

THE CHIPPENDALE SOCIETY



President: the Lord St Oswald

NEWSLETTER No. 151
March 2021

www.thechippendalesociety.co.uk



Sofa, part of a suite supplied by Thomas Chippendale to Sir Robert Burdett of Foremark Hall in 1766. The frame was originally painted blue and white. Shown with 'Green and Indigo Development No. 3' 1965 by Victor Pasmore.
Photograph courtesy of Godson & Coles.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It is immensely pleasing to be able to tell you that in this Newsletter you will find details of a full schedule of Society tours and events from June onwards. Much still depends on how the fight against Covid progresses, but with vaccinations in full swing we all have cause to be optimistic. This is one of the few times when it is a positive advantage to be old, because it means that all our loyal long-term members will have been fully vaccinated by the time our events begin in June. The exception to these live events is the Annual General Meeting on 15 May, which will be held online via the Zoom app. Further details and links will be emailed nearer the time.

This issue includes another dealer interview, this time with Richard Coles of Godson and Coles, the only remaining dealer of English furniture in the Fulham Road. It is astonishing to remember that only a few years ago there were 27 antiques dealers on that famous thoroughfare. Richard has been a staunch supporter of the Chippendale Society and our work, and we have in the past featured in the Newsletter one or two Chippendale items that have passed through his hands. I think you will enjoy Richard's enjoyable and engaging account of dealing in the age of Covid.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on one or other of this year's Chippendale Society events.

Adam Bowett

DEALING IN THE AGE OF COVID: AN INTERVIEW



Godson & Coles' stand at Masterpiece. Photo courtesy of Godson & Coles.

The following interview took place over Zoom in March 2021 with Richard Coles of Godson & Coles. We appreciate Richard sharing such fascinating insights on his time as a dealer and his perspective on Thomas Chippendale.

When did you start dealing in antiques? Can you tell us a little bit about your background in the antiques trade?

My uncle was an antiques dealer in Brussels specialising in English furniture and he would frequently come to England on buying trips. Starting in about 1975 when I was still in school, I began to accompany him during the holidays. We would go around areas like East Anglia and fill up the back of his estate car - it was a lovely life! Through that experience I met dealers and restorers, all extraordinary characters and that was my first introduction to the trade. Then I went over to Brussels and worked with him for a while; he did antique fairs in Antwerp and I would help out which was great fun. I really got the bug for antiques from him. Looking back he handled some great pieces of furniture. He was a good dealer.

You work with English antique furniture and modern British art - how did you come about focusing on these two areas?

At school I had a wonderfully inspirational art teacher. He was a huge influence and very much into the St Ives school, Modernism and abstract painting. He instilled the bug in me for that genre. After school I applied for a job working for Henry Moore, but when I didn't hear back from him, I decided to study cabinet making in order to go to West Dean College to study furniture restoration. I did in fact hear back from Henry Moore later on, but by that stage I was already pursuing my interest in cabinet making.

When you compare antiques and modern British art, you would have thought they would be completely different, but actually the problems the artists faced were remarkably similar. In the eighteenth century the great designers like Chippendale were coming up with completely new ideas - revolutionary designs that had never been seen before - just as an abstract painter starts from a blank canvas and has to develop his own visual language. When you get a painting by a great artist that is completely original, it has an energy and dynamism to it - an authority. You also sense this in furniture and particularly in pieces by leading cabinet makers such as Chippendale. When you combine these two very different art forms, I think you can get a very interesting dynamic.

How has the furniture of Thomas Chippendale played a role in your antique dealing over the years?

We all learn the facts about Chippendale, his history and that he was particularly famous for the *Director*, but really the great thing about Chippendale is that he was producing these designs that were completely original, that had never been seen before. The amazing thing is that through the development of all the various styles he developed, he got the design, balance and the flow right every single time. When you stop and really look at a piece of Chippendale furniture, it is unmistakably his own work - his 'handwriting'. The more you look - the proportions, the way the details are linked, the quality and execution - they are so distinctive. The design can be complex or it can be simple, but the way it flows is seemingly effortless and has an extraordinary confidence about it.

We currently have a pair of card tables by Chippendale jnr. He was brilliant but very different from his father. Later he pared his designs right down - his chairs at Stourhead were so ahead of their time they are almost modern. The card tables were unprovenanced when we bought them, but from the carving of the central tablet, a wheat sheaf and wings, we were able to find out that they came from Middelton Family of Stockeld Park in Yorkshire. Then the whole history of the tables came out. It was fascinating to learn about the people who commissioned them and lived with them, and all the stories. Middleton's wife, for instance, ran off with the groom; she left a downstairs window open at night so he could sneak in. All part of the family history. It ended in the most expensive divorce of the eighteenth century - you can imagine the rows that these tables witnessed! These pieces have all lived extraordinary lives.

Do you have a favourite Chippendale piece - either in your collection or elsewhere?

