Drawing Rooms, Dining Rooms and Parlours in the Homes of London’s Middling Sorts 1740–1810

ELEANOR JOHN

Although the family and domestic lives of the middling sorts in the eighteenth century have received some scholarly attention, there are few studies which consider their homes in detail.¹ Little has been published about what rooms they had in their homes and how they were furnished and this is especially the case for the second half of the eighteenth century, partly due to the decline in the number of surviving probate inventories from the 1720s. This article seeks to begin to address this gap in the literature and explores these homes in the London context, through the analysis of inventories supplemented by household sales catalogues. Homes and their contents were (and still are), as Lorna Weatherill expressed it in her ground-breaking study of the ownership of household goods in the early modern period, ‘constructed to convey social meanings as well as for practical purposes’; the impact of an interior partly arising from ‘the shared expectations and culture of the people using it. Material goods, such as furnishings, made physical and visible statements about accepted values and expected behaviour’.² Such detail then, while on one level seemingly mundane, is significant in understanding people’s lives. The evidence presented here begins to suggest patterns of furnishing which have the potential to contribute to an understanding of their social meaning, and for furniture studies provides some context with which to view pieces now mostly removed from their original surroundings.

This article focuses on the ‘middling sort’ or ‘sorts’, which were contemporary terms (along with others such as ‘middle station’ and ‘middle rank’) used to describe those people who worked for a living, but not in the same way as the labouring classes. Typically they engaged in trade, producing and/or selling goods; they often had diverse sources of income, owning, for example, leases on properties, shares in ships and investments in bonds. While some scholarship has engaged with the middling sort in their own terms, there is still a tendency beyond this to consider such people and the furniture they owned as largely imitative of their social superiors.³ This article, although very limited in its scope, provides indications that this was not necessarily the case, helping to provide a less reductive view of the middling sorts and their homes.

The main source of evidence for this study is a group of probate inventories pulled together during the Geffrye Museum’s research for the re-development of its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century period rooms. Sales catalogues were also included.

¹ Earle (1989); Hunt (1996); Vickery (2009). One of the few studies to buck this trend is Alcock (1993) which brings together inventory evidence and, where possible, surviving houses from the Warwickshire villages of Stoneleigh, Ashow and Stareton and surroundings, and includes a chapter of examples from the middling sorts with a small number from the eighteenth century.
in the group (see Appendix). The problems with inventories as evidence for furnishings are raised elsewhere in this volume of Regional Furniture (for instance in Lesley Hoskins’ article) and sales catalogues raise similar issues. The catalogues are not complete listings of the furnishings of a home. They only give the items to be sold; low value items may not feature, items may have been moved between rooms for the convenience of creating suitable lots and the room names may not have been those used by the occupants. However, as with inventories, the use of the room names indicates an understanding of these spaces which would have been shared to some degree. It is recognised that the number of inventories and catalogues in this group covering the period under consideration is small — representing 47 households over a 70 year period; clearly this cannot claim to be a representative sample and the findings presented here can only provide a suggestion of what might have been going on more broadly.

From the mid-seventeenth century up to 1740, the middling Londoners’ homes encountered in the group of inventories used by the Geffrye usually consisted of a kitchen, dining room and/or parlour over the ground and first floors, chambers on the upper floors and garrets at the top of the house, both of which latter spaces usually contained beds.4 Business premises, such as a shop, counting house or warehouse were often also mentioned on the ground floor. From the 1740s a different space, new to these homes — the ‘drawing room’ — is listed. While the uptake of another new space in middling Londoners’ homes in the previous century, the dining room, had been fairly rapid, the drawing room was not so quickly adopted. According to the inventories and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Number of inventories/catalogues</th>
<th>Number with a drawing room</th>
<th>Number with 1 or more parlour(s)</th>
<th>Number with 1 or more dining rooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1740s</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1750s</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780s</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1790s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of instances of room</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

catalogues in the Geffrye’s group, drawing rooms appeared for the first time in the 1740s and then not again until the 1780s. The lack of drawing rooms in the sample in the 1750s, 60s and 70s is probably due to the low number of inventories in the sample during these decades combined with the low uptake of the room, at about 1 in 7 households in the sample. In the 1790s this increased to half of the homes.

