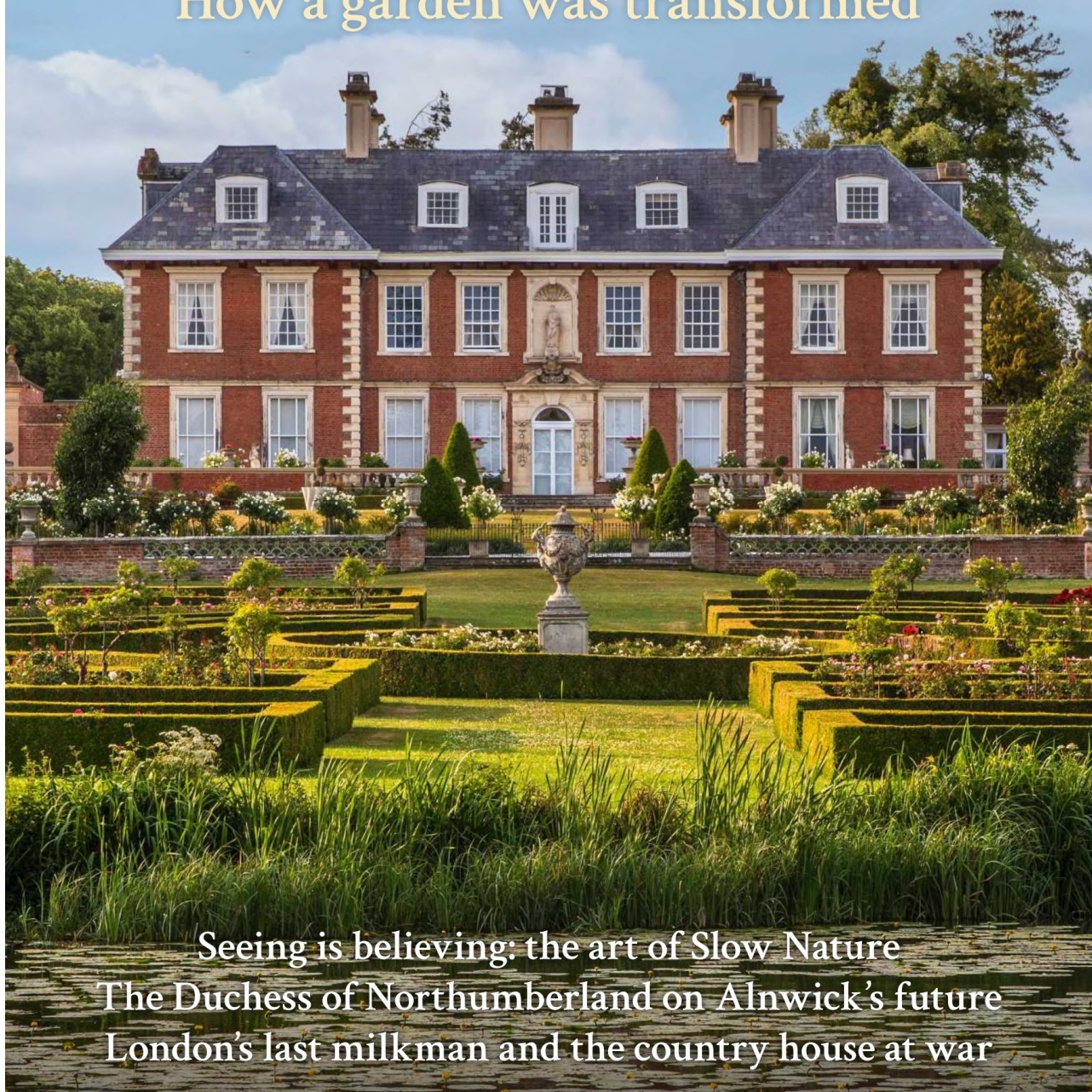


COUNTRY LIFE

EVERY WEEK

SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

Restoration miracle How a garden was transformed



Seeing is believing: the art of Slow Nature
The Duchess of Northumberland on Alnwick's future
London's last milkman and the country house at war



