

# MACKINNON FINE FURNITURE



**INCE & MAYHEW**

**England, circa 1780**

These wonderful chairs relate extremely closely to those supplied by Ince & Mayhew to Richard Myddleton (circa 1782) for Chirk Castle, near Wrexham, North Wales. A pair of these chairs was sold Christie's Wales, *Chirk Castle*, 21 June 2004, lot 50 (price achieved £74,090) and a single example in the same sale, lot 51 (price achieved £38,240).

Richard Myddelton's drawing-room chairs, with their Roman-medallion and French-cabriolet frames were designed for Chirk's great Saloon or room-of-entertainment, and harmonised with the room's redecoration in the fashionable George III-style popularised in Robert Adam's *Works in Architecture*, 1773. From the early 1770s, Chirk's ancient ceiling had been transformed into a 'Roman mosaic', a fashion promoted by 'Bob the Roman' Adam, by the architect Joseph Turner of Chester. Executed with exquisite craftsmanship, the cost proved almost ruinous and, ultimately only two rooms were completed in the neoclassical taste before all work was halted around 1790. It introduced emblematical tablets and medallions that were framed in stuccoed compartments; while its beams were enriched with 'Apollo' sunflowers tied in a palm-flowered bas-relief giulioche that derived from Robert Wood's 1753 engravings of *Palmyra's, Temple of the Sun*! Huge French-fashioned mirrors and pier tables enlivening the room's window-piers were designed to harmonise with the ceiling by the Soho cabinet-makers William Ince and John Mayhew.

The Chirk suite is first recorded in the saloon in the 1795 inventory:-

"2 Cabriole Sofa's cover'd with Tabor. loose Covers and 4 Bolsters 10.10.0

18 Elbow Cabriole Chairs, cov'd with Tabory paint frames to match the Sofa's and loose covers".

The closest parallel to the Chirk suite can be drawn with that commissioned by the 3rd Earl of Darnley for Cobham Hall, Kent. A loyal and most enduring client of Mayhew and Ince, between 1760 and his death in 1781, his bank account at Coutts records payments totalling just under £4,000, indicating a notable commission. The association continued with the 4th Earl who spent just over £3,600 prior to 1803. Among other furniture remaining at Cobham Hall that can reasonably be attributed to Mayhew & Ince are two further suites of similar date and inspiration, including one with inverted heart-shaped backs of the same toe as the present lot (see: J.Cornforth "Cobham Hall-III". *Country Life*, 10 March 1983, pp. 568-57, pls 8,9,11 & 12).

## **AN IMPORTANT PAIR OF GEORGE III BLUE AND CREAM PAINTED ARMCHAIRS**

Attributed to Ince & Mayhew

An exceptionally fine pair of George III blue and cream painted neo-classical armchairs. Each with oval shield backs painted with myrtle leaves and centred by a carved plume of feathers and channelled arm-supports, above a curved seat rail interspersed with painted foliate paterae, on a round tapered part fluted legs. The backs and seats upholstered.

### **Literature:**

C.Hussey, 'Chirk Castle', *Country Life*, 5 October 1951, fig.7 (chairs from the suite illustrated *in situ* in the Bow Drawing Room).

National Trust, *Chirk Castle Guide Book*, 1983 and 2003, chairs from the suite illustrated *in situ* in the Saloon.

M.Hall, 'Chirk Castle, Denbighshire', *Country Life*, 16 July 1993, illustrated *in situ* in the Cromwell Hall.

H. Roberts and C. Cator, *Industry and Ingenuity - The Partnership of William Ince and John Mayhew*, 2022, p. 364 (fig. 326) and p. 376 (fig. 363)

Height: 3' 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" in (100 cm)

Width: 2' 2" in (66 cm)

Depth: 1' 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" in (57 cm)

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