



19th Century Antique

A spectacular pair of 19th century statuary marble chimneypieces from Harewood House in the Palladian manner after William Kent, supplied under the direction of Sir Charles Barry, possibly carved by John Thomas. Carved in high relief throughout, the frieze centred by a tablet carved with a basket of flowers flanked by foliate swags, the jambs headed by boldly carved scrolling corbels hung with mask-headed foliate pendants issuing fruit. English, circa 1845.

Provenance: Supplied under the direction of Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860) to Henry Lascelles, 3rd Earl of Harewood (1797-1857) for the Gallery at Harewood House, Yorkshire, in the early 1840s and thence by descent at Harewood House. *See following page for further details.*

Dimensions

Height 64½in (163cm) width 92½in (235cm)

Internal height 44in (112cm) width 51in (130cm)

Depth 16¾in (43cm)

Reference

N384

Further details

Between 1842 and 1850, Sir Charles Barry, celebrated for designing the Travellers Club (1829) and the Reform Club (1837) in Pall Mall, and most notably the Houses of Parliament and Palace of Westminster (from 1840) in conjunction with Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–52), was employed at Harewood to modernize and enlarge the accommodation for the Lascelles' growing family—the couple had thirteen children. Louisa, Countess of Harewood (1801–59, née Thynne), daughter of the 2nd Marquess of Bath, was instrumental in the decision to make alterations at Harewood having witnessed major works at her family seat, Longleat House in Wiltshire.

In addition to exterior works that included an additional storey in Barry's favoured Italianate-style on the footprint of the original John Carr of York (1723–1807) and Robert Adam (1728–92) Palladian ground plan, Barry converted the state apartments for the private use of the Countess. The State Bedroom became her sitting room, the State Dressing Room, a breakfast room, and the Saloon was transformed into the main library in which Barry lined Adam's half-domed alcoves with mahogany bookcases. While changes to the most impressive and largest room of the house, the Gallery, which occupies the whole of the west wing, were less radical, Barry had the single 18th century caryatid chimneypiece, carved by Peter Mathias Van Gelder (circa 1742–1809), removed to the adjoining dining-room, which had undergone a Barry renovation, and the two white marble chimneypieces offered here were installed in its place possibly because one chimneypiece was considered inadequate to heat such a vast room. By doing so, Barry was echoing Adam's original idea of using two fireplaces to break up the great length of the apartment ¹.

Although the sculptor of the present pair of chimneypieces remains obscure, it is possible they were executed by the sculptor and architect, John Thomas (1813–62) Thomas's carving on monuments impressed Barry, who hired him to carve in wood and stone the coats of arms and other ornamental work for his Gothic-style King Edward VI Grammar School, Birmingham ². Thomas was also engaged by Barry to work on his Houses of Parliament project where he was responsible for sculpting all the figures of English kings and queens ³. Thomas worked from small drawings supplied by Barry's office, and developed large-scale drawings that formed the basis of the full-size plasters from which the figures and architectural work were carved in stone. Contemporaries admired Thomas for his prodigious energy and ambition to work as architect, fine art sculptor, and architectural carver. Barry in a letter summed up the man whose talent had enabled him to build one of the icons of the Victorian age, the Houses of Parliament, as 'an unassuming self-taught genius in his way' ³. Significantly, Thomas is recorded at Harewood where he undertook 'some beautiful carving in the pediment and elsewhere' ⁴.

The chimneypieces are designed in a neo-Palladian style, the white marble friezes carved in high relief with fruiting foliage centred by baskets and flanked by jambs with foliate trusses above satyr masks perhaps an acknowledgement to the Palladian architect Carr, who designed the exterior of Harewood between 1759–65. An Account of Sir Charles Barry (1845–51) and Records of Payments made by the Earl of

Harewood to Sir Charles Barry, architect, 1851, held at the West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) show that the Harewood commission was lucrative for Barry because he received a 3-5 percentage of what was paid to some of the firms to undertake the work⁵. These two documents record large payments, which together equate to nearly £75,000 but this can only have been a fraction of the cost—Barry earned nearly £37,000 for ‘additions and alterations’, and in addition to this, George Trollope & Sons, the London furnishers, submitted a bill for £7,000⁶. To put this into context, £10,000 in 1845 had approximately the same purchasing power as £1,205,830 in 2019.

In 1989-90, George Lascelles, 7th Earl of Harewood (1923-2011) decided to reinstate the original single chimneypiece in the Gallery and to return the design of the main windows to their 18th Century plan rendering these chimneypieces and the attendant window brackets redundant. A watercolour by John Scarlett Davis of the Gallery of circa 1825 showed the Van Gelder chimneypiece in situ prior to Barry's renovation, and the room essentially as Adam and Thomas Chippendale would have known it. The restoration of the original chimneypiece to the Gallery was also deemed feasible following the introduction of central heating to the mansion. The two Barry chimneypieces and attendant window dressings were removed with full planning consent and were put into store at Harewood where they have remained until the present.

1. M Mauchline, *Harewood House: One of the Treasure Houses of Britain*, Ashbourne, revised edition 1992, p. 128.
2. T Stevens, John Thomas 1813-1862, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published 23 September 2004.
3. I Blatchford, *John Thomas and his 'wonderful facility of invention': Revisiting a neglected sculptor*, V&A Online Journal, Issue No. 3, Spring 2011.
4. A Barry, *The Life & Works of Sir Charles Barry*, RA, FR.S, London, 1867, p. 117.
5. WYAS WYL250/3/Acs/529 530.
6. M Mauchline, op cit, p134, C Kennedy, *Harewood: The Life and Times of an English Country House*, London, 1982, p. 87.

Literature

Photographed by Bedford Lemere & Co in 1890, RIBA Collections, RIBA 7528. Unpublished *Country Life*, image L2961A.

AT Bolton, ‘Harewood House, Yorkshire, The Seat of the Earl of Harewood’, *Country Life*, 4 July 1914, pp. 22-23 and fig. 8: ‘The Gallery’.

H Avery Tipping, ‘Harewood House, Yorkshire, The Home of the Lascelles’, *Country Life*, 25 February 1922, p. 246.

G Nares, ‘The Splendours of Harewood’ *Country Life Annual*, 121, 1 January 1957, pp. 43-4, figs. 5-6, and p. 46.

G Jackson-Stops, ‘Harewood Rehung’, *Country Life*, 26 July 1990, p. 66.