

The Bowes Family of Streatlam Castle and Gibside and Its Collections

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ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE ANCIENT British noble and aristocratic families survive into the twentieth century, their collections have often been reduced or dispersed across the world. In turn, their original historical and artistic context may be lost as they lose their link with the people who first bought or commissioned them. This article looks at the collections of one historic British family, the Bowes family of County Durham, who were once major landowners and industrialists in the north of England. Although the direct male line died out in the eighteenth century, enough survives of their collections in Britain and the United States to give an idea of their artistic tastes and social aspirations. Some of their most outstanding objects have come to rest in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and these—when considered with other objects they owned and their relationship to the family's history—can be seen as a part of a pattern of luxury spending and social display by a family determined to make its mark in Georgian society.

The Bowes family was one of the most influential landed families in County Durham in northeast England. Its name and the coat of arms (three bows) perhaps indicate that the family originally headed a company of bowmen or archers in the service of William the Conqueror at the castle of Bowes on the North Yorkshire border. In about 1310 Sir Adam Bowes married Alice Trayne, heiress of Streatlam Castle, County Durham, which remained the family seat until the nineteenth century. William Bowes, Adam's grandson, fought in France and was knighted there in 1356, while other family members helped to police the border between Scotland and England. In the Tudor period Sir George Bowes was loyal to Queen Elizabeth I during the Rising of the North in 1569, and he was rewarded with leases for lead mines. His heroic defense of Barnard Castle nearby and his part in suppressing the Rising are recorded from old family documents in Sir Cuthbert Sharp's *Memorials of the Rebellion of 1569* (1840).¹ The family gained power and influ-

ence during the seventeenth century and continued its relationship with Barnard Castle; a simple silver wine cup (Figure 1) in the Bowes Museum, inscribed "Barnard Castle The 14 April 1635," probably commemorates the retirement of Sir Talbot Bowes from the Head Stewardship of the castle in 1635. Barnard Castle was subsequently ruined during the English civil war (1642–49); it survives today as a picturesque ruin overlooking the River Tees, although a town of the same name flourishes in its shadow.

William Bowes (1656–1706), great-grandson of Sir George Bowes, went to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1672 and was admitted to Gray's Inn that same year. William was elected member of Parliament for County Durham five times in the period up to 1705. In 1684 he was knighted by Charles II at Whitehall, which may have been a purchased honor. For his bride he sought the hand of Elizabeth Blakiston of Gibside, a country estate in the north of England west of County Durham, near Newcastle (the Blakistons had become the owners of Gibside through marriage in 1534, and a new house was built between 1603 and 1620). Inventories made in 1573 and 1608 can be found in the Strathmore archive in the Durham Record Office,² and, although little of the furnishings have survived, a superb gold cup and cover now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Figure 2) by Jacob Bodendick, London, 1675, bears the Bowes-Blakiston coat of arms and Blakiston crest of a cock and is listed in the family's possession in the early eighteenth century. The origin of the cup is not precisely known, but it has been conjectured that the cup is a racing prize won later by Sir William, who kept a stud farm at Streatlam Castle.³

The marriage contracts between Sir William Bowes and Elizabeth Blakiston linked two well-known families and sought to provide a certain status for Sir William and an assured future for his bride. In January 1693 an agreement was signed with Sir Francis Blakiston, the bride's father, which gave Gibside Manor, its collieries and lands, to his daughter Elizabeth, in return for certain provisions for Sir Francis and his other daughter, Jane.⁴ A later contract of August 1693 went into greater detail of the property involved and mentioned

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Figure 1. Wine cup, inscribed "Barnard Castle The 14 April 1635." Maker unknown. Silver, H. 25.6 cm. County Durham, The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle X.4596 (photo: The Bowes Museum)



Figure 2. Covered cup, engraved with the Bowes-Blakiston arms, by Jacob Bodendick (London), 1675. Gold, H. 14.75 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum M.63.1993 (photo: © The Board of Trustees of the Victoria & Albert Museum)



Figure 3. Cabinet, inlaid with the coats of arms of Bowes and Blakiston. English, after 1693. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1931, 31.86

that Sir Francis could live at Gibside for life. His wife, Anne, was also provided for, while his daughter Jane was to have a dowry of £6,000 if she married with the consent of her parents. Their goods, chattels, and furniture were to be in trust for life for Sir Francis and Dame Anne.⁵ The marriage of Sir William Bowes and Elizabeth Blakiston took place in St. Mary's Church, Barnard Castle, on August 17, 1693, and with it a new phase in the fortunes of the Bowes family began. This date must mark the terminus post quem of the

