

MACKINNON FINE FURNITURE



THE MARQUESS OF ANGLESEY'S DINING CHAIRS

England, *circa* 1765

These wonderful chairs come from the collections of the Marquesses of Anglesey at Plas Newydd and were likely commissioned by Henry Bayly-Paget, 1st Earl of Uxbridge, second creation, (1744-1812).

Born Henry Bayly, he succeeded in 1769 as 10th Baron Paget on the death of his mother's cousin. In 1770, around the time these chairs were made, he changed his name to incorporate Paget by Royal license. It is also in the early part of that decade that he is known to have commissioned costly silver. In 1769, Beaudesert the great ancestral seat of the Paget family also passed to him. In 1771-72, James Wyatt (1746-1813) was commissioned by Henry, remarkably quickly upon inheriting, to remodel the interior of this 16th century house in the gothic revival style of that period. From 1783, Plas Newydd also underwent alteration following the same stylistic direction. It is therefore interesting, that the present chairs which date from that time feature restrained gothic detailing, which would have complemented the interior decorative schemes of either house.

It is hard ascertaining which of the family houses these chairs were acquired for. The 1802 Housekeepers Inventory of Plas Newydd (Bangor University Archives and Special Collections, PN/V/576) lists runs of chairs with seats covered in 'red Morocco leather', including '16 Black chairs in the Vestibule the same as to the chairs in the Large Dining Room', there are a '2 large black sofas with red morocco seats and back cushions', then '12 large chairs to match with red morocco seats and backs' it also refers to smaller chairs with the same red leather upholstery, the use of the word Black' rather than mahogany is puzzling, which appears elsewhere as a distinguishing feature of the furnishings described.

There were other pieces in the 'Gothick' style at Plas Newydd including a series of 'painted Gothic chairs' variously listed in Lord Uxbridge's Sitting Room and in the Dressing Rooms of the Middle and North Towers. This hints at an interior with not just gothic revival fixtures but fittings too. Thomas Chippendale's in *The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director* (London, 1754) featured designs for chairs legs in a 'Gothick' style. With relief carved and pierced decoration, a fusion of chinoiserie motifs and Medieval tracery and there is stylistic derivation from this with the present chairs.

Wyatt was a designer and architect of considerable versatility, usually working in the light, neoclassical style. He was also a key figure in the popular establishment of the Gothic Revival taste, providing a bridge between the small-scale, highly personal Strawberry Hill style with the state-backed magnificence that the Gothic would take in the High Victorian era. Wyatt's revivalism usually did not depart from already-established non-Gothic forms, into which Gothic details and surface would be incorporated: as John Martin Robinson writes, "Wyatt's approach to Gothic, though based on studies and drawings of medieval detail, was basically Neoclassical and Picturesque". A characteristic example of this is one of Wyatt's designs for Plas Newydd, a sash window with Gothic details (RIBA66476): the earliest examples of sash windows date to the seventeenth century, a rather anachronistic combination with Gothic tracery from around the twelfth to the fifteenth century. Examples of chairs by Wyatt in the Gothic Revival style can be seen in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (W.151-1978) and at those sold at Christie's London, 15th December 2016, lot 82. While the Royal Collection also holds some sumptuous giltwood chairs designed by Wyatt for the Palace of Westminster (RCIN 28728)³ they also cautiously attribute a set of five much plainer chairs from 1800 to Wyatt (RCIN 20635), which feature more restrained tracery carving to the supports.

From the collections of The Marquesses of Anglesey, Plas Newydd

A superb pair of George III Chippendale period mahogany dining chairs, with upholstered serpentine seats and backs, on square profile chamfered legs joined by H-stretchers, the back legs outswept, the front legs carved with blind fret gothic tracery.

Exhibitions

Plas Newydd, Anglesey in the 'Rex Whistler Dining Room' and photographed there on numerous occasions.

Literature:

Christopher Hussey, 'Plas Neywad, Anglesey, The Seat of The Seat of the Marquess of Anglesey - I', *Country Life*, 1 December 1955, p. 1256 (one from the set in the library).

Plas Newydd, Anglesey in the 'Rex Whistler Dining Room' and photographed there on numerous occasions.

Height: 3' 4¹/₂" in (103 cm)
Width: 1' 10¹/₂" in (57 cm)
Depth: 2' 2³/₄" in (67 cm)

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