

NORTON PRIORY PRESS RELEASE

RARE HISTORIC FURNITURE RETURNS HOME TO NORTON PRIORY

A rare 17th century Antwerp collector's cabinet and gilt George II side table have returned home to Norton Priory in Runcorn – a century after they are thought to have left the area.



The Brooke family, who owned the former monastic site from 1545, lived there in a fine Georgian mansion for many years until they moved down to Worcestershire in 1921.

Sir Richard Brooke donated the site in trust for the benefit of the public in 1966 and the Norton Priory Museum and Gardens is now run by a charitable trust as a popular visitor attraction.

The Trust were alerted the historic pieces of furniture were coming up for sale by Nantwich auctioneers and valuers Wilson55 and they were recently secured at auction thanks to funding from the Art Fund Acquisition Fund and the Arts Council England V&A Purchase Fund. The Trust also received expert from respected art dealers Dino and Raffaello Tomasso of Tomasso.

The cabinet is considered to be one of the finest quality cabinets to be produced by the Antwerp workshops in the 17th century. Although not unique, the highly polished scagliola inlays were extremely expensive and highly prized in northern Europe at the time.

Mr Rob Sanderson-Thomas, Norton Priory chief executive, said: The Trust is delighted to have been able to secure this cabinet and table for display in the museum, thanks to the generous support of the funders. The museum has relatively few items that tell the story of the Brooke's time at Norton Priory, and even fewer which speak of the luxury and grandeur of the Georgian house.

"They demonstrates perfectly the quality that was embodied by the house which was once on the site. According to an 1865 inventory of the house, the cabinet was situated in an ante room to the library. It is believed to have left Norton Priory in 1921, so it seems highly appropriate that 100 years after their departure, these two items of furniture from the house are now returning, and will form part of the museum's permanent collection."

Sir Richard Christopher Brooke, a descendent of the original owners, has recently joined the Norton Priory's Board of trustees. He too was thrilled to see the precious cabinet and table returned to their original home. He added: "I am sure these two beautiful pieces of furniture were much prized in their day, so it is wonderful to see them back at Norton Priory, where they will now be enjoyed and appreciated by a much wider audience."

The collector's cabinet and Georgian table have now been sent away to specialist furniture restorers to repair and restore them to their original condition. Visitors will be able to see them when they return to Norton Priory for permanent public display next year.

For more information about visiting Norton Priory and Gardens, please check out the website: <https://www.nortonpriory.org/open>. Winter opening days are Friday – Tuesday. Closed Wednesday and Thursday.

Notes to Editors

For more details contact Rob Sanderson Thomas, Norton Priory CEO, on 01928 569895.

Norton Priory Museum and Gardens is a popular visitor attraction in Runcorn, Cheshire. It is managed by the Norton Priory Museum Trust Limited, an independent charitable trust.

About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund made £3.6 million in urgent funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine

grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. A further £2 million has been made available in 2021 for Reimagine projects. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 131,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. The winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021 is Firstsite in Colchester.

About the Purchase Grant Fund

The Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund supports the purchase of a wide range of material for the permanent collections of non-nationally funded organisations in England and Wales. The Fund is provided by Arts Council England Lottery funding and is managed by the V&A as part of its national work. The grants budget for 2021/22 is £730,000.

Demand is always very strong and funds are allocated to enable as many acquisitions as possible to be made. Each year the Fund considers about 100 applications and enables acquisitions of around £3 million to go ahead.

The Fund, run by the V&A since 1881, retains an interest in the organisations and objects it supports and collections they join, and ensures that the terms of the grant offer continue to be met.

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