Drawing rooms are associated with the wealthier householders, but by no means all of them. They are mostly combined with one or more parlours and there is only one instance of a drawing room being combined with a dining room; the drawing room then does not appear to emerge in middling homes functioning in a pairing with a dining room and this seems to be a later convention in the middling context. Like dining rooms, drawing rooms appear singly — there is only one instance of a household with two dining rooms and none with two drawing rooms. In contrast, there is frequently more than one parlour in a household. Unlike the dining room and parlour which sometimes appear as the only ‘living’ space, the drawing room is always in combination with these other rooms. The implications of these combinations become clearer as the furnishings of these spaces are considered.

**Drawing Room Furnishings**

The furnishings of the drawing rooms in the sample are remarkably consistent and suggest that there was a recognised convention for the furnishing of this type of room which was closely adhered to (see Table 3 below). All feature curtains and carpets and a suite of chairs; most have a sofa and card tables, the latter either described as a pair or two. The absences are potentially equally informative. None feature clocks, beds or case furniture. Only one has a dining table and none of the others have objects associated with eating. Tea things appear in 3 out of 8 of the drawing rooms. Notably there are no pillar and claw tables, whereas they are fairly common in parlours and dining rooms.

A close look at John Jackson’s inventory taken in 1786 opens up the main points.\(^5\) Jackson lived on Nassau Street, Fitzrovia. The inventory indicates a four-storey, 3-bay house (probably with additional basement), with the drawing room occupying the first floor front room and having three windows onto the street.\(^6\) There are front and back parlours on the ground floor. Jackson’s occupation is not given, but the inventory indicates that he was active in trade and lists shops and warehouses on two separate sites. Their contents include soap and salt bins, and scales specifically for these goods, which he was probably selling. He is accorded the status title ‘Esq[uire]’ in the document, which does not routinely appear, so might well have carried some weight.

Transcription from the inventory of John Jackson’ home taken in 1786:

- **Drawing Room**
  - a Steel Stove Grate Bow fender & fire Irons
  - a Landskep and figures in a Carved & painted frame
  - two Marble obelisks 2 Urns, Small Jarr damaged

\(^5\) TNA, J90/1843.

\(^6\) Two properties survive on the west side of Nassau Street which are probably the type of house Jackson would have occupied, now numbered 20 and 23.
7 Cartoons of Raphall Collo’rd framed & Glazed
Two Mohogany Card Tables, an Inlaid
Marble Slabb on a Carved frame
A Large China Jarr and Cover
Two Double Branch Gilt Girandoles
A Pier Glass in a Carved and Gilt frame
A Sopha two Bolsters and Chex Cases
Six Mohogany Chairs Crimson Morine
Seats Brass Nailed and Cases to Do
Two Elbow Chairs the Same = Three
Crimson Morine festoon Window Curtins
with Carved Cornishes Compleat
A Mohogany Stand for a tea Kettle
A Large Wilton Carpet

In this drawing room, the usual fire equipment is followed by a painting (landscape and figures), ornaments and coloured prints of Raphael’s cartoons (designs for the tapestries commissioned for the Sistine Chapel). Half the drawing rooms in the sample have paintings, but this is the only one where prints are recorded — the typical pattern being for the drawing room to have the more expensive version of the furnishing options — paintings rather than prints, and, for example, Wilton carpet rather than floor cloth. Ornaments occur in about half the drawing rooms and much less frequently in parlours and dining rooms. The card tables, in this case ‘two Mohogany’, are a feature of most drawing rooms in the sample with a pair or two card tables appearing in 6 out of 8 of these rooms, and a single card table in one of the rooms. They are found much less frequently in parlours, in 6 out of the 51 parlours in the sample, and mostly as single tables; only on one occasion are two card tables mentioned in a parlour. They are listed in around a third of the dining rooms (in 8 out of 24 dining rooms), where a pair is recorded on 2 occasions. Any other tables are relatively rare in these drawing rooms, a surprising finding, and pointing to the contained role of this type of room. Items relating to dining (for example cutlery or tables specified as ‘dining’ tables) are also absent from these spaces, with just one instance of a dining-related item. As mentioned, tea things do feature to some extent, as in the ‘stand for a kettle’ listed in Jackson’s drawing room. Notably the drawing rooms in this sample do not contain any case furniture. A range of case furniture is found in the parlours and, to a lesser extent, dining rooms, but not in the drawing rooms, again an indication of their apparently deliberately limited function. It is possible they were being kept clear of the mess and smells of dining and protected aesthetically from the bulkiness of case furniture (as well as the functions that went along with these pieces). The card tables, particularly with the use of two, may have been as much about the aesthetic of punctuating the walls of the drawing room with non-bulky, elegant pieces, as providing the facility to play cards.

