



Fig. 10 Naworth Castle: Walnut chest on stand

Naworth Castle

As we walked up the path to the entrance gate across the grounds, the sun briefly shone on the historic gateway, still bearing the arms of the Dacre family with their motto 'fort et loialte' (*strong in loyalty*). Gathering outside the entrance we were warmly welcomed by the current owner, the Hon. Philip Howard.

After a brief, entertaining history of the buildings and the Dacre/Howard family interactions the return of the rain brought us inside. We were reminded of the obvious hazards of roaming a romantic medieval castle and informed about some of the many various historic architectural attractions. The recent Historic Buildings Grant, and sale of the Dacre beasts, assisted works to the estate and current plans for the continued future of Naworth were outlined inside.

As a former stronghold of the Lord Wardens of the Marches, Lord Thomas Dacre was rewarded for his part in the battle of Flodden with the gift of extensive lands around Lanercost. This enabled the extension and improvement of the original fortified structure. Marriage into the Howard family by a surviving Dacre widow allowed the Castle's future to be secured. The descendant Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle, amassed (some argue that he dissipated the family wealth and indebted subsequent generations) a fortune and started the building of Castle Howard which allowed this property to become a 'second home' and was hence spared too much significant alteration. Some of the structure dates from about 1335, as

a royal right to crenellate was given at this date. But much was expanded, remodelled and reordered after c. 1535 by William Howard. It remained relatively untouched until a catastrophic fire of 1844. Although sections of the building were severely damaged, and we saw a fire-scorched door in the tower, much of the interior furnishings were saved by being stacked up in the quadrangle.

Restoration by Anthony Salvin (1799–1881) helped secure the basic structure and Philip Webb (1831–1915) became involved in the further restoration and modernisation needed in order to make this a Victorian family home. Artistic differences meant that Webb was not continuously involved in the project, at one point accusing the family of 'butchery to a medieval hall' in a dispute over the creation of a doorway in an historic wall. Charles Ferguson became the sole architect in 1879. The present owner is the second son of the twelfth Earl and purchased the Castle from his father in 1994. He is in the process of establishing a sustainable business model for its continued survival.

Many interesting pieces are part of the eclectic mix of furniture that is housed in the Great Hall. An 18th-century walnut veneered chest on stand was of note. Sometimes called blanket chests, this was an interesting piece, and I believe a similar one is in Castle Howard (Fig. 10). The presence of what seems to be the original base with legs, which are of good height, and the overall quality exemplified by the veneer choices, banding and quirk-set front corners suggest the possibility of metropolitan manufacture. The



Fig. 11 Overmantel depicting the Battle of Flodden in painted gesso by Edward Burne Jones and Ed. Boehm, 1881. It also shows the wooden panelling designed by Ferguson with a strong input from Phillip Webb

less common use of three drawers is a coincidental correlation (Francis Galton Naworth reference intended) to the choice of this arrangement in many later mahogany pieces from Lancaster trade. Could this relate to the second wedding of the fourth Earl Henry in 1743? (See A. Bowett *Early Georgian Furniture*, Plates 3.14, 3.4 and 3.5) Next to this was a rosewood music stand, c. 1830, in what is often called 'late regency in the style of Gillow', but provenance unknown. A good oak chest of drawers on stand c. 1700 was also worthy of attention.

So we moved into the library. Much of the Webb influence was evident here in the wood panelled interior, despite it actually being by Ferguson, along with other panelling throughout, together with the work by Morris Marshall, Faulkner and Co. Was some of the carving also by George Jack? The famous painted gesso overmantel relief of 1882 depicting the Battle of Flodden, 1513, by Edward Burne Jones and Sir Edouard Boehm was originally planned to be a bas-relief triptych (Fig. 11). A Morris rocking chair seemed most apposite. A Gillow oak dining room table and chairs c. 1880 remain in the dining room

and feature in a print in the book by Edmund Bogg, *Two Thousand Miles of Wandering in the Border Country, Lakeland and Ribblesdale* published in 1898. The triangular seated turned chair was not however located. An inlaid cupboard on (replica) stand c. 1790 drew attention. A French ebony cabinet on stand c. 1650 with some snake wood veneers and polychrome trompe l'oeil interior was a rare survivor (Fig. 12). The good early 18th-century gilt gesso side table could be the one which is depicted in an interior water colour by M. E. Ellis entitled *Lord William Howard bedroom* c. 1830/49.

The pervading smell of linseed oil unfortunately greeted us more strongly in the long galley, which had a good green and gold painted chair similar to some in the Gillow archive c. 1802/7, but this was new. There was much to note but the desk of the classicist Gilbert Murray and the trilingual typewriter should not be omitted. Likewise a set of nine embossed leather covered chairs from Portugal or Spain c. 1650 and two good North West ladder-back chairs should be mentioned. On the stairwell up to the tower were a wonderful series of South African Boer War



Fig. 12 Interior of a c. 1640 French ebony cabinet on stand

(1899–1902) period watercolours showing camp life by the artist, the Hon George Howard, later 9th Earl of Carlisle (1843–1911). On the long corridor up to the tower was a full-length self-portrait of Howard in plus-fours standing beside a north-western spindle-back rush-seated chair.

A wonderful visit, and as usual, our allocated time left so much more to discover and investigate. I can only thank our host and his team again for the most wonderful access to his home. Historically, sometimes referred to as Naward but perhaps best described by Sir Walter Scott as ‘one of those extensive Baronial seats which marked the splendour of our ancient nobles...’ or by William Morris ‘the whole place is certainly the most poetical in England’.

Simon Feingold.