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¹ Gloucestershire Archives, D149/TRS80 and F7.



2 Frampton Court, the gentleman's house constructed by Richard Clutterbuck between 1731 and 1733. *The author*

The new Frampton Court that replaced it mixed Palladian planning, with a main block, hyphens and wings housing offices, and baroque ornamentation (Figure 2). Inside, the ground floor domestic spaces exhibited a hierarchical arrangement and high quality craftsmanship. The classical orders established a decorative ranking for the rooms that visitors encountered when moving through the more public chambers. The stone-floored centre hall with Doric pilasters served as a space for segregating and directing encounters in the house. Its deal-panelled walls distinguished it from two parlors displaying exquisitely joined oak panelling decorated with Ionic and Corinthian pilasters (Figure 3). Family tradition claims that shipwrights from Bristol were involved in this work. Although there is no documentary evidence to support this story, skilled joiners from Bristol were likely employed in Frampton Court's construction, implying substantial urban and rural interaction.² A small study or library was situated off the Hall in the design of the new house. This room had built-in shelving, which seems to have been part of the original fabric of the room (Figure 4).³ Inlaid stairs provided vertical access. In several closets on the first floor, workmen re-used seventeenth-century panelling from the previous house (Figure 5). The best rooms on the ground and first floors overlooked the gardens. The offices included a kitchen in one wing, where the service stair climbed from the basement to the first floor, with a winding stair up to the garrets. The other wing housed the laundry, baking facilities and possibly an apartment.

This brief tour suggests how a small classical house served as a standard architectural form used by lesser landed gentry and rising commercial men alike to delineate their status and provide a commodious house for their everyday activities. Taken as a whole, the new Frampton Court presented a display that was at once confident, bold and attractive, but also suggested a show mounted by an owner not entirely certain about his status. The estate at Frampton had been held by the Clifford family since the eleventh century, but the marriage of Richard's grandparents in 1645 had united the

² Visual connections with Bristol work at such houses as Goldney House lend support.

³ I am grateful to Dr Susie West for her thoughts on this subject.



3 Chimneypiece in the drawing room at Frampton Court. *The author*



4 Frampton Court, the study; a drawing by a member of the family, c. 1840.
The author



5 Seventeenth-century panelling purportedly re-used in the building of the new Frampton Court. *The author*

longstanding gentry family with a well-to-do family of clothiers, the Clutterbucks. Despite his small landed estate, Richard's father retained active links with the mercantile world, serving from 1694 as Searcher of the Port of Bristol, an influential post in the Customs service that later devolved to Richard. Between 1680 and 1770 throughout Gloucestershire, men like Richard Clutterbuck combined architecture, spatial arrangement, interior finishes and furnishings in a way that achieved the segregation of space necessary to sustain the role of a gentleman. Although less differentiated than larger houses, compact plan houses were flexible, affording space for the public, private and service functions necessary to a genteel way of life.⁴

Genteel Gloucestershire families conveyed their social standing not only in the form, arrangement, and finish of their house, but most especially by precisely how it was furnished. This essay seeks to reconstruct the furnishing patterns of several genteel owners in Gloucestershire and around Bristol during the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The contents of gentlemen's houses like Frampton Court remain largely unstudied, but account books, probate records, receipts, letters, drawings and, in a few instances, surviving objects and collections, open possibilities to investigate their furnishing. These sources comprise the primary evidence for this essay, and a deep reading and analysis of several inventories and extant furnishings are at its core.⁵ Assessing the possessions of a group of owners on the threshold between the upper ends of the middling sort and the minor gentry offers new perspectives on the regional nature of furnishing.

Although a range of studies has charted consumption patterns, investigated the domestic interior and chronicled the availability of goods in England, analysis of household objects can be pushed further.⁶ Owners of small classical houses in Gloucestershire undertook few extensive interior decorating schemes until quite late in the eighteenth century. Gentlemen fitted out their houses in comfortable, occasionally sumptuous, ways. To achieve this level of furnishing, genteel households mixed fashionable and conservative elements by injecting newly acquired goods into older furnishing schemes. Moreover, buying new possessions rather than rebuilding a house was both affordable and had immediate visible impact. When genteel owners wanted to add something exotic to their household, they did not create a japanned room. Instead, they acquired a japanned piece of furniture, or, in the case of Richard Clutterbuck, a set of Chinese armorial porcelain.

Over time, owners adapted their houses to suit altered living patterns, most often by changing or updating furnishings. Without pushing the analogy too far, possessions were mobile in a way that reflected the mobility of gentlemen.⁷ Furnishings served as

⁴ See especially Gomme and Maguire (2008), pp. 140–47.

⁵ On the use of probate records, see Arkell, Evans, and Goose (2000); Spufford (1990); Swynfen Jervis (2010); Howard (1998).

⁶ See the especially valuable work of Earle (1989), chapter 8; Brewer and Porter (1993); Weatherill (1996); Shamma (1990); Overton, Whittle, Dean, and Hann (2004); Berg (2005); Styles and Vickery (2006); Goodman and Norberg (2007); Greig and Riello (2007); French (2007), especially chapter 3; Harvey (2008); Vickery (2009). For Bristol, Estabrook (1998), has used inventories extensively, especially chapter 6. See also E. and S. George (2005) and (2008); Moore (1981). On interiors, Fowler and Cornforth (1978); Thornton (1984); Saumarez Smith (1993); Cornforth (2004); Murdoch (2006); Collett-White (1995); Ayres (2003). Weatherill comments that 'Measurement of frequency also obscures some of the differences in quality and quantity', an important point [Weatherill (1996), p. 170].

⁷ Corfield (1996).

an indicator that differentiated merely genteel houses from those of the aristocracy and greater gentry. At the same time the number and quality of their possessions distinguished genteel owners from even moderately prosperous middling members of society. Instead, furnishings represented a central strategy for genteel owners to calibrate and display their status.

Domestic possessions reveal the subtle and evolving refinement of social status. The builders and owners of gentlemen's houses straddled the boundary between the upper middling sort and the lower levels of landed society. A few subsisted primarily on landed income, several reaped profits from government service, and a number made their money primarily in trade and commerce. Most profited from both landed and non-landed sources, displaying a broad portfolio of investments. Regardless of the source of their fortunes, however, all were united by their choice of residence. In the first half of the period, for example, the Whitmore family of Lower Slaughter Manor, who held estates in Shropshire as well as Gloucestershire, typified a Cotswold gentry family of long-standing residence.⁸ In the 1730s, two houses owned by John Elbridge, Cote and the Royal Fort, revealed the furnishing choices of a high-ranking Bristol Customs official. Mid-eighteenth-century mercantile patrons from the village of Clifton near Bristol, Thomas Goldney III and Paul Fisher, illuminated the interaction between interior space, furnishings, and wealth radiating from commercial pursuits in England's second port city. At Frampton Court, Richard Clutterbuck's account book and surviving objects map furnishings acquired after the construction of the new Frampton Court in the early 1730s, highlighting the role that fashionable objects played. Each of these houses helps to illustrate various aspects of genteel furnishing patterns, whilst contributing to a broader understanding of the changes in the gentlemanly household during the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Table 1 lists inventory values for household goods as well as the number of spaces appraised for several small classical houses in Gloucestershire. These figures indicate that the scale of furnishings in genteel houses with four rooms on a floor was fairly consistent between the 1680s and 1760s. Despite changes in values, the availability of goods, and the number of furnishings, a gentleman might expect to furnish his house with objects costing a few hundred pounds. This amounted to about ten per cent of building costs. The number and value of furnishings might be somewhat higher for those near Bristol, as in the case of John Elbridge and Paul Fisher, but this might be a matter of individual choice rather than geography. Other owners of small classical houses might occasionally spend less, but only on rare occasions significantly more than these figures reflect.