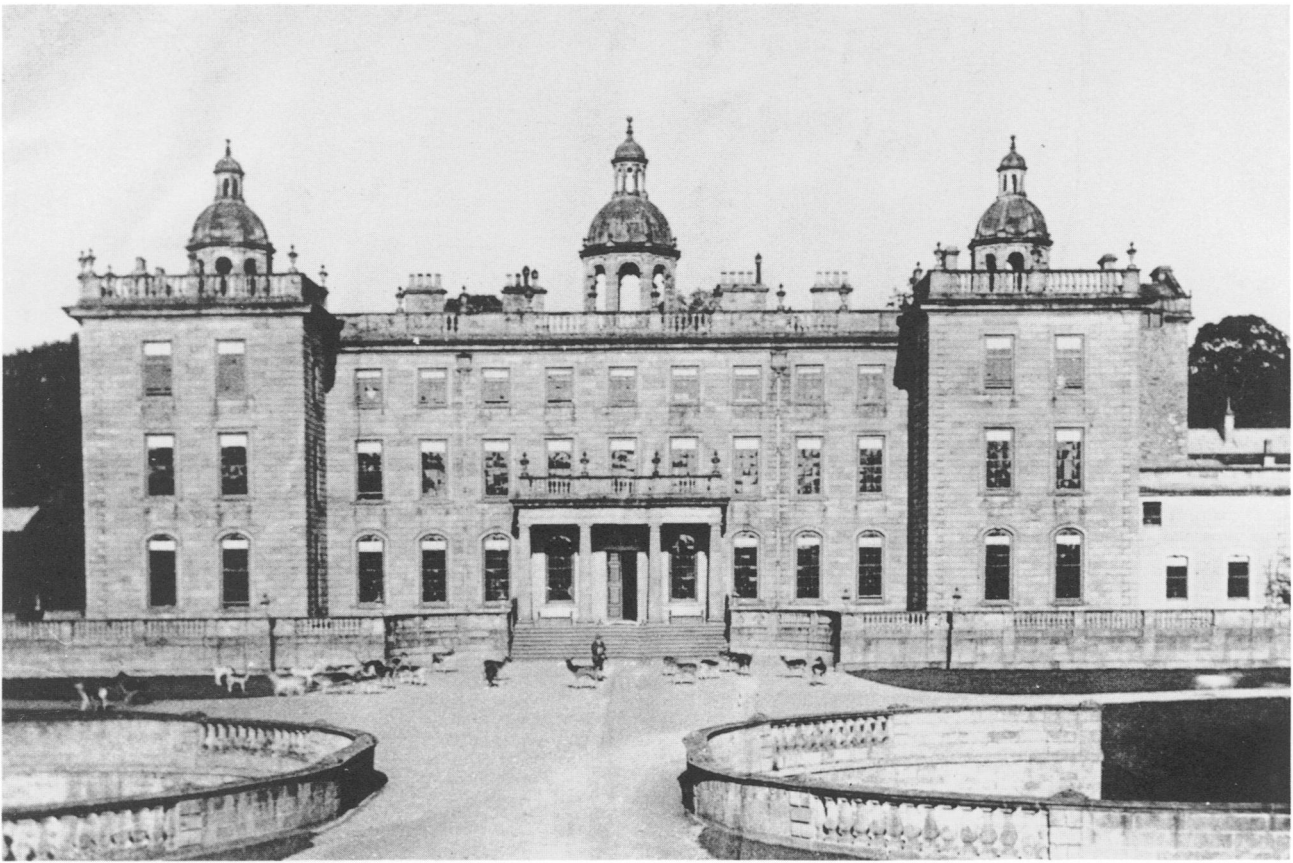


Figure 4. Photograph of Streatlam Castle, County Durham, as rebuilt by William Blakiston Bowes in the early 18th century. The cupolas and the portico were added by John Bowes (1811–1885)

remarkable large cabinet veneered with the Bowes-Blakiston arms, acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 1931 (Figure 3). The piece consists of a large cupboard with drawers over a chest of drawers, the whole magnificently veneered with floral marquetry and the coats of arms of the two families on the doors. On the pediment is the Bowes crest of six inverted arrows. It is similar in design and execution to a cabinet in the Victoria and Albert Museum inlaid with the arms of George Lawson of Harsley Castle, Yorkshire, and his wife, Margaret Trotter of Skelton Castle, Yorkshire, suggesting a common northern origin for these two pieces of superb craftsmanship.⁶ We do not know which craftsman made these pieces, but records imply that the Bowes family favored the city of Newcastle on the northeast coast for the purchase of luxury goods when not in London.

Ten children were born of this marriage, and eight of them, four boys and four girls, survived childhood. The youngest boy, John, died of smallpox in 1714. Lady Bowes was left to bring up her family after the death of her husband in 1706, and she took charge of the Gibside property on the death of her father in 1713 and

until her eldest son, William Blakiston, came of age in 1718. The Blakiston family was rich in lands but had not exploited the coal that lay beneath them, and Lady Bowes took over the running of the coal interests. She was involved in disputes with other coal owners, as she suspected that they had extracted too much coal for the safety of her mines.

William Blakiston Bowes, the heir to Streatlam and Gibside, preferred London life to that in the country, and in 1716 there was a staff of eleven servants at the Bowes family town house in Queen's Square, Westminster, London. William was sent to Europe on the Grand Tour and also trained in the techniques of coal mining, where the family's greatest wealth lay. He largely rebuilt and refurnished the family home of Streatlam Castle, changing it from a square, forbidding castle into a vast and rather daunting Georgian edifice, whose thick internal walls revealed its original purpose as a northern stronghold (Figure 4). The exact date of his work is not known, but the leaden spouts there bore the dates 1717, 1720, and 1721.⁷ The interior was laid out in the fashionable style, with a series of paneled rooms enfilade and suites of plain



Figure 5. Mirror with silvered frame. English, ca. 1717–21. From Streatlam Castle, where it hung between the windows of the drawing room. 270 x 75 cm. Liverpool, The Walker Art Gallery, on loan to The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle (photo: The Bowes Museum)



Figure 6. Jappaned cabinet on stand. English, ca. 1700. 186 x 117 x 61 cm. From Streatlam Castle or Gibside. Liverpool, The Walker Art Gallery, on loan to The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle (photo: The Bowes Museum)

and upholstered chairs, mirrors, and lacquered cabinets, some of which survive the dispersal of the contents in the 1920s (Figures 5, 6).⁸ A well-known suite of embroidered upholstered chairs, with the Bowes crest, must date from this refurnishing (Figure 7).⁹ The crest is contained within a lozenge, suggesting a spinster's or widow's arms, and it may be that the suite was commissioned by Lady Bowes before William attained his majority. Certainly a nineteenth-century inventory (1832–70) of Streatlam Castle records that his descendant John Bowes refurnished the state bed in white satin and red stuff, "exactly as they were put up in 1717 by Mr. Blakiston Bowes," an unusually precise date that would tally well with the style of objects.¹⁰ Most spectacular among the family possessions must have been some magnificent silver, including a silver-gilt ewer and basin by the court goldsmith David Willaume, today in the collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (Figure 9). It dates from the year of William's majority in 1718 and would have been part of a collection of plate that he

assembled in order to advertise his wealth and status in his search for a bride.¹¹

