

COOKING AND DINING IN THE
VICTORIAN COUNTRY HOUSE

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in the
Victorian Country House*



Frontispiece. The Kitchen, Alnwick Castle, designed by Anthony Salvin for the 4th Duke of Northumberland, 1852-61.

Peter Brears

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Peter Brears
Leeds, 2023.

Introduction

During the reign of Queen Victoria, between 1837 and 1901, this country passed through a period of development and expansion virtually unparalleled elsewhere. Based on technology and commerce, its home industries and Empire enterprises produced boundless wealth for the upper and middle classes, enabling them to adopt one of the most luxurious, ostentatious and materially rich lifestyles of all time. This was not only expressed in its fine arts, its architecture, its furnishings and its dress, but also in its tableware and food.

Today it is almost inconceivable that numerous families could afford to build, equip and staff a full-scale top-quality hotel restaurant purely for themselves, but this is what they did. It took an investment equalling hundreds of thousands of pounds in today's currency, but produced the quality of lifestyle that can now only be partially experienced in their modern equivalents, the top international hotels. Members of noble and gentry families were brought up to appreciate and demand the very best of domestic services. These included the produce of game, fish, meat, cereals, fruits and vegetables from their estates and gardens, but went on to be demonstrated in the pristine whiteness of their fine linens, the high polish of their massive family silver, the correctness of their behaviour and manners, and especially the quality, flavour and presentation of their meals. All of these, along with many other services were considered essential for the maintenance of their refined, cultured lifestyle.

Establishing these standards before the introduction of modern labour-saving devices required the employment of a large, well-trained and experienced workforce. Not only was this a practical necessity, but it also served as a powerful visual representation of a family's wealth and status. With annual incomes well in excess of £40,000 a year, the wealthiest nobles and commoners often employed an indoor staff of thirty or more. In addition to the cost of their wages, these servants had to be fed, clothed and accommodated, as well as incurring further expenditure on medical care, transport and other incidentals. Of course, there were many country houses that operated on a far smaller scale, relying on perhaps a dozen or even half a dozen servants, for their owners varied enormously in wealth, social status and lifestyle. The dukes with thousands of acres of ancestral estates and a vast inheritance of agricultural and industrial income, a number of great houses and every conceivable luxury had their rank defined as being one stage below that of a prince. In reality, however, their resources and lifestyle were truly princely. In contrast, many of the new country houses built throughout

Victoria's reign served as the combined rural retreats and status symbols of the newly-wealthy manufacturers and professionals who had benefited from the country's booming international industry, trade and colonial administration. Often surrounded by only a few acres of gardens and parkland, these had more of the character of large suburban villas, and so were staffed accordingly.

Whatever the size of an establishment, it demanded the provision of a fully operational kitchen capable of not only providing everyday meals, but also those needed for the numerous daytime, evening and overnight entertainments that provided the essential cohesion of Victorian society. With say ten in the family and thirty indoor servants, for example, each requiring three meals a day, they required kitchens capable of serving 120 covers every day, with many more for any reception and house-party. The meals for the family and their guests were expected to be of the highest culinary standard, even if only one or two were in residence, while those of the servants were of a plain but substantial nature, but still far, far better than those available to most agricultural and factory workers of this period.

Unlike today, when most of our food is obtained in a partly, often completely prepared state, the majority of that coming into a country house kitchen was usually fresh and raw. The development of the railway network and food manufacturing on an industrial scale had started to provide a number of convenience foods. They included imported meat and fish and out-of-season fruits and vegetables in tins, as well as boxed biscuits and confectionery, but these made up only a tiny part of the whole. The large country house took pride in its self-sufficiency, drawing in as much as possible from its own estates, home farm, dairy, gardens and orchards. It also made good use of fresh fish from the ports, live turtles kept by specialist suppliers, and all manner of preserved foods, sausages, patés, wines, spirits, herbs and spices imported from every part of the world. Having assembled these wide-ranging high-quality ingredients in sufficiently huge amounts, they were then passed into the hands of the kitchen staff.

