

MACKINNON

FINE FURNITURE



KNOWSLEY HALL: A PAIR OF GEORGE II GILTWOOD ARMCHAIRS

England, *circa* 1755

These magnificent armchairs are superb examples and amongst the grandest known of mid 18th century English seat furniture conceived in the French 'Rococo' taste. Of particularly generous bold proportions and having broad, cartouche shaped backs, they are robust and yet their lines are sinuous and flowing throughout, the wonderful downward and outward scroll of the arm being particularly accentuated. Their form is derived from French *fauteuils à la reine* of the Louis XV period, the 'picturesque' style interpreted so eloquently by Thomas Chippendale in his *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director*. Chippendale used the image of one of his 'French chairs' on his own trade label, highlighting such designs as the epitome of sophisticated and current taste.

In fact, the closest known design for this particular chair was by the master carver and designer Matthias Lock, who drew it for the artist Richard Cosway for what became known as the 'Sitter's Chair'. The original drawing, *circa* 1755, is preserved in the Victoria & Albert Museum as part of the Lock collection of drawings. The collection also includes some drawings by Chippendale, with whom Lock is believed to have had a working relationship.

These chairs were part of a suite most likely commissioned by the 11th Earl of Derby for Knowsley Hall, near Liverpool. Originally a medieval hunting lodge, Knowsley was extensively remodelled by the 11th Earl in the 18th century. To this day, the family reside there and the house contains a notable collection, including a pair of these chairs. The remainder of the suite of seat furniture was subsequently dispersed, and six can be seen today in the collections of the Dukes of Roxburghe at Floors Castle, Roxburghshire.

Our pair was with Mallett in 1963 from where they were purchased under the guidance of John Fowler of Colefax and Fowler for the new owners of Notley Abbey in Buckinghamshire, previously the home of Laurence Olivier and his wife, Vivien Leigh.

The Knowsley Hall Giltwood Armchairs

A highly important pair of mid 18th century George II period giltwood rococo armchairs. After a design by Matthias Lock, the serpentine top rails with leaf crestings above cartouche shaped, upholstered backs with leaf and 'C' scroll carved mouldings, the upholstered arm rests with accentuated outward scrollings hand rests, the serpentine seat rails with leaf and stylised shell decoration and raised on foliate carved cabriole legs terminating in scroll toes.

Literature:

'Knowsley, Lancashire', *Country Life*, 12 July 1913, p. 56 (illustrated)

Christopher Hussey, 'Knowsley Hall, Lancashire', *Country Life*, 12 March 1937, p. 280

Country Life, Ingestre Hall - Staffordshire The seat of the Earl of Shrewsbury and Waterford, 31 October 1957, p. 924 - 927, pl. 7 (illustrated in the Yellow Drawing Room)

A. Andrews, *A Short History of Ingestre*, the chairs illustrated twice on page 24 and annotated on page 26, 2013

([http://www.celebratingestre.co.uk/assets/Short History of Ingestre 3 PROOf.pdf](http://www.celebratingestre.co.uk/assets/Short%20History%20of%20Ingestre%203%20PROOf.pdf))

Connoisseur, October 1963, p. XVIII advertised with Mallett

Marcus Binney, 'Floors Castle, Roxburghshire - II', *Country Life*, 18 May 1978, p. 1372 (for the suite)

Clive Aslet, 'Titania's kingdom (Floors Castle, Kelso, Roxburghshire)', *Country Life*, 23 April 2014, pp. 56-61

Mallett, *Mallett Catalogue*, 2005, pp, 42 - 44

Height: 3' 6¹/₁₆" in (107 cm)
Width: 2' 7³/₁₆" in (80.5 cm)
Depth: 2' 6¹/₁₆" in (76.5 cm)

Stock Number

R10.189

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