Genteel people furnishing houses had many motives, including display, sociability, comfort, security, knowledge and even political statement. During the century after 1680 people's possessions increased in number.¹⁰ Several kinds of objects held particular status for gentlemen and their families. Invariably, precious metals, especially silver, formed the most valuable component of a gentleman or woman's personal possessions, although significant numbers of such possessions were restricted to the very

⁸ Atkyns (1712), p. 655.

⁹ It is interesting how inventory takers examining the same house at Lower Slaughter Manor might delineate certain spaces separately, which accounts for the variation in number across the three Whitmore inventories.

¹⁰ Weatherill (1996), p. 6.

Table 1 Comparative values of household furnishings (£), and inventoried spaces.⁹

	John Clifford, 1683, Frampton House	Richard Whitmore, 1688, Lower Slaughter Manor	William Whitmore, 1725, Lower Slaughter Manor	Elizabeth Whitmore, 1735, Lower Slaughter Manor	John Elbridge, 1739, Cote	John Elbridge, 1739, The Fort House	Paul Fisher, 1744–1752, Clifton Hill House	Thomas Goldney, 1768, Goldney House
VALUE	Few values listed	274.16.8 ^a	260.10.6 ^a	199.17.0	290.8.10	303.12.8	326.17.11	No values
NO. OF SPACES LISTED ^b	19	23	21	15	24	23	N/A	25

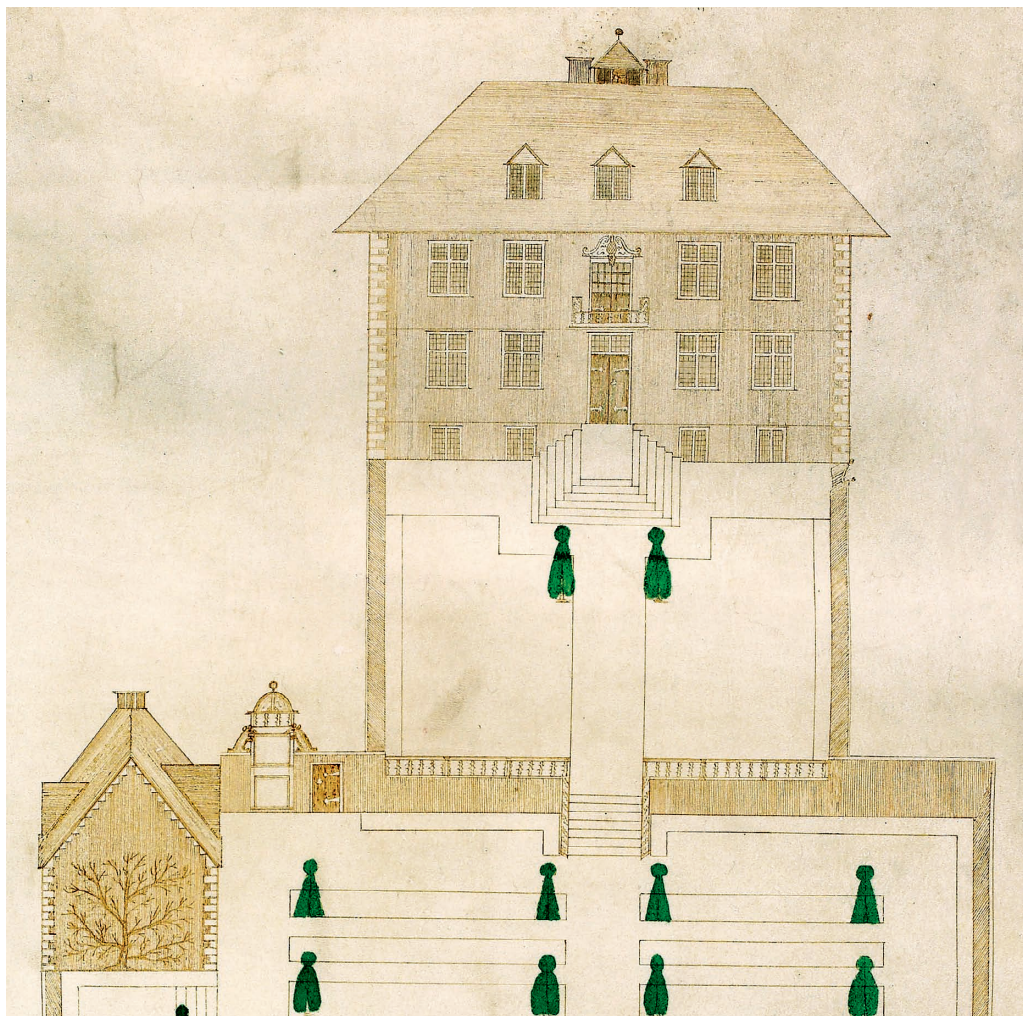
NOTES: a = silver included in calculation

b = excluding outbuildings

wealthy.¹¹ Textiles were typically the most costly goods in gentlemen's houses with the exception of precious metals, a feature of eighteenth-century life that John Cornforth described as the 'primacy of upholstery'.¹² The period under consideration stood out as a time of transition and growth in the textile industry, and in Bristol and especially the Stroudwater Valleys, considerable fortunes were made in the eighteenth century from the production and distribution of cloth.¹³ Genteel families kept careful records of linen and clothing and fabric often added to the inventoried value of furnishings.¹⁴ The possession of books also marked status.¹⁵ Furniture design manuals and pattern books have been credited with the transmission of cultural values, but the libraries of some of the richest, most fashion-conscious of Gloucestershire owners display limited evidence of such books.¹⁶ Their libraries suggest that gentlemen such as Elbridge, Goldney and Fisher were moderately knowledgeable about arts, architecture, and furniture, but not in the category of gentlemen-scholar amateur architects.

Reflecting the continued conservatism of many genteel houses, display of arms and armour were not uncommon, such as at old Frampton Court, where in 1683 John Clifford had '3 carbines; 2 dragoone muskets; 1 old pistol; 1 payer of holsters; 1 halberd' in the Hall. Additionally in the kitchen he kept '1 Birding peece, with my arms on it in silver'.¹⁷ Such martial displays continued into the eighteenth century. John Elbridge had a 'Pyke' in his Hall.¹⁸ William Palling of Brownhill Court had an arsenal

¹¹ Shammas (1990), p. 179.¹² Cornforth (2004), p. 75.¹³ Jenkins (2003), 1, p. 396.¹⁴ See, for example, Gloucestershire Archives, D45/F4.¹⁵ Weatherill (1996), Table 5.1; Estabrook (1998), p. 168, Table 7.1.¹⁶ Vickery (2009), p. 21; Harris, (1990). Gloucestershire Archives, D149/TRS80; D45/F3; D45/F4; D149/T358; Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/10/18; Bristol Central Library, 23274; University of Bristol Library, DM1398/A.¹⁷ Gloucestershire Archives, D149/TRS80.¹⁸ Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/10/19.



6 Lower Slaughter Manor, from a 1731 estate plan. *Gloucestershire Archives*

of weapons stockpiled at his house. In 1758, a government official tasked to investigate noted ‘a great Number of Arms for such a Place, and very clean and ranged in good Order,’ including long guns, Blunderbusses, and various pole arms.¹⁹ Even in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, older forms of display, with overtones of power and control, remained aspects of domestic space in gentlemen’s houses.