Although William Blakiston wished to marry, he was not successful and died intestate at the age of twenty-four in 1721. He was succeeded by the second son, Thomas, who died suddenly, apparently of a fit, in 1722, and then by the youngest remaining son, George Bowes (Figure 8), who had joined the army and had become a captain in General Wade's regiment. George resigned his commission in order to devote himself to family affairs and the running of his estates. He presented two handsome silver flagons to St. Mary's, Whickham, near Gibside, in the same year that he succeeded to his property. They are engraved "Ex dono Georgii Bowes, Armiger. Anno Domini 1722" and were no doubt given in gratitude for his inheritance.¹²

Unlike his eldest brother, George Bowes did not care for life in London. Later he wrote from Gibside, "I must own I was greatly tir[e]d of London, not only from a dislike of Town's life, but from a just aversion to the scandalous Measures of the last Winters Campaign."¹³

However, he did wish to become a member of Parliament and have the influence that that entailed. This meant residing in London from November to June if he were to attend regularly. His first attempt to enter Parliament as a member for Berwick in 1723 was thwarted by a quarrel with William Cotesworth, an influential coal owner, and it was not until 1727 that George Bowes succeeded in gaining one of the two seats for County Durham. Through his attempts to enter Parliament, Bowes met Thomas Robinson, who was knighted by George II in 1731. He was an amateur architect, a follower of Lord Burlington's, and had traveled widely over Europe. It seems likely that he gave Bowes his first lessons in architecture and encouraged him to subscribe to the most influential architecture books of the day, William Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones* (1727), James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* (1728), and Isaac Ware's edition of Palladio's *The Four Books of Architecture* (1738). Robinson was the owner of Rokeby Park, a few miles from Streatlam Castle, which he had built in the Palladian style in 1725–30.

Discussions about George Bowes's marriage had

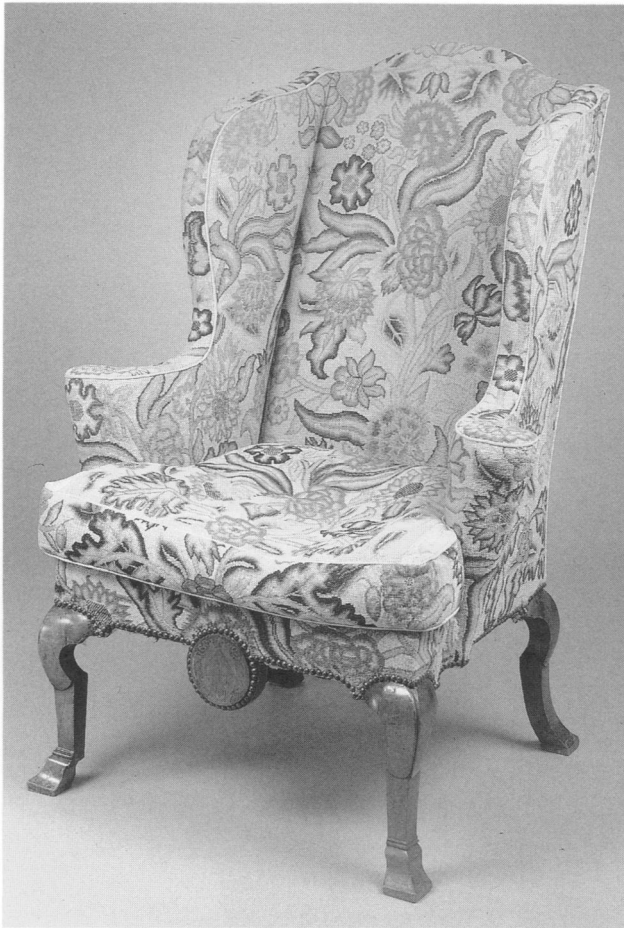


Figure 7. Chair with embroidered cover, with the Bowes coat of arms. English, ca. 1717. Location unknown (photo: courtesy of Sotheby's New York)



Figure 8. Enoch Seeman the Younger (British, 1694–1744). *George Bowes*. Oil on canvas. Payment for the portrait is recorded in Mrs. Bowes's accounts for April 27, 1745. Glamis Castle (photo: courtesy of Kinghorne and Strathmore estates)

begun as early as 1720, when his future bride, Eleanor Verney, sole heiress of Lord Willoughby de Broke of Compton Verney, was only ten. If she were to marry



Figure 9. Silver-gilt ewer and basin by David Willaume (London), 1718. H. of ewer 33 cm. Diam. of basin 68 cm. London, Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (photo: reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother)

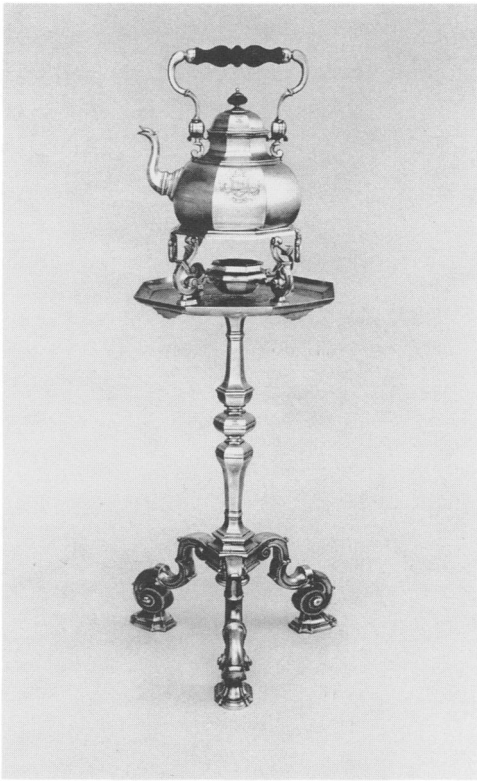


Figure 10. Silver teakettle and stand engraved with the Bowes coat of arms with Verney in pretense, by Simon Pantin (British, d. 1731), 1724. Silver, H. 103.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Irwin Untermyer, 1968, 68.141.81



