

Adam Calvert Bentley and Ardgowan Antiques

Call +44 7545 220052



NAPOLEONIC INTEREST: Rare Linen Damask Banqueting Cloth Commemorating The Napoleonic Wars

An exceptionally rare, if not unique Irish damask banqueting cloth of fine white linen made to commemorate the battle of Waterloo and Trafalgar, with a central figure of Britannia flanked by military trophies *Waterloo* and *Trafalgar* and with a fallen flag reading *Napoleon*, the borders with wreaths, anchors and trident crowns signed by Coulsons of Lisburn, Ireland

SKU: C2947

Length: 538 cm (212 inches)

Width: 226 cm (89 inches)

Year: Irish. Early 19th Century



The Duke of Wellington celebrated his victory each year with a banquet at his home, Apsley House, on a linen banqueting cloth woven by Coulsons of Lisburn

The Coulsons of Lisburn: Damask Manufacturers

William Coulson (1739-1801) set up a damask linen weaving company in Lisburn in 1764. His hand woven linen tablecloths and napkins became renowned for their high quality and elaborately woven patterns. They were commissioned by royal and noble families throughout the British isles and Europe.

William Coulson had four sons, John, William, Walter and James, who continued the business after their father's death. During the 1830s the company split in two, when James set up his own firm, James Coulson & Company. Both firms continued to produce damask and other fine linens for royalty and other international and prestigious clients until the 20th century.

It was not unusual to have floral designs and special commissions with family coat-of-arm, cloths of various sizes, including banqueting cloths were accompanied by matching napkins, which were the same design on smaller scale. Others are special commissions, including the linen woven for the social event of the season in 1838, The Waterloo Banquet, in the year of Queen Victoria's Coronation. The factory eventually closed down in 1931.

For a similar example of this commemorative cloth, (approx. 379cm by 270cm; 12ft by 8ft 8in), and group of accompanying similarly designed napkins, attributed to John William Coulson and Walter Coulson, linen weavers of Lisburn, see the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London (TXT0175-TXT0181).

Adam Calvert Bentley and Ardgowan Antiques

In 1810 the firm of Coulson was honoured by receiving the following letter on behalf of H. R. H. The Prince of Wales (the Prince Regent).

Call +44 7545 220052

Carlton House Terrace,

Sept. 10 1810. Gentlemen, I received your letter, and avail myself of the earliest moment to make known to you His Royal Highness's pleasure upon the subject of it. I have the satisfaction to inform you that the patent which I herein enclose, confirming to you the appointment of Table Linen Manufactures to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, has been conferred on you with every mark of approbation from His Royal highness, who commands me to say how much he admires the beauty and excellence of your manufacture, and how desirous he feels to give every possible encouragement to that branch of trade which forms the staple of Ireland; in the welfare of which His Royal Highness ever takes an earnest and anxious interest. I am further commanded to say that you have His Royal Highness's permission to use his name in any further manner which you may conceive to be conducive to your credit and interest. I have the honour to be, gentlemen, Your most obedient servant, To Messrs. Coulson. B. Bloomfield

Belfast Municipal Museum And Art Gallery

Curator Arthur Deane, F. R. S. E., M. R. I. A..

Quarterly note

NoLVII ----- June 1938

States of Coulsons of Lisburn

One of the social events of the London season a hundred years ago was a Waterloo banquet at Apsley House. The Duke's annual celebration of the anniversary was particularly memorable in 1838, the year of Queen Victoria's Coronation.

In some of the cloths that were made for the Royal Household a centrepiece, bearing the word "Waterloo" was interwoven. The cloths are still in use for the dinner which is held in the Waterloo Chamber, Windsor Castle, on the eve of the anniversary of the battle. The "paint" of the centrepiece has been presented to the Museum by Mr. James English, Belfast. [79'36]

A few years ago H. M. Queen Mary was graciously pleased to examine a napkin that had been made in the Lisburn looms for George III. His Majesty immediately noticed the resemblance to the pattern of the Waterloo cloths. At the same time, she asked when the fleur-de-lys had been omitted from the Royal Arms.

James Coulson continued to receive a large share of the orders for the Royal Household. He also received appointments to the holders of the Vice-Regal office at Dublin Castle, the Tzar Alexander II. of Russia George I., King of the Hellenes, Leopold, Duke of Tuscany, the nobility and gentry at home and abroad, the social clubs, the military messes, and from hotels in London and overseas: these all contributed to make a well-known and established business.

At the Great exhibition in 1851, Mr. Coulson received a diploma and a gold medal. He died in 1851, aged 76, and left his business and all his property to Mr. James Ward, Strawberry Hill, Lisburn. Mr Ward resided principally in London, but paid occasional visits to the factory. He was largely instrumental in the formation of the London Irish Rifles, and was its first Commanding Officer. For his services to the Territorial Force he received the honour of C. B. from H. M. Queen Victoria.