To meet the aspirational and practical culinary expectations of those living in country houses, generations of the leading English and French cooks had developed a culinary tradition of exceptional quality, interest and elegance. Now provided with the finest of raw ingredients, kitchens and kitchenwares, as well as extensive staff and an informed, appreciative and wealthy clientele, they had created an impressive and comprehensive cuisine Anglais of world class. Taken as a whole, the range, scale, quality and complexity of the dishes they prepared for our royal, noble and gentry houses was second to none. They were at least equal to, and often surpassed those of most modern hotels and restaurants. To today's cooks, now all elevated to the rank of chef, Victorian food, if thought of at all, conjures up a vision of little more than stodgy, boring puddings and huge roasts, but nothing

could be further from the truth. I have vivid memories of presenting the recipes for the 28 complex and highly garnished dishes prepared by a major Leeds hotel for a banquet it gave in 1881 to its present chef for him to recreate for a charity dinner. His initial cheery 'Anything they did then we can do today!' was rapidly replaced by crestfallen 'Dear God! Dear God!' in disbelief of their culinary demands. The fact that his predecessors had cooked them for 1,300 covers rather than the proposed 100 was similarly startling. Only a single example of a few of the dishes could now be prepared authentically, those actually served having to be considerably modified to accommodate modern skills and facilities.

My own interest in this aspect of food history developed in the 1970s and '80s, arising initially from the purchase of a number of period recipe books written by the highest echelon of cooks. Unlike the extensive but largely pedestrian works of Mrs. Beeton and generations of basic cook-housekeepers, they described dishes of a completely different calibre. Once the moulds etc. they described had been bought through the antiques trade, it was then possible to start cooking, re-creating the dishes as accurately as possible. The results were far better than the long neglect of their recipes had suggested. Serving multi-coursed dinners to a dozen or more food historians confirmed my findings, high-class high-Victorian food was, like the culture that had created it, full of enthusiasm for great flavours, textures and, most particularly visual appeal. However, as with any other newly-experienced cuisine, it takes a little time for the nose, eye and mouth to become acclimatised to its properties.

One reason for the current lack of knowledge and appreciation of the finer dishes of the Victorian period is the secrecy in which they were originally prepared. The highly-trained cooks kept their hand-written recipe books away from prying eyes, and often carried out their most complex practices in private. In addition, the kitchen department of all large country houses was almost monastically separated from both family members and most of the servants. It was physically contained within its walls, except for the serving hatch opened only at meal-times, and, since its occupants were at their busiest when others were eating, the kitchen staff rarely met their fellow servants. Following the closure of almost every great country house kitchen on the outbreak of war in 1939, this secrecy continued. The cooks and their staffs were dispersed and the culinary equipment and plant either put into long-term storage or sold off for scrap. The whole of the servants' quarters, formerly a scene of bustling activity, were now deserted and left to rot or serve as cold, damp stores for domestic junk. Since the traditional green baize door had always provided a socially robust barrier beyond which neither family nor guests should ever penetrate, the kitchens were conveniently forgotten. To most aristocrats the concept of anyone,

especially visiting guests and the public, being allowed to look into their service rooms was beyond comprehension. It was only in the 1970s that, probably taking a lead from popular television series such as *Upstairs, Downstairs*, that owners such as the Marquis of Bath at Longleat started to open their historic kitchens. The visitors found their first sight of this long-forgotten, hidden world to be completely fascinating. In many ways its functional character was more comprehensible and approachable than that of the magnificent state rooms above. Life led in vast gilt-furnished art-galleries was beyond most people's comprehension, but cooking was. As a result, more stately homes started to open their below-stairs areas as displays.