Three inventories, supplemented by other sources, from the Manor at Lower Slaughter, Gloucestershire reflect the furnishings over time of the Whitmores, a prominent gentry family with estates in Shropshire and Gloucestershire (Figure 6).²⁰ Richard Whitmore’s 1688 inventory offers a look into the house in the late seventeenth

¹⁹ Report from the Egerton MS 3440 (Leeds Papers vol. cxvii), Appendix 5 in Phillpotts (2010).

²⁰ www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66436.

century.²¹ The inventory takers began their work on the first floor in the 'Best Chamber', indicating the centrality of bedrooms to domestic display at this date. This room was indeed splendid; amongst its furnishings was a bed arrayed in purple cloth, an unusual choice of colour, embroidered with 'slipps'.²² On the walls hung tapestries depicting 'the Story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba'. A set of chairs, one with arms, a couch, and curtain on the windows completed the ensemble. Valued at £60, the best chamber was an impressive space for a member of the late-seventeenth-century gentry. Although the other bedchambers, visited next, were less valuable, the appraiser's initial emphasis on these first floor spaces is an indication of their importance in the overall value of the household.

Despite having four main spaces on the ground floor, Lower Slaughter Manor contained only three identifiable public rooms: the 'Little Parlour', 'Hall' and 'Great Parlour'. By comparison with the bedchambers these rooms housed relatively low value objects. The exception was the Great Parlour, which contained fourteen chairs covered with turkey work, as well as three 'Turkey Carpetts', a looking glass and silver toasting fork. It is unclear whether the carpets were on furniture, as often depicted in the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, or on the floor.²³ The fourth room may have been one of the 'chambers' listed,²⁴ possibly the 'Chamber over the Kitchen' (which was in the basement) noted in a 1725 inventory of the manor house.²⁵ The practice of having a bed chamber on the ground floor changed entirely in genteel houses over the ensuing century.

Inventories conducted in 1725 and again in 1735 offer evidence of important modifications at Lower Slaughter from several decades before. The inventory takers in 1725 began their survey in the Hall, signifying a different mind-set about the relative importance of spaces.²⁶ The ground floor rooms displayed many of the same furnishings, but generally appraised at lower values. The same fourteen chairs and couch stood in the 'Bigg Parlour', for example, although their lower appraisal reflected their out-dated nature.²⁷ In the same room, however, appeared 'One stand, Tea table, one Hand tea table, & a Sett of China', an indication that the Whitmores were one of few gentry families to acquire China and utensils for hot drinks by 1725.²⁸ Besides these new wares, however, the room contained a paltry £2.4.0 of household goods, by comparison with the £15 there in 1688. The bedchambers remained the most valuable rooms in the house, although these too had declined in value. The 'Bedstead Curtains etc' in the former 'Best Chamber' was valued at £5, a steep drop, and a 'Bedstead with Cloth Curtains lined with silk' was worth only £3.10.0.

²¹ Gloucestershire Archives, D45/F2.

²² Slipps were embroidered elements applied to textiles. On colour see Vickery (2009), pp. 172–75.

²³ See Saumarez Smith (1993), plates 15 and 38.

²⁴ As suggested by Gomme and Maguire (2008), p. 213, plan 159.

²⁵ Gloucestershire Archives, D45/F3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ The fourteen chairs are valued at £1.1.0. The couch is 3s.

²⁸ Weatherill (1996), Table 8.1 indicates that only 6% of gentry families owned china and 7% utensils for hot drinks in the 1675–1725 period. Overton et al. (2004), Table A4.1, 192, states that between 1700 and 1740, only 20% of Cornish gentlemen and 23.1% of Kentish gentlemen possessed material goods related to hot drinks.

The 1725 inventory conveys the impression of a relatively conservative member of the squirearchy, but by the 1730s the Whitmores updated their rooms by purchasing a number of new furnishings. A widow played a pivotal role in this household refurbishment. After her husband William's death in 1725, Elizabeth Whitmore spent time and money at Lower Slaughter, repairing the manor and acquiring stylish objects not found in the house earlier, including several tables made of mahogany, a newly-fashionable wood. Whereas up to 1725 William Whitmore had retained one of the ground floor rooms as a bedchamber, his widow removed the bed and installed a 'burrow and book case' valued at the substantial sum of £10, as well as an easy chair, a comfortable seating furniture form that only began to appear in parlours from the 1730s. This room almost certainly functioned as a personal informal sitting area, with its easy chair (but no other chairs), burrow and bookcase, 'writing table' and the personal touch of 'seven small pictures'.²⁹ Other bedrooms were slated for refurbishment, as indicated by a £40 'worked bed and quilt with two pieces of damask to line the same Unfinished & not Sett up'.

The furnishing of houses was a complex interplay between husbands and wives and the account of Lower Slaughter Manor offers further evidence to support the importance of women's roles in furnishing the domestic interior. Historians have debated this point extensively. Amanda Vickery suggests 'evidence of female designs and patronage dates from 1600 at least'. Cornforth and Saumarez Smith see the eighteenth century as the period when ladies' choices became central to interior decoration, although Cornforth argues this occurred in the 1720s whilst Saumarez Smith contends it was not until about 1760.³⁰ Evidence from Lower Slaughter indicates an earlier date in line with Cornforth. The increased presence of china also indicates a turning point in display and dining habits, where William's pewter was supplanted by Elizabeth's china. Three dozen knives and forks appeared in the 'Butler's Pantry'. Easy chairs were found in two rooms, including the 'Little Parlour'. In 1735, the 'Great Parlour' contained several new objects: an 'India Japan'd Chest', coffee mugs, and a 'TeaPott' of 'blew and white China' for use in formal entertaining.³¹ Elizabeth Whitmore's transformation of Lower Slaughter Manor, with pewter and cane chairs out, blue and white china and mahogany in, mirrors a broader change taking place in many genteel houses throughout the country.³² In this way, Lower Slaughter illustrates the careful balance in furnishing, combining *à la mode* and old-fashioned, which was characteristic of small classical houses and their owners.

Chancery court documents, including inventories and auction records from a case involving the will of customs official John Elbridge, offer further insights into genteel possessions near the thriving port of Bristol. Elbridge, the son of a merchant, worked diligently in professional service as Deputy Comptroller of Customs in Bristol, acquired a gentleman's house, and lived handsomely but not extravagantly despite great wealth. His assets included a house in Kings Street around the corner from the Custom House, a house in the Royal Fort, and lands in Hanham, Oldland and Bitton

²⁹ Cornforth (2004), p. 42; Crowley (2001), pp. 145–46.

³⁰ Vickery (2009), p. 131; Cornforth (2004), p. 206; Saumarez Smith (1993), p. 233.

³¹ Gloucestershire Archives, D45/F4.

³² Thornton (1984), p. 102; Bowett (2009), p. 15.



7 Cote House. *The author*

in Gloucestershire.³³ Elbridge had an interest in several other estates and carried numerous mortgages for others.³⁴ A portion of his fortune came from a moderate-sized sugar plantation in Jamaica and was thus underpinned by the Atlantic slave trade.³⁵ Elbridge was a substantial landowner with a diversified portfolio of investments.

Elbridge owned two houses for which furnishing records survive: Cote House ‘over the Downs’ near Westbury on Trym and the Royal Fort house in St Michael’s Hill. Inventories suggest that the household contents at Cote and the Royal Fort were worth similar amounts — £290.8.10 and £303.12.8 respectively — but the Cote appraisal became a main point of contention because one lawyer argued it was ‘an Imperfect Schedule of Such Goods, by reason many of them (and those the best) are huddled together in Gross Sums which is Certainly Wrong and I believe unprecedented’.³⁶ The ‘Imperfect Schedule’ for Cote, however, indicates the coded cultural and monetary values of furnishings for the genteel.