Returning to the contents of Jackson’s drawing room, the ‘inlaid marble Slabb on a Carved & painted frame’ is a rich piece of furniture, a table of sorts, but impressive rather than functional (or rather its function was to be impressive), part of an earlier aesthetic and found in the first drawing room in the sample in 1740, but not in the drawing rooms after this one of 1786. The gilt girandole, with its two double branches,
is a typical feature. Lighting is listed in most of the drawing rooms, generally girandoles and lustres, whereas in the parlours and dining rooms the lighting items listed in the room are mostly sconces. The different approaches to lighting would have created different atmospheres in these rooms. Sofas are another key element found far more frequently in drawing rooms than in parlours and dining rooms, either matched to or distinct from the suite of chairs or curtains. Jackson’s has check covers, while the suite of chairs, upholstered in crimson morine, matches the festoon curtains. The curtains in the later drawing rooms in the sample are mostly given as ‘cotton’, or described as ‘dimity’ or ‘chintz’, both of which suggest linen or cotton textiles. The floor of Jackson’s drawing room is covered with a large Wilton carpet. Carpets, like curtains, appear in all the drawing rooms, with half of them being described as ‘Wilton’ — one of the more expensive and luxurious carpet types available at the time — and seem to be essential elements of these spaces, whereas in parlours and dining rooms they are not so consistently present; consequently they are likely not to be so key to the effect or function of those spaces.

The inventories of George Blachford’s drawing room, taken in 1793, and Elizabeth Butcher’s taken in 1809 show the same furnishing elements employed in these spaces up to the end of the period. As far as can be ascertained from the inventory, Blachford’s house, number 19 on Charlotte Street, which is west of and parallel to the Tottenham Court Road, consisted of four storeys and a basement. The drawing room was on the first floor at the back of the house, probably overlooking the garden, a space that is rarely mentioned in the sample, or in inventories generally, and most likely routinely under-recorded in this type of record. However, in this instance Blachford’s garden is mentioned and, though brief, the listing gives some indication of what the garden was like and how it was used, for leisure and drying the laundry, having: ‘Two painted Garden Seats — Five Cloaths Posts/& three props — A Stone Roller & Iron frame’. The roller indicates that the garden is likely to have been laid out with gravel paths, and it would have been used to maintain them. There were also two parlours on the ground floor, a front parlour and ‘dining parlour’, a term that only occurs a couple of times in the sample.

Elizabeth Butcher’s address is given as 17 King Street, Portman Square, a street that is proving difficult to locate in that area. Judging from the inventory, her home also consisted of a four storey house and probably a basement that contained the front and back kitchens. The drawing room was on the first floor at the front, with again two parlours on the ground floor. In both inventories the main features of the drawing room, the elegance of two card tables, the softness of curtains and carpets, the sparkle of girandoles and lustres, and a distinct lack of case furniture or dining things, is apparent.