In the 1970s I restored the 1680 kitchen at Clarke Hall, Wakefield, back to its original state, but as a working kitchen, not as a display. Using a combination of archaeological and archival sources, I designed, commissioned and purchased all the equipment in authentic style and construction, before putting it into practical use. Cooking over charcoal stoves, roasting before open fires and similar operations provided a uniquely informative learning experience. One now called 'experimental archaeology'. This approach, along with the academic study of food history, remained in its infancy, however. Its vast primary sources in the form of printed books and manuscripts, surviving equipment and buildings, along with the memories of the last generation of country house servants, were still largely neglected. Since then I have restored over thirty historic kitchens and prepared reports on a similar number for both preservation trusts and noble owners. Their brief has always been directed towards restoration and display, but these projects also gave me unique access to their documentary and physical resources. In this way I was enabled to make accurate measured drawings of all manner of kitchens, their fixtures and utensils, and gather a wealth of related information regarding their use and products. Exploring this unknown aspect of industrial archaeology has been a uniquely interesting experience.

Considering their essential role in sustaining life, the study of the history of food and kitchens has never received the detailed attention they deserve. Many of those few serious books and papers that have tackled them have done so from restricted points of view, seeing them as aspects of other disciplines, such as architecture, technology, sociology or recipes. These blinkered approaches, especially when combined with the traditional academic disdain for material culture and practical experience, are inadequate, and often misleading. One common mistake has been to consider country house kitchens to be mere cottage kitchens writ large. This is comparable to assuming that a great engineering works that manufactures cars is just an up-scaled version of someone tinkering with their vehicle in a back yard. Every aspect of their operation, including

financial control, investment in plant, professional administration, training, technological expertise, internal security, and range, scale and quality of product is completely different. The country house kitchens were professional commercial kitchens operating in much the same way as those of modern hotels and restaurants, not domestic living rooms in which cooking was only one of many multifarious activities.

In order to be both meaningful and comprehensible, food history has to commence with a clear definition and understanding of the context of the topic being studied. Once that has been done, however, it must be all-embracing in its sources of information. Restricting study to written records alone, a practice of many historians, is inadequate when considering essentially practical subjects and especially when dealing with food and cookery. A knowledge of the material culture of the subject, along with practical experience of the nature of foodstuffs, of culinary techniques and of the taste, textures, scents and visual effects they produce, is absolutely essential.

In the following chapters this approach has been adopted as far as possible by supplementing the purely historical evidence with numerous scale drawings of structures, fixtures and utensils, made over the course of over thirty years of fieldwork. These are described in the various departments and rooms in which they were originally found, and are provided with authentic period recipes to not only show how they were used, but also to enable them to be used today; the proof of the evidence should be in the eating. The limitations of this policy are obvious. Due to the differences in the availability of certain foodstuffs, the scale of the catering and the changes in equipment between a great country house and a modern domestic kitchen, many dishes are now no longer practical. However, many others are, and are well worth reviving not only to enlighten our concept of the high-class cookery of the period, but because they are good to eat.

For centuries the food cooked in our country houses was the finest available, its variety then being greatly expanded by the investment in new technology, enlarged professional staffs and international trade of the Victorian period. This great culinary tradition then started to wain around the time of the First World War, and finally collapsed with the outbreak of war in 1939. Now, over eighty years later, it remains forgotten, even those who experienced its final stages having passed away. Hopefully this book will go a little way in reviving interest in it, and encourage further study, appreciation and enjoyment of all its diverse aspects.

Peter Brears,
Leeds.

Families & Servants

One of the great privileges of vast wealth was the freedom to choose a personal lifestyle unrestricted by either resources or most conventions. The British tradition of primogeniture that retained a family's core properties and income for the use of the first-born son, the financial dependence of his wife and others on his goodwill, and his autocratic control of his lands, tenants and servants imbued him with immense power over all around him. It also left him perfectly free to pursue his own interests in any way he wished, whether political, cultural, military, sporting or social. As in all communities, there was a well-established pecking-order based on rank, pedigree and wealth headed by the Queen and her sedate court, then eclipsed by that of the Prince of Wales and his hedonistic Marlborough House set, followed by the ducal families, and so on down to the aspirational nouveau-riche. Entry into each group, or a particular clique within it, was restricted by its particular mores and expectations. These included a carefully codified system of manners that governed every aspect of social interaction, failure to observe their practices leading to rejection.

