

Newsletter No 4  
Autumn 2008

# Robert Thompson's<sup>®</sup> Craftsmen Ltd.

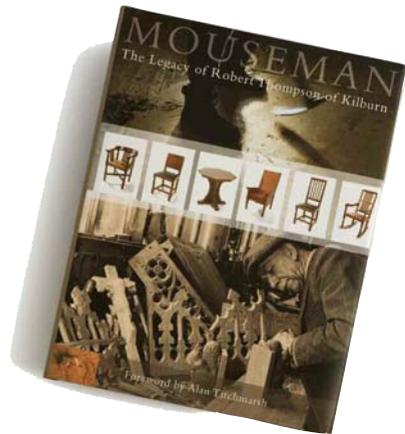
*The year, so far, has been a busy one for all the team at Kilburn.*

*On a personal front, I have been working with Ionriver on our new website. It now has images and information on each piece of Mouseman furniture in our standard range. By having this information available on the website, it will certainly make it much quicker and easier to identify a specific item of furniture from our standard range.*

*June saw the arrival of the first 250 copies of the special limited edition, complete with slipcase, of the new Mouseman book. These are now being despatched to everyone who pre-ordered a copy. This will no doubt become a very collectable book in the future*

October to December is usually a very busy time for the sales office staff, as they are responsible for making certain that all the Christmas mail orders are despatched prior to our annual two week holiday. Last year was no exception, by juggling production we just managed to keep all the small items in stock in the lead-up to Christmas, thankfully this enabled us to make certain that all our customers received that all-important present prior to December 25th.

I am pleased to say we currently have reasonable stocks of most small items and coffee tables. Should you require a specific item for a special day, it is always advisable to order well in advance and specify a delivery date to avoid disappointment.



It's a sad fact of life that the presence of the 'mouse' alone is no longer a guarantee of authenticity. However, as sold here in Kilburn or at a bona fide antique dealers, the mouse trademark remains a guarantee of a beautifully hand crafted piece of furniture that will bring a lifetime of service and pleasure – just as my great grandfather, the 'Mouseman', intended.

*Ian Thompson Cartwright  
Managing Director  
Robert Thompson's Craftsmen Ltd*

## *From Little Acorns . . . New Tree-Planting Scheme*

Robert Thompson's is helping to create the forests of the future in Yorkshire. All royalties from the new Mouseman book will be donated to a new Robert Thompson's Craftsmen tree-planting scheme administered through the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT).

Under the scheme, a range of native broadleaved species will be planted including ash, bird cherry, goat willow, alder, birch, oak, hawthorn, hazel, rowan and aspen. The mix of trees will depend on the site conditions.

YDMT was formed in 1996 and has planted over 500,000 trees in hundreds of separate projects throughout the Yorkshire Dales. Some projects focus on new planting, others add to an existing wood or restoring a wood.

According to David Baker from YDMT, the Yorkshire Dales has one of the lowest densities of woodland in the country. He explained, 'Planting of native broadleaved species will create beautiful woodlands that support a large amount of biodiversity including plants, insects, animals and birds that are threatened. It is also an effective way of absorbing greenhouse gases. And of course,' he added, 'the trees we are planting today may be used to make wonderful furniture in the future.'

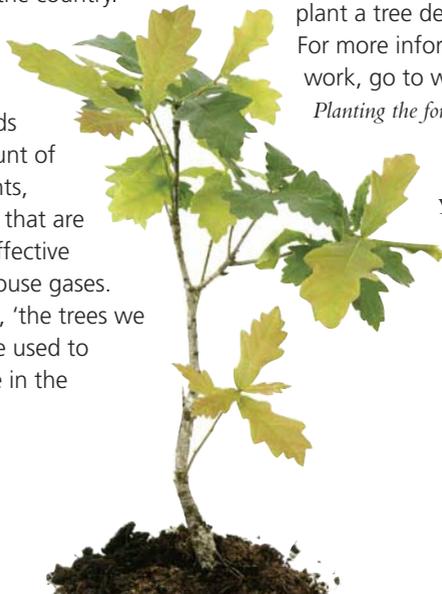


Ian Thomson Cartwright explained the company's decision to establish the tree planting scheme, 'Trees are the starting point for Mouseman furniture and also for books and so it seemed appropriate to demonstrate that link and to put something back into the Yorkshire landscape by using revenues from the new Mouseman book to grow further trees for future generations to enjoy.'

