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Dear Editor

Having read Aiden Harrison's note in *Regional Furniture Society Newsletter* (79, Summer 2023) responding to my essay, 'The Thomas Stanley Bed and a Related *Corpus* of Furniture from Tudor Lancashire', *Regional Furniture* 36 (2022), I would like to make a few points and relay newly discovered manuscript evidence of interest to Aiden and the society's membership.

Firstly, Aiden's observations concerning the Stanley bed and its clear reconfiguration are interesting. There is physical evidence for the head-rail's repositioning higher up on the headposts at some point (illustrated by the pair of redundant lower dowel holes on each post), seen here as **Fig.1**. This image also suggests the posts' outer forward-facing edges at and below the micro-linenfold have been patched. Obfuscating the side rails' original position (lined-up with the head-rail's earlier, lower position?), their repositioning occurred by 1913: the bolts clearly visible in Chinnery's *Oak Furniture* (1986) photograph are also visible when the bed was photographed for auction in 1913 **Fig.2**. Of course, this does not tell us when the siderails were lowered.

The footboard seen in this 1913 photograph (**Fig.2**) and in Chinnery's *Oak Furniture* (**Fig.1**) has been presented as an introduction made as part of the bed's Victorian reconfiguration: 'form also follows function in the exposed, decorative replacement footboard [...]. While its intrusive shape would compromise the draped bedcoverings used in the medieval period, it neatly complements that other Victorian innovation, the eiderdown'.¹ The bed, as discussed in my 2022 *Regional Furniture* essay, has clearly undergone repeated and significant remodeling during the twentieth century: the footboard, canopy, and finials have all been removed and today are lost. Its last known configuration included replacement side- and footrails including holes for the rope support. Only when the original rails are recovered will it be possible to assess their physicality and age.

Aiden's reasonable comments made about the footboard echo opinions made elsewhere, including that the Stanley bed seen in the 1913 photograph is 'souped-up'. A recently discovered account of the bed made by George Shaw (1810–76), when it was in James Dearden's collection, records not only the bed's ornate and integral footboard, but also a filigree tester *before* reparation—to use Shaw's term. Perhaps it is during this work that the head and siderails were realigned? As such, the bed photographed in 1913 is not as 'souped-up' as it has been assumed. In March 1834, Shaw writes that:

—Went with M^r Raines to see a carved oak bed in the possession of M^r Dearden² once in Lathom House.³—The back is profusely carved but in a different Style from that of any other that I ever Saw, the Pillars are also carved, and have crests upon them and a foot board between.—The Tester is likewise carved.—It is being repaired, and will have a fine effect when completed if the repairs are done with taste.—⁴

Shaw, a noted forger of Tudor furniture, was also a budding antiquary, and his documentary approach to recording the Thomas Stanley bed pre-dates his now well-established fraudulent enterprise from the following decade. Indeed, the bed's

¹ Aiden Harrison, "A Response to The Thomas Stanley Bed and a Related *Corpus* of Furniture from Tudor Lancashire, Peter N. Lindfield, *Regional Furniture* 36, 2022," *Regional Furniture Society Newsletter*, no. 79, Summer (2023), p. 6.

² James Dearden (1798–1862).

³ Lathom House, Ormskirk, Lancashire.

⁴ Oldham Archives, D-HEW 50, f. 85.

description matches the matter-of-fact antiquarian recording method he employed to record numerous other buildings and pieces of furniture throughout his diaries. Whilst it is impossible to determine if the bed was ‘souped-up’ in early–mid 1834, or how invasive the repairs were, we can, however, categorically state the bed possessed an ornately carved footboard and tester before these restorations.

With this information to hand, it prompts us to reassess a well-established argument: there ‘is an invariable rule for high-status beds [from the medieval period...which] is the absence of a footboard: neither manuscript illustrations nor extant beds display this feature [...]. Footboards only became a regular feature of grand English beds in the nineteenth century’.⁵ I have addressed this question elsewhere,⁶ however, given Shaw’s unearthed 1834 description of the bed, it seems prudent to counter this assumption—or *rule*—here. Since Penelope Eames’ superlative doctorate was published as *Furniture History* (1977), new lines of research have been opened to historians: the digitization of medieval and early modern manuscripts and other visual sources across the globe has given us access to new and perhaps previously unknown materials that shed light on medieval, Tudor, and early modern furniture.

Contrary to the above noted ‘rule’, there are, actually, numerous depictions of high-status, ornate, and even canopied beds from the medieval period, and the sixteenth century, that include footboards. A few examples should underline the point that our knowledge of medieval and Tudor furniture is far from complete and that we are, today, clearly hampered by the paucity of surviving examples from across the cultural spectrum.

