

# The next chapter

Believing there's room for impartial art advice from an auction veteran, Clive Stewart-Lockhart has left Woolley & Wallis to embark on one last career move. *Noelle McElhatton* went to hear his plans ahead of the current Covid-19 lockdown

When Clive Stewart-Lockhart was in his 20s, he collected Clarice Cliff. Not a lot of people know that, but when ATG meets with him in Salisbury in early March, the auctioneer is gazing lovingly at the catalogue for a forthcoming Woolley & Wallis Clarice Cliff and Art Deco sale.

"I have an *Orange Trees and House*-pattern tea set, bought for £18 in 1974, coming up in this sale," he says, excitedly, followed by a frown. "I'm worried about the cohort of 40-year-olds and under. I was collecting in my mid-20s, but now young people want to spend their money on experiences instead of buying stuff, with minimalist houses because they move more often."

Pointing to the Woolleys catalogue, he adds: "That's the real challenge for our industry – who's going to absorb all these objects?"

The question hangs unanswered, as the issue with younger buyers is unlikely to hinder Stewart-

## We ask whose personal brand he most admires in the dealer world. Without a pause, Stewart-Lockhart replies "Robert Young, by a mile."

economy is pretty crowded, accounting for nearly five million workers, he jokes that he's "more than happy to be a statistic".

Leaving the ranks of PAYE workers will no doubt come as a shock after 47 years, though. Stewart-Lockhart responds that he'll still be doing "much the same as I have been doing for the past 20 years, which is dealing with clients who want to sort their lives out in one way or another. I'll just be doing it on my own account."

At 65, Stewart-Lockhart is at the upper end of the age range of those pursuing a solo enterprise. Such longevity has its upsides too, of course.

His little black book also includes former colleagues from his days as an expert on the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow* (from 1994-2017).

Fellow specialists John Benjamin and Paul Viney, former chairman of Woolleys until his

the phone to Rupert?"

Though no longer appearing on the Beeb, his profile remains strong, helped by continued involvement in lecturing at Sotheby's Institute and the Arts Society (now delivered online during the Covid-19 lockdown).

### Impartial help

The admin around setting up a business has preoccupied Stewart-Lockhart – though he had already grasped the minutiae of GDPR and the more recent anti-money laundering regulations while at Woolleys.

A new website, [artadvice.co.uk](http://artadvice.co.uk), has launched and professional indemnity insurance has been purchased "in case I give bad advice".

Not that this is the intention. The gap Stewart-Lockhart wants to fill arises from what he says is



### Curriculum Vitae

**2012-20**  
Managing director to deputy chairman, W&W

**1982-2012**  
Cataloguer, rising to managing director and deputy chairman, Dreweatt Watson & Barton, Dreweatt Neate

**1976-82**  
Ceramics and general valuations, Sotheby's

**1975-76**  
Assistant, Bluett & Sons

**1973-75**  
Student and administrator, Sotheby's



"the difficulty in getting impartial help".

"If I go into a valuation as a Dreweatts man or a Woolleys man, I'm selling those companies. Whereas if I go to a valuation without that label, I can say where it should be sent for the best price."

Now free from the requirements to think of auctions as the sole route to market, Stewart-Lockhart looks forward to "the occasions where I can do private sales for a client rather than putting them through the rooms. Some things do better at auction at certain levels. Equally, there are objects you can get a much better price for if you have a specific client in mind... who just has to have it.

"Now I can actually say to clients, that dealer

together, followed by art education at Sotheby's Institute. Stewart-Lockhart admires his friend's entrepreneurial spirit: starting as a furniture dealer, evolving in the early 1980s into the unfashionable area of folk art, while purchasing a shop in Battersea, again ahead of the fashion curve. "Robert has built an incredibly strong brand, helped by an engaging, non-pushy style and brilliant social media," he says, adding that folk art is "so compatible with Instagram".

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### Quieter years

Stewart-Lockhart emerges from Woolleys after two of the quieter years of his career. A persistent blood cancer condition requires regular rest breaks, to which a rolled-up bed in his office attests. "The illness is not terminal, it just requires managing and being self-employed will help," he says, matter-of-factly.

As the interview ends, Stewart-Lockhart talks about what has and hasn't changed in the auctioneering business across his career. He was an early adopter of live bidding – "I did the first live sale on [thesaleroom.com](http://thesaleroom.com) back in 2006," he says proudly – and believes that timed auctions as a format will go mainstream.