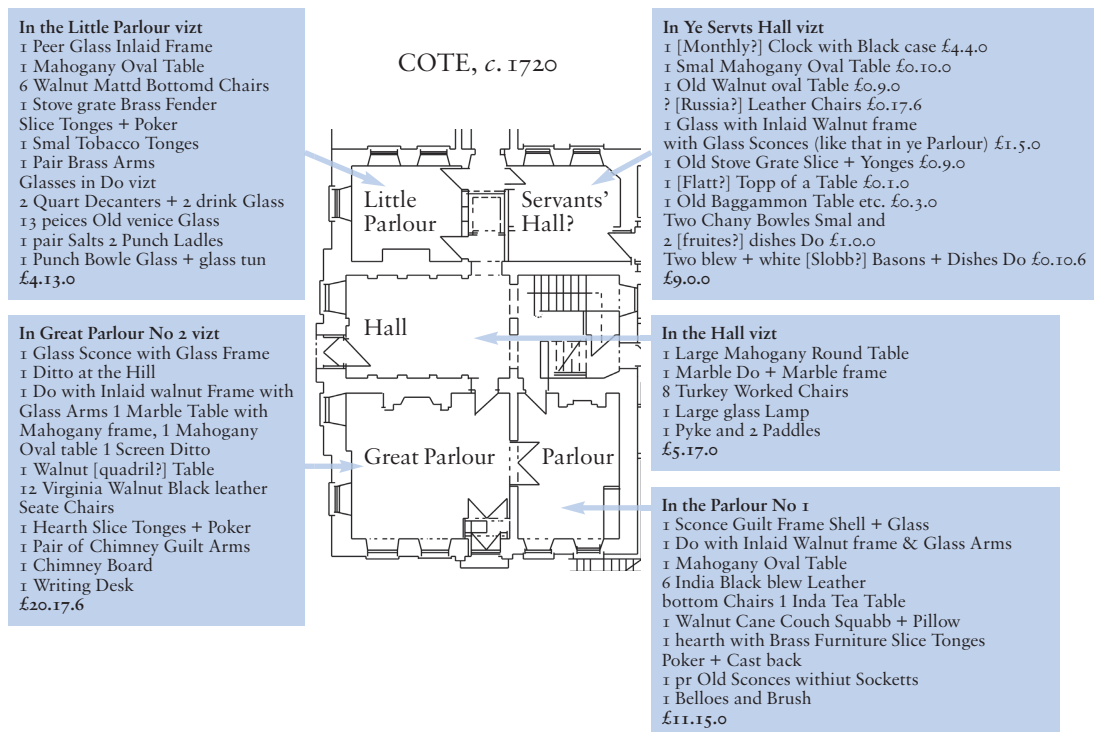
This disputed inventory makes Elbridge’s Cote House one of the most copiously documented gentlemen’s houses in Gloucestershire, but one that is virtually unexplored (Figure 7). In 1728, Elbridge received Cote as a bequest from his cousin Thomas Moore, who also left him specific objects, including an ‘East India Cabinet’, a ‘Tortoiseshell

³³ Bristol Record Office, 1608/8/b and 1608/a. For the Royal Fort House, see Leech, (2000), p. 61. Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/20.

³⁴ Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/10/15 and AC/WO/12-20.

³⁵ Bristol Record Office, 34328/a.

³⁶ Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/11/1/a.



8 Cote floor plan, with inventoried contents for each room. *The author*

Cabinett and all that is in them', 'two Tortoiseshell powder boxes', a third portion of 'Plate [,] Rugs & Jewels', and 'so many of my pictures in my now dwelling House on St Michael's Hill as he shall have a mind & liking to'.³⁷ The specificity of these bequests reinforced the precise and loaded value of the gift. In turn, during Elbridge's probate settlement, his niece displayed both emotional attachment to the goods at Cote, which had been her sister's, and a keen sense of their worth by demanding 'some few pieces of furniture' that she was bent on having for herself.

Elbridge's furnishings as described in the 1739 inventory can be matched with the surviving house to reconstruct how the rooms were furnished, what signals each space and its associated objects conveyed, who used which spaces, and how spaces and objects together structured the lives of gentlemen owners and their households (Figure 8).³⁸ The dark wood-panelled Hall governing entry and access to the house had a 'Large Mahogany Round Table' and '8 Turkey Worked Chairs', a durable fabric which had its peak popularity in the late-seventeenth century for middling rank homes.³⁹ These rather old-fashioned chairs designated a respectable but somewhat utilitarian space. The first room on the right, listed as the Great Parlour on the Elbridge inventory, had

³⁷ Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/10/4.

³⁸ Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/10/19.

³⁹ Thornton (1984), pp. 24 and 59; Saumarez Smith (1993), p. 175, plate 163; Bowett (2002), p. 77.

'dark panelling like the hall'.⁴⁰ The furniture included several sconces, one of glass the other of inlaid walnut, a 'Marble Table with Mahogany frame', '1 Mahogany Oval Table', '12 Virginia Walnut Black leathr Seate Chairs', and a 'writing desk'. Three tables and twelve chairs made from various woods combined with handsomely-decorated lighting fixtures and a writing desk to create a room that was a centre of sociability and perhaps some business.⁴¹ Pictures, listed separately on the inventory, also likely hung here. Valued at £20.17.6, this room contained the most valuable objects on the ground floor.

The 'Parlour' located behind contained a 'Walnut Cane Couch' (or daybed),⁴² '1 India Tea Table', a single 'Mahogany Oval Table' and 6 'India Back' chairs with 'blew Leather' bottoms, that is slip seats. Injecting ornamentation was a 'Guilt frame Shell + Glass'. The presence of fashionable India back chairs with a day bed indicated use for both repose and polite entertainment, a space of less formality but more privilege. It is interesting to note that leather served as upholstery in these two ground floor spaces, likely a practical alternative because meals were taken in one or both of these rooms. Across the Hall, the 'Little Parlour' had one mahogany table and walnut seating furniture covered in even plainer matted bottoms, a typical feature until about 1725, whilst its equipment of 'tobacco tongues', decanters, glasses and punchbowl suggest a room used for intimate male sociability.⁴³

The fourth space on the ground floor at Cote was likely 'Ye Servts Hall'. This room, heated with a small corner fireplace, was well-furnished for the use of Elbridge's staff. Presumably because it was a back space, the appraisers valued the objects individually, offering a better guide to their worth. They especially noted that a £1.5.0 looking glass with inlaid walnut frame and scone arms was 'like that in ye Parlour', an indication of the relative ranking of furnishings in the house. The appraisers described several objects, including a walnut table, as 'old', perhaps cast-offs previously used in other parts of the house. A costly 'Monthly Clock wth Black case' valued at £4.4.0 regimented the time, which the servants might have spent at an 'Old Baggamon Table' worth 3 shillings, seated in seven chairs covered in 'Russia Leather'.

Five bedrooms occupied the first floor. In eighteenth-century genteel households, the best bed was the most important and expensive object, not on account of its wood but because of the fabric that adorned it and this was true at Cote.⁴⁴ Additionally, for much of the eighteenth century, inventory samples from England and North America suggest that bedding often constituted the largest category of expenditure in any house.⁴⁵ Documentary evidence and architectural features such as panelling and deep cornices suggest that the two finest rooms were located directly above the Great Parlour

⁴⁰ Cote, Robinson MS, 1971, p. 7.

⁴¹ Both Virginia walnut and mahogany became much more readily available after the passing of the Naval Stores Act in 1721. See Bowett (1994) and (1995).

⁴² Bowett (2009), p. 187.