You first look at pieces by Chippendale in museums or country houses and you never think you will handle them during your career - it is the ultimate dream. Then when you actually come across a piece by Chippendale, it sends a shiver down your spine. My favourite is a slightly unusual one; there is a fustic commode supplied by Chippendale to Nostell Priory in about 1770. It has never been restored and doesn't appear to have been touched at all. It is dry and sleepy - and I just love the overall form and atmosphere of it. There are many more glamorous pieces, but that commode has always been a favourite.

DEALING IN THE AGE OF COVID *(cont.)*

Can you tell us the story about the Chippendale sofa you had on display at Masterpiece in 2019?

The sofa came up for sale in America. I looked at it and just knew it had to be by Chippendale. It couldn't have been by anyone else. But we had no provenance; the only way to definitively say it was by Chippendale would be if we could prove where it originally came from. Fortunately a pair of armchairs from the suite came up in America a year or so later with an unbroken history back to the Burdett family at Foremark Hall. Although they were later gilded, we were able to test the chairs through paint analysis and we found that the make-up of the original paint was identical on both the chairs and the sofa. Once we had the provenance linked to Foremark Hall, my colleague Olivia went through the archives and found the sofa listed in the original inventory. That moment when you nail the provenance is really exciting. It is so rewarding to be able to handle examples of our heritage and return them to their proper place in history.

What do your buyers look for when they buy Chippendale furniture?

The obvious answer is provenance. Beyond that, why do we and they get so excited about Chippendale? Because there is a complete authority to the way that he designed and executed a piece of furniture. It has a flow and a rightness and a confidence about it. People get that - and that is the reason why his furniture has stood the test of time.

Besides Chippendale, what other cabinetmakers do you admire?

I also love the furniture of the early eighteenth century, especially carved mahogany furniture - the work of William Hallett and John Boson, the period of William Kent. The carving has a real weight to it and reflects back to the work of Grinling Gibbons. This is also really the first time when outstanding cabinetmaking was seen in England. It has a wonderful quality to it and is generally very architectural.

How has antique dealing changed over the years since you started?

It has changed massively. When I started there were the great dealers such as Mallett, Partridge, Hotspur and Jeremy. I was in awe of these people. In the Fulham Road there used to be 27 antique shops, it was known as the brown mile! Now we are the only antique shop left. The internet has certainly changed the way we source pieces. Before, if a rare piece turned up in the country, it would generally be bought by a local dealer and then slowly filter its way to London. Now it is accessible globally and many purchasers don't even view the piece in person, which I think can be extremely dangerous!

What do you personally collect?

Someone once said to me 'You are either a collector, or you're a dealer, you can't be both.' If you're a dealer, sadly you do have to sell the pieces you find. So at home I have some simple things. I have a few modern British pieces which I love by artists such as Victor Pasmore and Terry Frost - and nice antiques of good colour, good proportion, but not necessarily important ones.

Now that we have a roadmap to opening the country again post-COVID, what are you most looking forward to as a dealer?

We will open up on April 12 when we are allowed to. I can't wait to get back into it all again, getting out on the road to find new pieces. We are halfway through researching a very interesting piece by Chippendale, but all the archives have been closed and everything has inevitably ground to a halt, but soon we will be able to get going again. The piece we are currently researching is potentially really exciting and I look forward to sharing more details soon.



Godson & Coles' stand at Masterpiece, 2019. The Foremark Hall sofa is the centre and the two card tables supplied by Thomas Chippendale jnr to Stockeld Park are on each side. Photo courtesy of Godson & Coles.

EVENTS INFORMATION - 2021

Dear members

I do hope that you are keeping safe and well through these difficult times and all moving towards getting the vaccine. Following the recent Government announcement on limited relaxation of lockdown rules we are delighted we can offer some events this year. You will notice that our timing of events has been pushed further into late Spring/Summer to minimise the chance of Covid disruption. Other slight changes mean that our first study day to Everingham Park is to be by independent travel, but hopefully the location not far from York will not put you off this private visit. As the Government's Covid guidelines are not set in stone we would like to make it clear that in the event of an

attendance limit being put on the tours those to apply first will secure a place up to this new limit. In the event of a complete lockdown the tours will of course be cancelled but we hope to refund all fees. All tours will be organised in a Covid compliant way, which could mean the use of face masks, social distancing and splitting of groups. Having said all this, I do hope to see you all this year to enjoy some interesting and educational study days and tours.

Cathy Lambert, Events Organiser

EVENTS MAY – SEPTEMBER 2021

Annual Dinner

Tuesday 1 June 2021, Otley Golf Club, 6:30 for 7:00pm

The speaker this year will be Simon McCormack, Transform Nostell Project Curator.

No tickets will be issued but applications, including any seating preference, should be made by completing the enclosed reservation form and returning it by **12th May 2021** together with your cheque made out to *The Chippendale Society* to

Cathy Lambert, Hon. Events Organiser, Nesfield Hall, Nesfield, Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 0BN

Please note: if Government restrictions only allow a certain number of people to gather inside, priority will be given in the order that applications have been received.

