

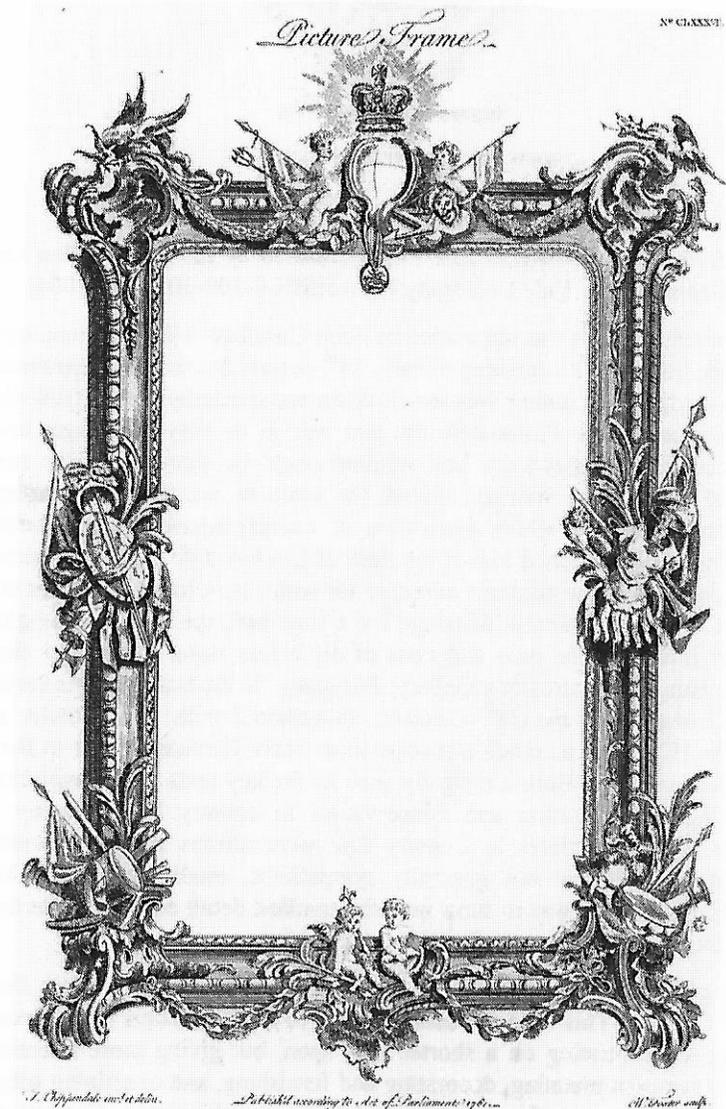
For aficionados of Chippendale furniture there is much to learn despite the fact that the author's time-span finishes before the third edition of the *Director* and the transition to neo-Classicism. There are many cross references to other designers, entrepreneurial craftsmen and their adventurous clients which enables one to put some of Chippendale's achievements into context. To take just one example, Chippendale's dazzling combination of gold coloured silk wallcoverings with *silvered* furniture for the Yellow Damask Sitting Room at Harewood (now lost) may well be the culmination of similar and considerably earlier experiments quoted by Cornforth at Ditchley and Hilsborough House, London.

This is a book not just to consult and defer to, but above all, to be enjoyed.

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The Chippendale Society

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REVIEW

John Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, published by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press ISBN 0-300-10330-1 (2004)

This magnificent book is the summation of John Cornforth's lifelong enquiry into the planning, decoration and furnishing of early 18th century houses. Its appearance almost never happened, for the author was struck down unexpectedly with a fatal illness and died before it appeared. Fortunately the text was in its very last stages and so the author's accumulated knowledge and wisdom could be shared with the rest of the world as he would have wished. Indeed, for years he was the most generous and helpful of mentors to a whole generation of country house owners, curators and scholars. Whoever telephoned him at his desk at *Country Life* could be assured of his patient guidance over the slightest *minutiae* for restoring a historic interior or a piece of furniture: the correct length of fringe for a state bed, the depth of the glaze for a new tummy lining, or the pros and cons of oil versus water gilding, or the correct balance for hanging pictures in a Gallery. For many 'in the business' his earlier book, *English Decoration in the 18th Century*, co-authored with John Fowler and first published in 1974, was as much a revelation as Mark Girouard's *Life in the English Country House* (1978). Both are rightly seen as the key texts in the evolution of our understanding, interpretation and conservation in country houses today. Equally Cornforth's frequent articles in *Country Life* were always looked forward to and pleasure to read: critical but generally sympathetic, erudite but never boring or pedantic. His great skill was to show how the smallest detail could provide the clue to understanding how a house was planned and lived in.

Early Georgian Interiors continued^s the work begun in his earlier *English Decoration in the 18th Century*. This time the author brings to bear a lifetime of observation and questioning: concentrating on a shorter time span, but giving more attention to the relationship between planning, decorating and furnishing, and examining subjects like the role of silver, the taste for tapestries and the use of chinoiserie. For lack of space, and because others have now written about them, certain subjects covered in the earlier book are not developed very much further here: carpets, chimney pieces, picture frames or architectural colour. His hero is William Kent, 'the architectural decorator', and the touchstone for the whole period for him is Houghton, the only

surviving house of the period completed within fifteen years and still retaining almost all its original furnishings. In addition there are chapters on The Primacy of Upholstery: Parade, Comfort and Variety; The Rise of Historical Thinking; The Role of Pictures; and The Planning and Sequences of Decoration, using eight great houses as case studies. Everywhere there are cross references to other houses, descriptions from diaries and letters, quotations from bills and inventories: one is left dazzled at the encyclopaedic knowledge of the author.

(continued overleaf

43rd ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner will take place at Otley Golf Club (which has very recently been extensively refurbished) on Tuesday 7th June 2005 at 7.00 for 7.30.

The Society's guest this year will be Professor Brian Allen, Director of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, and Trustee of the recently re-opened Foundling Museum about which he will speak.

No tickets will be issued but applications, including seating preference, should be made by completing the reservation form below and returning it with your cheque.

There will be a choice of starters and desserts, but to assist the caterer and also to enable the cost to be held at last year's figure of £18 you are asked to indicate your preference for the main course, either:

- (A) Supreme of Scottish Salmon dressed with Hollandaise sauce
- (B) Roast Rack of Lamb, flavoured with garlic and rosemary.
- (C) Vegetarian
- (D) Gluten-free

.....
Please reserve.....places for the Annual Dinner at £18 each.

Cheque enclosed for total amount of £.....

Please indicate the number of each type of main course choice

A() B() C() D()

Name

Address

.....Tel. No.....

I/We would like to sit with.....

Please make cheques payable to *The Chippendale Society* and send to:
John Holdsworth, 74 Riverside Park, Otley, West Yorkshire LS21 2RW