Transcription from the inventory of George Blachford’s home taken in 1793:

Drawing Room
A pair of Stripe Dimity festoon Window Curtains
A Square Pier Glass 50 x 27 in Gilt frame

7 TNA, E140/6/1; C104/196.
A pair of Sattin wood Card Tables Lined & Baize
Covers – Ten Vase back Jappand Elbow Chairs
Cane Seats, with Cushions & Dimity Cases
A Sopher to Correspond with Cushion & Case
A Pair of Cut Glass Lustres with Drops &c
for Two Lights each — A Jappand Codill [quadrille?]
Box — A Jappand tea Caddy — A Wilton
Carpet pland to Room 39 yds — Two Large
Chinese Figures & Gause Vails
A Bright Steel Stove Steel Cut fender Shovel
Tongs & Poker

Transcription from the inventory of Elizabeth Butcher’s home taken in 1809:

Front Drawing Room
2 Chintz Window Curtains.
2 Inlaid Card Tables.
1 Do ~ Tea Table.
1 Do ~ Urn stand.
1 Large Pier Glass, Gilt France.
2 Girandoles ~ ~ ~ Do.
4 Portraits, Gilt Frames — Mr and Mrs Butcher the Elder,
Mr & Mrs Thomas Butcher
12 Mahogany Chairs, stuffed backs.
1 Steel polished Grate.
1 set of Fire Irons.
1 steel Fender.
2 Fire screens.
1 Wilton Carpet.
2 Pieces Embroidery, Gilt Frames.

As mentioned, drawing rooms first appear in the whole sample of middling inventories used by the Geffrye, which cover the period 1570-1810, in 1740. By this point the drawing room is already well-established in aristocratic homes, but it is worth noting, admittedly based on a very limited consideration of these aristocratic rooms, that that their furnishings appear to be quite different. The inventory of 1746 of the drawing room at Montagu House, Whitehall, which was owned by the 2nd Duke of Montagu and which had been built in the early 1730s, includes elements shared with the middling drawing rooms, albeit on a grander scale, such as the marble topped tables on carved frames but also constituents not part of the middling drawing rooms, such as case furniture — there are ‘2. India Japann’d Cabinets on Carv’d Gilt Frames’ and hangings; also at variance with middling drawing rooms there are no card tables and no mention of a sofa.8 The inventory of the drawing room at Thanet House, Great Russell Street, London, taken in 1760 is closer to the middling pattern, but includes ‘a mahogany pillar and claw table’ something absent from the middling drawing rooms.9

8 Murdoch (2006), pp. 85 & 89 (where the ‘Persia’ carpet for the drawing room is listed in Chest No. 2), and p. 102.
9 Ibid., p. 233.
Clearly this requires much more attention, but a trickle down of aristocratic furnishing styles and conventions should not be assumed.

THE FURNISHINGS OF DINING ROOMS AND PARLOURS

While drawing rooms feature only in the wealthier homes in the sample, and not in all of those, parlours and dining rooms appear at all levels. Parlours are the most commonly occurring room — there are 51 in the sample appearing in 34 out of 47 households (i.e. in nearly three quarters of the homes), whereas there are 24 dining rooms occurring in 23 of the 47 households, or about half. Parlours appear singly in 7 of the households, and with other parlours in a further 5, meaning this type of room is used without either a dining room or drawing room in a quarter of the households. They are combined with a dining room in 14 of the households and with a drawing room in 6. Dining rooms appear alone, without parlours or drawing rooms, in 5 of the households.

One of the distinctions between parlours and dining rooms is that the latter tend to be more expensively furnished. The second-hand values given for the furnishings of dining rooms in the sample range from £3:15s to £35:13s, with a mean average of about £20, and with values clustering between £15 and £20. The second hand values given for the furnishings of parlours range from £2:9s to £25:5s and cluster between £5 and £10, with a mean average of about £13.

Both spaces are generally furnished with a suite of chairs and a range of tables. Evidence of dining is equally apparent in both spaces and even when parlours are combined with dining rooms, or with another parlour in the same home, there tend to be items associated with dining in both. Case furniture also appears in both spaces, but more frequently and in a wider range of types in the parlour (see Table 2, below). However, the type of case furniture appearing in dining rooms is not strictly limited to pieces associated with dining such as beaufets, but includes desks of various types such as bureaux, and bookcases, pointing to a range of activities being appropriate for this type of room, but perhaps not to the same degree as in parlours. The wide variety of case furniture found in parlours includes sideboards, beaufets, a range of writing desks and bookcases, with corner cupboards being the most common, which interestingly do not feature in the dining rooms. As with the drawing room, there seem to be patterns or codes being adhered to in the furnishings of these spaces.

