



Gosford House: a view of the west front

Gosford House, East Lothian

Saturday 13 July

The Dowager Countess of Wemyss and March, who showed us around the house and collection, welcomed us. The house is by Robert Adam, 1790, for the 7th Earl, with later pavilions added on by William Young, completed in 1891. The imposing entrance, at the south end of the south pavilion, opens into the breathtaking three-storey marble hall, lined with pink and white Derbyshire alabaster and polished Caen stone. A grand double staircase leads up to the gallery on the *piano nobile*, and on into the three grand rooms in the centre block. The collection, which is exceptional, includes the following items:

A claviorgan, a combined harpsichord and chamber organ, the harpsichord made by Jacob Kirkham, London, and the organ by John Snetzler, London, 1745, was purchased by the Hon. Francis Charteris (later the 7th Earl) from Snetzler in 1751 for £86.6.0. The instrument is housed in a case of inlaid walnut.

In the library is a 1st edition of Chippendale's *Director* (1754), used by Alexander Peter of Edinburgh as a source for the suites of furniture now on the first floor. These were made for Amisfield, near Haddington, built for Francis Charteris, 7th Earl, in 1756–1759 and the 'new' suite was embroidered by Catherine (died 1786), wife of the 7th Earl; while her mother, Henrietta, Duchess of Gordon, worked the earlier suite. Two further items from Amisfield, in the Chinese-style bedroom, are a gilded rococo overmantel mirror, commissioned from William Mathie by

the 7th Earl, and a Chinoiserie bed, with japanning on a white ground, possibly German.

A set of six painted beech small upright armchairs by Georges Jacob, chair-maker to Marie-Antoinette, are stamped with the maker's name on the inside of the back rail. They have been re-upholstered, with added cushions and castors.

A lady's boudoir wheel by John Jameson of York, c. 1780–1800, is a fine example of a standard type for spinning flax, but made to an individual specification.

Three sofas and four chairs, by William Trotter of Edinburgh, are part of a grand gilded mahogany suite, formerly upholstered in silk, commissioned by the 8th Earl for the town house in Queen Street, Edinburgh, c. 1815. There were originally thirty-six chairs.

A campaign bed by Morgan and Sanders, early 19th-century, is unusual in that the main timbers are oak, rather than mahogany. The canopy timbers are birch or beech. Under the seat section is a canvas bag for storage, a feature that rarely survives.

It was an extraordinary privilege to be shown the furniture by Shelagh Kennedy and to have the benefit of her knowledge and personal experience of living at Gosford House. For further details see John Hunt, 'Gosford, East Lothian', *Country Life*, October 21, 1971, 1048–1050 and November 4, 1971, 1200–1202.

For opening hours see <http://www.gosfordhouse.co.uk/webpages/the-house.html>

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