The Tale of the Mouse - Book Review & Price Guide

Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson, inspired by the natural beauty of English oak, turned his back on twentieth century mass production to rekindle the original wood carving techniques of a former age.

It is well worth reviewing again a wonderful little book, first published in 2001, about the life and work of Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson, 1876-1955. This precedes about sixty examples of his work which have been sold in the last few years. Prices start at over £10,000 and run through to a modest £35 for a bread board with a mouse carved on the handle. If the ‘Mouseman of Kilburn’ were alive today he would be astonished at the prices in these pages.

The first three chapters of the book look at the early years and influences, the turning point in his career, and of course the continuing legacy today that lives on in Kilburn. It tells us how the carved mouse which appears on much of his work was first created as a whimsy, has become a lasting and distinctive trademark and represents probably one of the earliest logos created in the early twentieth century which is still around almost a hundred years later. Check out picture two where we have highlighted a typical mouse carving. The inclusion and styles of the mouse carved on early Thompson furniture provide a clue to the age of the piece. Pieces carved before c1920 do not include the mouse carving. Between c1920 and 1930 the mouse was carved with front paws, which then disappear as they were too prone to damage. The images in our price guide are of course examples of free standing furniture and smaller objects which are probably in private ownership. We cannot here do justice to the almost 900 examples of Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson’s work around England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales which represent the commissions he took for much more ambitious projects in churches and other public and private houses. It is only right that the last nine chapters of the book are devoted to circular tours with maps which include detailed instructions on where the traveller can see his work. Many of these circular tours, regardless of the work of Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson are worthwhile in themselves as they take us through some of the most beautiful country in Britain. Price Guide continues on pp 44,45.
Robert Thompson, Mouseman oak refectory table, 7ft 6in wide, 3ft 11in deep. Lots Road Auctions, Chelsea. Feb 06. HP: £2,800. ABP: £3,293.

Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson oak sideboard, three drawers flanked by two panelled doors, iron hinges and latches, signature mouse at one end, octagonal block feet. 5ft. Goringes, Lewes. Mar 05. HP: £2,300. ABP: £2,705.

Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson, oak chest of drawers, 100cm high x 77cm. Richard Winterton, Burton on Trent, Staffs. Jul 03. HP: £2,100. ABP: £2,470.

Oak cased bracket style clock by Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson of Kilburn, 8 day movement striking to two gongs, case with carved arched cornice, cantled front corners and panelled sides, raised on block feet. 15.25in high. Dee, Atkinson & Harrison, Driffield. Nov 04. HP: £2,300. ABP: £2,705.

Longcase clock, 8 day movement with square brass dial signed Sinclair Harding, Cheltenham, oak case by Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson, moulded cornice on flower carved fluted pilasters, glazed door, carved in relief with mouse trademark, 76.25in high. Andrew Hartley, Ilkley. Dec 04. HP: £1,850. ABP: £2,176.

Set of six adzed oak dining chairs by Robert ‘Mouseman’ Thompson, panelled back with square section uprights and faceted finials, shaped arms over panelled sides, panel seat with loose cushion, front legs with carved mouse trademark in high relief. Andrew Hartley, Ilkley, W Yorks. Feb 06. HP: £1,100. ABP: £1,293.

Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson oak square dining table with carved mouse signature, c1950s, 37.5 x 33in, 28.5in high. David Duggleby, Scarborough. Dec 09. HP: £700. ABP: £823.

Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson, oak work box, 57cm high, 50cm wide. Richard Winterton, Burton on Trent, Staffs. Jul 03. HP: £700. ABP: £823.

Oak freestanding lamp, Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson, carved column, signature mouse to upright, 158cm high. R. Winterton, Burton on Trent, Staffs. Jul 03. HP: £700. ABP: £823.


Robert Mouseman Thompson oak table lamp, mid 20thC, octagonal spreading form, 36cm and old Bakelite fitting (needs re-wiring). Boldon Auction Galleries, Tyne & Wear. Sep 05. HP: £140. ABP: £164.


Pair of oak 'Mouseman' serviette rings, each carved in relief with a characteristic mouse, length 2in. Fellows & Sons, Hockley, Birmingham. Oct 03. HP: £35. ABP: £41.


Robert Mouseman Thompson oak table lamp, mid 20thC, octagonal spreading form, 36cm and old Bakelite fitting (needs re-wiring). Boldon Auction Galleries, Tyne & Wear. Sep 05. HP: £140. ABP: £164.

Pair of oak 'Mouseman' ashtrays with canted corners, each surmounted by a mouse, 11cm. Boldon Auction Galleries, Tyne & Wear. Sep 05. HP: £45. ABP: £52.

Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson oak table lamp, mid 20thC, octagonal spreading form, 36cm and old Bakelite fitting (needs re-wiring). Boldon Auction Galleries, Tyne & Wear. Sep 05. HP: £140. ABP: £164.


Pair of oak 'Mouseman' serviette rings, each carved in relief with a characteristic mouse, length 2in. Fellows & Sons, Hockley, Birmingham. Oct 03. HP: £35. ABP: £41.