

# Frederick Parker Foundation

Registered Charity Number 1063283

[www.frederick-parker-foundation.org](http://www.frederick-parker-foundation.org)

## Newsletter 2010

### Royal Visit

The highlight of the past year was a visit by HRH The Duke of Kent on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009 to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our acquisition of the Chair Collection and its display for study by furniture students interested in the history, design, restoration and manufacture of chairs at the London Metropolitan University. On this special occasion we started our membership scheme of Foundation Friends in order to purchase chairs to fill some gaps in our Study Collection and add some important modern items. Members generously donate by direct debit £50 annually for this purpose and we had a draw for two cases of Veuve Cliquot champagne at the dinner after our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Lecture. The winners happened to be two Past Masters of the Furniture Makers' Company.

There was a good turnout including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University, the Masters and Clerks of the Upholders' and Furniture Makers' Companies, our enthusiastic supporters and a good bunch of descendants of Frederick Parker. Derwent, the furniture manufacturer that now produces Parker Knoll designs, put on an interesting small exhibition of their chairs. The Duke of Kent appeared to be most interested in our chairs and chatted with a good number of our supporters.



Trustee Stephanie Marsh and Michael Priest enjoying a joke with HRH The Duke of Kent.

### The Collection

The Frederick Parker Collection at the University has had an eventful year. The archive has been the focus of a lot of attention. Over a year ago we managed to secure funds to make an inventory of it and to purchase the correct conservation grade boxes and storage materials. Steve Gange Moody from Bucks New University, High Wycombe, spent two months last summer listing the archive. Whilst this is not a catalogue, we at least now have an idea of the scope and volume of material it contains. The next step is to develop a catalogue and make the archival material publicly accessible - a considerably lengthy task.

To ensure the chairs are properly cared for, every year the Collection is cleaned by students under the supervision of the conservation staff. The chairs are taken off display, the display shelves cleaned and the chairs dusted and vacuumed, if appropriate, and then re-displayed. This year we took the opportunity to

rearrange the display too. The Frederick Parker Collection reference number of each chair has been discreetly marked on the underside to ease stocktaking and increase security.

Dr John Cross, a Trustee and senior lecturer at the University, has been appointed Curator. He and his colleagues are involved in the paperwork and the policy decisions that your Trustees must approve to obtain Museum Status. This is a time consuming task but will be to the long term benefit of the Collection.

## **Recent Acquisitions**

We are delighted to have been able to add some key chairs to broaden the Collection in recent months.

- 1) From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century we have accepted the kind gift from Jill Anderson of a folding stained beech chair, probably with its original sprung seat beneath later covers, made by Aircraft Ltd of Wembley about 1933. Apart from being an unusual survival, it is of all the more interest to the Collection because the records of the manufacturing company, founded in 1878 in Bethnal Green by Edwin Atkins, are held at London Metropolitan University. (PKC 466)
- 2) Furniture with unrestored painted surfaces is always a rarity to have survived and we are most grateful to Mr and Mrs Godfrey Curtis for donating such a chair, which is also of an unusual X-framed form. Dating from around 1800 and probably British, the beech frame retains a large proportion of its gessoed and painted surface on a black ground, in the manner of Greek 'Etruscan' red-figure pottery which were popular in sophisticated circles with people who had seen such things excavated on the Grand Tour or brought to England by the likes of the diplomat Sir William Hamilton. (FPC 467)
- 3) The Trustees have purchased at auction one of the iconic 20<sup>th</sup> century chairs, a chrome-plated Diamond chair, model 421 LU, designed by the American Harry Bertoia in 1950-2 and manufactured by Knoll Associates from 1953, along with a similar stool. These seem to be early examples of the model and include the original yellow covered cushions, although the foam inside them has perished. (FPC 468-469)
- 4) A more direct Parker Knoll link comes with a Russell Orthopaedic chair (PK 1067), kindly donated by its designer Russell Manoy. The chair was in production by the firm from 1978 to 1993 and its success, as a result of considerable research into lumbar support and posture seating, led to some 250,000 sales. The chair was made in beech in two sizes with various options, the one that we have being stained to walnut effect with a dark brown velvet covering. Russell Manoy has also generously donated his research papers to the Foundation. (FPC 470)

With great sadness I must report that Tom Jourdan, one of the Frederick Parker descendants, a founder member of our Foundation and a Trustee, previously acting as Hon Treasurer, died on 26th May 2010. We shall miss his enthusiasm and experienced advice.