Individuals can also help to re-forest the Dales. For a £10 donation, YDMT will plant a tree dedicated to an individual. For more information on the Trust's work, go to [www.ydmt.org](http://www.ydmt.org)

*Planting the forests of the future: Ian*

*Thompson Cartwright and  
senior fundraiser for the  
Yorkshire Dales Millennium  
Trust, Anne Bullough.*



## *Fire!*

During a recent fire at Moreton Hall, part of Warwick College, a large collection of Mouseman furniture was salvaged and is now being treated at Kilburn for water damage. A complete Mouseman library, including a display case containing a rare, first edition Gunnerus, had a lucky escape having been recently moved from Moreton Hall to a new building in the college.



*The fire-damaged roof of Moreton Hall.*

## *Refurbished Inn is Home to 'Mice'*



Anyone visiting Robert Thompson's in Kilburn may wish to call into the Abbey Inn at Byland, approximately three

miles from Kilburn. An integral part of the historic Byland Abbey Estate, the Inn was purchased by English Heritage in 2005. It has been extensively refurbished including specially commissioned Mouseman furniture in the restaurant, which bears the charmingly appropriate name, the Piggery. One of the Inn's three bedrooms has also been furnished with bespoke pieces of furniture from the Mouseman collection. The bedroom has beautiful views across the majestic ruins of Byland Abbey and has been renamed the Mouseman bedroom.



A special 20% discount at the Abbey Inn for two nights (min) bed and full Yorkshire breakfast in the Mouseman bedroom. The offer is valid until March 2009. Reservations must be made in advance. Please quote 'Mouse' to receive your discount. For more information, visit

[www.bylandabbeyinn.com](http://www.bylandabbeyinn.com).





*The 'Mouseman' library at  
Leeds Girls High School in the 1930s.*

### *Auction Round-up.*

Mouseman furniture is always a sound investment as a recent auctions demonstrated.

One of the most interesting Mouseman auctions in a very long time took place in July at Tennants in Leyburn, North Yorkshire. The sale comprised the complete collection of Mouseman furniture and fittings from the library at Leeds Girls High School. The items dated from 1933/1934 when Robert Thompson was commissioned to supply everything for the school's new library, from fitted bookcases, panelling and doors, to pen trays, ink wells and book troughs.

The sale attracted keen interest from the media and from major Mouseman collectors as well as 'old girls' of the school. Amongst the most fought-after items were 13 chairs, each bearing not one but two 'mice' signatures. Estimated at £250-350 apiece, they set new price levels for single Mouseman dining chairs when they sold for up to £2,300 each.

Nine small-scale refectory tables, in the classic Thompson style, sold for between £5,000 and £7,000 each and a 6ft wide librarian's pedestal desk left its estimate well behind, achieving £18,000.

At the other end of the scale, small items, even without the 'mouse' signature, sold well – many to former Leeds Girls. Simple, adzed pen trays measuring 9in x 3in brought bids of between £180 - £200 per pair.

Records show that the original cost of the library furniture and fittings from Robert Thompson was £1,222; the total raised at the auction was £236,000. A wise investment indeed.

*An example of a chair from Leeds Girls' High School, showing its condition prior to restoration (A) and restored to its full glory (B).*



### *Imitation is not Always the Best Form of Flattery....*

Robert Thompson's has recently registered as a trademark. The names Robert Thompson's and Mouseman and also the 3D mouse logo and the recently designed stylised mouse logo, currently used on all business related stationery. The above join the original 2D mouse logo that the founder of the company, Robert Thompson, registered back in the early 1930s.

