressive example imported in 1900 (**Fig 1**).

examples had compartments for cargoes of cutlery or spices.

Most, however, are purely decorative 19th-century copies, or rather variants, made in Germany and Switzerland, with detailed rigging and miniature crew. The hulls may be chased with maritime mythological subjects and they usually have wheels to glide between diners.

They were very popular on late-Victorian tables and usually have the import marks of Berthold Müller, the German manufact-

Large, impressive and, if not German, then from just over the Swiss border, is Butchoff's huge Black Forest chair, or rather sculpture—it measures 40in by 41in by 24½in and consists of two glass-eyed walnut bears holding a lily pad for the seat (**Fig 6**).

This is a fine contrast to some delicate 18th-century furniture offered by Lennox Cato of Edenbridge and Patrick Sandberg, Butchoff's Kensington Church Street neighbour. Cato's giltwood console table of about 1760 (**Fig 5**) is a wonderful, fizzing, Rococo piece, close to designs in Chippendale's *Director*. Sandberg's pair of flame-figured mahogany Pembroke tables typify the elegance of late-18th-century Sheraton (**Fig 7**).



**Fig 7: Pembroke tables. With Sandberg**

**Next week British Art Fair**