

# THE CHIPPENDALE SOCIETY



President: the Lord St Oswald

NEWSLETTER No. 149

[www.thechippendalesociety.co.uk](http://www.thechippendalesociety.co.uk)

October 2020

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We have all spent the past six months in a curious limbo, and it seems we are to remain stranded here for some time yet.

The Committee continues to meet digitally in accordance with the Society's rules and Committee members have worked hard to mitigate the effects of the Covid emergency on the Society's governance and its collections. For instance, lockdown abruptly halted our conservation schedule for the Society's works on paper this spring, and this is only now being restarted. In common with other societies, our usual activities and events for 2020 have been drastically curtailed, and at the present time we still don't know when these will recommence, although we fervently hope to run a full programme in 2021. While other Societies have turned to Zoom lectures

and other digital amusements, we early on took the view that Committee members already had quite enough to do in dealing with the effects of Covid on their jobs and their families, without having further burdens imposed on them. But now, despite the advent of the anticipated 'second wave', we hope gradually to restart Society's usual activities, beginning with a visit to Wentworth Woodhouse on 21 October. Whether we will be able to enjoy our traditional Christmas lunch together remains to be seen. Since we have no events to report, this newsletter is shorter than normal, and format of future newsletters is likely also to change, but please be assured that normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

## CHIPPENDALE'S DRAWINGS FOR THE DIRECTOR

It was some years ago, while planning for the 2018 tercentenary exhibition, that we first learned of Morrison Heckscher's ambitious plan to publish a facsimile edition of Chippendale's original drawings for the 1754 *Director*, and it is with great pleasure that we now celebrate the completion of that noble task in 2020. The book, supported by a number of private sponsors and published in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is a full-size facsimile, with the drawings reproduced exactly to

their original size and in their correct sequence, handsomely bound in half leather by Thornwillow Press, NY. The spine bears the title in gold-tooled black leather. The print run is limited to fifty, but seventy-five copies were also printed in cloth and paste paper boards.

## CHIPPENDALE'S DRAWINGS FOR THE DIRECTOR



Fig. 1 (left). Thomas Chippendale, 'Commode Clothes Press' drawing.  
Fig. 2 (right). Thomas Chippendale, 'Commode Clothes Press' plate 104.

The drawings are preceded by several short introductory essays. The first, by Morrison Heckscher, discusses the drawings in the context of the published *Director*, describing how they illuminate the evolution of the published work, and how the drawings both relate to and differ from the engraved versions. The second, also by Heckscher, outlines the ownership history of the Met's drawings, descending from Thomas Henry, 4th Baron Foley (1808-69) to the 7th Baron's sale at Ruxley Lodge in Surrey, in 1919. They were acquired by the New York book dealer George D. Smith, then consigned to auction after his unexpected death in 1920 and purchased by the Metropolitan Museum. The third essay, by Femke Speelberg, briefly discusses the *Director* in the context of contemporary British and European design books

and emphasises what a 'daring and speculative' undertaking the *Director* was. Finally there is a short appreciation by David Linley, Earl of Snowdon, himself a furniture maker with an international reputation.

Amazingly, 147 of the 161 original drawings survive. The majority are in the Foley Chippendale albums, acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in 1920. Others are held by the Chippendale Society (3) and the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art (2). The fourteen missing drawings are represented by the engraved versions, in their allotted place. The original 1754 preface and notes to the plates are also reproduced.



Fig. 3. Thomas Chippendale, drawing for 'Ribband Back Chairs', plate 16.

## CHIPPENDALE'S DRAWINGS FOR THE DIRECTOR

The value of the drawings to the Chippendale scholar and enthusiast is difficult to overstate. They amply demonstrate, as Heckscher says, Chippendale's artistic genius, as well as his thorough understanding of all the practical aspects of cabinet making. Many still bear ruled pencil lines and perspectives, while some have additions and late changes, indicating that Chippendale was working on them even as others were being engraved. Some were numbered and others retitled and every page evinces the urgency of the design and publication process. On plate 78 the title 'Desk and Bookcase' was originally placed at the right hand side, but that awkward placement was vigorously struck through and rewritten at the top of the page, and this format was followed for all subsequent designs of this orientation (fig 4). A drawing for plate 104, a 'Commode Clothes Press' was published with a completely different design for one door, and the changes can just be seen in pencil on the drawing itself (fig 1 & 2, see page 2). Heckscher remarks that in contrast to the technically perfect but 'stylized, and anonymous' engravings, the drawings are 'vibrant and expressive: how precise the pencilled

geometry; how elegant the inked line; how effective the washed shadows; how unlike the rote work of a draftsman preparing somebody else's sketches'. They have an intensity which the engravings simply lack, and which is nowhere more strongly expressed than in the drawing for 'Ribband Back Chairs', plate 16 (fig 3, see page 2). The delicacy of detail is also remarkable, for instance in the minutely fine Chinoiserie scene sketched on the fire screens in plate 125 (fig 5).