⁴³ Bowett (2002), pp. 80–83, discusses leather. Matted bottoms are mentioned on p. 272 and in Bowett (2009), p. 163, plate 4.37. Leather seems to have supplanted cane and rush seats after about 1725, see Cornforth (2004), p. 40.

⁴⁴ Rothstein and Levy (2003), I, pp. 631–58, 633. For comparative bed values, see Cornforth (2004), pp. 91–92. See also Ayres (2003), p. 82, and Beard (1997).

⁴⁵ Shammas (1990), pp. 169–70, Table 6.3.

and Parlour.⁴⁶ Located at the front of the house, the most highly decorated room enjoyed ready access to the main stair. Its furnishings were appraised at a substantial £50. Chintz fabric with yellow satin adorned the bed, which was replicated in the elaborate window curtains. The presence of chintz is particularly intriguing. By the eighteenth century, East Indian fabrics, especially calicoes and chintzes, had caught the fancy of Europeans and challenged the products of European woollen manufactures.⁴⁷ In England, this ‘calico craze’ resulted in episodes of violent protest against printed cottons, and an almost complete ban on East Indian fabrics in 1721, a victory for the wool trade that sustained so many other Gloucestershire gentlemen.⁴⁸ Curiously at Cote, chintz, illegal to import from India although available in English facsimiles, served as a fashion statement for one of Bristol’s leading Customs officials. Additional furnishings, including a ‘Chint[z] Quilt Lined with green silk’, 2 dressing tables, a ‘Double Jappan case Drawers’ and ‘10 India Back Chairs with Workd Seats’, indicated that this space easily served to entertain — and impress — visitors.

A ‘Closet’ adjoining the best bedchamber contained ‘1 Walnut Desk and Bookcase’. This £5.5 case piece seemingly stood alone in the small room. By comparison, desk and bookcases listed in inventories from larger country houses at Erddig and Cannons were valued at between £7 and £25.⁴⁹ The desk and bookcase naturally suggests books. Between his two houses at Cote and in St Michael’s Hill, Elbridge owned seventy volumes valued at a relatively modest £5.10. The collection included a combination of religious and instructional literature, together with some history, poetry, and plays: *The Whole Duty of Man*, *The Gentleman’s Calling*, and *The Gentleman Instructed*, which was ‘written for the instruction of a young nobleman’.⁵⁰ The books offer a guide to gentlemanly reading habits and assert the closet as a private space for combined writing and study for the customs official.⁵¹

The next most expensively furnished space was also a bedchamber on the first floor. This chamber, fully-panelled, probably in oak (Figure 9),⁵² contained a bed with a Crimson silk counterpane, two ‘setts of Crimson Camblet window vallions Cornishes + 2 squabbs’, a ‘walnut case Drawers’, 6 fashionable ‘India Back chaires with Camblet Seats and 2 Elbow Ditto’, and three pictures, valued at £38 8s. 6d. The eight chairs had crimson seat upholstery matching the windows, whereas a somewhat outmoded ‘sett of Guilt Leather hangings’ costing £5 5s. adorned the walls.⁵³

The furnishings suggest that Elbridge’s bedchambers probably served as an occasional focus of sociability, evoking interplay between public and private space.⁵⁴ These two rooms could be seen; although removed from the main floor rooms designed for

⁴⁶ See Cote, Robinson MS, 1971, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Lemire (2003), I, pp. 493–512; Lemire (1991), pp. 12–42.

⁴⁸ Lemire (1991), p. 41. The restrictions were ineffective, however, and by the 1730s cotton manufacturing had resumed in Britain [Lemire (2003), I, p. 504; Riello and Parthasarathi (2009), especially chapters 10, 11, and 13.

⁴⁹ The Cote example may have been similar to ones illustrated in Bowett (2009), chapter 2; for Erddig and Cannons, see p. 54.

⁵⁰ Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/10/18; Darrell (1725).

⁵¹ Lipsedge (2006); St. George (2006).

⁵² Cote, Robinson MS 1971, p. 8.

⁵³ On gilt leather hangings, see Saunders (2002), pp. 121–23.

⁵⁴ Thornton (1984), p. 51.



9 Cote; first floor oak cupboard,
probably 'Room No. 1 First Storey'.
The author

reception, privileged visitors might be shown up the staircase and into one of the bedchambers, there to be impressed by the architectural features, the range of goods on exhibition, the sumptuous textiles at the windows and on the beds, and the ample furniture to accommodate chosen people of significance. Whilst ascending to these rooms, visitors and servants alike would pass the 'Eight-day Clock with fine Japan Case + Glass Front,' worth £9 that stood in the staircase, at once one of the most visible and most expensive single items in the house.

Cote typifies genteel houses in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The rooms and objects indicate how these houses functioned as social spaces. For a person with a substantial fortune of nearly £80,000, John Elbridge owned a house that was handsomely but not ostentatiously decorated. He kept furnishings relatively up to date, possibly due to his niece's influence, but there was no attempt to refurbish the house completely. In several cases, the best furnishings were restricted to privileged visitors. Of the three sets of 'India Back' chairs, probably purchased in the last two decades of Elbridge's life, two were in the best bedchambers and one was in the 'Parlour'. The presence of imported wood such as walnut from Virginia, mahogany from the

Caribbean, and oak from the Baltic, as well as Russia leather and controversial Asian-inspired chintz textiles, highlighted Elbridge's connections with overseas trade. As at Lower Slaughter, where the Whitmores had an 'India Japann'd Chest' in the Great Parlour,⁵⁵ the staid possessions of a gentleman had a spice of the exotic.

Other court documents allow investigation of the appraised and market values of furnishings. A comparison of the inventory of Elbridge's house in the Royal Fort, Bristol with the sale record of its contents at auction offers interesting guidance.⁵⁶ In most instances where objects can be reliably cross-referenced, the auction result tended to be higher than the appraised value. Campbell's *London Tradesman*, for example, notes that appraisers, 'generally value things very low, not out of respect to any of the parties, but because they are obliged to take the goods if it is insisted upon at their own appraisement'.⁵⁷ An 'India Cabinett' valued on the inventory at £2 is described on the auction results as a 'fine India Cabinet' sold for £2.11.0. A 'Japan Dressing Table & pier Glass' brought £3.18.0, well above the £2.5.0 assigned by the appraisers. An easy chair that stood in the Red Bedroom at the Royal Fort sold for £1.11.0 at auction, more than double its appraisal of fifteen shillings. Two sets of chairs with leather seats and cane backs are listed on the inventory, all valued at 6 shillings per chair. Of these, six went to a Mr Longman for £2.3.0, seven shillings above the inventory listing, while another bidder secured twelve more for £3.15.0. There were exceptions, however, as when a 'Standing Bed with Crimson furniture and three Setts of window Curtains vallens and Cornishes' appraised at £3.5.0 brought only £3. For the most part, the furniture at the Royal Fort represented old-fashioned taste. For example, there is no mention of India Back chairs, the best rooms containing cane chairs of various sorts. Although in the absence of the objects themselves it is impossible to determine what these furnishings looked like, offering this data yields the hope that additional comparative research may develop a better visual picture of the furniture owned by genteel households.

The contents of genteel houses elsewhere near Bristol offer further quantitative and qualitative information about the material objects to be found in small classical houses. Two residences in the village of Clifton offer benchmarks about the costs of furnishings in relation to building and the range of goods gentlemen possessed at the end of our period. Linen draper Paul Fisher spent over £325 furnishing his new Clifton Hill House in the late 1740s (Figure 10).⁵⁸ The notes and receipts for Fisher's Clifton Hill House run from 1744 to 1752 and list the supplier, date, and cost of the goods. Since Fisher spent a little over £4,200 on his house, the furnishings amounted to roughly 8% of building costs.⁵⁹ This admittedly crude measurement provides a guideline to gentlemanly investments in both furnishings and houses.