Figure 11. Upholstered chair. English, ca. 1735. Walnut, partly gilt with pewter inlay, H. 106 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1931, 31.86

after the age of fourteen, she would come into the sum of £15,000, and the marriage duly took place after her fourteenth birthday on October 1, 1724. In spite of the monetary aspect of the match, George Bowes was very much in love with his young bride, who was as beautiful as she was learned. It was this marriage that must

have led to the family's acquisition of an elegant silver teakettle of 1724 by the London maker Simon Pantin, which was donated to the Metropolitan Museum with its original tall tripod silver stand (Figure 10). This is a rare feature of such wares and suggests that George Bowes hoped his wife would entertain in some style. It



Figure 12. *Gibside from the South*, engraving by Samuel Rawle after a watercolor by J. M. W. Turner (British, 1775–1851) for Robert Surtees's *History of Durham* (1816–23). The view shows clearly the James Paine chapel on the left and the column of Liberty on the right, with the Jacobean house in the middle distance. County Durham, The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle 1983.35 (photo: The Bowes Museum)

is engraved with the Bowes–Blakiston arms with those of Verney “in pretence” (superimposed to indicate marriage to an heiress or last female representative of a noble family).¹⁴ It must have superseded a similar, but plainer, teakettle and stand by the Newcastle maker Francis Batty of 1722, today in the collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.¹⁵

Sadly, Eleanor Bowes died two and a half months after the marriage. Horace Walpole’s gossip was that the bride “was said to die of the violence of the Bridegroom’s embraces,”¹⁶ and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the famous bluestocking, wrote a poem about her death beginning:

Hail, happy bride, for thou art truly blest?
Three months of rapture, crown’d with endless rest.¹⁷

As with most marriages among those with lands or money at that time, the marriage settlement was highly important. It was revoked, and Bowes had to pay back the £15,000 dowry plus £750 interest. However, the kettle and stand were retained, presumably as George Bowes’s personal property, and feature in lists of family plate throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Bowes was now twenty-three, the owner of vast estates and already a widower. If his young wife had lived, it is likely that the Jacobean house at Gibside would have been replaced by a Palladian mansion. George Bowes was a successful businessman and in 1726 formed an agreement with his neighbors the Wortleys and the Liddells to restrict the coal trade in their own interests, forming a cartel known as the Grand Allies or Alliance. He became mayor of Hartlepool and of Durham in 1732, having presented a still-surviving statue of Neptune to the marketplace in Durham in 1730. He also paid for paneling in the town hall in 1751.

However, his main pastime was replanning the landscape of his mother’s house at Gibside. The house was three stories high, with five bays of mullioned windows and a plain slate roof, and it stood above a steep drop to the River Derwent and water meadow below. It had been completed in 1620 and was by now rather old-fashioned, with the main dining room in the former Great Chamber on the first floor and some of the bedrooms located opposite. There were more bedrooms on the second floor, and garrets above, largely for servant use. Bowes began to modernize the house by putting in sash windows. His real interest, however, was the layout of the grounds, and under his supervision the nineteen Gibside walks were engineered according to designs by Stephen Switzer in 1731 and 1732. They provided points of interest on strolls through the



Figure 13. Mirror with gilded frame with the Bowes crest of interlaced arrows. English, ca. 1740. 175 x 100 cm. Liverpool, The Walker Art Gallery, on loan to The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle (photo: The Bowes Museum)

grounds by members of the family and their guests, especially when there was a newly completed building to visit. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Verney, visited in 1734, after extensive repaneling and refurnishing by the Newcastle cabinetmaker James Bickerdike had taken place.¹⁸ The bathhouse above the river was begun after Switzer’s second visit to Gibside and completed in 1736, in time for a visit by the 3rd Duke of Cleveland, a descendant of Charles II, on April 6, 1737. Entertainments were given for the company at Durham, and a barge bore the duke and his wife to Tynemouth Light House, accompanied by a customs house boat and a town boat. Here there was further entertainment.¹⁹ The walnut armchair with applied pewter ornament in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 11), stylistically datable to about 1735, perhaps coincides with one of the visits. More buildings were undertaken, usually one at a time, as funds permitted. The New Coach Road (1738–40) was an engineering feat through difficult terrain, and the new stables (1747–51) were conveniently placed for access to the house. The banqueting house (1741–45) was a Gothic Revival belvedere from

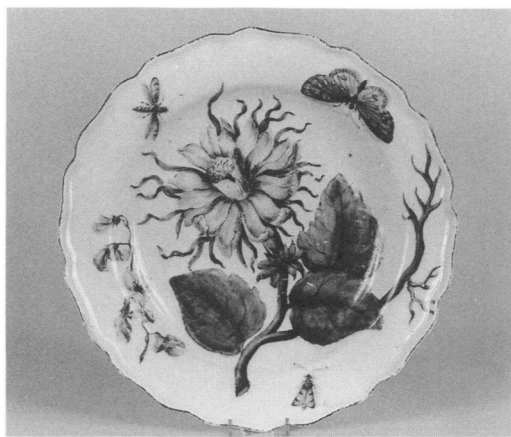


Figure 14. Porcelain plate. Chelsea. Diam. 23 cm. County Durham, The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle X3372 (photo: The Bowes Museum)