What hasn't changed, he notes, is the profile of people best suited to the art and antiques market: "Not necessarily the straight-A students, though the big auction rooms still seem to think so."

In his recruitment of talent over the years, devotion to art and antiques remains paramount.

On a noticeboard above his desk is a photo of one of his three sons dressed in his military uniform. When interviewing a young candidate for a position at Woolleys some years ago, Stewart-Lockhart noticed the man kept looking at the photograph.

"After a while I asked him, what is it you really want to do, and he replied, I want to join the Royal Marines. I told him if that was his passion, he should follow it, as I've followed mine." ■

### My gavel moments

**Clive Stewart-Lockhart recalls memorable sales, including one 'barn find' with a difference, across his 45-plus years as an auctioneer**

**When: September 1985**

**What:** at a Dreweatt Neate Fine Art picture auction – a format Stewart-Lockhart introduced to the firm – a 1720s landscape oil painting of a fox hunt by English sporting artist John Wootton (1686-1764) accounted for half the day's takings. It hammered at £106,000 and for years held the firm's house record.

**When: May 1986**

**What:** in 1986, Stewart-Lockhart was asked to sell selected lots by

Stewart-Lockhart had the task of "rounding these up, much to the disappointment of the curators".

In his research, he discovered a set of six George III Chippendale-period carved giltwood girandoles (one shown right) that had hung in the saloon at Ramsbury.

Titled An Important Auction of English Furniture, the property of Sir Francis Burdett's Will Trust, the auction's proceeds totalled £250,000.

The six mirrors were bought by Harry Hyams for £90,000 to be repatriated back to Ramsbury Manor – in exactly the same place they had resided in the past.

**When: 2005**

**What:** a memorable private treaty

day trips to Canberra by Stewart-Lockhart convinced the National Library of Australia that it had to have these drawings – among the first visual records of the continent by a European artist.

The deal was record-breaking for both buyer and auctioneer. Sold for a reputed £1m-plus, the



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Raper, George, 1769-96, Ducie Collection of First Fleet art, National Library of Australia

"I had no idea who painted them but as one was of a kookaburra [shown left], I assumed that they might all be Australian," he recalls.

Stewart-Lockhart and his friend, dealer and academic Christopher Foley, began painstaking research, including analysing the paints used and paper, as well as discovering how the watercolours came to be in the possession of the Ducie family.

The works were discovered to be by George Raper, a 19-year-old midshipman on the 'First Fleet' to Australia in the 1780s taking convicts to the newly established penal colony there. Two modern-

1991 while at Dreweatts, Stewart-Lockhart found the house to be a gift that kept on giving. After he moved to W&W in 2012 to become its managing director, the house's owners consigned a succession of pieces into the Salisbury saleroom.

The most important of these was a George II giltwood wall mirror in the manner of Matthias Lock and John Linnell. Estimated at £20,000-30,000, it made £78,000 (plus 25% buyer's premium).

"It shows the importance of keeping in touch with old clients, many of whom became friends," Stewart-Lockhart says.

### Down memory lane

This photo was taken at the July 1992 sale of the contents of Sunnyclose, near Henley-on-Thames.

"It was a huge undertaking and we needed extra help," Clive Stewart-Lockhart recalls. "So we recruited assistance from the Fine Art Valuation course at Southampton, then a wonderful source of keen young talent."

In the front row, next to each other, can be seen youngsters John Axford and Jonathan Pratt, now chairman of Woolley & Wallis and managing director of Dreweatts, respectively.

The photo also includes Rachel Furr (then Coleman – middle row, to the left), who went on to work at Bonhams and Elaine Binning (far right, facing away) who became a director of Dreweatts and head of furniture.

Binning is one of four future BBC antiques experts in shot, working with Stewart-Lockhart and Axford on *Antiques Roadshow*, and *Flog It!* and *Bargain Hunt* regular Pratt.



The sale was held in conjunction with valuation firm Gurr Johns, which 28 years later went on to acquire Dreweatts and Bloomsbury auction houses in 2017.

"It's a moment in time," Stewart-Lockhart muses, "where agents and auctioneers worked together, as well as capturing two of the senior UK auctioneering figures when they were mere students, with their careers stretching out ahead of them."