A 1768 inventory of Thomas Goldney III's 'dwellinghouse Outhouses and Gardens at Clifton' opens further avenues for analysis. His family had been prominent Quaker merchants in Bristol since the 1670s, and Goldney's father had relocated to a gentleman's house in Clifton village on slopes overlooking Bristol. Although Goldney is most

⁵⁵ Gloucestershire Archives, D45/F4.

⁵⁶ Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/11/4/k.

⁵⁷ Campbell (1747), p. 175.

⁵⁸ Bristol Record Office, 09467/12/b.

⁵⁹ Bristol Record Office, 09467/12/a.



10 Clifton Hill House, built and furnished by Bristol linen draper Paul Fisher between 1746 and 1752. *The author*

noted for creating an outstanding garden, the house and its contents have been less thoroughly explored and the inventory reinforces other evidence, such as parish rate books, that suggest he drifted away from his forebear's religion.⁶⁰ Indeed, the range and quality of Thomas Goldney III's possessions illustrated the elevated material status of even Nonconformist commercial elites who by 1770 had become an established part of British genteel society.

The inventory references 'the new part' and 'the old part' of the building and provides detailed descriptions of furnishings, although no values.⁶¹ In the 'Best Room Southwards', a bedchamber that overlooked the garden, there stood the extravagant assemblage of a 'Mahogany Bedstead Fluted Pillars half silk yellow damask furniture feather Bed', side by side with five chairs with checked coverings. Such informal fabric coverings are oddly juxtaposed with expensive silk, although they might have been a utilitarian protection for the silk underneath. Between the time of Elbridge's inventory in 1739 and Goldney's thirty years later there had been a marked evolution in the use of the bedchamber for sociable purposes. For Elbridge, born in the seventeenth century,

⁶⁰ Stemberge (1998); University of Bristol Library, DM1398/A and Bristol Record Office, P/St.A/OP/1(b), p. 233, where Goldney is listed as a member of the vestry in 1743.

⁶¹ University of Bristol Library, DM1398/A.



11 Goldney House, the mahogany parlour, probably installed in the 1720s. *The author*

the bedchamber still fulfilled a public function; for the eighteenth-century man, Goldney, it did rather less so.

Sociability had migrated to other rooms. In the new building, the principal rooms on the ground floor included ‘the Common Best sitting parlour’, ‘the common sitting small parlour fronting the north’, a ‘Hall’ and ‘best Stair case’, and the magnificent, and still intact, ‘Mahogany parlour’ (Figure 11). The ‘Mahogany parlour’ not only displayed an impressive tea table, but richly carved panelling and fine joinery, ‘10 Half Crimson silk armed Chairs’, ‘2 White Marble tables and carved Gilt frames’, ‘2 pier Glasses in carved Gilt frames’, several items of silver and portraits of Mr Thomas Goldney and his father. This room was a splendid exhibition for a Bristolian gentleman. Thirteen spaces in the ‘Old part of the Building’ were more private rooms, such as ‘the Study’, or dedicated to service needs. The ‘Study’ contained objects that suggested a focus on personal interaction with companions interested in learning and the natural world: a mahogany writing desk, a pair of globes, several pieces of ‘Virginia Walnut’ furniture, several ‘Landskip’ paintings, numerous prints, ‘1 Large Box for viewing pictures perspectively’, probably some form of zograscope, and a ‘Camera Obscura’.

A group of visitors in 1764 mentioned the Camera Obscura, which clearly gave them pleasure as it allowed a view of ‘the whole Country & the Objects around’. This

account, written by Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson of Pennsylvania, aligns with objects recorded in Goldney's inventory to reconstruct her procession around the house and grounds.⁶² The new section of Goldney House was the focus for household social activity. As Ferguson traversed the Hall she encountered its 'Derbyshire marble' and 'Italian composition' tables, as well as a 'pillar Dutch tea table History painted', on her way to the 'Mahogany Parlour', the likely site of breakfast. Here Goldney's things dazzled her, as they were meant to: her description of 'a very fine Sett of english China on a Silver Tea Table' accords with Goldney's inventory of a 'Silver tea table on a carved Mahogany stand with a fine Sett of Worster China'. It is even possible that Ferguson and her friends gained admittance to Goldney's study, a more private chamber where the 'Camera Obscura' she mentions was stored.⁶³ Ferguson went away impressed by her 'polite Treatment' having spent a 'most agreeable Morning,' thanks largely to those furnishings that surrounded her.

Specific domestic objects were particularly significant because they provide precise clues to status display. Furnishing a house to genteel standard was a significant undertaking and few owners seem to have replaced furniture entirely. Rather, furnishing campaigns took place in stages that combined old and new furniture over time. As in country houses, 'insufficient attention has been devoted to the strong thread of conservatism' in decorating.⁶⁴ Shortly after he inherited from his father, William Palling of Brownshill commissioned a piece of furniture from Henry Viner (Figure 12). This piece, recorded in a description and sketch made by Viner (Figure 13), was a chest of drawers made of 'Bannut tree', a local name for walnut.

Feb 16th 1733/4 I Promise to make a Chest of Drawers four foot + a half high and a Yard in Breadth all clean Bannut Tree to the value of three pounds for Wm Palling of brownshill in which I promise to take for the value hereof four pieces of Bannut tree for my pains as Witness my hand Henry Viner

The sd Wm Palling I have ye priviledge of seeing the Chest of Drawers before hand + if I like him not at the price the Bargaine is to be void if he pleases.⁶⁵

Such a piece indicated knowledge of current style and an effort to secure new furnishings. London furniture makers seemingly constructed this form infrequently, although the rarity of documented examples may be a question of terminology, with 'chest of drawers' encompassing a wider range of forms than generally acknowledged.⁶⁶ Either way, Palling's chest demonstrated a balance between taste and provincial craftsmanship reflected in other genteel houses.

Although there is no extant inventory, Richard Clutterbuck's Frampton Court likewise housed a series of individual objects that served as status signifiers. Clutterbuck almost certainly bought new furniture in the early 1730s to adorn his substantial new house, including a set of ten side chairs and two matching settees, with compass seats,

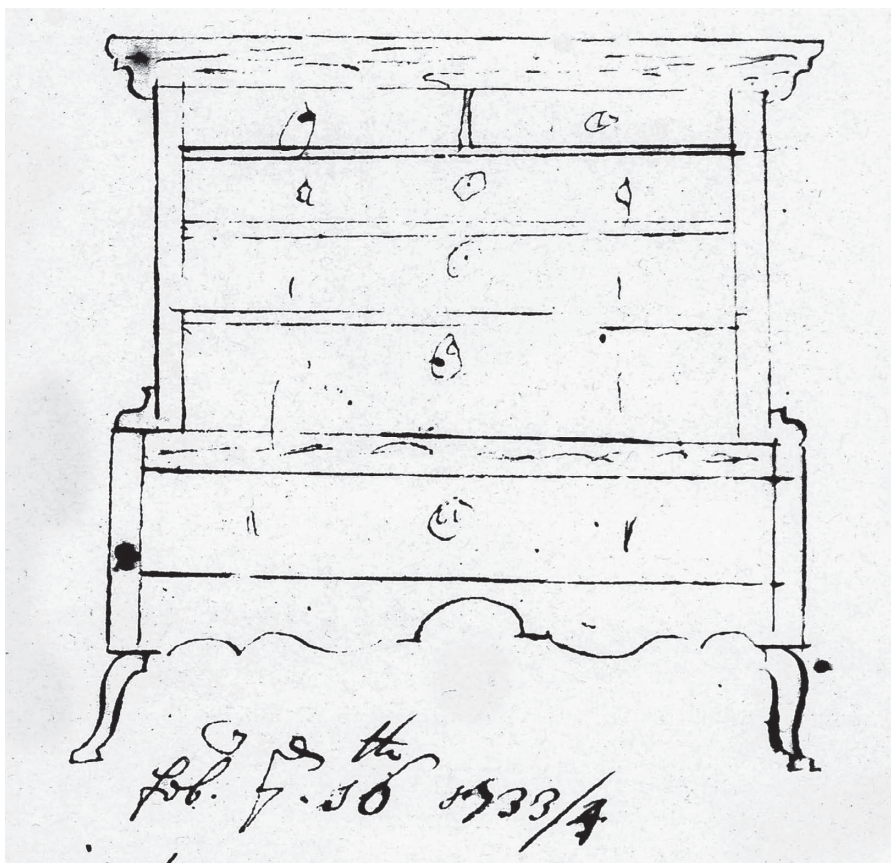
⁶² Wulf & Wulf (1997), pp. 208–09; University of Bristol Library, DM1398/A.

