



Fig 1. Oak Jacobean style dresser. Great Western Auctions, Glasgow. Mar 06. HP: £310.



Fig 2. A 1920s oak display cabinet blind fret detail over stained leaded glass, twin doors, raised on bulbous feet. Thom Wm Gaze & Son, Diss. June 13. HP: £110.



Fig 3. Oak ledge back sideboard, early 20thC, top with moulded edge, above two drawers flanked by cupboards, upon bulbous gadrooned supports united by stretchers, 133 x 182 x 57cm. Roseberys, London. Jan 09. HP: £70.



Fig 4. Set of 4 art deco style oak side chairs with drop-in seats on baluster turned front supports. (4) Kent Auction Galleries, Folkestone. June 12. HP: £10.

Fine Furniture going for a Song

The Revival Styles of Interwar Furniture

By Edward J Rycroft

The period between 1919 and 1939 saw a great variety of furniture come onto the market. Soldiers were coming back home after fighting in the First World War and new houses were being built for the younger generation. The Arts and Crafts period was finally coming to a close and the Art Nouveau movement was also in its last phase. The Art Deco movement would make an impact on contemporary furniture designs with its Egyptian influence blending the Classical world with Contemporary Europe. However, many people also wanted something traditional or, at least, 'traditional-looking'. Manufacturers such as Heals, etc, seized this opportunity and made furniture in various reproduction styles. However, most kept to the three main styles which could be instantly recognised. These were Jacobean, Queen Anne and Georgian. The term Jacobean, was sometimes known as Carolean, or more usually Jacobean, mixing the Elizabethan styles with those from the period of James I. These terms were used interchangeably by various manufacturers. Individuals also made furniture for their homes in styles being produced in the factories.

The Jacobean Style

This style took inspiration from the reign of James I. The cup and cover support was very popular during these two decades as well as the use of carved decoration in Gothic style. This furniture was often made in oak but on many cheaper pieces, beech was used in conjunction with oak and stained to match. Better quality pieces were made using the traditional pegged mortise and tenon joints and even frame and panel construction. The term Jacobean was a good concoction as much of the furniture produced incorporated designs of the late sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth century.

The Queen Anne Style

This was based on furniture prevalent around the time of Queen Anne's reign from 1702 to 1714. This saw the introduction of the cabriole leg, the increased use of walnut, especially in veneered form, and the production of simple but elegant furniture, often relying on veneers for decorative purposes. Though this style emerged during the reign of Queen Anne, it continued into the reign George II. The lowboy came into existence after gradual design development from the side table, which was the forerunner of the dressing table. After the Great Fire of London, with increasing population and a desire for smaller rooms, furniture design had to change to suit the new houses. Chests on chests, stands, cabinets on chests, bureau bookcases, bureau cabinets and many more were produced to take advantage of the higher space, ultimately saving floor space and yet providing an interesting eye level view. The Queen Anne style of the Interwar years used many design elements from this period.

The Georgian Style

This was based on the original furniture style which had evolved by the middle of the eighteenth century, a time which saw the emergence of famous designers like Thomas Chippendale, George Hepplewhite and Thomas Sheraton, towards the end of the century. The reign of George II saw furniture design in England develop into what is commonly recognised as the Georgian style. Particularly notable was the arrival of mahogany from the West Indies, the introduction of the cabriole leg with the claw and ball terminal and the use of carving as the main form of decoration, especially acanthus leaves and scrolling foliage. The 1920s and 1930s reproductions used many of these design characteristics. Now we can look at examples of furniture from each of the revival styles from the Interwar period.

Figure 1 is an oak sideboard, fashioned in the Jacobean style and is a type made in large numbers at the time. This combines turned cup and cover legs and geometrically applied moulded drawer fronts. The use of oak and the simulated staining to resemble patina gives the impression of age. To the untrained eye, it may appear original.

Figure 2 is an oak bookcase which again uses various styles in one whole item. This is another example of how furniture was designed to incorporate early looking design elements and yet no original piece would have combined the same characteristics. The doors are leaded and the whole piece is standing on turned bulbous legs and bun feet. An original piece of similar design would probably have had doors with glazing bars and taller simple-turned legs. This is a good example of furniture of this period.

Figure 3. This is another sideboard but more typical of the period. The back has applied split turnings and carved top rail, the front is fitted with two doors, each with arcaded panels of the type popular during the late sixteenth century. It has further moulded drawer fronts and drop handles commonly found on furniture during the Restoration period and the whole piece is raised on carved cup and cover legs, united by stretchers. This is a good example of furniture combining the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Carolean styles, probably of the type termed 'Jacobean' during the Interwar years and sold at a bargain price of £70.

Figure 4. These oak side chairs incorporate the slatted back with the cup and cover leg, combining Art Deco and Jacobean styles. Chairs made during the Carolean period usually had turned or barley twist legs. The cup and cover leg was only found earlier in the century on large tables and court cupboards. These examples are fitted with drop-in seats and the crest rails are plain but moulded geometrically. These chairs are good examples of the type of furniture available today for under £50 selling for a surprising £10.