In previous generations such groupings and social customs had operated on a relatively local scale focussed around the county towns, but these changed in the early part of Victoria's reign. With the development of rapid transport by rail and of highly-efficient postal and later telegraph services upper-class life became far more unified, especially in its round of annual activities. Every May, high society assembled in London for The Season, a period of continuous entertainment featuring formal visiting, lunches, dinners and balls in all the great aristocratic town 'houses' – actually the most magnificent of urban palaces. This then broke up for a return to the country houses for the start of grouse shooting on the 'Glorious Twelfth' of August and the main hunting and shooting season. In contrast, many set off to warmer climes, over-wintering in France, the Mediterranean resorts or even further afield. Those who followed this ever-repeating cycle required considerable sums to do so, not only in the maintenance of the required large-scale London and country houses, as well as hunting and shooting lodges, but also in the provision of the finest food, drink and entertainment. These, in their turn, demanded the employment of a huge well-trained professional

workforce in order to keep up appearances and reputations. None of these could be maintained, however, without the combination of an immense, sustainable income and efficient financial control. Having gained entry into a superior social group, it was all too easy to carry on regardless of its often crippling expences. Enjoying the friendship of the Prince of Wales brought with it the duty of providing him and his intimates with catering and accommodation of grand hotel standards entirely free of all charges. As both Lord Hardwicke and Christopher Sykes discovered, this totally exhausted their considerable resources, turned them out of their homes, drove them into bankruptcy, and effectively ejected them from society. Prince Edward's only reward for the luxurious, lavish hospitality he had received was no more than a whispered 'what a thoroughly bad business.'¹

While many families chose to follow this lifestyle, others did not, sometimes purely because they were of a reclusive nature, sometimes because they enthusiastically followed other interests, or lacked the necessary means. Others had not been brought up into this class, and felt uncomfortable in its company. Changing circumstances also played their part; those with offspring of marriageable age might expand their level of entertaining in order to secure good matches, for example, while others might do so to reflect their elevation in the peerage, or a similar improvement in their status. In contrast, some retreated in the face of financial or personal problems. The aspirations of one generation could also be rejected by the next, just as a matter of personal taste. A family's level of participation in high society was by no means regular, frequently changing from one generation to the next. A further factor was the degree of luxury or plain-living that the head of the family might choose for himself and impose on his relations. With the benefit of a vast income drawn from 32,000 acres of prime agricultural land and a highly profitable stud, Sir Tatton Sykes of Sledmere (1826-1913) chose to dine on half-raw mutton chops accompanied by rice pudding, for example.² Most preferred to enjoy a far more varied diet of good, plainly cooked meals, only providing elaborate and expensive dishes when entertaining guests, while others demanded *haute cuisine* on every day throughout the year. Those with limited requirements or resources could always hire in the services of a professional catering company as and when they needed to throw a grand party, but it was always considered preferable to maintain a fully competent domestic staff of one's own.

Over the course of the last millennium, and particularly with the growth of a prosperous middle class from the sixteenth century, an unbroken tradition of aristocratic domestic service had become well-established, one that reflected the different levels of society. In the Tudor and Stuart periods it was still common practice for royal, noble and gentry families to take the younger members of their immediately subordinate rank into their households for a number of years.

During this period these part-adopted-part servant youngsters were given a thorough apprenticeship in domestic matters. In this way they absorbed the essential knowledge of manners, etiquette, management and those practicalities that were essential for their acceptance into polite society. Following this system with yeomen serving the gentry, the gentry serving the nobility, and the nobility serving royalty, a remarkably cohesive and stable social order was established. Everyone knew their place. By the Georgian period this process had virtually disappeared, service based on patronage and loyalty being replaced by paid employment. Even so, the earlier class-distinctions remained as strong as ever. The family and its table-servants continued to dine in grand seclusion, the upper servants that had occupied the dais in the great hall for centuries now kept to their steward's room, while the lower servants were relegated below stairs to the servants' hall, the direct descendant of the great hall of the middle ages.

