

Windsor chairs at Newstead Abbey

As *Regional Furniture* 2018 went to press I discovered a reference in Thomas Crispin's *English Windsor Chairs* (Dover, New Hampshire: Sutton Publishing, 1992, p. 10) to an inventory of Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire dating from 1738 to 1740. Further research showed that the inventory in question is published by Nancy Goyne Evans in 'A History and Background of English Windsor Furniture' (*Furniture History*, 15 (1979), p. 34):

After the death of William, Lord Byron (1669–1736), a suit brought on behalf of his children against Frances, Lady Byron, and her second husband Sir Thomas Haye, Barrister, required appraisers to draw up a lengthy inventory of the furnishings of the house at Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire. Scattered through the rooms was Windsor furniture of varied form. The single chair in the hall served a recognized function, but furnishings of the four galleries introduce new insights into the early use of Windsor furniture. Ranged throughout these areas were no less than ten settees! The account reveals something of their placement in these passages:

In the Red Gallery

4 Double Windsor Chairs	3..3..0
One Treble D ^o [Ditto]	
8 Single Branches [candle arms]	1..8..0
2 Glass Sconces	
80 prints of Several Sorts	8..8..0

In the Great Gallery

4 Treble Windsor Chairs, 6 Single D ^o	4..4..0
2 Arm Chairs and Cushoons	0..15..0
A Harpesichord wth. Leather Cover	5..5..0
An Elks head A Wooden Bagg Pipe	1..1..0

In the Little Gallery

12 Cane Chairs 4 Windsor Chairs	2..10..0
4 Arm Chairs and Cushoons	1..10..0
2 Marble slabs wth. Iron frames	5..5..0
8 Single Branches 2 Glass Sconces Double Branches	1..6..0
A Brass Branch wth. four Socketts	1..10..0
20 Pictures

In the Blue Gallery

1 Treble Windsor Chair & Single D ^o	3..0..0
12 Single Branches	1..5..0
15 Heads [busts] 2 Lanthorns	1..1..0
2 Black Marble Tables wth. mohogany frames	5..0..0

The term 'settee' was not yet applied to the Windsor seat that accommodated two or more people, and the expression of size is still in terms of an expanded chair form.

Size is similarly expressed in the Joseph Newton advertisement of 1729: '... single Chairs 7s. 6d. a Piece, the Seat-two's, Seat-three's and four's all at 7s. per Seat.' At Newton's prices, four doubles and a treble for the Red Gallery with carriage at '... Three-pence a Seat ...' would have cost 77 shillings for chairs and 2 shillings and 9 pence carriage – £3.19.9 compared to £3.3.0. Four trebles and six singles for the Great Gallery would have cost 126 shillings for chairs and 4 shillings and 6 pence carriage – £6.10.6 compared to £4.4.0. No comparison can be made for the four Windsors in the Little Gallery (28 shillings plus 1 shilling carriage) as there is no way to separate the twelve cane chairs also included in the £2.10.0 valuation. For the Blue Gallery a treble and a single would have also cost 28 shillings plus 1 shilling carriage – £1.9.0 compared to £3.0.0. For the three galleries where a comparison can be made £11.19.3 compared to £10.7.0, which is closer than one might expect in a calculation of this kind.

Newstead is about 20 miles from Newark, 27 from Fenton and 12 miles from Nottingham. There is a reasonable likelihood that the 4th Lord and Lady Byron acquired their many Windsors from Joseph Newton who must be the leading candidate, being their nearest source of supply. Carrier from Fenton to Newark, by barge along the Trent from there to Nottingham and then by carrier the last stage to Newstead seems a possible route. Perhaps Newton gave the Byrons a discount.

Enquiries with Simon Brown, Curator at Newstead Abbey, reveal that hot-footing it to Newstead to hunt for these Windsors is a fruitless pursuit: 'The entire contents of the house were sold by the 5th Lord Byron to service his sizeable debts – he was unable to sell Newstead itself due to the terms of his inheritance – he auctioned off everything else he possibly could (including doorknobs!).' Alas.

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