Figure 15. Mahogany clothespress marked "GIBSIDE," attributed to Vile and Cobb, ca. 1756. 143.2 x 126.2 x 67.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Morris Loeb, 1956, 56.125

which to view the whole estate. The 140-foot column bearing a statue of Liberty (1750–57) could be seen from the lower Derwent valley. It formed a culminating point for the Grand Avenue (1746–49), the western end of which was terminated by James Paine's Chapel, begun in 1760, the year of George Bowes's death (Figure 12).²⁰

With all his activities in Parliament, as a coal owner, and running his estate, Bowes did not have much time to devote to refurnishing Gibside House. There is a solitary record of a couch being bought from William Hallet in 1739.²¹ However, no further interior furnishing seems to have been done at Gibside until 1743, when George Bowes remarried and set about refurbishing Gibside in a manner suitable for his new bride. The London furniture maker William Greer provided mahogany and other furnishings to the value of £432.6.4.²² These are recorded as being in the drawing and dining rooms in the Gibside inventory of December 1743, where they seem to have displaced walnut furniture sent on to the lesser rooms. The account book for this period in the Bowes Museum records purchases of jewelry, a silver tureen from the great Rococo silversmith Peter Archambo (£39.11.0), and further silver plate from "Mr. Nevill" and the

Countess of Essex to the enormous sum of £545.3.0. Sadly, none of this survives, but a Palladian-style mirror with the Bowes coat of arms would seem to date from this second wave of furnishment. It is one of a set of four, now split among the Metropolitan Museum, the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (currently on loan to the Bowes Museum; Figure 13), and the Rosenbach Foundation, Philadelphia.²³ With its severe architectural character and pedimented frame, it is in the latest Palladian taste, and the four must have decorated one of the main rooms in Gibside or the Bowes's town house in London.

George Bowes married Mary Gilbert on June 14, 1743. She was the heiress of Edward Gilbert of St. Paul's Walden Bury, Hertfordshire, and also had property in London as part of her dowry. They seem to have set about entertaining in a manner befitting their grand position. An evocative description of entertainment at Gibside during their marriage survives in the letters of the husband of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu of Denton Hall, Northumberland, in July 1753. He wrote: "I dined this day sennight at Gibside; it was one of the finest summer days I ever saw. . . . All the gentlemen are planting and adorning their Seats, but nothing comes up to the grandeur and magnificence of what Mr.

Bowes has done, and is a-doing. I ought not to omit telling you that he has already erected upon a rising ground a gothick building which he calls a Banqueting room, in which the night before there was a concert of Musick, at which Jordain and an Italian woman performed, whom Mrs. Lane brought with her from Bramham Moor [Bramham Park, North Yorkshire] from which she came in a day."²⁴ From Gibside, visits were made to dine with neighbors, such as the Ellisons at Park House, Gateshead, the Liddells at Eslington Park, Northumberland, and Bowes's brother-in-law Thomas Liddell at Newton, County Durham. These friends were usually engaged in the coal trade and sometimes had family connections. Visits were also made to the York races and Lord Burlington's Assembly Rooms there, with lodgings taken at York for the event, as well as the races at Newmarket in August 1756.

With this marriage the family seems determined to have their presence felt in London. Their London town house on Conduit Street was replaced by one in fashionable Grosvenor Square, rented from 1758 to 1759, first at number 13, then at number 40. As staging posts Bowes had already rented Ledston Hall, Yorkshire, and Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire, the ancestral home of the Byrons, in order to break the long journey between Gibside and London. Mary Bowes's accounts of expenditure survive for the years 1743–63 and form a fascinating account of fashionable spending in London.²⁵ They record her visits to Drury Lane Playhouse and the opera, as well as to benefit performances for Mrs. Woffington, Colley Cibber, and David Garrick. Her companion was often Miss Chalenor, the sister-in-law of Bowes's eldest sister, Anne. In 1755 Mary Bowes also visited Ranelagh, the pleasure gardens in London, where her husband's old friend Sir Thomas Robinson was master of ceremonies.

She began a collection of old master pictures, buying works attributed to Rubens,²⁶ still in the family, and others at a public auction in Pall Mall in January 1749. She also bought a set of prints of *Marriage à la Mode* direct from the painter William Hogarth in April 1746, less than a year after their completion.²⁷ She made numerous and continuous purchases from many of the fashionable London dealers and makers of fine furniture and porcelain, including "Dresden" (Meissen), Derby, Bow, and Chelsea. A set of Chelsea botanical plates in the Bowes Museum, bequeathed in 1878 with much other eighteenth-century porcelain by John Bowes's cousin Susan Davidson, may be survivors of two sets of "plates with plants" bought from the Chelsea sales of 1758 and 1759 (Figure 14).²⁸ Mary Bowes also bought from the fashionable furniture

maker John Cobb in 1756,²⁹ who was famous not only for the quality of his furniture, made in association with his partner William Vile, but also for his "haughty behaviour," which included appearing in his workshops "in full dress of the most superb and costly kind" when giving orders to his workmen.³⁰ This payment may relate to the large Rococo mahogany clothespress once attributed to William Vile in the Metropolitan Museum marked "GIBSIDE" (Figure 15).³¹ Its carved decoration is similar to that on an elaborate bookcase supplied by Vile to the royal family in 1762. Her greatest expenditure, however, was on the drawing room at Gibside, for which £1,000 was given by her father in April 1760. Some drawings survive that suggest the incorporation of large pictures from the collection, and a new chimneypiece was commissioned from the sculptor Thomas Carter. It may be noted that there was nothing "extravagant" about her spending, and everything was of good quality, suitable to the family's elevated and established position, rather than ostentatiously grand or expensive; in this the Boweses contrast with magnates such as Sir Lawrence Dundas³² and Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn,³³ who commissioned fashionable architects to design their furniture and imported French tapestries and Continental porcelain in abundance, presumably to make a great splash in London society.

