

Nostell Priory and Parkland

Nostell Priory takes its name from the priory dedicated to St Oswald which stood here from the 12th Century until Henry VIII ordered the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s. It was then converted to a house, which was bought in 1654 by the Winn family, wealthy textile merchants.

Inspired by his Grand Tour of Europe in the early 18th Century, Sir Rowland Winn started plans to build a new house – the one we see today. He commissioned a doll's house on an equally grand scale for his new wife, Susanna. The doll's house is one of the most loved items by visitors to Nostell and not to be missed.

Sir Rowland's son (another Rowland!) was later to snub his father's taste for the flamboyant Rococo style and embrace the newly trendy neoclassical look. He engaged the country's most prestigious architect, Robert Adam, to complete the building of the house and Thomas Chippendale to furnish the rooms.

Work on the house came to an abrupt end in 1785 when Rowland was killed in a road accident. His widow, a Swiss heiress called Sabine, continued to live at the house with her children. She was, by all accounts, very unhappy and consoled herself with food, resulting in her becoming increasingly fat to the point where she had to be wheeled around in specially made chair!

The house and family fortunes went into a period of decline for over 30 years until it was inherited by Charles Winn in 1817. Charles set about finishing the house and filling it with his huge collection of curiosities, ornaments and paintings.

By the time his son, Rowland (yes, another one!) inherited the house in 1874, the family fortunes were beginning to improve, thanks to the rich coal reserves on the estate. The Winns became rich and powerful industrialists and the house was known as a centre for Northern Conservatism.

The twentieth century saw the house used periodically by the family and run by a permanent staff when the family were not in residence. During World War II it was requisitioned by the Royal Artillery for the training of recruits.

In 1954 the house was conveyed to the National Trust and the Trust continues to look after the estate for everyone to enjoy. It is unusual in that it retains all the original Chippendale furniture along with the later collections of Sir Charles Winn.