In any great house, as in a well-organised factory, there was a clear chain of managerial command descending from a steward as works manager, down through subordinate heads of department to the hands-on workforce. As with all other aspects of life at this period, this system was further divided according to gender, male and female activities being strictly separated from each other. Being of such widespread long-standing, these basic principles of domestic management were deeply embedded within the whole of polite society. However, our knowledge of them is now greatly enhanced by the series of instructional manuals published in the late nineteenth century to instruct the *nouveau-riche* industrial and commercial families that had risen from the lower classes.³ These were essential if newly-elevated masters and mistresses were to maintain any degree of respectability among both their peer group and the well-trained servants they now employed. The mixture of realities and expectations of this group formed a popular subject for novelists, from Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* to Thomas Armstrong's *Crowthers of Bankdam*.

The culinary staff structure within a great house is best introduced as a chart;

	MALE	FEMALE
House Steward		
Steward's Room Boy		
Butler	Man-Cook	Housekeeper
Under Butler	Confectioner or Cook	Stillroom Maids
	Pastry Cook	Kitchen Maids
Servants' Hall Boy		Dairy Maid
Footmen	Kitchen Man or Scullion	Vegetable & Scullery Maid
Odd Man	Baker	

Planning the Country House Kitchen

This arrangement was frequently modified, perhaps by the addition of a roasting cook or a plate-room boy, or much more frequently by dispensing with the man-cook and transferring his duties to the female cook. As a further economy, the posts of cook and housekeeper were usually combined with that of a cook-housekeeper. In terms of gender, the continuing anomaly was that of the baker, who might be either a man or a woman who, depending on local preference and expediency, he or she would work under the direction of the man-cook or the housekeeper as appropriate. Of course there were many others intimately concerned with the production of food for the country house, these including the staff of the home farm, the slaughtermen, butcher, gamekeeper, head gardener and brewer. Since their activities remained largely beyond the boundaries of the country house itself, however, they will not be considered in this book. Those who are interested in these areas are advised to read excellent studies such as Pamela Sambrook's *Country House Brewing in England, 1500-1900* (London 1996), John Martin Robinson's *The English Country Estate* (London 1988), and Mark Dawson, Laura Mason and Janet Pickering's *The Domestic Dairy* (Leeds 2018).

Since there were considerable variations in both staff structures and individual duties between one household and another, it is almost impossible to present an all-embracing account of the subject. The production of pastries, for example, would be undertaken by the confectioner in a great household, a pastry cook in a slightly lesser one, a stillroom maid in most others, or a cook-housekeeper at the bottom of the scale. In order to deal with this and other similar situations, the following chapters assume that a full complement of domestic servants has been employed. Basic pastries, therefore, will be dealt with as stillroom products, only the most elaborate being described within the confectionery, for example, even though pastries might have been made in the kitchen in some houses.

After more than four generations of artificial light, and around three generations of artificial means of heating, refrigeration and ventilation, today's society has largely forgotten the all-important role of the natural environment in serving the needs of human life. Now, if any of these essential services are required, the only solution is seen in terms of technology fuelled by increasingly expensive energy. This is a complete contrast to the approach of earlier generations whose lives were governed by seasonal changes in sunlight, wind and weather. Sure in the knowledge of when and where the sun would rise and set at any time of the year, what winds would bring what weather from season to season, and similar well-understood phenomena, they planned their homes to take best advantage of these conditions. Any study of historic houses and castles of the medieval and later periods confirms that their builders were fully environmentally aware. Only with the publication of Robert Kerr's *The English Gentleman's House* in 1864 was this knowledge effectively codified. His 'Aspects Compass' (Fig. 1.) is a remarkably concise, informative and easily usable combination of diverse yet interconnected information.¹

