

THE CHIPPENDALE SOCIETY



President: The Lord St Oswald

NEWSLETTER No. 132

www.thechippendalesociety.co.uk

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'Chinese Chairs', from plate XXVII of *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director* (1762)

'...designs of Chairs after the Chinese Manner, and are very proper for a Lady's Dressing Room: especially if it is hung with India Paper. They will likewise suit Chinese Temples. They have commonly Cane-Bottoms, with loose Cushions; but, if required, may have stuffed Seats, and Brass Nails.'

USE OF EMAIL

Please help us to keep costs to a minimum by requesting that the Newsletter be sent to you by email in future. Please contact dib.chippoc@enterprise.net

NEW CHIPPENDALE SOCIETY WEBSITE

During the last few months a new website has been under construction for the Society and it will go live within the next few weeks. The address will be www.thechippendalesociety.co.uk

In addition to general information about the two Thomas Chippendales the site will cover the Society's events and news of interest to members as well as an archive of Newsletters. One of the aims has been to make the site as attractive and informative as possible in order to encourage new members to join. One of the Committee's long-term aims is to include a *catalogue raisonné* of all known works by Chippendale. The first stage of this will be to put the catalogue of the Society's own collection on the site. We hope you will like the new site and will let us know what you think of it so that it can develop into a really useful resource.

A VERY BRIEF LOOK AT THE LONDON DEALERS

At the magnificent **Masterpiece Fair** (24 June – 1 July), without doubt London's finest, one could see some of the most beautiful and interesting works of art currently on the market. The thrill is not unlike walking through one of the world's great decorative art museums for the first time, except that one can touch everything (within reason), and indeed everything is for sale.

English 18th century furniture is particularly well represented with all the leading dealers offering mouth-watering spreads. For the present writer, on the look-out for pieces with possible connections to Chippendale and his selected contemporaries, the short list included **Godson & Coles**, with a handsome sideboard table, very similar to a Chippendale model at Paxton (and another at Wallington), interestingly also with a Northumberland provenance. Among **Apter Fredericks'** superb stock were a pair of unusual corner cupboards from Leinster House, Dublin, with bold and elaborate marquetry reminiscent of Chippendale Junior's designs. **Thomas Coulborn's** stand was dominated by a remarkable set of 12 side and two armchairs, with Chinese fretwork backs, identical to a suite formerly at Grimsthorpe Castle and long attributed to St Martin's Lane.

Ronald Phillips offered a stunning array of pieces, many new to the market: a pair of pedestals and vases, closely related to the examples at Paxton; a pair of elegant 'Denton style' demi lune commodes, formerly in Lady Cadogan's collection, now reunited; a set of four stunningly designed and carved baroque pier glasses from Castle Howard, c1720; an ogee shaped overmantel mirror attributed to the Linnells; and two from the famous suite of japanned chinoiserie side chairs again from Grimsthorpe. **Mallett's** had a most unusual tall secretaire bureau, with a slight chinoiserie profile, with baskets and sprays of flowers in marquetry, suggesting an origi-

nal female client. **Frank Partridge** had the superb coromandel commode originally from Ribston and later Castle Howard attributed to Langlois and another pendant also attributed to Langlois with contrasting goud grec marquetry. All this was in addition to **Carter Marsh** who exhibited both the Medici and Hanover Tompions, **Edward Hurst** with a Charles Clay zodiacal clock with the most advanced rococo English ormolu case for its date (c1740). This is not to begin to describe the French furniture (except a brilliant little metamorphic writing table by Riesener with **Kraemer** of Paris), the silver, the porcelain, the miniatures, the jewellery....

Events for summer and autumn

Thursday 20th August 2015 Visit to Raby Castle and Rokeby Park

The magnificent 14th century Raby Castle, seat of the Vanes since the early 17th century, has a wealth of interesting interiors and fine furnishings reflecting the family's fortunes and the work of James Paine, Daniel Garrett, John Carr of York and William Burn. Furniture includes lavish suites by Gillows and Pugin, 18th century Chinese porcelain, and a unique group of four Meissen birds from the Japanese Palace at Dresden. Our private visit will take place in the morning before the general public are admitted.

Lunch is not included and may be taken as a picnic in the gardens or in the Stable Tea Rooms.

In the afternoon we will have a private tour of Rokeby Park, the perfect Palladian villa built by Sir Thomas Robinson, later manager of the famous Ranelagh Gardens, in the late 1720s. Later acquired by the Morrill family it has fine paintings, furniture and interiors including a rare and charming Print Room. Its estate along the banks of the Tees and Greta were the subject of some of Cotman's greatest early watercolours.

Applications for both events should be sent to **Anthony Mills,**
Lark Hill, Linton Common, Linton, Wetherby LS22 4JD to be received by Thursday 6th August.

Tickets will not be sent in order to minimise expense. Please assume you have a place unless you hear to the contrary.

Monday 19th October 2015 Visit to Knowsley Hall, near Liverpool

With special permission from the Earl and Countess of Derby members of the Chippendale Society are invited to a privileged visit to Knowsley Hall, including the New House, the family's private residence. We will be guided by the curators Dr Stephen Lloyd and Dr Christina Kokosalakis. Knowsley has been the seat of the Stanleys since the fifteenth century and reflects periods of rebuilding and refurnishing in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries with a wealth of fine paintings, furniture, books and works of art. The New House contains furniture from Robert Adam's Derby House, including the famous Ince and Mayhew Derby House Commode.

Please note that the visit to Knowsley is limited to 20 members and places will be allocated based on date of receipt of applications.

On the next two pages is a report on the recent visit to Levens and Sizergh Castle. It is intended to include more such reports in the Newsletter in future.

