

John Andrews, *Arts and Crafts Furniture* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2005), £39.50 hbk, 279 pp., ISBN 18514 94839.

'IT HAS LONG BEEN TIME for a specialist work on Arts and Crafts furniture' it says in the blurb on the dust jacket of John Andrews' handsome new volume. In four chapters, the third of which ('The Movement Arrives') makes up the bulk of the book, and with 303 plates, almost all in excellent colour (except for black-and-white archive material) and many of them full-page, he gives a wide-ranging overview of the subject in Britain and America.

After a three-page 'Introduction', the first chapter offers readers a 'Brief History' – an overview of the movement in 15 pages, with a two-page 'Chronology' afterwards. Given that Andrews then elaborates everything he has said in these pages in the rest of the book, I find this a rather curious arrangement. It is as if he wrote the book for two sets of readers, one of which would only want a brief outline, and one which would want to go into the topic in depth.

Chapter two is entitled 'The Build-Up', and Andrews looks in relative depth at the work of G. E. Street, Talbert and Eastlake, Morris & Co. and Christopher Dresser. Of particular interest to readers of this journal, the Morris and Co. section is by far the longest of the four (18 pages out of 39), with 19 illustrations of furniture, most of it designed by Philip Webb, some by George Jack. Let me use this section to give an example of the style of this book: there are only 83 lines of text about

Morris and Co.'s furniture work, occupying some 48 cm vertically altogether, when a whole page of text – of which there are only five in the whole book – occupies 24 cm; by contrast, there are 333 cm of pictures and captions on Morris and Co.'s output. This shows the work to be, therefore, a picture book with text, rather than a text book with pictures. That said, however, what text there is is both concise and informative, and the pictures are generally first-rate.

Chapter three – 'The Movement Arrives' – works its way through all the usual suspects in Britain from Ashbee, Voysey and the Century Guild, through Heal, Liberty's and the Glasgow School, up to Gordon Russell and Edward Barnsley. In the space of 130 pages each of the 14 individual designers or groups gets several pages of coverage, largely photographic as before. There then follows a 20-page gallop through 15 'Other Makers, Designers and Guilds', covering the work of the likes of Walter Crane, Edwin Lutyens and Heywood Sumner. The chapter closes with 22 pages on 'The Commercial Companies' illustrating the work of 13 of them. The whole chapter gives an extremely useful pictorial overview of the range of designs produced which fall within the embrace of the Arts and Crafts movement, and includes some characters who have frequently been neglected.

The fourth chapter, entitled simply 'America', offers a 25-page tour of the four most obvious designers and producers in the USA: Frank Lloyd Wright, Gustave Stickley, Charles P. Limbert and the Greene brothers. The book closes with a 27-line *envoi* entitled 'The Legacy', a 23-book bibliography and a four-page index.

At the end of the book this reviewer admits to feeling more than a little disappointed. Its title – *Arts and Crafts Furniture* – seems to offer much, and yet there is so much more that a book with such a title could/should/might have included. I would, for example, have preferred smaller pictures and more text. I would have wanted more than just the obvious four of whom we already know so much from America; sections similar to the second and third ones in the British section would have been very welcome. And then there is a gaping hole for Europe and the rest of the world. Where are the designers and products of Austria, Hungary and Finland, to name but three stand-out countries with a strong Arts and Crafts tradition? Where are the examples from the Japanese *mingei* designers, which the recent *International Arts and Crafts* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert

Museum (17 March–24 July, 2005) highlighted to such effect? Maybe the problem lies in the title. Perhaps *Arts and Crafts Furniture in Britain and America: An Overview and Pictorial Reference Bank* would have been a more accurate and helpful title for the putative reader. Perhaps what I had been expecting and would have liked is something with the coverage of Wendy Kaplan's wonderful recent book (*The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America* [London: Thames & Hudson, 2004]), but just concentrating on furniture.

In sum, this is a well-illustrated book with useful but limited information. It would be good for someone wanting to get a feel for the range of furniture produced by designers and craftsmen following in the Arts and Crafts tradition in Britain and America. I think, however, that we are still waiting for the definitive book on Arts and Crafts furniture.

*David A. Hill*