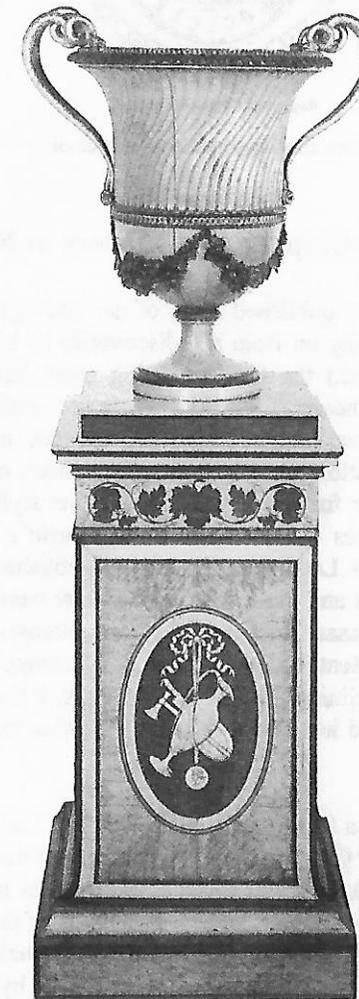


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The Chippendale Society

President: Lord St Oswald



Newby pedestal

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A Widow's Tribute: a Chippendale mystery at Newby Hall solved

Judith Goodison has recently published more of her findings on the work of Thomas Chippendale junior. Following on from her discoveries of his work at Stourhead and Harewood she has researched the famous dining room suite at Newby Hall. This much-admired and well-known furniture, made of mahogany, satinwood and purpleheart, with a distinctive band of grape and vine leaf marquetry decoration, has long been an enigma. Traditionally it is said to have been made by the Chippendale firm (like much of the other furniture in the house), yet stylistically it is quite unlike any other documented pieces emanating from St Martin's Lane. In the *Burlington Magazine* for January 2009 Lady Goodison has established without doubt that the suite of sideboard, pedestals and vases, and wine cooler were indeed ordered by Lady Grantham and made by Thomas Chippendale, junior, almost certainly in the year 1791 and to the designs of his client's recently deceased husband, the 2nd Lord Grantham. Originally intended for the dining room at Newby Park, it found a permanent home in the new dining room created in 1808 at the family's other residence at nearby Newby Hall.

The story of the commission began back in 1780 when Lady Jemima Yorke married Thomas Robinson, 2nd Lord Grantham and came to live at her husband's uncle's house at Newby Park, near Thirsk. They enjoyed themselves in modernising the building, with Lord Grantham, a keen amateur, supervising much of the work. In 1786 however Lord Grantham died and Mary moved to London. Nevertheless she continued to care deeply for her previous home which was now occupied by her brother-in-law. In a letter to him in 1790 she expressed her wish to commemorate her late husband there:

'It has long been my wish, but til now never so near in my power, to show my regard for Newby by furnishing some one object there from some one design of Lord Grantham's; the one that occurred to me was the Tables in the Dining Room, with the vases & all the ornaments as made out in the design that you I believe kept; that would complete one room & be observed by all who saw it...'

Her brother-in-law evidently agreed, and Mary wrote back requesting:

'your assistance in giving orders to Mr Chippendale; whom I agree with you will be the proper person to employ....I would not grudge the expense make it what it ought to be; that article of expense I am ignorant of: perhaps you can give a general guess if 150£ would nearly answer it or quite...'

In the event, some three years later Lady Grantham's account with Hoare's Bank reveals a payment to Chippendale for £154 14s -- her guess was evidently pretty close to the mark.

Sadly, Mary's brother-in-law died in 1792, whereupon Newby Park was let. Mary determined to remove the dining room furniture (*'the Sideboard Tables I will never let & shall take them away to my house at Putney tho' too fine for it...'*). But at almost exactly this time a distant relative also died: this was William Weddell whose magnificent house at Newby Hall was now inherited by Mary's son, the 3rd Lord Grantham. He was another keen amateur and after his marriage designed a new dining room there in which his father's furniture could be displayed to great advantage.

The Annual General Meeting of the Chippendale Society will be held at the Civic Centre, Otley on Monday 11 May at 8 pm.

The Annual Dinner will be held at Otley Golf Club on Tuesday 2 June. More details and application form on separate sheet.