North and south

The Northern Fair is shaping up to be a happy one, with snuff boxes and a necklace given for love, as PAD highlights unexpected jewellery and sculptural furniture



Fig 1: A hunting scene adorns a Thomas Shaw snuff box (left), which has an 1838 inscription within (right). Sold by Highland Antiques

SOMETIMES simply signing up for a fair can bring dividends for dealers that are beyond the reach of shop window or even internet. Mike Wilson deals online only from Aberdeen as Highland Antiques. He offers 'rare and collectable' silver, among which he has a good stock of snuff boxes. As he will be exhibiting at the Northern Antiques Fair in North Yorkshire between October 8 and 11, he sent in images for advance publicity and therefrom made his first, very satisfactory sale.

Among his items was a silver snuff box (Fig 1) marked by Thomas Shaw of Birmingham, 1829, which had an embossed hunting scene on the lid and an inscription inside: 'Presented to Mr Alexander Forbes of Levens by Richard Rushton Preston as an acknowledgement of his Valuable Services in the formation of the New Plantation at Preston Patrick A.D. 1838'.

Levens Hall in Cumbria has the world's oldest topiary garden, which was laid out for Col James Grahme in 1694 by Guillaume Beaumont, who had previously worked for James II at Hampton Court, as, indeed, had Grahme. When James was ousted in 1688, both retired to the North and took up their profession there. Since Beaumont, there have been 10 more head gardeners at Levens, whose names have recently been commemorated on a tree sculpture. Many of them were long-lived and several Scottish, including the fourth, Alexander Forbes, who was in place from 1810–61. He was a particular enthusiast of fruit trees and the topiary.



Fig 2: A 1960s Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson horseshoe pin tray. £635, with Carnes

Richard Rushton Preston was a local lawyer and Preston Patrick is a few miles from Levens. I don't know whether their plantation there survives; perhaps it was disrupted by the M6.

Also near Levens is the home of Janet Pruce, one of the Northern Fair's organising team. She brought the box to the attention of the Hall's current owner, Richard Bagot, who bought it in order to present it to the 11th head gardener, Chris Crowder, who has just retired after 40 years. In 2003, Mr Crowder published *The Garden at Levens*, which celebrates—most of—his predecessors. A happy tale for all.

The Northern is a descendant of the original Harrogate fair founded in 1951 and, for the

past five years, has been held at Tennants Auctioneers' Garden Rooms, Leyburn, with exhibitors from all around the country. This year, from Norfolk, Breckland Antiques brings Arts-and-Crafts pieces, its speciality, including a splendid necklace (Fig 3) that has an attractive provenance and inscription. The confection of silver rope-twist links, citrine, chalcedony and mother of pearl with eagle, star and poppy motifs is unsigned, but in an Artificers' Guild box, leading to an attribution either to the architect designer Henry Wilson or to his former assistant Edward Spencer, a founder of the Guild, which operated from 1901–42. The inscription on the reverse 'JC from DYC, 25 12-1911' tells us that it was a Christmas present from the great Scottish etcher Sir David Young Cameron to his wife, Jeannie. They were said to have been inseparable. She died in 1931, he in 1945, and the necklace has remained in the family until now (£7,950).

Much more local to the fair is Kilburn, North Yorkshire, the birth- and workplace of Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson, whose 150th anniversary is this year. Naturally, several exhibitors will bring large and small pieces of furniture famously marked with his carved mouse. A particularly endearing example is a 1960s horseshoe pin tray (£635) with Carnes Fine Art from Lancashire (Fig 2). That dealer also has a rather larger oak owl by Stan Dodds, master carver at the Mouseman factory in the 1960s and 1970s (£8,950). →