CHIPPENDALE SOCIETY VISIT TO LEVENS HALL AND SIZERGH CASTLE

7 MAY 2015

LEVENS HALL

Our first destination was Levens Hall, a house built around a pele tower erected by the Redman family about 1350. It was greatly extended by the next occupants, the Bellinghams, and in 1689 was sold to James Grahme, Keeper of the Privy Purse to James II. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688 Grahme thought it prudent to place some distance between himself and the new regime in London, but he did not mean to live without London comforts, so the house was again extended and modernised in the 1690s. It remained largely unchanged thereafter until the 1820s, when Mary Howard, the last of Grahme's direct descendants, modified much of the interior to create a deliberate evocation of the house's Elizabethan heyday. The house is now owned and lived in by the Bagot family, who inherited in 1883.

At Levens we met Susan Stuart, furniture historian and author of a two-volume history of Gillows of Lancaster, who had researched the furniture supplied by Gillows for the house in the early 19th century. Also with us was Adam Bowett, who had researched furniture supplied to Colonel Grahme by Thomas Pistor and Gerrit Jensen, two of the foremost London cabinet-makers of the late 17th century. Our tour was chaperoned by Levens' chief guide, who found Susan and Adam's fascination with furniture quite mystifying. A walnut writing table stated to be c.1750 was shown by Susan Stuart to have been made by Gillows in 1808, but even when shown copies of the bills and original Gillows sketches our guide was not convinced. This episode set the tone for the visit, and it was clear that this was a house in which the romance of the past, whether historically accurate or not, was valued very highly. When confronted by an early 19th century Gillows oak bed, baldly stated to be Portuguese and made of Spanish chestnut, it was prudent to keep silent and concentrate on the uncontroversial 'Levens pattern' chairs supplied by the Lancaster firm in 1808.

There was a great deal more to see and admire; the collection included arms and armour, paintings by Rubens, Lely, Turner, Peter de Wint and Edward Burne-Jones, silver by Peter Archambo and William Kidney, a remarkably long suite of brass filigree sconces, and a fine long-case clock by George Graham. Joseph Nash's watercolours of the 1840s hung in several rooms, and in them it was possible to see many of the same furnishings and objects we saw as we passed through the house. Dotted about the house was a small collection of Napoleonic memorabilia, including Napoleon's saddle and the Duke of Wellington's campaign bed. In several rooms there were sections of fine gilt leather wall hangings, although which was 17th century Spanish and which was 19th century Gillows was difficult to determine.

One of the most interesting aspects of the house was the way in which Mary Howard and her descendants had sought to recreate an Elizabethan idyll, with armour hanging in the hall, dark oak panelling, and 'antique' furniture. Much of the latter, like the many cane chairs bought new in the 19th century, was now considered to genuine 17th century material, but perhaps this is why there is a sense of intimacy and continuity at Levens which is matched by few other houses of comparable size and status.

One should never leave Levens without seeing the gardens, which were looking at their best in the spring sunshine. The topiary garden, first planted in the early 18th century by Guillaume Beaumont, formerly gardener to James II, cannot be beaten for romance and old English charm.

SIZERGH CASTLE

We then proceeded the short distance to Sizergh Castle where we were welcomed in the forecourt by the House Steward who gave us an excellent history of the Strickland family who have lived at Sizergh since at least the thirteenth century. He explained that the castle had begun as a pele tower, was enlarged with three new wings in the 1560s and only altered infrequently later. The family had been staunch Catholics and went into exile with James II only returning in the mid 18th century. This accounted for large numbers of royal Stuart portraits and other memorials. From here we were able to roam through the house at will. Entering the Great Hall, under a fine Elizabethan screen removed from the floor above, we first encountered two plain chests with carved scrolled escutcheons framing metal locks dated 1571, introducing us to the time of Alice Strickland who with her husband Sir Walter (d 1569) were responsible for most of the exceptional panelling and elaborately carved overmantels which are such a feature of the house and clearly comparable to those at Levens. There was some speculation as to the origins of this tradition in Westmoreland. Anthony Wells – Cole has suggested that at least two are derived from prints by Benedetto Battini, published in Antwerp in the 1550s. A series of remarkable stools on the second floor of the pele tower are also dated 1562 with the initials WS – these have elaborately carved aprons with scrolls and strapwork reminiscent of Netherlandish pattern books. They are surely some of the most remarkable

furniture still surviving in the original 16th century house for which they were made. The famous Inlaid Room at the summit of the tower with the bed and internal porch or draught-excluder make it a remarkable ensemble. There was a suggestion that its authorship could be the same foreign craftsmen who worked in the Great Chamber at Gilling Castle near Helmsley dated 1585, where the glass is signed by the German ‘architect’ Bernard Dinninghof’.

A certain prosperity returned to Sizergh in the mid 18th century and is evoked by an early Romney portrait of the scholarly Walter Strickland SJ in a banyan seated in his library surrounded by books, telescopes and the impedimenta of learning. Furniture from his period included early pieces by Gillows for which Susan Stuart was able to identify a chest of drawers cum writing table, and, for his brother, a fine pair of matching tallboys with fluted chamfered sides and blind fretwork friezes. Both are datable to the late 1750s, as was the long suite of mahogany sofas and side chairs, with distinctive ‘camel’ backs and double scrolled fluted arms and cabriole legs with flanking scrolls. Here is one of the elusive early homes of Gillows furniture, so close to Lancaster, and being made for co-religionists.

We are enormously grateful to Adam Bowett and Susan Stuart for sharing their expertise with us on this memorable early summer visit to two exceptionally interesting houses and collections.



A group of members in the courtyard at Sizergh Castle