⁶³ Vickery (2009) discusses scientific instruments and the sex of objects, chapter 10.

⁶⁴ Cornforth (2004), p. 8; Collett-White, (1995), pp. 93, 207.

⁶⁵ Gloucestershire Archives, MF1442. Connections to both furniture-making and Bristol is likely suggested in Gloucestershire, Archives, D1815/Box 12/1.

⁶⁶ Bowett (2009), pp. 116–17.



12 Drawing of a chest made for William Palling by Henry Viner, 1733/34.
Gloucestershire Archives

No. 7. 50 1733/4

I Promise to make a Chest of Drawers four feet & a half high
and a yard in breadth all plain Bannat Free to the
value of three pounds for Wm Palling of Burnhill
in which I promise to take for
the value hereof four pieces of Bannet too for my pains
as Witness my hand Henry Viner
25 2
03 00 00
Wm Palling

A Law of privilege of showing the Chest of Drawers before Land
& if he likes him not ^{at the price} the Bargain is to be void
of he please

13 Henry Viner's agreement with William Palling. Gloucestershire Archives



14 India-back chair, ash with burr ash veneered splats, c. 1730–1735, probably made for Richard Clutterbuck of Frampton Court. *The author*

India backs and cabriole front and back legs all terminating in claw and ball feet (Figure 14). Although chairs were prevalent in all households by the mid-eighteenth century, their number, form and value mattered.⁶⁷ A carefully coded vocabulary helps to refine the dating of these chairs, reinforcing the case that they comprised pivotal objects acquired by Richard Clutterbuck for his elegant new house.

No direct documentary evidence links the chairs with the construction of Frampton Court, but family tradition holds that they were acquired by Richard Clutterbuck. Previously the Frampton chairs have been variously described as walnut, or as ‘burr-elm-veneered and ash side chairs’ and dated to the period of George I.⁶⁸ Recent analysis proposes they are ash with burr ash veneered splats.⁶⁹ The latest scholarship also suggests that these chairs were contemporary with the construction of the new Frampton Court in the early 1730s.⁷⁰ The first recorded instance of the compass or rounded seat is found in an inventory of a State Bed Chamber at Erddig in 1726. In addition, a November 1728 furniture bill first documented shell carving at the knees on a chair

⁶⁷ Hall (1991), p. 6; Overton et al (2004), pp. 90–93.

⁶⁸ *Christie’s Report* (November 2003).

⁶⁹ Hartley (2006), p. 14. Many thanks to James Ayres for drawing my attention to this brief essay.

⁷⁰ Bowett (2009), pp. 171–75.



15 Watercolour sketch of the hall at Frampton Court, c. 1840. *The author*

leg, which ‘soon achieved near universal popularity’. The Frampton chairs also exhibit the claw and ball foot, a motif introduced about this time.⁷¹ This type of foot appears on all four legs, indicating the chair’s high level of status. Taken together, these stylistic details confirm a date of construction in the early 1730s and present strong circumstantial evidence for their being acquired for the new Frampton Court. Whilst not the finest or most decorative chairs available in the second quarter of the eighteenth century they were distinguished by their figurative wood and new form.⁷²

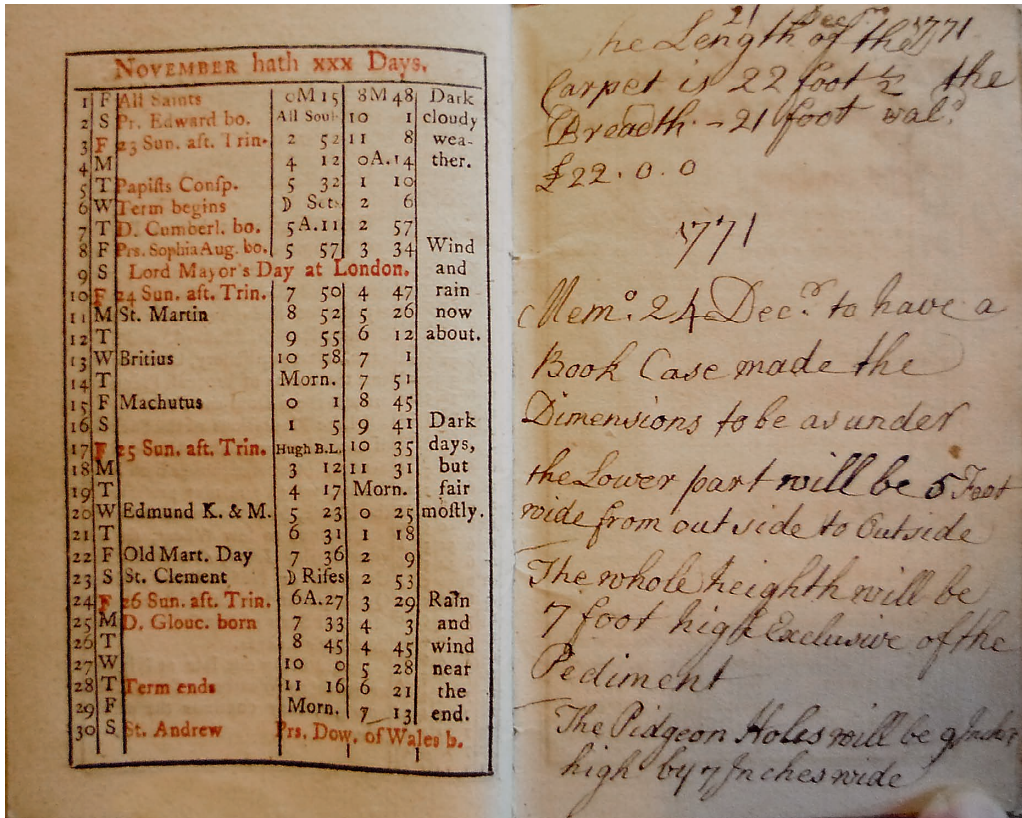
Later generations clearly valued this set of furniture. A series of watercolours executed in the 1840s and 1850s by several female members of the family depict many of the rooms at Frampton Court. The set of India-back compass seat chairs stood at that time in the Hall (Figure 15). Richard Clutterbuck owned Frampton Court until his death in 1775, at which time it passed to his niece Elizabeth Phillips and then to a great-nephew, Nathaniel Winchcombe, who changed his name to Clifford in 1801. It seems highly unlikely that these chairs should have entered the Frampton Court collection between the time of Richard’s death and the completion of the drawings.

