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A GILTWOOD AND MARBLE TOPPED PIER TABLE ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS CHIPPENDALE

REF946

H: 33 in (84.5 cm)

W: 59 ³/₄ in (151cm)

D: 24 in (61 cm)

The original, well figured Greek marble from the island of Tinos over a frieze carved with waterleaves, a band of pierced and applied joined lyres interspersed with acanthus and bell flowers over an astragal moulding carved with a running guilloche. The magnificent central apron with scrolling acanthus linked with swags of husks and centred by a plume of feathers. The four legs carved with lotus leaves swags of husks and spiral fluting and terminating in turned lobed feet.

Probably made for Sir Roland Winn, Nostell Priory, West Yorkshire

Subsequently, Sir George Strickland, Boynton Hall, East Yorkshire

Henry Spencer & Sons, Boynton Hall Sale, 21-22nd November 1950, lot 123

Sotheby's, 20th October 1986, lot 207

H: 33 in (84 cm)

W: 59 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (151cm)

D: 24 in (61 cm)

PROVENANCE

Although this table's first known provenance is Boynton Hall, East Yorkshire, it is highly unlikely to have been made for that house. The Strickland family had neither the money nor the aspiration to live in the style suggested by a table of such ambitious design and quality. They were, however, allied by friendship and marriage to the Winn family of Nostell Priory, and Sir Rowland Winn, 5th Baronet (1739-85), had no such inhibitions. In 1766 he engaged the fashionable architect Robert Adam to remodel his house and Thomas Chippendale to furnish it. Sir Rowland's chronic financial situation meant that the work proceeded only fitfully, and by the time of his early death in 1785 large parts of the house remained unfurnished, including the Saloon and the Drawing Room. A bill delivered in April 1785 listed the unfinished furniture 'now in hand' for both rooms, and this included two pairs of pier tables. Those for the saloon, designed by Robert Adam and with inlaid scagliola tops by Richter and Bartoli, are still in the house. Those for the drawing room, described as '2 Rich Carvd and Gilt Table Frames for the Piers to your own Marble Slabs', were perhaps delivered at the same time, after Sir Rowland's widow had finally paid the bill.[1] The tables were certainly in place in the 1820s when they were repaired by Thomas Ward, but sometime thereafter they disappeared. The present table is thought to be one of the missing pair, transferred to Boynton Hall most probably by Charles Winn (1795-1874) as a present to his brother-in-law George Strickland. Charles Winn's taste leaned more towards the antiquarian than the neoclassical, and it was during his time that the Drawing Room was hung with Brussels tapestries and furnished with Continental furniture. Initially he had intended to retain the tables, since they were repaired and regilded by Ward in 1822-4, but there is no record of them in the house after that date.

[1] WYW 1352 NP 1551/5& 6.

DESCRIPTION

The table's design could go back as far as 1767, when Robert Adam's first drawings for Nostell's Drawing Room were created, but stylistically it has much more in common with Chippendale's mature neoclassical furniture of the 1770s. The sinuous palm-leaf and scroll frieze occurs on a number of Chippendale's most celebrated pieces, notably the tables for the Music Room and Circular Dressing Room at Harewood House (supplied 1771-2). These originally had arrangements of suspended husks,

acanthus leaves and central plume similar to those which survive on the present table. The applied swags at the tops of the legs also occur on the Circular Dressing Room table, together with the beaded collar and lotus-carved cap. The spiral fluting of the legs is unique in Chippendale's repertoire, however, finding only a faint echo in the feet of the Circular Dressing Room table.

While the design points to the early 1770s, the first record of the table's existence is in a letter dated 30 June 1781, in which Thomas Haig, Chippendale's business partner (and by now in partnership with Thomas Chippendale jnr), wrote that the furniture for the drawing room, which included '2 Rich Table Frames to your Marble Tops', had been made 'upwards of two years'.^[1] It is likely, therefore, that the table was actually made in the mid-to late 1770s.

Conservation, repair and physical evidence

This table was certainly one of a pair, because the legs are marked V-VIII. The companion table with legs numbered I-IV has yet to be found. The frame was made for an existing top, described in the 1785 bill as 'your own Marble Slabs', because the inside of the semi-circular frame has been cut away to accommodate the thickness of the marble behind the slimmer front edge. Conservation work has revealed that one of the swags of suspended husks had been replaced, as described in Thomas Ward's bill of 1822-24:

1 new Length of husks carved in wood for the Drawing Room Pier Tables - £0. 10. 0

Ward was also paid for 'preparing and Gilding [in Oil Gold] the 2 rich Pier Table Frames.'^[2] Analysis of the gilding has shown that the table had two layers of gilding; the original 18th century water gilding and the later oil gilding applied by Ward. The replaced husks have only the later oil gilding.

The Winns of Nostell and Stricklands of Boynton

The relationship between the Winn and Strickland families was intertwined for many decades, with several marriages between the two families. Elizabeth Letitia ('Betsy', 1732-1813), daughter of Sir Rowland Winn, 4th Baronet Nostell, married George Strickland, the eldest son of Sir Rowland's friend, Sir William Strickland of Boynton Hall, East Yorkshire. Prior family connections already existed, as Betsy's aunt, Katherine Henshaw, had married William Strickland, the second son of Walter Strickland of Beverley, himself a younger son of Sir Thomas Strickland, 2nd Baronet Boynton.

The marriage of Betsy's brother Rowland to Sabine, a Swiss widow somewhat older than him, had strained relationships within the family. When their father, the 4th Baronet, heard of the planned marriage, he wrote to his son to warn of the dangers of marrying an older woman unfamiliar with the 'language, customs and manners of the English nation.' They married anyway, but the warning proved accurate, and after Rowland inherited the title and the house in 1765, relations with family members remained strained, with disputes about money at the heart of it all. Nevertheless, when Rowland and Sabine's son, Sir Rowland Winn, 6th Baronet, died in 1805 at the age of 30, it was his Aunt Betsy that was executrix to his estate.

The estate was inherited by a cousin, Charles Winn. In 1819 Betsy's granddaughter, Priscilla Strickland, married Charles Winn. He was great friends with Priscilla's brother, Sir George Strickland, and they shared a coin and book collection which they inherited jointly from George's father, William Strickland, 6th Baronet Boynton. In 1830 George Strickland also gave Charles Winn the Norman font which is still at Wragby Church (adjacent to Nostell) today. Perhaps one of Chippendale's Drawing Room tables was given in return?

Boynton Hall remained in the ownership of the Strickland family until 1950, when the house and contents were sold. Among the latter was the present table, whose true identity as one of the original components of Chippendale's Nostell Priory commission has only now been recognised.

With special thanks to Dr. Adam Bowett for his help cataloguing this table.

[1] WYW 1352 NP 1587/5

[2] WYW NP/C3/1/5/6/8