

At the auction of Important English Furniture at Sotheby's 9 July 1999 there appeared an object that seemed to have impeccable credentials – a green painted pembroke table supplied by Chippendale as part of the major consignment to the great 18th century actor David Garrick for his villa on the banks of the Thames at Hampton, Middlesex. This object had a convincing and unbroken provenance extending back to its original purchase in 1772, but was sold on the lower estimate for what appears to be a very reasonable price of £10,000, probably because of extensive repainting.

The previous day at Christie's another piece from the Garrick commission appeared, this time an open armchair with blue and cream painted decoration. The chair carried a small brass plaque on the top rail identifying it as 'Garrick's chair' and retained much of its original decoration. The eventual price of the chair at £38,000, double its top estimate and four times the amount for the similarly provenanced pembroke table, perhaps reflected the present market's desire for original surfaces. However, an object with such a firm provenance and critical historical associations was perhaps the Society's greatest lost opportunity over the past 18 months.

The only other piece of furniture with a firm provenance and which could be definitely ascribed to Chippendale that appeared on the market during the past 18 months was a pair of giltwood open armchairs, in the same Christie's sale as the Garrick chair. This time the chairs had originally been supplied to the 1st Viscount Melbourne for Bocket Hall in about 1773. The Society already holds the fine lyre back library chair from the Bocket commission but still lacks a good example of Chippendale's fine giltwood seating furniture: the chairs eventually sold for the not inconsiderable sum of £133,000. (To be continued)

## The Chippendale Society

President: Lord St Oswald



*Sir Rowland and Lady Winn in the Library at Nostell Priory* by Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1736 - 1808). The St Oswald Collection, Nostell Priory (Detail)

**NEWSLETTER No 90**

March 2001



## VISIT TO NOSTELL PRIORY

On the evening of 14 March some 70 members enjoyed a very memorable visit to Nostell Priory, the home of the Society's President, Lord St Oswald. Our entrance via Adam's grand horseshoe steps presaged a special occasion indeed – our visit was over two weeks ahead of the official re-opening of the house to visitors after two years' closure for repairs. Inside our noble host greeted each of us with a glass of champagne and introduced us to Roger Carr-Whitworth, the National Trust's Historic Buildings Representative for Yorkshire. Roger spoke most engagingly about the recent renovations to the building, the installation of 'conservation heating' equipment, and the conservation of some of the Chippendale furniture, as well as explaining the broader context of Chippendale's Nostell commission. Although not as luxuriously fitted out as Harewood, Nostell contains a unique range of documented furniture of superlative quality and interest.

We were then able to free-flow around the *piano nobile*, as well as Lord St Oswald's private flat, armed with specially printed notes about the furniture. It was excellent to see some old favourites at close quarters once again; the great library writing table, the japanned suite for the State Bedroom and Dressing Room, the two marquetry commodes in the Saloon. Many of the cabinet pieces had been opened for us specially – we could admire the marbled paper lining in the japanned clothes press, and the remarkably preserved colour of the back of its doors; the medal case with its uniquely unpolished finish; and Lady Winn's toilet table with its charming bottles and boxes. Some furniture has been newly conserved, including the japanned commode, where Roger pointed out that three of the four pendant husks on the sides are cast in lead, while the fourth is of carved wood.

After nearly two hours in which to enjoy such treasures we repaired to the Stables where a marvellous supper had been prepared. We are enormously grateful to Roy Boardman for making the arrangements for us, and to his colleagues for staying on duty late into the night, to Roger Carr-Whitworth and Sophie Raikes of the National Trust and, of course, to our President for his generosity and hospitality.

## 'CHIPPENDALE SPOTTING' Part 1 by Mark Westgarth

'Chippendale' furniture, as members of the Society will know, is perhaps the most often cited attribution in the sphere of furniture collecting, although lately there has been a notable rise in the tendency for furniture attributed to 'Gillows' appearing at auction. Attributions are notoriously fickle and perhaps none more so than those proposed in the commercial sphere. However, a number of 'Chippendale' pieces have appeared on the market that had a strong provenance and/or documentary evidence which supported the assertion that they came from his workshops.

continued overleaf

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### The Annual General Meeting

will be held at Otley Civic Centre on **Monday 14 May** at 7.30 pm.

### The Annual Dinner

will be held on **Tuesday 5 June** (the 383rd anniversary of Chippendale's baptism in Otley parish church in 1718) at Otley Golf Club, 7.00 for 7.30 pm.

The speaker will be **Richard Marriott, Esq**,  
Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for the East Riding of Yorkshire

Please use Functions Entrance

No tickets will be issued but applications, including any seating preferences, should be made by completing the reservation form below and returning it with your cheque for £16 per head. Please indicate if any vegetarian meals are required. Guests and potential new members are very welcome.