

## Battle of the broadsheets over 'brown'

JUST as UK newspapers are split over 'Brexit,' they are taking opposing views over an even more hotly debated issue: the fortunes of brown furniture.

Articles in *The Sunday Times* (February 1) and *The Sunday Telegraph* (January 31) took wildly different stances on the decline in prices – though neither took their cue from the annual good-news fest that is the Antiques Collectors' Club's Annual Furniture Index (see news, page 8).

*The Sunday Times* is all optimism. Reduced prices for 'brown' make it affordable as well as original, compared with newly made pieces.

This upside was supported by bullish contributions from auctioneers Jeremy Lamond, director, Halls Fine Art, Bonhams' director of decorative arts Mark Wilkinson and others.

*Sunday Times* journalist Katrina Burroughs'

purplest prose was reserved for dealers, hailing Robert Young and Spencer Swaffer as "heroes of eclectic cabinetry" for selling "absurdly picturesque examples of brown".

Over at the *Telegraph*, doom and gloom reigns, with a grim litany of brown furniture's decade of woes, theorising that mid-century styled TV shows such as *Mad Men* have nailed mahogany's coffin. A photo spread highlighted the halving of prices in 10 years: a Victorian chair once priced at £850 was now valued at £375; a side table currently £93, down from £200.

But before readers could bang their heads on the nearest drop-leaf table, the article ended on a note of hope, observing "there are signs of recovery for certain types of furniture... useful pieces like tables, chairs and bookcases". Phew!