Study Day at Everingham Park, Yorkshire

Thursday 10th June 2021

We are delighted to offer a study day at Everingham Park, a privately owned mansion near Market Weighton. Built originally by John Carr of York about 1760, the house was restored in 1962 for the Duke of Norfolk. Everingham Park is situated just off the A1079 between Pocklington and Market Weighton. As it is only a 50 minute drive from Wetherby it can be easily accessed by independent travel and this is reflected in the price. The tour begins at 11 am so please be there in good time. It will include the ground floor reception rooms and nearby Chapel of Saints Mary and Everilda, built c.1840. This is an impressive Romanesque church with coffered ceiling and life-size statues of the Apostles and Holy Family. The tour will be followed by a two course lunch including a glass of wine, tea/coffee. After lunch we can stroll the gardens at leisure.

The cost of £49.50 includes admission and tour with lunch, a glass of wine and tea or coffee. Applications by **15th April 2021**.

Four Day Study Tour to the Welsh Borders based in Oswestry

Tuesday 6th July to Friday 9th July 2021

We are delighted to offer this three night, four day study tour based at the four star Lion Quays hotel in Weston Rhyn, Oswestry. We begin on Tuesday 6th July with a tour of Combermere Abbey, originally a Cistercian house but acquired by one of Henry VIII's courtiers, Sir George Cotton, at the Dissolution. Gothicised in 1814-21 by Stapleton Cotton, Viscount Combermere, this privately owned house has a fairy tale exterior built over a Tudor interior. In the afternoon we travel to Plas Newydd, Llangollen. Here, before our free flow tour, we have a lecture about the house which was home to two Irish ladies, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby - 'The Ladies of Llangollen' - who set up home here in the eighteenth century, causing a great scandal. Originally a five roomed cottage, the house has been Gothicised and became a magnet for such famous figures such as William Wordsworth, Caroline Lamb, Sir Walter Scott and Josiah Wedgwood.

On the morning of Wednesday 7th July we enjoy a tour of Chirk Castle. Originally built by Roger Mortimer de Church as part of a chain of fortresses across North Wales in 1295, it was bought by the Myddleton family in 1593, to whom it belonged until handed over to the National Trust in 2004. Here we will enjoy the

magnificent state rooms and the 1920s glamour when tenanted by the de Walden family. From Chirk we travel a short distance to Erddig, the home of the Yorke family for over 200 years. Saved by the National Trust from deterioration, we will see rooms as they developed over three centuries, including a wonderful Tapestry Room, a recently renovated State bed covered in Chinese silk and extensive servants quarters.

Powis Castle near Welshpool is our destination on the morning of Thursday 8th July. Powis is the ancestral home of the Herbert and Clive families. Our private tour will illustrate how a fourteenth-century castle became an elegant home. Highlights include the State Bedroom, Long Gallery and wonderful terraced gardens. In the afternoon we travel a short distance out of Welshpool to the privately owned Brithdir Hall. This sixteenth-century house was remodelled in the Regency style around 1815 and the tour includes a Gothic 'ferme ornée'.

On Friday 9th July we have tours of two privately owned houses. The first, near Shrewsbury, is Pitchford Hall, described as Britain's finest half-timbered house. Owned by the Colthurst family for more than 500 years it was sold in 1992. Placed on the 'at risk' register, the house has been bought back by Rowena Colthurst and is currently undergoing restoration. In the afternoon we travel towards Telford to Hatton Grange, built in 1764 for Plowden Slaney by Shrewsbury architect Thomas Farnolls Pritchard. Still privately owned by the Slaney family it is regarded as one of Pritchard's most complete existing works and a good example of an elegant Georgian country home set in beautiful gardens.

The cost is £580 per person sharing a double/twin room, with an £85 supplement for a double room for single use. This includes all coach travel, entrance fees, tours and lectures, three nights bed, breakfast and dinner at the four star Lion Quays Hotel near Oswestry, two lunches and two coffee/teas and cake. Deposits of £100 per person should be sent with your application form by **15th April 2021** and the balance of £480 per person (£565 per person for a double room for single use) is due by the **30th April 2021**.

Study Day at Tatton Park and Tabley House, Cheshire

Thursday 12th August 2021

We are delighted to offer a study day with private tours to these two important Cheshire houses. In the morning we tour Tatton Park, ancestral home of the Egerton family and given intact with contents to the National Trust in 1958. Redesigned in the late eighteenth century by Samuel Wyatt, this grand Palladian villa has a fine art collection and furniture by Gillows. There will be time after our visit the fabulous gardens at your leisure.

We then travel a short distance to Tabley House where we will have a light lunch followed by an afternoon tour. Tabley is the ancestral home of the Leicester family and was designed by John Carr of York. Tabley is also renowned for its picture collection and furniture by Gillows.

The cost is £69.50 to include all admissions and guided tours, a light lunch, and coach travel. Applications must be received by **30th May 2021**.

Please refer to the separate application form for each of the above events.