

# Sir Ambrose Heal

## Newsletter

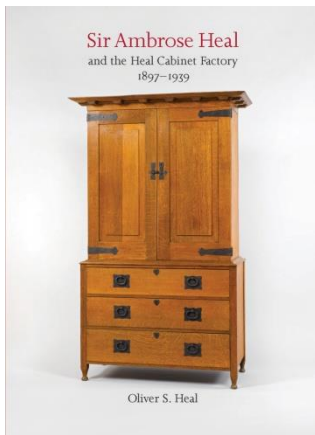


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#### **1. The Book *Sir Ambrose Heal and the Heal Cabinet Factory 1897-1939***

The last few months have flown past but hopefully by now you will all be aware that the book *Sir Ambrose Heal and the Heal Cabinet Factory 1897-1939* was published at the end of March. Derek Brown and his team at Oblong Creative have done a superb job on the layout and presentation to produce a book that is appropriately up to A.H.'s high standards.



The book launch was held at The Millinery Works in Islington on 6th April and I spent an enjoyable afternoon signing copies and talking about A.H.'s life. It was great to see so many people, many of whom I had not seen for many

years. Thank you for your support. Since then I have given a number of other talks to audiences trying to raise awareness of Sir Ambrose and his work.

For those of you who have not yet bought a copy, now is the time to put it on your Christmas shopping list! It is available either direct from

Oblong (tel. 01937 849949) or from good book shops. It is attracting some very encouraging reviews. For example, Peyton Skipwith wrote for *Apollo* in July that it provides 'a lively portrait' of Ambrose Heal 'but the book is far more than a biography: it itemises the in-house production of the Heal Cabinet Factory as well as listing outside suppliers, thus making it an essential work of reference for anybody interested in 20<sup>th</sup> century furniture design.' It is a large format hardback book with 586 illustrations.

ISBN 9780957599239 [www.oblongcreative.co.uk](http://www.oblongcreative.co.uk)

#### **2. Christine Angus & Ambrose Heal**

The information that the high-backed child's chair made at the turn of the century by Heal's for Joan Drummond Angus had been acquired by the V&A Museum of Childhood arrived too late to be



included in the book. The V&A describe it as an important piece of Arts and Crafts furniture. Curiously news has also since emerged of the existence of a similar, previously unknown chair that appears to have been a prototype for the one that is now in the

Museum. So it seems an appropriate moment to consider the subject here!

Joan Angus who was the youngest of ten children was given the chair when she was five years old. One of her older sisters was Christine Angus who later became better known when she became the second wife of the painter Walter Sickert. Christine



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was a talented artist in her own right and Ambrose Heal made use of her designs for inlay on this chair and also on a large fumed oak sideboard made around the same period. The cherub figure inlaid in mother of pearl and ivory on the chair is echoed in a silk embroidered dalmatic owned by Westminster Abbey that Christine Angus displayed at the 1916 Arts & Crafts Society exhibition. Her little sister Joan was again the inspiration for this robe but sadly she had died by then from tuberculosis and the pattern recalls her as 'The Eternal Child'.

Probably around this time Ambrose purchased a circular silk embroidery by Christine that was mounted under glass in an ebonised frame as a tray. The figures of the young girls surrounded by garlands of flowers are recognisably by the same artist who decorated the chair and embroidered the dalmatic.



Christine evidently became a friend of the family because she visited Ambrose and his wife Edith at their house in Pinner as this photograph of her in the garden there shows.



The mystery of where the second chair has come from is unresolved. Descendants of the Angus family

assure me there was no second chair in the household. The only pictures I have been sent are not very clear yet there seems no doubt that the writing, discovered when the old upholstery was stripped off, is an attempt at marking out the wording that would later be inlaid on the chair that is now in the Museum of Childhood. I would be fascinated to learn more about where this chair has been all this time and hope someone out there can provide some clues.



### Antiques Roadshow 26 October

The BBC were filming the Antiques Roadshow some months ago not far from here at Chenies Manor so we went along with a number of items.

I have just been notified that two programmes from Chenies will be broadcast on Sunday 19 October and on 26 October but that the recording of Paul Atterbury talking with me about Ambrose's Sidney Barnsley dresser will go out during the second programme. We also took along memorabilia of Cecil Ambrose Heal, Ambrose's eldest son killed tragically just after arriving at the front line in 1915, but I am not sure if that will find its way into the final programme or if it has been cut.

Altogether it was a fascinating experience.

Oliver S Heal October 2014