Turning to some examples, the sales catalogue of James Waller’s ‘Household Furniture, Linen, China &c’ (1782), lists a dining room on the first floor and a front and back parlour on the ground floor of a four storey house with cellars on Mansell Street, Goodman’s Fields, just north-east of Tower Hill. Both the dining room and front parlour have furnishings for dining — both have dining tables and the parlour, apparently more fully equipped, also has a ‘side board table’. Both have pillar and claw tables. This type of table is first mentioned in the sample of inventories in 1740, in a dining room. The earliest known documentary record of such tables is from 1729, in TNA, C108/167.

11 LMA, CLA/002/02/01/3184; this inventory is that of William Snelling, salter. The term ‘Claw Table’ is used, rather then ‘pillar and claw’ but this is assumed to be the pillar and claw type.
Given the time-lag involved in inventories, which record interiors likely to have been furnished some years earlier, this shows the middling sort as reasonably early adopters of this form. The dining room in Waller’s home has a floor cloth and the front parlour a Turkey carpet (mostly likely at this date an imported Turkish carpet, rather than one of English turkey-work). Carpets are more common in parlours than dining rooms, which would make sense in practical terms if eating were confined to the dining room, but this does not seem to be the case. It seems rather that the aesthetic or ‘feel’ of the room is at play, making carpets more suitable for parlours.

Table 2  The incidence of various types of case furniture in parlours and dining rooms 1740–1810

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of case furniture</th>
<th>Number of instances in parlours (out of a total of 51 parlours)</th>
<th>Number of instances in dining rooms (out of a total of 24 dining rooms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sideboard</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaufett</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner cupboard</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupboard</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s cupboard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest of drawers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buroe (or ‘buroe desk’)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buroe and bookcase</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk (or secretary) and bookcase</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escrutore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookcase</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buroe dressing table</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressing chest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressing table</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knee hole chest of drawers with a secretary drawer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardrobe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the Lord Chamberlain’s accounts, for their supply.\textsuperscript{12} Given the time-lag involved in inventories, which record interiors likely to have been furnished some years earlier, this shows the midding sort as reasonably early adopters of this form. The dining room in Waller’s home has a floor cloth and the front parlour a Turkey carpet (mostly likely at this date an imported Turkish carpet, rather than one of English turkey-work). Carpets are more common in parlours than dining rooms, which would make sense in practical terms if eating were confined to the dining room, but this does not seem to be the case. It seems rather that the aesthetic or ‘feel’ of the room is at play, making carpets more suitable for parlours.

\textsuperscript{12} Bowett (2009), p. 246.
\textsuperscript{13} Gilbert et al. (1987), pp. 41–45.
Transcription from the sales catalogue of James Waller’s ‘Household Furniture. Linen, China &c’, 1782:

Numb. VII. Dining Room.
Lot  
1 A brass fronted stove, with fret border  
2 A brass fender, poker, tongs and shovel  
3 A sconce glass, in a carved and gilt frame  
4 A square mahogany dining table  
5 A mahogany card table  
6 A ditto fret cut tea table  
7 A ditto pillar and claw table  
8 Four walnut-tree chairs, leather seats  
9 A japan’d escutore and stand  
10 A painted floor cloth  
11 A pair of brass scales, iron beam, 3 iron and 2 brass weights, and a plate basket  
12 A fine painting of a horse and groom, fram’d  
13 A game painting, frame  
14 An eight day clock, in a japand case, on the landing place