Counterfeiting is a widespread problem, one generally associated with pirate DVDs, CDs, perfume and clothing, but now even Mouseman furniture is being targeted by unscrupulous fraudsters, seeking to cash in on the



reputation of the company's craftsmanship .  
Ian Thompson Cartwright said, 'We are the only company licensed to make this furniture, which means we can control every aspect of its production. Every piece of furniture is produced in the time-honoured, traditional way, using great skill, by craftsmen who have trained for many years. The fake items are sub-standard and we believe they are being produced in sweat-shop conditions. The internet has opened up the way for dubious dealers, trading in fakes, to become more established.'

# Thompson®

Earlier this year, Robert Thompson's had to deal with an unfortunate case in which a man bought what he thought was a Mouseman stool on an internet auction site. When one of the legs became loose he brought it to Kilburn, where he was given the sad news that the stool was in fact a fake, more than likely made in China and definitely not made by the dedicated craftsmen at Kilburn.

Ian Thompson Cartwright's advice is 'Buy only from our showroom in Kilburn or from a reputable antiques' house or auctioneer. Always try to establish an item's history and provenance. Ask who owned the item previously and particularly if there is any evidence to support this

**Pre-1930s** – Chairs will be adzed all over with interwoven leather strap seats.

**1930s to mid 1940s** – Chairs adzed all over with solid piece of cow hide for seat.

**Mid 1940s to 1950s** – Adzed back panel only with upholstered cowhide seat and clearly visible webbing on the underside of the seat.

**1950s to 1970s** – Carved lattice panels start to appear in dining chair and arm chairs.

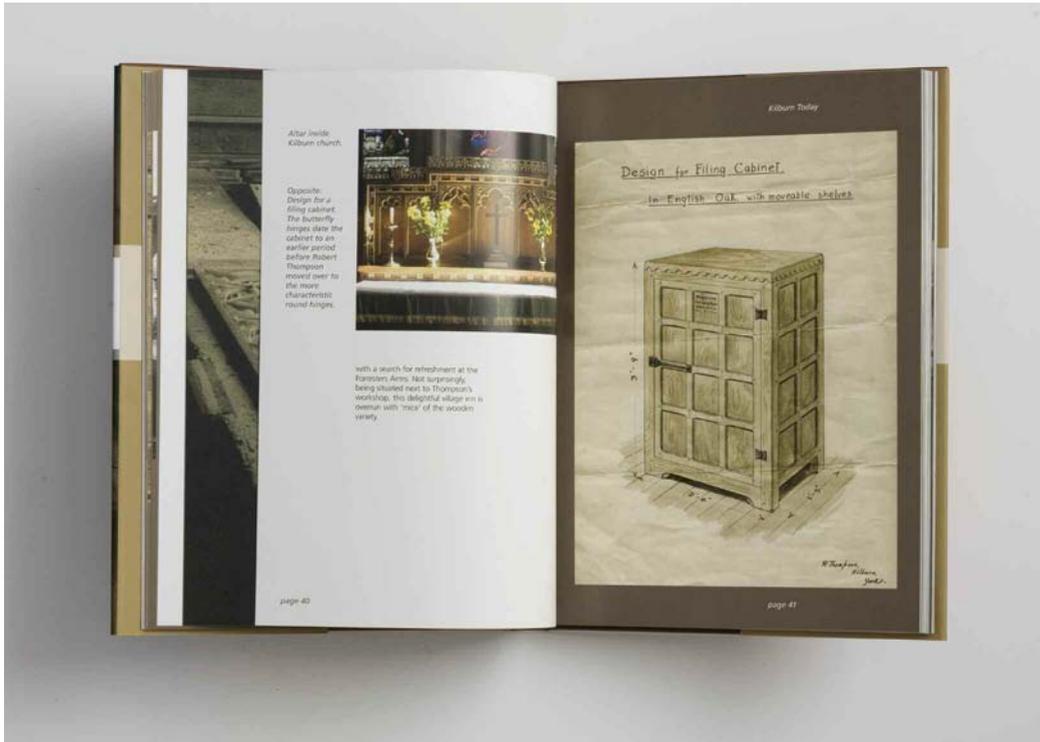
**1970 to present** – Adzed surface to back panel only. Fully upholstered seat. Rush rail reduced in depth to finish below the surface of the bottom side rails.

