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The Chippendale Society

Chairperson: Pat Lofthouse



NEWSLETTER No 85

October 1999



Registered Charity No. 501046

Temple Newsam acquires lacquer secretaire from Harewood House

Leeds Museums and Galleries have recently bought the exquisite lacquer secretaire supplied by Chippendale to the State Bedroom at Harewood House in 1773 (cover). It had been bought by a private collector in New York but the export licence was deferred and the asking price - £650,000 - was raised with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Art Collections Fund, Hotspur Ltd, Partridge Fine Arts (Ltd), Mallett & Son (Antiques) Ltd, the Monument Trust, the J Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust, the Leeds Art Collections Fund, A & S Burton 1960 Charitable Trust, the Leche Trust, members of the Furniture History Society, Patrick and Mavis Walker and several private benefactors, including a major donation from an anonymous admirer of Christophor Gilbert in whose memory the secretaire has been acquired.

It comes hot on the heels of the Society's acquisition of the music desk from Nostell Priory: both are on view at Temple Newsam in adjoining rooms.

Report on the Society's Activities

Some 90 members of the Society and their guests met at the Otley Golf Club for the 37th Annual Dinner on 8th June. Mary Gilbert said Grace, Pat Lofthouse gave the loyal toast and Daru Rooke spoke entertainingly about antiques in the Edwardian houses about which he is making a TV series, before proposing the health of the Society. We are very grateful to John Holdsworth for making all the arrangements for this convivial occasion.

A Short History of the Chippendale Society.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is *A Short History of the Chippendale Society* which was prepared by Andrew Firth (Founder Member and Chairman of the Chippendale Society 1972 - 1987) shortly before his death.

Catalogue of the Society's Collections

The text and photography for the catalogue have now been completed and are shortly to be delivered to the printers. Thanks are due to the Idlewild Trust and the Gordillo Coleridge Charitable Trust for their financial assistance, and it is hoped that further trusts will also contribute to this project. All the items of the Society's furniture and many of its documents will be illustrated in full colour and accompanied by an informative text and Introduction. Further details in the next Newsletter.

FUTURE EVENTS

● Autumn Lecture

Edward Waterson, the renowned authority on the subject, will speak on

'Lost Houses of Yorkshire'

on **Wednesday 27 October at Arthington Village Hall** at 7.45 (doors open 7.15)
Tickets (to include refreshments) £2 at the door.

● Study Day

James Lomax, Hon Curator, will lead a Study Day at Temple Newsam on **Tuesday 30 November.**

Timetable:

10.30 Coffee

11.00 - 12.15 Lecture *'Thomas Chippendale: the master and his style'*

12.15 - 1.30 Lunch on your own (picnics may be eaten in the seminar room, Stables cafe will be open)

1.30 - 3.00 *Tour of the Collections.*

This event is limited to 25 participants

Please reserve places for the Chippendale Society Study Day at Temple Newsam on 30 November 10.30 - 3.0 at £15 each

Name

Address

Please make cheques payable to The Chippendale Society and send to the Hon Curator, The Chippendale Society, Temple Newsam House, Leeds LS15 OAE, enclosing an SAE

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CHIPPENDALE SOCIETY

The Chippendale Society, like some of the most worthwhile organisations, came into existence in the most haphazard way. It was almost entirely the brainchild of Thomas Pickles of Otley (1890 - 1976) whose family had owned the boats for hire on the river Wharfe for generations. At that time the river and the park were the main sources of recreation for the town and Mr Pickles was a well known figure. His uncle Barrett (1843 - 1940) was a respected local historian who urged him to promote a wider interest in Thomas Chippendale, the young Otley man who had sought his fortune as a cabinet maker in London. His own enquiries culminated in his book published in 1971, a pioneering work full of new research, and now very much a collector's item.

Thus in early 1962 he was instrumental in having a plaque fixed to the exterior of the Otley Building Society, built on the site of the cottage in which Chippendale is said to have been born. His next step was to organise a supper on 5th June 1963, the anniversary of Chippendale's baptism, at the Royal White Horse Inn (tickets 10/6d). This was intended to be the first annual dinner to be held as near as possible to this important date. Eighteen months later, at a public meeting held on 26 January 1965, the Society itself was founded, with County Councillor Major Austin Hughes as Chairman and Sir Malcolm Stoddart-Scott, MP, as President. At its first meeting held on 27 April Thomas Pickles was elected Secretary and an annual subscription of 5/- was levied.