Dating these chairs effectively and exploring their provenance marks them as material representations of Richard Clutterbuck’s efforts to display status and illustrates the consumption behaviours of genteel builders and owners. Examples found in larger houses offer an interesting contrast in terms of cost, quality, and numbers. In 1728, Sir Robert Walpole ordered a lavish set at the substantial cost of 50 shillings per chair, which included damask upholstery.⁷³ By comparison John Elbridge’s 1739

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 174–75.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 178–80, especially 178, Fig 4.67, and Bowett (2003), pp. 3–9.

⁷³ Bowett (2009), p. 171.



16 Richard Clutterbuck's Account Book, December 1771, description of bookcase.
The author

inventory values a 'round Back Leather seated Chair', possibly similar, at 6s. and a set of '6 India Back blew Leather bottom Chairs', which almost certainly cost much less than Sir Robert's chairs.⁷⁴ If, as seems probable, Richard Clutterbuck acquired these chairs for his new house, it demonstrates the fashionable acquisition of up to date furniture. In this way, these chairs represent a furnishings shift about 1730 that coincided with an architectural transition that announced merchants and professional men as the increasingly typical builder of small classical houses in Gloucestershire.

Other objects with utilitarian and decorative functions reinforced this point. Richard Clutterbuck stayed abreast of fashion. Specific instructions for a bookcase, including a height of seven feet 'Exclusive of the Pediment', are recorded in 1771 (Figure 16).⁷⁵ Like other gentlemen's houses, however, the furnishings of Frampton Court were not wholly *au courant*. An older chest with the initials 'RC' and date '1639' suggested Richard's Clifford family lineage whilst displaying out-dated taste. One bedchamber had walls covered with a late-seventeenth- or early-eighteenth-century Aubusson

⁷⁴ Bristol Record Office, AC/WO/10/18 and AC/WO/10/19.

⁷⁵ Frampton Court collection, Richard Clutterbuck account book.

tapestry, an older form of décor, and William Clutterbuck's will leaves the 'hangings and chairs in the Parlour Chamber' specifically to Richard.⁷⁶ A set of Chinese armorial porcelain was complemented by a range of quotidian pewter dishes and serving pieces made in Bristol and London in the 1740s and 1750s, despite the fact that pewter was 'gradually being usurped by earthenware and china' and gradually moved to the 'back-stage' of the house.⁷⁷ The show created by new furnishings was counter-balanced by older pieces of furniture.⁷⁸ The portability and relative ease with which furnishings could be acquired combined with specific design details to enable genteel owners to convey value and status.

The room arrangements, interior finishes and furnishings at small classical houses like Lower Slaughter Manor, Cote, Goldney House, Clifton Hill House, and Frampton Court indicate that genteel owners in Gloucestershire stood high in the socio-economic hierarchy, likely in the top ten per cent of wealth in the population.⁷⁹ Between 1675 and 1725, mean inventory values for the gentry were £320 and £193 for trades of high status, including clergy and professions.⁸⁰ The findings presented in this essay are in line with these values and indicate that Gloucestershire builders and owners who possessed small classical houses equipped them with a range of handsome goods that at once displayed a local sensibility and reinforced their genteel status in wider British society.

Yet if this is a reminder of how many material possessions belonged to genteel households, there was still a substantial gap with country houses of the greater gentry and aristocracy. Larger houses with more rooms to fill naturally contained more objects. Moreover, the quality of furnishings, and hence their cost, often far surpassed those of genteel owners.⁸¹ Although the 2nd earl of Lichfield socialized regularly with the owners of one small classical house in Gloucestershire, the Rookes of Bigsweir, his domestic possessions far outstripped anything they had. A 1743 inventory of Lord Lichfield's Ditchley Park in Oxfordshire lists forty-one rooms as well as a dozen or more ancillary spaces. The contents, excluding silver, were valued at £1489.5.0, or nearly five times as much as a gentleman's house like Cote.⁸² The most expensively furnished bedchamber was valued at £137.5.0; seven bedrooms contained furnishings worth between £30 and £52, comparable to John Elbridge's best bedroom. On the ground floor, the comparison becomes even more stark, where Lichfield's Drawing Room had furnishings worth £143.13.0 and his Great Room £195.10.6. The parlours of gentlemen simply could not hold their own against such spaces. With the plate included, the contents totalled a staggering £3,000, or about ten times as valuable as a gentleman's possessions.⁸³

⁷⁶ Description from Frampton Court collection, Christie's Report (2003); Gloucestershire Archives, D149/F18 and The National Archives, PROB11/623.

⁷⁷ Overton et al. (2004), p. 135.

⁷⁸ Collett-White (1995), pp. 93 and 205.

⁷⁹ In their study of Cornwall and Kent, for example, 'gentlemen' and 'esquire' made up less than 6% of the sample between 1700 and 1749 [Overton et al. (2004), p. 22, Table 2.2].

⁸⁰ Weatherill (1996), p. 168, Table 8.1.

⁸¹ Cornforth (2004); Murdoch (2006); Collett-White (1995).

⁸² Murdoch (2006), pp. 143–65.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

Other comparisons measure gentlemen's level of material possessions. Small country houses elsewhere in England were more comparable in their size, arrangement and furnishings, but even these often had more possessions and higher values.⁸⁴ The wealthiest merchants, such as South Sea Company officials, had significantly higher numbers of goods worth more.⁸⁵ Individual objects told similar stories. On one occasion, Lady Elizabeth Germain purchased a fine inlaid desk in France 'from the Dauphin for 100 guineas' for Drayton House, Northamptonshire.⁸⁶ Compared to Lady Betty's buying binge, Elizabeth Whitmore's efforts at Lower Slaughter seem positively staid.

Owners of small classical houses had handsome furnishings, but in most instances they made little effort to replicate the consumption practices of the aristocracy. At the same time, gentlemen's personal possessions outstripped most of the other residents of Gloucestershire, and their houses were filled with many more things than the abode of the average middling sort. Their choices were not always governed by resources, but often relied on taste and preference. John Elbridge had the means to furnish to a higher standard, but his two houses near Bristol were accoutred with a range of objects that did not cost vast sums of money. Bristol linen-draper Paul Fisher's house was the height of Palladian fashion, but the amount that he spent furnishing it suggests *décor* in line with other gentlemen.

The richness of these Gloucestershire records suggests that it was the combination of regional, metropolitan and transnational features that marked the furnishings of these small classical houses as distinctive. Possessions enabled families to participate in genteel society, inject taste into the domestic environment, and display their fashion sense in a way that was relatively economical. Genteel owners acquired fashionable new luxury goods that were signifiers of fashion, especially after about 1730. Elizabeth Whitmore bought china and mahogany furniture. Richard Clutterbuck acquired handsome India-back chairs and a set of Chinese armorial porcelain. Simultaneously, however, the genteel retained older objects that supported traditional forms of social interaction. They also exhibited a willingness to acquire possessions over time, incrementally inserting appropriate objects into their domestic surroundings. The result was a mixture of fine furnishings, often situated in public spaces, with older, less stylish objects usually found in back rooms. Their furnishings reflected a level appropriate to their status. Fashionable India-back chairs could co-exist with a walnut cane couch, or a handsome green bed might stand in the same room with an 'old' case of drawers and dressing box, and 'old' quilts and blankets. As with their building campaigns, families on the cusp of elite status furnished their houses in measured ways, displaying an array of objects distinct in its composition from those lower and higher in society.

⁸⁴ Collett-White (1995). Some of the smaller houses described include Colworth House (1723, £365) and Hinwick House (1766, £570).

⁸⁵ G. and P. Glanville, (2004), pp. 11–24, especially 11–12.

⁸⁶ Murdoch (2006), p. 119.

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