

# GODSON & COLES

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## A PAIR OF GEORGE III PERIOD MAHOGANY GAINSBOROUGH ARMCHAIRS

REF1122

An Important Pair of George III Period Mahogany Gainsborough Armchairs

By William Vile and John Cobb

The elegantly shaped upholstered backs with serpentine arms scrolling down to the upholstered seats. The channelled serpentine show rails finely carved and centred by a foliate cabochon and scrolling through to the cabriole legs, terminating in scrolled feet, raised on castors.

London, circa 1761

Height: 41.7 in (106cm) Width: 29.5 in (75cm) D: 30 in (76cm)

## PROVENANCE

Supplied to the 6th Earl of Coventry for Croome Court, Worcestershire. Invoiced on 25th June, 1761.

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## DESCRIPTION

This rare pair of mahogany armchairs crafted by William Vile and John Cobb for Croome Court in 1761 stand as exceptional examples of mid-18th century English furniture, representing both the refined craftsmanship of Vile and the aesthetic ambitions of his patron, the 6th Earl of Coventry. Commissioned as part of Robert Adam's grand neoclassical redesign of Croome, these chairs were more than functional—they were statements of taste and modernity.

The armchairs exhibit the restrained elegance characteristic of the early Neoclassical period, with clean lines, finely carved detailing, and balanced proportions. Crafted from rich, dark mahogany, a prized imported hardwood of the era, the chairs feature delicate scrolled foliate motifs and subtly moulded frames, in keeping with the Adam style. The upholstery would have originally been in a luxurious Morocco leather, chosen to complement Adam's decorative scheme for the interiors of Croome.

William Vile, cabinetmaker to George III, was celebrated for his precision and quality. His work for Croome Court—undertaken alongside his partner John Cobb—places these armchairs among the most distinguished English furniture of the period, combining aristocratic patronage, architectural harmony, and masterful joinery into enduring works of art.

The mahogany suite remained at Croome until it was sold by Sotheby's London on 25 June 1948, lot 137, as part of a larger sale on behalf of the Croome Estate Trustees.

### Croome Court Commission

Croome Court underwent extensive refurbishment in the 1760s under the direction of Robert Adam. Although many of London's leading cabinetmakers contributed to the project, royal cabinetmakers Vile and Cobb were the principal suppliers. Croome Court stands as one of their most important commissions. Remarkably, an almost complete series of bills survives for Croome from 1757 to 1801. An invoice from Vile and Cobb dated 25 June 1761 references these chairs, listing: 'For 6 Handsome Carv'd Mahogy. Arm'd Chairs, on Castors, Stuff'd and Quilt'd & Covered with morrocco Leather, and finish'd Complete, with the best Burnish'd nailes...at £7 each'.

A pair of corresponding sofas are listed in a subsequent invoice dated 5 July 1761.

William Vile died in 1767, but his partner John Cobb continued to supply furniture to Lord Coventry at Croome Court.