Figure 5. These Queen Anne style side chairs are very much in the design of the original chairs with vase-shaped back splats and cabriole legs. Many chairs of this period were either overstuffed or had drop-in seats and were simply made. These are good examples of Interwar versions although the legs are less

pronounced and the back splats lack definition. However, at £10, these are interesting pieces of furniture history of the twentieth century and much more within people's reach than period versions.

Figure 6. This is a Queen Anne style dressing table which follows the same lines as a lowboy. Described as mid twentieth century, it is actually the type made during the 1920s and 30s. In walnut and raised on cabriole legs, with handles it is typically in the eighteenth century style. The exaggerated cabriole legs, the shaped form to the underside and the practicality of the design makes this a good piece. Sold last October for £130, this is a bargain for something of this quality.

Figure 7. This is a bureau bookcase with a domed top, two doors opening to reveal shelves and a fall front section below two long drawers, the whole standing on cabriole legs. This is typically Queen Anne style but such a piece would never have been found in the early 1700s. All of these features are typical of the period although bureau bookcases usually had panelled doors and always had a base fitted with three or four drawers, usually standing on bracket or bun feet. This stands on cabriole legs instead and therefore combines all of the design characteristics of the period in one piece. Another good example of the style, this sold for £400.

Figure 8, is the last example of the Queen Anne style of the Interwar period. It is a small bedside table in mahogany and of the type of piece made as part of a bedroom suite during the 1930s. This very small piece is simply crafted, the drawers having drop handles. Equal drawer sizes were another common characteristic of the Interwar years which made the furniture appear top-heavy. When viewed from the top such pieces do not appear in proportion. This sold for £30 at auction, a good price for something so small and decorative.

Figure 9 is a mahogany chest on stand in the Georgian style or tallboy as they were sometimes known. This is a nice example as it incorporates mahogany with a bow-fronted form and has a gothic arched cornice. The drawers are graduated and edged with cock-beading, another typical Georgian characteristic. However, chests on stands were not really in fashion in the mid-Georgian era. This piece is a good example of the Interwar interpretation of the style and is affordable to most people. It sold recently for £280.

The set of four chairs in **figure 10** are in the Chippendale style and combine some of the most recognizable characteristics from the Georgian era. The shaped crest rails and the pierced back splats are very typical and on these examples, the cabriole legs with the claw and ball terminals have been used when actually they were more commonly found during the 1740s and 1750s, slightly earlier than the design of the chair back. Made from mahogany, these are good chairs for a Georgian style room. These sold for £380 in March last year.

Figure 11 is a Georgian style mahogany bureau, the fall opening to reveal a fitted interior with three drawers below. The drawers below do not appear graduated and the bracket feet are more simplified than those of the eighteenth century. This is a practical piece which takes up little space and will add another hint of the Georgian style to a room in that theme. For £35, one cannot go wrong.

Figure 12. This is a Georgian style wine table, with carved column and cabriole legs, the knees with acanthus carving and the legs with pad feet. On this example, the decoration on the legs and elsewhere is probably machine done. However, this is closely following the old typical design of a tripod table and is a good example of how the Interwar years reproduced furniture of this type. This was also a bargain, selling for £40.

On the whole, it can be said that the Interwar revival styles took the best features from the periods they were copying and applied them to single pieces. From the analysis of the pieces above, the better quality examples more closely follow the original designs and are created to be visually attractive as well as practical. These are inexpensive and in terms of giving a room a particular theme, or maybe adding to a themed or period room, most of the furniture discussed would be suitable. At just less than £200 for many good pieces, the revival style of the Interwar period could be something worth investing in.

All prices hammer.



Fig 5. Mahogany Pembroke table, late 19thC, rounded top above end drawer with opposing dummy drawer upon turned tapering supports, 74 x 95cm, with four Queen Anne style dining chairs, 20thC. (5) Roseberys, London. July 07. HP: £60.



Fig 9. Georgian style mahogany bow fronted chest on stand. Great Western Auctions, Glasgow. Nov 05. HP: £280.



Fig 6. A mid 20thC walnut veneered Queen Anne style dressing table, four drawers with brass swan neck handles, raised on cabriole supports, 107 x 57 x 77cm high. Batemans, Stamford. Oct 13. HP: £130.



Fig 10. Set of four early 20thC Chippendale style dining chairs. W & H Peacock, Bedford. Mar 03. HP: £380.



Fig 7. 1930s Queen Anne style walnut bureau bookcase, serpentine moulded cornice over arched glazed doors enclosing adjustable shelves, base with fall over two long drawers raised on scallop moulded cabriole legs and pad feet, 210 x 92cm. Locke & England, Leamington Spa. Mar 06. HP: £400.



Fig 11. Georgian style mahogany bureau. Gorrings, Bexhill. July 05. HP: £35.



Fig 8. Queen Anne style three drawer chest on legs. Stroud Auctions, Stroud. Oct 13. HP: £30.



Fig 12. Georgian style wine table with circular mahogany top and carved oak naturalistic tripod base. Golding Young & Co, Grantham. Nov 06. HP: £40.