Meanwhile, other members of George Bowes's family had not been idle, and George Bowes's sister Elizabeth had bought and refurnished a house in Durham town in 1758. This was in addition to the family home in South Bailey, near the cathedral. She seems to have set about refurnishing it, and a pair of fine Rococo mirrors have appeared on the New York art market with a provenance from this house (Figure 16).³⁴ They must date from about 1760, as they are recorded in an inventory of that year, although Elizabeth herself had died in 1759 and the house was rented out for a number of years.³⁵

Into this prosperous and discerning family Mary Eleanor, the only child of George and Mary Bowes, was born on February 24, 1749. Bowes received a letter of congratulations from Captain William Fitzthomas dated March 2, 1748: "What tho' it be'nt a Boy, the same Material will produce one, be industrious & apply yourself closely to the Business, & I warrent your success." He continued: "at least your blood, if not your Name will be transmitted to Posterity." He also mentioned a relative of his, who had some connection with the Bowes family and might be encouraged to take the name of Bowes and make a match of it.³⁶

Mary Eleanor was born when her father was nearly fifty and perhaps unused to young children. She seems



Figure 16. Pair of mirrors with gilt frames, from Elizabeth Bowes's town house in Durham (now the County Hotel). English, ca. 1760. 147 x 64.6 cm (photo: courtesy of Sotheby's New York)



Figure 17. J. C. Dillman Engleheart (British, 1783–1862), after George Engleheart (1752–1829). *Mary Eleanor Bowes*. Miniature, watercolor on ivory, H. 6 cm. County Durham, The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle 1975–48 (Min 86) (photo: The Bowes Museum)

to have been treated as a young adult rather than a child, with great attention paid to learning and accomplishments. Her father would show her off to his friends reciting long speeches from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and poems by Milton. She received lessons in music from the Newcastle composer Charles Avison and other lessons, including dancing and drawing, while for recreation she went to children's balls. Her favorite dances were given by the earl and countess of Northumberland for children from the age of five to fourteen. George Bowes died in 1760, leaving her a rich heiress, "the greatest heiress perhaps in Europe, and ugly in proportion" (Figure 17), according to Lord Chesterfield.³⁷

Unfortunately, Mary Eleanor had little judgment of human nature. In 1767, at the age of eighteen, she married John Lyon, the 9th Earl of Strathmore, of Glamis Castle, Angus, Scotland, but they turned out to be temperamentally unsuited to each other. There exists a Chinese porcelain tea set with the Bowes arms that must date from just before this marriage, as it shows her coat of arms in a lozenge, the symbol for spinsters or widows (Figure 18). This contrasts with another Chinese porcelain service at Glamis Castle with the Bowes Lyon arms, which must date from after the marriage.

The marriage to the 9th Earl of Strathmore took a year and a half to arrange. One of the conditions of George Bowes's will was that anyone marrying his daughter, or succeeding to Gibside, would have to take the name of Bowes. This was at first not agreeable to Lord Strathmore, and there were also money matters to be arranged. The couple had five children, three boys and two girls, the eldest of whom was at first disliked by his mother.

The 9th Earl of Strathmore died of consumption in 1776 en route to Lisbon seeking a cure. The marriage had not been a happy one, and Mary Eleanor enjoyed her new freedom. She had an affair with George Grey, and, while expecting his child, suddenly married Andrew Robinson Stoney, an adventurer who had already maltreated and hastened the death of his wealthy first wife. He had wooed Mary Eleanor with a fake duel. Once married, Stoney sought to gain possession of the rents from the estate and tried to force her to make her property over to him. After ten years' struggle in the courts, she obtained a divorce and, in return for a pension, transferred the estate to her eldest son, John, the 10th Earl of Strathmore.³⁸

In these unpropitious circumstances, there were few changes at Gibside, although Mary Eleanor had erected a magnificent greenhouse between 1772 and 1775 to cater to her interest in plants. She commissioned the

botanist William Paterson to collect specimens during his voyage to the Cape of Good Hope in 1774–79, and these were contained in an elegant Neoclassical cabinet, veneered in burr elm and kingwood, complete with pipes and taps in the legs. The front is decorated with carved boxwood cameos of artistic and scientific figures including Apollo, Homer, Pope, and Shakespeare, indicating the learned nature of its function.³⁹ The cabinet must have been a unique commission, specially designed and made, although nothing can be traced in the family accounts relating to its construction. The cabinet survived, minus its plants, into the twentieth century with some adaptations, and was bought by the Bowes Museum in 1961 (Figure 19).

Mary Eleanor's eldest son, John Bowes, the 10th Earl, made good the depredations of his stepfather and restored Gibside as nearly as possible to what his grandfather had planned, a place of interest and delight. However, he failed to marry for many years, owing to a liaison with Lady Tyrconnel of Seaton Delaval on the bleak Northumbrian coast. She was a great beauty, six years his senior, with an easygoing husband, and she became a constant visitor to Gibside. However, Lady Tyrconnel was suffering from consumption and her condition varied, but remedies were useless and she died at Gibside on October 8, 1800. Lord Strathmore was left in much the situation as George Bowes when his first wife died, and he too turned to Gibside for consolation and employment. Gibside House was too large for his needs as a young bachelor. The top floor was removed and a heavy castellated parapet erected to hide the pitched roof. In 1812 the chapel designed by James Paine was nearly complete and was consecrated. John Dobson (1787–

