

# FRANK PARTRIDGE

## **A Set of Twelve Queen Anne Walnut side Chairs Anglo Dutch**

*Circa 1715*

20 x 20 x 48.5 in high (52 x 51 x 123 cm)

*in the manner of Daniel Marot, the arched scrolling top-rail carved with foliage, the moulded shaped uprights carved with paterae, the pierced carved splat of vase form carved with scrolls and foliage, the stuffed seats with a pierced carved apron, on cabriole legs carved with foliage and joined by a shaped stretcher*

Illustrated

Partridge Summer Exhibition 1989 P 29

Until quite recently chairs of this type were thought to be English, and were regularly described as such in text books and catalogues. However, no chair of this model with a solid 18th century English provenance is known, and even the famous 'Roberts' chairs at Hampton Court Palace cannot firmly be placed there before the 19th century. Nor are such chairs depicted in 18th century drawings or paintings of English interiors; they first began to appear in 'antiquarian' interiors of the 1820s. This was a time when large quantities of European woodwork and furniture were imported into England in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars to supply a burgeoning demand for historicist furniture and objects, a taste fostered by the romantic novels of Sir Walter Scott, and by the nascent Gothic, Elizabethan and Carolean Revivals in architecture and decoration. In the *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture* (1833), J.C. Loudon related that among others, '... Wilkinson of Oxford Street, and Hanson of John Street, have extensive collections of Elizabethan and Dutch furniture...' suited to the antiquarian furnisher.

Similar chairs occur in European collections, particularly in Holland, and it is likely that they are indeed Dutch. The earliest versions, dating from around 1700, have framed, moulded backs filled with elaborately carved strap and scrollwork, the upholstered seats being raised on tapered pillar legs and X stretchers. Notable examples are held in the Rijksmuseum, Victoria and Albert Museum and the Metropolitan Museum. The design of the carved elements is often compared to patterns for ornamental fabric and upholstery published by Daniel Marot, which were adapted and translated into wood by Dutch carvers. There is also a strong visual link, in style and subject matter, between the chair backs and contemporary Dutch hall seats.

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Later versions, of which these are notable examples, employ the same decorative repertoire grafted onto a radically different form. The key features are; the curved or 'India' back, the vasiform splat, the raked back legs and asymmetric, forward-weighted stretcher and the cabriole front leg. All these elements derive from contemporary English chairs, which adapted the 'India-back' design from about 1715. However, the finely carved decoration is characteristically Dutch, as are certain features of design and construction. The oak seat rails, the scrolled back legs, the dead-flat back and the numbering of chair parts are all indicative of Dutch rather than English manufacture.

Adam Bowett, September 2014