All the world knows that Chippendale was a furniture maker, but in 18<sup>th</sup> century London good furniture makers could be found in almost every street. But few, if any, could match Chippendale as an artist. Morrison Heckscher should have the last word: 'These [drawings] are the work of a master, the art by which Chippendale himself must ultimately be judged'.

The book of Chippendale's Director drawings can be bought from Thornwillow Press while stocks last, price \$1850. <https://thornwillow.com/chippendale-director-heckscher-spielberg>.



Fig. 4 (left). Thomas Chippendale, drawing for 'Desk and Bookcase', plate 78.



Fig. 5 (right). Thomas Chippendale, drawing for Chinoiserie screen, plate 125.

## EVENTS REPORT

Dear Members

I hope that you are all keeping safe and well. These are very difficult times and as you know we have had to cancel all our events so far for this year. Fortunately I have been able to rebook this year's events for similar times in 2021.

### Postponed 2020 Events to 2021

Tatton and Tabley day study tour - May 6th 2021

Everingham Park day study tour - June 10th 2021

The Welsh Borders four days, three nights study tour - July 6th - 9th 2021

Kent four days, three nights study tour - 7th - 10th September 2021

I do hope you will be able to join me in 2021, so put these dates into your 2021 diary. Costings will have to be confirmed in the New Year.

### Current Events

As we are able to do group travel using a coach, I am looking at organising more local events which members can access independently. The first of these is to Wentworth Woodhouse on the 21st October. Wentworth Woodhouse is a few miles off the M1 near Rotherham so easily accessed independently by car. There is a description and application form in this newsletter. Our Christmas lunch is more challenging as we cannot gather together for a meal as a large group but we may still be able to make a visit to a House. This maybe at the end of November before the weather deteriorates.

During these difficult times communication would be made easier if you could supply Peggy Pullan, our membership secretary, with your email.

I hope to see you all soon.  
Cathy Lambert, Events Secretary

## EVENTS FOR 2020



Study Tour of Wentworth Woodhouse  
Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020

sold to pay death duties in the 1940s and the family located to other properties. The nationalisation of the coal mines also did not help the family fortunes.

The house and gardens were occupied by the army during the Second World War and subsequently as a Teacher Training College and with open cast mining taking place perilously near to the house, the future of the house looked uncertain. The house is now run by the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust and looks to have a more concrete future following a government grant to make major repairs.

The cost of this Study Tour, to include admission and the guided tour is £22 Please contact Cathy Lambert to secure your place (Tel: 07950 206002 or [cathylambert2@gmail.com](mailto:cathylambert2@gmail.com)) To ensure safe distancing there will be two tours of 10 members, 11am and 2pm. Refreshments are not included but are available on site.

Please note that in the event that this tour is cancelled due to Corona Virus, your cheques will be refunded.

We are delighted to offer this private tour of this iconic house, one of the largest historic houses in the UK with around 300 rooms and with possibly the longest continuous façade of any house in the country. Our guide, Chippendale Society Treasurer, historian and archivist, David Allott, will spend over an hour and a half revealing the history and architecture of this important house, and showing us areas of the house not normally open to the public.

Wentworth Woodhouse is situated in the village of Wentworth, north of Rotherham and a few miles off the M1, so easily accessed independently by car. There is a car park at the end of the village beside the public entrance into the park. The original house occupied by Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford, was altered and extended in the 1630s, and was transformed with Baroque additions in the 1720s by Thomas Watson- Wentworth, later Marquis of Rockingham, in the 1720s. The house was greatly expanded with the majestic west front by the same man using Henry Flitcroft. The house was filled by Rockingham and his heirs with a grand collection of works of art which unfortunately were

### MEMBERSHIP: DUES REMINDER

Annual membership subscriptions for 2021 will be due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. If you have not already arranged to pay by Bankers Standing Order and would like to do so, please contact the Membership

Secretary, Peggy Pullan, [membership@thechippendalesociety.co.uk](mailto:membership@thechippendalesociety.co.uk), The Croft, Breary Lane, Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9AE.

A few 2020 subscriptions remain unpaid. If you have not already paid please could you arrange to do so as soon as possible. Individual annual subscriptions are £14.00, joint annual subscriptions are £21.00.