Numb. IX. Front Parlour.
  1 A cut fender, poker, tongs, and shovel  
  2 A pier glass, in a walnut-tree and gilt edge frame  
  3 A ditto  
  4 A large mahogany side board table, with a turn-over flap and a drawer  
  5 A mahogany oval dining table  
  6 A large mahogany pillar and claw table  
  7 A smaller ditto  
  8 Six virginia walnut-tree chairs, horse hair seats  
  9 A walnut-tree elbow chair and cushion  
 10 A Turkey carpet, 11 feet by 9 feet  
 11 A mahogany cat, 6 hat hooks, 4 pieces of canvas and a mat

Turning to another example, the inventory of William Cowden, a bricklayer, taken in 1796: Cowden lived in Hackney and his house appears to range over four storeys, although he may not have occupied all the rooms, as only single rooms are listed on some of the floors.\(^{14}\) Cowden had a dining room and a parlour. The dining room contained ‘A Deal Painted Press Bedstead’, (a bed that could be folded away in a cupboard). Beds appear in a small number of the dining rooms and parlours and while they might not have been a sought after furnishing for these spaces their inclusion in such rooms was probably a practical solution to a lack of sleeping accommodation in the rest of the house. Perhaps they did not compromise the presentation of these rooms too much: here the bed is included amongst the usual, fairly smart furnishings of a dining room — a pier glass in a carved and gilt frame, mahogany tables and chairs. Like James Waller’s home, and fairly typical in the sample, both the parlour and the dining room in Cowden’s home are furnished with dining tables described as ‘A

\(^{14}\) TNA, PROB 31/915/52.
Mahogany two flap Dining Table’ and ‘A Mahogany flap dining table’. The use of the term ‘flap dining table’ is common in the sample from the 1770s.

Transcription from the inventory of William Cowden’s home taken in 1796:

**No. 3 Dining Room**

- A Brass fronted Stove
- A Deal Painted Press Bedstead with two folding Doors and Drawer under Ditto
- A Large feather Bed Bolster and two Pillows
- Two Large Superfine Blankets
- Do. Linen Quilt
- A Mahogany two flap Dining Table
- a Pier Glass in a Carved and Gilt Frame
- Ditto in Ornamented Gilt Frame
- A Mahogany Pillar & Claw Table
- Six Mahogany Chairs Stuffed with Hair with Horse Hair Seats and an Elbow Do
- An Inlaid Mahogany Tea Tray
- A Kidderminster Carpet

**No. 4 Parlor**

- a Bath Stove set in Galley Tiles
- A Serpentine Cut fender Shovel Tongs and Poker
- a Mahogany Bureau Desk
- a Wainscot Chest of Drawers a Lot of Sheets &c (Appraised) by I Messrs Hindle and Son Sworn Appraisers at the Sum of
- A Wainscot Desk and a Pair of Mahogany framed Venetian Window Blinds
- Six Mahogany Carved Back Chairs with Horse hair Seats
- A Mahogany flap Dining Table
- A swing Dressing Glass, three floor Mats a Piece of Matting a framed Slate, two Prints a Brush [illegible] and an Oil Cloth