## *Making a Stand for Bettys Cakes*

Robert Thompson's is delighted to have received a commission from the well known Yorkshire firm, Bettys and Taylors of Harrogate, to design and produce a cake stand which will be sold exclusively through Betty's. Made of English oak and measuring approximately 12in x 12in, the cake stand is octagonal in design, with an oiled finish, carved feet and, of course, bears the distinctive mouse.

To purchase one of these exclusive cakes stands contact Bettys direct tel: 0845 345 3636 or visit [www.bettysbypost.com](http://www.bettysbypost.com)





## New Book is a 'Must-Read'

The new book, *Mouseman: The Legacy of Robert Thompson of Kilburn*, was published at the end of June by Great Northern Books. Written by Patricia Lennon and David Joy, with extensive input from Ian Thompson Cartwright and the company's archivist, Christopher Scaife, the book is the most comprehensive summary of Robert Thompson's life and provides a detailed guide to his work. It is a 'must-read' for anyone interested in Mouseman furniture or 20th century Arts and Crafts furniture makers.

An exclusive limited edition of the book has been produced, which is presented in a special slipcase with a personalised bookplate signed by Ian Thompson Cartwright. As we go to press, only approximately 250 copies of this special edition remain from the original limited print run of 500 and they are selling quickly. To reserve a copy of this special limited edition, complete the enclosed leaflet and return it to our publishers, Great Northern Books, or call 01274 735056.

A standard, hardback version of the book is also available priced at £15.95 plus 3£ p+p, which can be ordered by calling 01347 869100 or email [info@robertthompsons.co.uk](mailto:info@robertthompsons.co.uk)

## *Classic Mouseman*

Robert Thompson's offers refurbished, previously owned Mouseman pieces for sale. Customers are assured that these Classic Mouseman items have been verified, accurately dated and carefully refurbished in the traditional way. To view a current list of Classic Mouseman pieces go to [www.robertthompsons.com](http://www.robertthompsons.com). Items move quickly so you are advised to enquire quickly if you are interested in one of the pieces



*A very fine example of a Classic Mouseman reclining smoking chair with reading stand. Dated 1920's and priced at £5,295.*

The company is always interested in buying back items of Mouseman furniture and will be pleased to hear of items for sale.

## *Dates for your Diary*

**7 October 2008: Huddersfield Daily Examiner Literary Lunch.** David Joy will be talking about the new Mouseman book. For further details and tickets, call 01484 430000.

**9 October 2008: Betty's Betty's Harlow Carr.** Ian Thompson Cartwright and the company's archivist, Chris Scaife, will give one of their extremely popular talks at Betty's Café Tea Rooms in Northallerton. These talks sell out very quickly so anyone wishing to attend should book early. [www.bettys.co.uk](http://www.bettys.co.uk)

**19 October 2008: Ilkley Literature Festival** Ian Thompson Cartwright and the author of the new Mouseman book, David Joy, will give a talk on Robert Thompson at St Margaret's Church Hall, Ilkley and then lead a walk around St Margaret's Church and Ilkley Parish Church to discover the Mouseman carvings there. [www.ilkleyliteraturefestival.org.uk](http://www.ilkleyliteraturefestival.org.uk)

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*Newsletter No 5 will cover Spring/Summer 2009.*

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