

# News release

## Dumfries House – background document

### History

Dumfries House, situated in Ayrshire, Scotland was designed and built at the bequest of William, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dumfries (1699-1768). Originally a commission given to the architect William Adam in 1747, after his death it was passed on to his sons; John, Robert and James Adam who oversaw the design and construction of the house between 1754 and 1759. The property is set in a 1,940 acre estate.

Lord Dumfries and his family are thought to have taken residence at the house from August 1760. The house has remained in the ownership of the Dumfries family ever since, although the principle residence of the family later became Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute so Dumfries House was often unoccupied.

### Interior

Upon completion of the Palladian mansion and at the instruction of William, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dumfries, the Adam brothers turned their attention to the task of furnishing the property. They sought the skills of Thomas Chippendale to create an interior which would complement the classical style of the building. The contents of the house are still recognisable from the 1803 inventory, including the carpets. Among the highlights of the furniture is a magnificent late George II Chippendale parcel-gilt rosewood, padouk and sabicu breakfront bookcase, 1759. The collection also includes a highly important pair of late George II giltwood pier glasses, 1759 – elaborately ornate oval mirrors.

Several of the bedrooms were furnished entirely by Thomas Chippendale, including the Blue Bedroom which includes what was then the most expensive piece of Chippendale's commission – the George II palm-wrapped mahogany bed. A further highlight includes the extremely rare Chippendale George II giltwood overmantle mirror with a Savonnerie tapestry panel probably woven by Thomas Moore.

The house today contains not only the finest surviving collection of Chippendale Rococo, but also the finest and best documented collection of furniture in existence by the pre-eminent 18<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish cabinet makers; Francis Brodie, Alexander Peter and William Mathie. Highlights include two pairs of Scottish late George II giltwood pier glasses by William Mathie of Edinburgh, 1759.

The striking aspect of the interior is its immaculate condition. Time and inhabitants have laid a light hand, and foot, on the property. The floors are miraculously unworn, the banisters unmarked and the carved ends of the treads have practically never been polished. At Dumfries the house is practically in the condition in which it was delivered. The value of the evidence provided by the house itself, the furniture and the documentation (not just the bills and inventories but the even rarer correspondence between the furnishers and the patron) is incalculable.



We are an independent charity committed to saving art for everyone to enjoy. Since we began in 1903, we have helped to save over 850,000 works of art. Today, some 80,000 members fund our work. In return, they receive free or reduced-price admission to many museums and galleries in the UK. This is not the only reason they join: they support us because they love art.