Art market

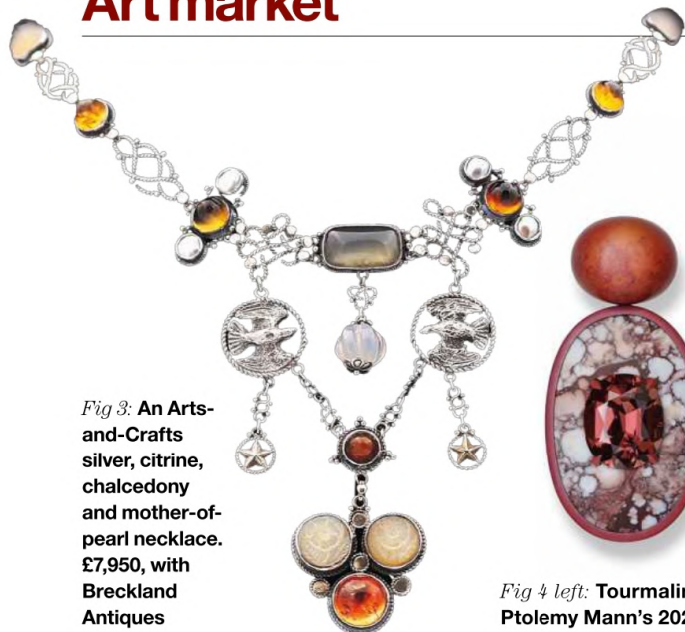


Fig 3: An Arts-and-Crafts silver, citrine, chalcedony and mother-of-pearl necklace. £7,950, with Breckland Antiques

The atmosphere at PAD, the art and design fair in London, is distinctly more contemporary, although many of the exhibitors are at pains to emphasise that their designers 'harmoniously blend the past and the present by combining traditional craftsmanship with a decidedly contemporary approach'. This is its 18th year in the tent in Berkeley Square, W1, from October 13–18, and it brings together 66 exhibitors from 15 countries.

The most recent editions have seen more jewellers among them and that glittering field is again a feature. Notable is Hemmerle, established in Munich, Germany, 133 years ago and still run by the family. The Hemmerles

were suppliers to the Bavarian royal court and are among those who aim to blend past and present. They are also adventurous in using unexpected metals, such as iron, together with gold or silver and found objects or organic shapes with more obviously precious and glamorous stones (**Fig 4**).

Several of the London participants are also holding gallery exhibitions for artists they will be showing at PAD, among them Fumi and Tristan Hoare. The former will show 'Companions', new works by a German wood-working duo, Lukas Wegwerth and Corinna Dehn. They make furniture that becomes sculptural by a covering of armadillo-like shingles or scales (**Fig 6**) and the name expresses its anthropomorphic qualities. He is a cabinetmaker and she a former fashion designer, who brings colour and verve to the creations. The show will be at Fumi's gallery on Hay Hill, W1, only yards from Berkeley Square, from October 3–November 28.

Tristan Hoare has a fine provenance himself as the son of remarkable dealer Oliver Hoare, who died in 2018. Hoare Snr was an authority on Persian and Islamic arts, with a much wider range of knowledge, but Mr Hoare Jnr, based in Fitzroy Square, W1, concentrates, at least for now, on young and established contemporary artists in a variety of mediums. Among those he's showing at PAD is Ptolemy Mann (**Fig 5**), whose exhibition, 'Chromatic Minimalism', will be at the gallery from November 6–December 12. She produces wonderfully colourful hand-dyed and woven artworks that have great emotional charge. She also paints and is a printmaker. 🐉

Next week To market, to market!



Fig 4 left: Tourmaline and marbled-magnesite earrings. With Hemmerle. Fig 5 right: Ptolemy Mann's 2025 work *Yellow Violet Dynamics*. With Tristan Hoare



Pick of the week

This is a late call for Jonathan Delafield Cook's exhibition at Purdy Hicks, Thurloe Street, SW7, to October 10. He works in charcoal on linen and farm animals form the principal subject, with life-size portraits of bulls (such as *Black Bull*, 2026, *below*) and sheep (including *Rough Fell Sheep*, 2026, *above*), as well as smaller drawings of poppies and feathers, all executed with extraordinary precision. These powerful studies give us more of the nature of the beasts than chunks of the real things suspended in tanks of formaldehyde.



Unfortunately, there were two wrong prices in last week's column. Textile Antiques's tapestry of 'Spring' should read £14,000 and William Cook's armchairs £6,800



Fig 6: The Armadillo Cabinet by Lukas Wegwerth and Corinna Dehn. With Fumi