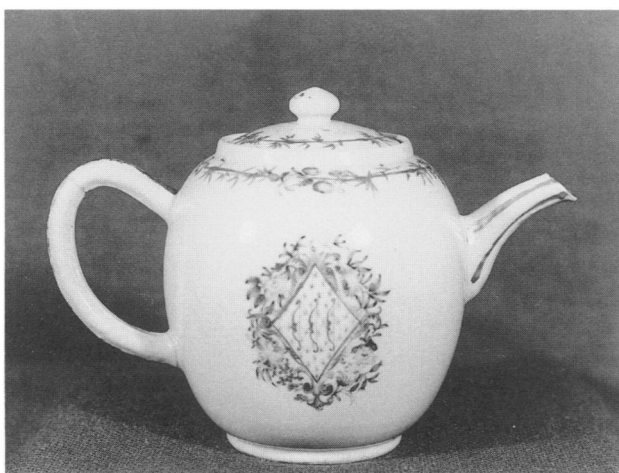


Figure 18. Chinese porcelain teapot with the arms of Bowes, ca. 1767. H. 16 cm. County Durham, The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle X.4439 (photo: The Bowes Museum)



Figure 19. Botanical-specimen cabinet, English, ca. 1780. Veneered in walnut and kingwood with applied boxwood cameos framed in mahogany, 136 x 76 x 47 cm. County Durham, The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle FW 56 (photo: The Bowes Museum)

1865) designed a new wing for Gibside House consisting of a two-story greenhouse, but this was rejected and the Earl of Strathmore returned to live at Streatlam Castle, the ancient seat of the Bowes. Here he formed a liaison with a village girl, Mary Millner, who gave birth to a son, John Bowes Bowes, in London in 1811.

The 10th Earl seems to have done little to the interiors at Gibside and Streatlam, other than adding some elegant suites of chairs, and was presumably happy with the furnishings ordered by his grandfather.⁴⁰ He did, nevertheless, buy a large quantity of plate from Rundell and Bridge between 1797 and 1801.⁴¹ They would have contrasted with a utilitarian Wedgwood blue-and-white service that was perhaps used when Mary Millner attended dinner after her arrival at Streatlam

Castle in 1813, although never when other guests were present. It was transferred to the Bowes Museum by his son in 1882. His greatest coup, however, was the purchase of three watercolors by J. M. W. Turner, executed when he was in the northeast on a commission to paint Raby Castle for the Duke of Cleveland. Turner wrote to his friend James Holworthy on November 21, 1817, that "Lord Strathmore called at Raby and took me away north"⁴² and the result was three watercolors, two of Gibside and one of another family property at Hylton Castle, one of which (*Gibside from the South*) was engraved by Samuel Rawle for Surtees's *History of Durham* (1816–23) (Figure 12).⁴³

The 10th Earl tried to legitimize his infant son by marrying Mary Millner on the day before he died in 1820, but the courts decided that his claim to the Scottish title and estates was not valid, as his father had never resided in Scotland, and the title passed to the 10th Earl's brother Thomas, who became the 11th Earl of Strathmore, from whom Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, the Patron of the Friends of The Bowes Museum, is descended. However, the infant John Bowes Bowes (eventually contracted to John Bowes) was left with an entailed interest in the Bowes family properties in County Durham, which made him a very rich man. He maintained the family estates in good order but spent increasing periods of time in Paris, where he married an actress, Joséphine Coffin-Chevalier, who was the guiding force behind the founding of the Bowes Museum in their home town of Barnard Castle, which opened in 1892.⁴⁴ On his death in 1885 the Durham properties reverted to the Strathmore family, who now took on the surname Bowes Lyon. After World War I they withdrew from the Streatlam and Gibside estates, and a number of family pieces came on the market into the collections of the Metropolitan Museum and the Bowes Museum, as well as other collections. A room in Glamis Castle, Angus, is furnished with family pieces, including a seventeenth-century armorial chimney-piece from Gibside. Although Streatlam is now demolished and Gibside survives as a shell in the care of the National Trust, enough exists of their collections to suggest something of the wealth and magnificence of one of the leading families of the north of England.

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NOTES

1. The location of the original documents is given in Joan Auld, "A Glamis Miscellany," *Archives* XIV, no. 63, pp. 131–140.
2. See Jennifer Gill, *Streatlam and Gibside: The Bowes and Strathmore Families in County Durham*, Durham Record Office, 1980, p. 28.
3. Philippa Glanville, "The Bowes Gold Cup: A Stuart Race Prize?," *Burlington Magazine* 137 (June 1995) pp. 387–390.
4. Durham Record Office, Strathmore Papers, D/St/D5/1/57.
5. Durham Record Office, Strathmore Papers, D/St/D5/1/59.
6. Preston Remington, "The Bowes-Blakiston Cabinet from Streatlam Castle," *MMAB* 26, no. 11 (Nov. 1931) pp. 264–267. The Trotter-Lawson cabinet is discussed and illustrated in Christopher Wilk, ed., *Western Furniture 1350 to the Present Day in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 1996) pp. 80–81.
7. These dates are given in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, no. 37 (1888) p. 381. However, the first date of 1719 is given by John Bowes, *Streatlam Castle in the County of Durham* (London, 1880) p. 13, and the catalogue of the sale of remaining contents and fittings held at Streatlam Castle by Perry & Phillips Ltd., Bridgenorth, Salop, on May 24–26, 1927.
8. Streatlam Castle and its contents were discussed and illustrated in *Country Life* 38 (Dec. 18, 1915) pp. 836–843.
9. R. Edwards and Percy Maquoid, *The Dictionary of English Furniture* (London, 1954) I, p. 258, fig. 98; the set sold at Parke-Bernet New York, Nov. 3–5, 1960, lot 370; a single chair sold at Sotheby's New York, Oct. 16, 1993, lot 308.
10. This supposition seems to be borne out by the volume of Bowes letters in the British Library (Add. Ms 40747), in which William writes twice (March 13, 1717/18, and April 24, 1718) to his mother from London, mentioning chairs and beds that he is sending to her in Durham. There is also a letter of 1720 to a prospective father-in-law in which he describes his assets, including £1,600 of silver, and mentions renovations at Streatlam and Gibside.
11. A related stand of the same date and by the same maker is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Other Bowes silver of the early 18th century includes a teapot and stand by John Leach of 1709 (*Christie's Review of the Year*, 1960–62, p. 34), and a coffeepot by John Bache of 1724 (sold at Christie's, July 12, 1989, lot 197).
12. A plain silver punch bowl (Newcastle, 1725) that he gave to the Newcastle Company of Bakers and Brewers ca. 1736 is now in the Bowes Museum (1984.5).
13. Durham Record Office, Londonderry Papers, D/Lo/F743 (14) June 10, 1744.
14. "A Unique Ensemble," *Connoisseur* (Aug. 1955) p. 27; Yvonne Hackenbroch, *English and Other Silver in the Irwin Untermyer Collection* (New York, rev. ed., 1969) p. 72, figs. 138, 139. See also *Queen Charlotte's Loan Exhibition of Old Silver*, Seaford House (London, 1929) pl. 43 (tripod stand only).
15. See John Cornforth, *Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother at Clarence House* (London, 1996) p. 53, which also illustrates other pieces of family silver today in Her Majesty's collection.
16. G. Sherburn, "Walpole's Marginalia in Additions to Pope (1776)," *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 1 (1938) p. 482, no. 171.
17. Robert Halsband, *The Life of Lady Wortley Montagu* (Oxford, 1956) p. 123.