Sir Malcolm remained President until his death in 1973 when his wife Elsie took over. Roger Suddards succeeded her in 1994, and Christopher Gilbert in 1996. Austin Hughes remained Chairman until 1972, to be followed by Andrew Firth until 1987. Mary Gilbert then succeeded until 1994 when Pat Lofthouse, the present Chairman, took over.

The annual dinners have remained extremely popular, in part because of the guest speakers who readily agreed to partake at these convivial occasions. Well known Yorkshire figures have included Lady Harewood (1973), Lord Rosse (1974), Sir Marcus Worsley (1975), Lady Zetland (1982), Lady St Oswald (1986), Sir Marcus Fox (1988), the Hon Simon Howard (1990). In 1968 an Autumn Lecture had been established, with Arthur Negus giving the first of a long series exploring the furniture and decorative arts of the age of Chippendale. Spring visits to historic buildings have been a regular feature of the Society's calendar for many years.

The Society played a major role during the celebrations to mark the 250th anniversary of Chippendale's birth in 1968. A special service was held in the parish church on June 9th, and a commemorative postal franking was arranged. A more long-term memorial was the establishment of the 'Chippendale Ride' on the Chevin - a plantation and mile-long walk in the tranquil Danefield estate, composed of woods in which Chippendale made his furniture: oak, beech, lime, hornbeam, sweet chestnut and cherry. Her Majesty The Queen graciously donated the first lime tree. Our great ally was Reginald Rawlings, chief forester to Otley Urban District Council, who later became an enthusiastic devotee of Chippendale, amassing a considerable archive of material which was given to the Society by his son after his death in 1998.

In 1971 Sir Malcolm obtained charitable status for the Society when its rules and objectives were first adopted. They are: first, to advance public education and to promote the appreciation and study of the work of Thomas Chippendale; and secondly, to acquire, preserve and maintain examples of his work for the benefit of the nation. Thus inevitably the Society became involved in the question of the viability of a special Chippendale museum in Otley when this arose in 1970. Sam Chippindale, the co-founder of Town and Country Properties and the Arndale Property Trust Ltd, and an enthusiastic supporter of the Society, had bought the Old Grammar School with this object in mind. In the event it has been recognised that it would be impossibly expensive for the Society to run its own museum and its collections have always been housed at Temple Newsam where they can be seen in the most sympathetic context.

In 1972 Christopher Gilbert, Keeper of Temple Newsam, became Honorary Curator. Until then we had spread the legend of Chippendale by lectures, visits and social events. Christopher was to bring us into the wider, richer, areas of acquiring and conserving Chippendale furniture and memorabilia, newly adopted as one of our objectives. An appeal was launched to raise a fund of £7,000 for acquisitions. Within a short period it had doubled its target and this now provided the core funding for future purchases. The story of Christopher's acquisitions for the Society is described in the Introduction to the Catalogue, but it is one of extraordinary success: he was always modest about his achievement, but this area of the Society's activities were very largely driven by his vision. He developed particularly fruitful relationships with a number of benefactors including Sam Chippindale, Raymond Burton, the Sir George Martin Trust and Simon Redburn whose generosity has greatly enhanced the collections. His own book, the standard work on Chippendale, was published in 1978, and this was followed by his important exhibition at Temple Newsam the following year to mark the bicentenary of Chippendale's death.

During the 1980s the Society worked steadily towards its goals. A high point came in January 1987 with the unveiling of the bronze statue of Thomas Chippendale made by Graham Ibbeson in Manor Square. It was commissioned by the Sam Chippindale Foundation who then donated it to the Society. A maintenance fund was subsequently provided by Mrs Dorothy Tempest.

The early 1990s were dominated by the struggle to achieve the status of a Registered Museum, an important standard for attracting grants and other support for the Society's objectives. Despite an appeal and all the efforts of Roger Suddards, our new President, judgement went against the Society on the grounds that we did not possess our own premises. Nevertheless it did not forestall the purchase of two satinwood tables from Denton Hall in 1996, greatly aided by a grant of £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Even so, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find this kind of support without museum status.

Thus a new phase in the history of the Society seems about to begin. Let us sail into the future with the same zest as did our founding father Thomas Pickles, a boatman *extraordinaire!*