Perhaps the earliest and most significant illustration of a high-status medieval bed with a footboard is found in Corpus Christi, Oxford, MS no.157, from c.1130 (**Fig.3**). Depicting *Henry I’s Nightmares*, the King lays on a bed where the architecturally pierced headboard with capping and finials is replicated at its foot. This footboard rises above the level of the bedding but less so than the headboard: we can assume that this footboard was clearly meant to be viewed given the decoration. Of course, this bed is almost certainly hypothetical, however it suggests that the footboard existed as a notion (or perhaps even a formal and constructional part of beds) as far back as the twelfth century.

The Getty’s Froissart manuscript includes a miniature, *The bed of the King of Navarre set on fire*, c.1480–83, depicting its wooden structure (**Fig.4**).⁷ The artist has illustrated a footboard under the lifted-up fabric, which responds to the headboard. Constructed from stiles pegged into a lower rail resting on the dais, this grid-like panelled structure matches the headboard, albeit without the linenfold panelling. We can, perhaps, assume that footboard’s reduced decoration given its obfuscation by fabric and is thus practical rather than decorative. This c.1480–83 manuscript miniature suggests footboards existed at this time, as in 1140, but were hidden by fabric, even on high-status beds.

There are also numerous examples of footboards included in drawings, engravings, and pattern-book designs of and for beds from the late-fifteenth century. *Amnon raping Tamar* by Heinrich Aldegrever, plate 2 from *The Story of Amnon and Tamar* (1540), depicts a bed set upon a dais with a footboard clearly behind the chest. More elaborate, a footboard is incorporated at the bottom of Peter Flötner’s engraved

⁵ Adam Bowett, “The Redland Hotel Bed,” *Furniture History Society Newsletter* 226 (2022), p. 30.

⁶ See Peter N. Lindfeld, “In Bed with the Tudors: Did Tudor Beds Have Foot Boards? The Conundrum Illustrates the Challenges of Early Modern History,” *History Today* November (2022), pp. 22–24.

⁷ Los Angeles, The Getty Museum, Ms. Ludwig XIII 7 (83.MP.150), f. 274v.

design for an ostentatious canopied state bed, c.1540, set under a second tester (**Fig.5**).⁸ Numerous other engravings and woodcuts from the turn of the sixteenth century also depict beds with footboards, albeit where they do not reach the floor, perhaps reflecting practical considerations where perfectly flat floors were not required for them to sit properly.

Further contradicting long-held understandings of elite beds, the exposed and carved footboard seen in 1913 also responds to the clear development in beds depicted in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts where carved woodwork is visible. Whilst *The Annunciation* in Royal MS 16 G III (1479) depicts a Van Eyck-style bed entirely draped in fabric (**Fig.6**), another in this manuscript, in *Noli me tangere* (**Fig.7**), includes a bed with an elaborately carved tripartite headboard made from Gothic tracery.⁹ This, then, could explain the well-known 1539 fragment from Henry VIII's and Anne of Cleves's bed now at the Burrell Collection, Glasgow, where the carved and painted surface was clearly meant to be seen.¹⁰

Contrary to recent claims, there are numerous examples of high-status and even royal beds depicted with footboards in medieval manuscript miniatures and in published designs from the sixteenth century. We cannot assume these illustrated beds were real, but the breadth and dept of examples across time, place, and media, indicate a need to reassess commonly held opinion on the genesis of footboards. With this information to hand, we cannot assume the Thomas Stanley bed's footboard is Victorian. Indeed, when these historical illustrations are combined with Shaw's matter-of-fact description of the bed from 1834, the now-lost ornate features have every chance of being Tudor. I would be delighted for the Thomas Stanley bed's footboard, canopy, and finials to emerge and be subjected to examination rather than attempting to judge them and their age via poor photographs.

Image Captions

Fig.1: *Detail of the Thomas Stanley bed*, as illustrated in Chinnery, *Oak Furniture* (1986). Courtesy of Jan Chinnery.

Fig.2: *Detail of the Thomas Stanley bed as it existed in 1913*, from Messrs C. W. Provis and Sons, *The Manor House, Rochdale*. Courtesy of Touchstones, Rochdale Archives and Local Studies.

Fig.3: *The nightmare of Henry I*, c.1130, from the Worcester Chronicle, Corpus Christi, Oxford, MS no.157, f. 382.

Fig.4: *The bed of the King of Navarre set on fire*. Ms. Ludwig XIII 7 (83.MP.150), f. 274v. The Getty Museum, LA.

Fig.5: Peter Flötner, *design for a bed*, c.1540. 1992,0620.1. © British Museum, London.

Fig.6: *The Annunciation*, Royal MS 16 G III (1479), 18v. © British Library Board, London.

Fig.7: *Noli me tangere*, Royal MS 16 G III (1479), 168v. © British Library Board, London.

⁸ London, British Museum, 1992,0620.1.

⁹ London, The British Library, Add MS 45131, f. 54.

¹⁰ Glasgow, Burrell Collection, 14.236. See Simon Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life, 1460–1547* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1993), pp. 236–37.