

## **HISTORY GROUP MEETING 9<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021**

### **'Treasures of Temple Newsam'**

Adam Toole, Curator of Temple Newsam, gave an excellent talk about the treasures of Temple Newsam's collections. This was well illustrated with some striking images which highlighted the detail of different pieces. The speaker emphasised the national importance of the paintings, furniture, silverware, pottery and wallpaper at Temple Newsam saying that together they constituted one of the finest collections of decorative arts in the country. He provided a brief outline of the history of the House and went on to tell the rather surprising story of how the collections come to be what we see today.

In 1922 Leeds Corporation bought the Temple Newsam estate for £35,000 with the house itself (but not the contents) included in the deal. The entire contents of the house were offered for £10,000, but this offer was declined. The contents amassed over centuries were of course considerable and the ensuing sale when they were auctioned off and the house emptied took a number of days. Then for the next 16 years, although looked after by the Corporation, the house stood more or less empty.

In 1938 Philip Hendy curator of the City Art Gallery became responsible for the House. He saw its potential as an art gallery and there were exhibitions featuring works by artists such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth and it was interesting to see photographs of this period. This continued after the Second World War when Leeds was active in acquiring pieces in such areas as furniture, ceramics and silverware.

It was only later in the post-war era that a programme of restoration and repatriation was systematically pursued. Adam Toole mentioned the importance of the 1983-2005 period in this connection. Interiors of rooms were restored and refurnished to make them appear as they might have done when they were lived in. Also priority has been given to acquiring pieces which were in the House when the contents were sold off. This policy of repatriation continues to this day.

### **A few of the Treasures that featured in the talk.....**

#### **Chippendale Writing Desk.**

Adam Toole judged that this was the most famous single piece in the House. A writing table originally made c 1770 by Chippendale for Harewood House where Robert Adam was responsible for the interiors. At this time the neo-classical style, inspired by the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, had come into fashion and Chippendale demonstrated his mastery of it. Marquetry was used for the decoration of the table and this also shows Chippendale's alertness to shifts in fashion, because this technique had only recently been revived. Research has established that the original decoration of the desk made use of colour. The overall shape of the table suggests a triumphal arch, consistent with the neo-classical style.

#### **Murray cabinet.**

In the Rococo style of the mid 17<sup>th</sup> C the Murray cabinet was probably made by the cabinet maker John Channon c1745 for the Perthshire family of that name. It is made of mahogany inlaid with

elaborate brass decorations which are a prominent feature. Inside the cabinet are many compartments, some of which are hidden of course!

### **Pascal's Girandoles.**

Although the family had lost money in the South Sea Bubble, Henry (7<sup>th</sup> Viscount) was determined to create an impressive Picture Gallery in a part of the House which had suffered a long period of neglect. This was successfully achieved in the 1740's. In the 1990's a programme of restoration was undertaken, which even included recreating the original green flock wallpaper. The original contents of the room were reassembled so that the room is now very much as it would have been when it was first created. So, it is possible to see the original vision – 'a forest of mythology.'

James Pascal of Covent Garden supplied the many pieces of furniture which were required for the room (1745-47). A particular highlight of Pascal's work are two large girandoles (candleholders). These are very elaborate and in keeping with the mythology theme. They depict the story of Diana and Actaeon, a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which Actaeon is transformed by Diana into a stag and killed by his own hounds. This is a reminder of the popularity and influence of classical literature at the time.

### **Picture of Lady Hertford**

Joshua Reynolds painted Lady Hertford (then Lady Beauchamp) in 1777 when she was only eighteen. This is another instance of a work of art being repatriated and it is much loved. Reynolds was one of the foremost artists of his time and very popular with the upper classes. Lady Hertford developed a close relationship with the Prince Regent which lasted for thirteen years. But there is uncertainty about how intimate this relationship was. She was an interesting character and had views about the politics of the day. Her attempts to play an active political role caused controversy. Her relationship with the Prince Regent ended in 1820.

### **Pan Music Stand**

This music stand by Hugh Wedderburn was part of a commission to celebrate the tercentenary of Chippendale's birth in 2018. This is a contemporary work, but its link to Chippendale and the reference to classical mythology means it speaks to Temple Newsam's past. This elaborate work with its rich walnut finish displays a very high standard of craftsmanship. It is an example of the ongoing commitment to add new acquisitions to the collections at Temple Newsam.

Notes by Colin Roberts, History Group Convenor.