This example also shows the major difference between dining rooms and parlours. They contain similar types of goods but, judged from the valuations given, those in the dining room are of considerably better quality. Both rooms are furnished with six mahogany chairs upholstered with horse hair seats, but those in the parlour are valued at £2 while those in the dining room are over twice that, at £4 and 11 shillings. Similarly, both contain a mahogany dining table, the one in the parlour again a cheaper example at 12 shillings and 6 pence and the one in the dining room again valued at over twice that at £1 5s. It is likely that dining rooms and parlours, while apparently over-lapping in terms of function and furnishings, carried subtle distinctions which were more evident to people at the time — this is not only apparent in the fact that more expensive furnishings routinely appear in dining rooms, but in the room combinations: as mentioned, two dining rooms in the same house only appear once in the homes in this sample, while there is often more than one parlour. If the spaces were largely indistinguishable or interchangeable in contemporary minds, this pattern would not be found.
This admittedly small sample of inventories and sale catalogues begins to provide some evidence for the furnishings of the homes of London’s middling sorts in the second half of the eighteenth century. It suggests that there were patterns of furnishings for certain rooms, pointing the way to shared understandings and conventions that would have related to the values, needs and behaviour of middling Londoners at this period. The drawing rooms in this sample consistently display a well-defined set of furnishings that mark the room out as a distinctive space, kept clear of bulky case furniture and the mess of dining, where the practicalities of life appear to be deliberately distanced. Parlours and dining rooms with their dining tables, sideboards and desks are more clearly engaged with the functions of daily life. While drawing rooms are not at this stage a critical part of middling homes and probably not therefore a strong part of middling identity, the evidence tentatively points to them becoming more common in middling homes towards the end of the century. A larger study, drawing on more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number of drawing rooms with item (out of total of 8)</th>
<th>Number of dining rooms with item (out of total of 24)</th>
<th>Number of parlours with item (out of a total of 51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Window Curtains</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpet</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor cloth</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Card table</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other table(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair(s) suite</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofa(s)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea things</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking glasses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ornaments</td>
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<td>Musical instrument(s)</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firescreens</td>
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<td>Bed</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds in cages</td>
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inventories and sales catalogues, and on wider sources of evidence, which can provide richer insights into behaviour and beyond this to possible motivations, is needed to really get to grips with the changes taking place here, but the study does provide some context for items of middling furniture: corner cupboards are likely to have been used in parlours; pillar and claw tables, book cases and bureaux belong to dining rooms and parlours rather than drawing rooms and higher quality items were more likely to belong to dining rooms than to parlours. Another interesting implication is the way in which this information can be brought to bear on representations of interior space. The painting shown in Figure 1, for example, is usually described as ‘John Middleton with his Family in his Drawing Room’. It is a very rare depiction for this period of an identified London tradesman at home. John Middleton was both a colour manufacturer supplying artists’ pigments and owner of a paper-hanging warehouse who had premises on St Martin’s Lane, Covent Garden. With the information presented here,

the assumption about the painting showing a drawing room can be reassessed and the connotations of the type of room represented better understood. The room is shown furnished with a sideboard table (to the right of the fireplace) on top of which are cutlery boxes, possibly a Pembroke table on the far right and a pillar and claw table in the centre — all items which were likely to have been understood at the time as belonging not to a middling drawing room but to a parlour or dining room. The items typically associated with a middling drawing room are also missing — for example card tables and a sofa. Middleton then, it would appear, has not chosen to be presented in his drawing room, with its connotations of distance from the practicalities of life, but the much more down-to-earth environment of a parlour or dining room.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES
The National Archives, Kew: J90/1843, inventory of John Jackson (1786); E140/6/1, inventory of George Blachford (1794); C104/196, inventory of Elizabeth Butcher (1809); C108/367, sales catalogue of James Waller (1782); PROB 31/915/52, inventory of William Cowden (1796)
London Metropolitan Archives: CLA/002/02/01/3384, inventory of William Snelling (1739/40).

