

Period pieces strike gold at silver jubilee

■ Traditional fare back in favour at NEC

AFTER an eventful London fairs season, attention turned to the last major event of the summer and it gave dealers and collectors a chance to get out of the capital for the top provincial fair, *Antiques For Everyone* at the NEC, Birmingham.

Now 25 years old and held three times a year, the *Antiques For Everyone* formula is well known and in the later 1990s attracted more than 500 exhibitors to the NEC's cavernous halls.

This summer's fair from July 22 to 25 saw some 270 dealers spread around just over 200 stands, but although the tally was down (and wisely the fair's new layout does not try to hide that fact) for those who turned up the Birmingham fixture proved it can still do the business.

What is more it managed business in areas many other fairs cannot reach, on this occasion a renewed interest in English period furniture.

Paul Burrows of Yoxall Antiques counted among his furniture sales a Regency davenport by Gillows which went to a private buyer for some £12,000, contributing to what the Solihull

dealer described as "my most successful fair at the NEC for years".

His other sales included a mid-19th century mahogany dining table and set of chairs, a Regency secretaire bookcase and Victorian two-seater settee.

Chester's **Mike Melody** is difficult to beat on keen pricing and again he moved an impressive amount of his extensive stock, selling three farmhouse dressers, a large table and a considerable quantity of country furniture, mainly to private buyers.

English country furniture specialist **Mark Seabrook** from Cambridgeshire continued a good summer selling a fine early oak settle among other things, while **James Strang** from Scotland sold Scottish Arts & Crafts chairs.

One piece that caught my eye was a solid oak door and its 17th century frame,

Right: period furniture made its mark at the summer *Antiques For Everyone* where Yoxall Antiques sold this Gillows davenport for around £12,000.



which **Peter Bunting** from Derbyshire sold for around £2000 to an Isle of Man customer who will use it as the front door to his 16th century cottage.

For once furniture seemed to overshadow that bastion of business at the NEC, ceramics, although early English pottery specialist **John Howard** was happy enough with sales to describe this event as his best fair of the summer season.

John, like many other NEC regulars, finds this venue both enjoyable and profitable simply because it is eminently affordable, with a number of dealers, including John himself, covering their costs in the opening hours.

At its Silver Jubilee airing the summer *Antiques For Everyone* had a gate of some 17,500 over the four days, ten per cent up on last July.