

# London Regional Meeting – Alternative Finishes

Thirty members met on 1st November at Warner Fabrics, Chelsea Harbour, courtesy of Charles Hamer. It was especially pleasant to have several new members attending.

The meeting was organised by John Downer and his talk on Alternative Finishes was supplemented by a wide ranging selection of Mauchline Ware from John and Judith's collections plus many displays brought to the meeting by members.

John briefly covered the history of the manufacturers of Mauchline Ware and the principal types of finishes – pen and ink, black transfer, fern and photographic. Many other 'alternative' finishes were introduced in the 1860-1870 period of which 'Black Lacquer' is probably the best known. Only in relatively recent times has the enormous range of other finishes been widely recognised as Mauchline Ware and there is great potential for a lot more research into many aspects of the manufacture including the connections with the thread manufacturers whose trade labels are to be found in so many boxes.

The range of alternative finishes is well illustrated in David Trachtenberg and Tom Keith's book, although the names they give for some of the finishes are rather controversial. John thought 'Cream Ware' would be a more suitable term for the grouping called 'White Ware' in David and Tom's book. He also preferred 'Floral Ware' to 'Chintz Ware' but Charles Hamer was very content with 'Chintz Ware' given that the meeting place was the home of Chintz! There was general agreement that 'Chequer Ware', first suggested by the late Ron Harper in 1987, should be retained, as it has in the book. As an aside John expressed a personal preference for the generic term 'Fancy Wood Ware' as used by Smiths, rather than 'Alternative Finishes'!

A flavour of the finishes on show can be sensed from the following: coloured transfer (eg shells, ferns, robins), playing cards, Chinese lacquer, tortoiseshell, floral, basket weave, willow pattern, kaleidoscope, postage stamp paper, little people, games boxes, advertising, fortune telling and many more. Some of these can be seen in the accompanying pictures.

John was given a hearty vote of thanks for not only organising the meeting but for his presentation which inspired much discussion.

Leslie Jones



Part of John and Judith Downer's displays.



Christabelle Davey's display.



More alternative finishes from the Downers' collections.