PUBLISHED SOURCES

ELECTRONIC SOURCES
APPENDIX

TRANSCRIBED INVENTORIES IN THE GEFFRYE MUSEUM ARCHIVE
USED TO PROVIDE DATA FOR THIS ARTICLE

ORIGIN AL LOCATION — THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

C 113/11, Re – Phillips, inventory of John Mitford, Bow, Middlesex, 1739/40.
C 103/176, Re – Hepworth, inventory of Luke Hepworth, St Marylebone, Middlesex, 1740.
PROB 3/40/26, inventory of William Crawford, Parish of St Johns, Southwark, master of merchant ship
Good Intent, 1741.
C 111/227, Tice v Matthews, inventory of Benjamin Tice, baker, Silver Street, St George, Bloomsbury,
Middlesex, 1744/5.
PROB 3/45/17, inventory of Francis Gibson, Parish of St Georges, Bloomsbury, Middlesex, 1745/6.
C 105/5, Braithwaite v Taylor, inventory of George Braithwaite, goldsmith, Lombard Street, 1746.
PROB 3/46/1, inventory of Jonathan Jekyll, Parish of St Andrews, Holborn, Middlesex, watchmaker,
1746.
PROB 3/46/4, inventories of Thomas Hill, Billingsgate, London, vintner, house at Greenwich, house at
Thames Street, London, 1746.
PROB 3/46/8, inventory of James Gooding, Parish of St Dunstans in the West, London, saddler, 1746/7.
PROB 3/49/9, inventory of John Brice, Covent Garden, Middlesex, 1749.
PROB 3/49/1, inventory of Thomas Shackleton, Parish of St Bartholomew the Great, London, 1749.
PROB 31/352/75, inventory of Richard Knight, St Peter Cornhill, London, 1752.
C 104/211, Arney v Hess, Inventory of the goods of Christian Tiehlen, sugar baker, at Leman Street,
Goodman’s Fields, St Mary, Whitechapel, Middlesex, 1761.
C 103/172, Re Franklin, catalogue of a tallow chandler, Chelsea, Middlesex, 1763.
C 103/195, Rushton v. Waddilove, inventory of Mark Smithson, Cock Court, Ludgate Hill, London,
1764.
C 110/157, Ex parte Crumpton, inventory of Wilkinson Crumpton, watchmaker, Primrose Street,
St. Botolph Bishopsgate, 1764.
C 103/195, Robinson v Robinson, inventory of Thomas Robinson, Bell Court, Mincing Lane, London,
1772.
C 108/83, Strange v Harris, sale catalogue of household furniture of George Perring, gardener, Queen
Street, Hammersmith, 1780.
C 108/367, Lodes v Bates, sale catalogue of household furniture of James Waller, Mansell Street,
C 107/137, Everidge v Wood, sale catalogue of household furniture of a gentleman, Red Lion Street,
Clerkenwell, 1784.
C 107/137, Everidge v Wood, sale catalogue of household furniture of William Chenery, cabinet-maker
and Upholsterer, Leadenhall Street, London, 1785.
J 90/143, West v Jackson, inventory of John Jackson, Nassau Street, St Anne’s, Westminster, 1786.
C 108/166, Carpenter v Ashness, sale catalogue of household furniture of Thomas Massey, salesman,
west side of Field Lane, Holborn, 1788.
C 108/285, ?Webb v Ives, sale catalogue of household furniture of Mr Webb, jeweller, Great Portland
Street, London, 1792.
E 140/6/1, Blachford v Blachford, inventory of George Blachford, Charlotte Street, Bedford Square,
London, 1793.
J 90/343, Godier v Godier, inventory of Goddier, weaver and pawnbroker, Bethnal Green, Middlesex,
1793.
PROB 31/915/52, inventory of William Cowden, bricklayer, Mare Street, St. John Hackney, 1796.
PROB 31/903/1, Exhibit: 1799/1, inventory of William Martin, Lieutenant General of Artillery, Queen Anne Street East, Middlesex, 1799.
PROB 31/921/733, inventory of Gawler Gryffyth Rickman, Kensington, Middlesex, 1800.
PROB 31/915/80, inventory of John Harris, Chamber Street, St Mary Whitechapel, Middlesex, 1800.
PROB 31/921/639, inventory of John Sears, Worcester Street, St Saviour Southwark, 1800.
PROB 31/921/736, inventory of Nicholas Browning, baker, St Giles Cripplegate, London, 1800.
C104/196, Butcher v Butcher, inventory of Elizabeth Butcher, King Street, Portman Square, 1809.

**Original Location — London Metropolitan Archives**
CLA/002/02/01/3384, inventory of William Snelling, salter, Parish of St. Botolph without Bishopsgate, 1739/40.
ACC/0358/001, inventory of Thomas Marriot, innkeeper, of Vineyard House, Cold Bath Fields, Clerkenwell, 1779.
O/073/001, sale catalogue of household furniture of a gentlewoman, Balam Hill, near Clapham Common, Surrey, 1781.
ACC/0953/008, inventory of Joseph Rankin, Hornsey Lane, Highgate, 1802.
ACC/0763/037, inventory of George Turpin, Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, 1808.