18. Durham Record Office, Strathmore Papers, D/St/E5/5/2.
19. John Gloag and Yvonne Hackenbroch, *English Furniture with Some Other Furniture of Other Countries in the Irwin Untermyer Collection* (London, 1958) figs. 109, 110, and p. 25.
20. For a fuller account of the garden buildings at Gibside, see Margaret Wills, *Gibside and the Bowes Family* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1995).
21. Durham Record Office, Strathmore Papers, D/St/E5/8/10. The couch was possibly recovered by John Bowes in 1845; see D/St/E15/7/3.
22. Sarah Medlam, "William Greer at Gibside," *Furniture History* (1990) pp. 143–156.
23. Information in MMA files, courtesy of John Cornforth.
24. Emily J. Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu. The Queen of the Blue Stockings. Her Correspondence from 1720 to 1761* (London, 1906) pp. 36–37.
25. Durham Record Office, Strathmore Papers, D/St/E15/5/96 to 100 and D/St/E12/11.
26. In fact, a version of Franz Snyders's *Fruit Market* now in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg (see Susan Koslow, *Snyders* [Antwerp, 1996] p. 17).
27. April 26, 1746: "Paid Mr. Hogarth the Painter for Six Prints of Marriage a la Mode being ye second Payment 10/6d"; May 20, 1746: "Paid Elias Shadows bill for framing six Prints of Marriage à la Mode £1/18." They were subsequently recorded in the "Sotts Hall" (the drunkard's hall or gaming room) at Gibside in the inventory of 1761.
28. March 11, 1758: "Pd at y. Chelsea sale for 12 Plates with Plants £5 & four small Baskets for Fruit £2.5.0"; April 10, 1759: "Pd at ye Chelsea sale for 12 Plates with Plants £5.17.6d & 12 Plates less [?] £5.7.6d."
29. Nov. 30, 1756: "Paid Mr. Cobb Cabinet Makers for a Mahogany tea chest 12/-; Paid ditto for ditto a Mahogany table with a drawer in it 15/-; Paid for a large Mahogany chest of drawers to th[e] ap. [?] Maho[gan]y Night table £6.10s"; Feb. 15, 1758: "Pd Mr.Cobb Upholdersher y.Balance of his Bill in bill on Child [Mrs. Bowes's banker] £61.18.qd." Further payments to Cobb for 1754–57 are recorded in Medlam, "William Greer at Gibside," p. 155.
30. J. T. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* (London, 1829) II, p. 243, quoted in Geoffrey Beard and Christopher Gilbert, *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660–1840* (London, 1986) p. 182.
31. Anthony Coleridge, *Chippendale Furniture* (London, 1968) p. 22, fig. 11.
32. For the Dundas collection, see the special issue of *Apollo* (Sept. 1967).
33. Oliver Fairclough, "Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn and Robert Adam: Commissions for Silver 1768–80," *Burlington Magazine* 137 (June 1995) pp. 376–386.
34. Sold at Sotheby's, New York, Oct. 13, 1994, lot 479.
35. Durham Record Office, Strathmore Papers, D/St/E8/9 to 13.
36. British Library, Add. Ms 40748, Bowes MS, pp. 103–104.
37. Bonamy Dobré, ed., *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope 4th Earl of Chesterfield*, VI (London, 1932) no. 2480, pp. 2795–2796.
38. Her life story is described in Ralph Arnold, *The Unhappy Countess* (London, 1957).
39. Identifications are due to Gertrude Seidmann, Oxford.
40. A pair of Regency armchairs from Gibside was sold at Sotheby's, London, July 4, 1997, lot 85.
41. This included tureens, dinner plates, ice buckets, and a centerpiece (D/St/C1/10/16–17). The Bowes family silver was sold at Christies, London, Dec. 8, 1948, but the catalogue descriptions are too imprecise to enable many identifications to be made. A set of dinner plates with the 10th earl's arms by James Young, London, 1791, from the 1948 sale (lot 78) was sold at Christie's, April 30, 1996, lot 63.
42. John Gage, *Collected Correspondence of J. M. W. Turner* (Oxford, 1980) p. 71.
43. Andrew Wilton, *Turner* (London, 1979) nos. 556, 557.
44. See Charles Hardy, *John Bowes and the Bowes Museum* (Bishop Auckland, 1970); see Elizabeth Conran et al., *The Bowes Museum* (London, 1992).