It is best understood as the dial of a 24-hour clock, with 12 midnight at the top and 12 noon at the bottom, onto which a compass has been superimposed, north to the top, south to the bottom, west to the left and east to the right. Further information has then been added, including the hours of direct sunlight at Christmastime, the equinoxes of Lady Day and Michaelmas, and Midsummer Day, and the winds and weather driving in from the north-east, north-west, south-east and south-west. Having graphically presented the major environmental conditions, the final stage involved the placing of a scale plan of any particular window or door in its intended geographical orientation on the centre of the chart. This immediately revealed if sunlight would ever penetrate it and, if it did, at what times throughout the year. It also suggested the angle of the sun, whether close to the horizon at morning and evening, or at its zenith at mid-day. The example of a south-facing window is shown in Fig. 1., but if this were to be rotated, it would show the hours during which the rays of the sun would enter a window facing in a particular direction;

ASPECT	CHRISTMAS	LADY DAY	MIDSUMMER	MICHAELMAS
N	nil	nil	nil	nil
NE	nil	6 a.m.-7.15 a.m.	4 a.m.-7.15 a.m.	6 a.m.-7.15 a.m.
E	8 a.m.-10.30 a.m.	6 a.m.-10.30 a.m.	4 a.m.-10.30 a.m.	6 a.m.-10 a.m.
SE	8 a.m.-1.30 p.m.	4 a.m.-1.30 p.m.	4 a.m.-1.30 p.m.	8 a.m.-1.30 p.m.
S	8 a.m.-4 p.m.	4 a.m.-1.30 p.m.	7.30 a.m.-4.30 p.m.	7.30 a.m.-4.30 p.m.
SW	11 a.m.-6 p.m.	11 a.m.-6 p.m.	11 a.m.-7.30 p.m.	11 a.m.-6 p.m.
W	1.30p.m.-4 p.m.	1.30 p.m.-6 p.m.	1.30 p.m.-8 p.m.	1.30 p.m.-6 p.m.
NE	5 p.m.-6 p.m.	5 p.m.-6 p.m.	5 a.m.-8 p.m.	nil

As to the weather, even when subject to the changeability of the British climate, it was graphically indicated by the direction from which it came;

North-west winds;	boisterous
North-east winds;	cold in spring
South-east winds;	mild and relatively dry
South-west winds;	boisterous and wet

Given these experience-based observations, it was now possible to place each room in the ideal position that would make the most of its geographical location. Larders and kitchens were best kept to the north-east quadrant, for example, for here they would receive little or no sunlight and remain in the shadow of the main house to keep them cool, yet still providing good light for the first hours of the working day. Here too the prevailing wind carried their smoke, steam and smells away from residential areas. Breakfast rooms ideally faced the south-east, and dayrooms the south, so that during the course of the day they were well-lit but would not dazzle their occupants as the sun was at its height. Dining rooms, meanwhile, could face either the west or the south-west to benefit from the evening light, since by 7 p.m. the autumn, winter or spring sun would have set, with no risk of dazzle. In contrast, an easterly or south-easterly dining room could provide attractive sunlit vistas from its windows.

This all sounds very logical, but numerous other factors each played their part in the design of a country house. These included the presence or long-accepted location of other buildings, the topography of the site, with its individual slopes and landscapes, and the personal opinions of both client and architect. When planning a new house, the easiest course of action was to call in one or more established architects to prepare drawings of their proposed schemes, the choice being determined by a combination of reputation, knowledge of their work, or the advice of knowledgeable friends. It was also really worthwhile to consider an appropriate manual in order to clarify one's thoughts and expectations. Of these, J.C. London's *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture*

and Furniture of 1833 (new edition 1846), was of great help, presenting 1,317 pages packed with copious practical advice and numerous illustrations. For the country house in particular, however, the above-mentioned *The Gentleman's House* (1864-1865) by Robert Kerr was absolutely invaluable in its range of appropriate theoretical and practical advice. It commenced with a description of domestic buildings erected from the eleventh to the mid nineteenth centuries before presenting the general requirements of a good modern house, especially on

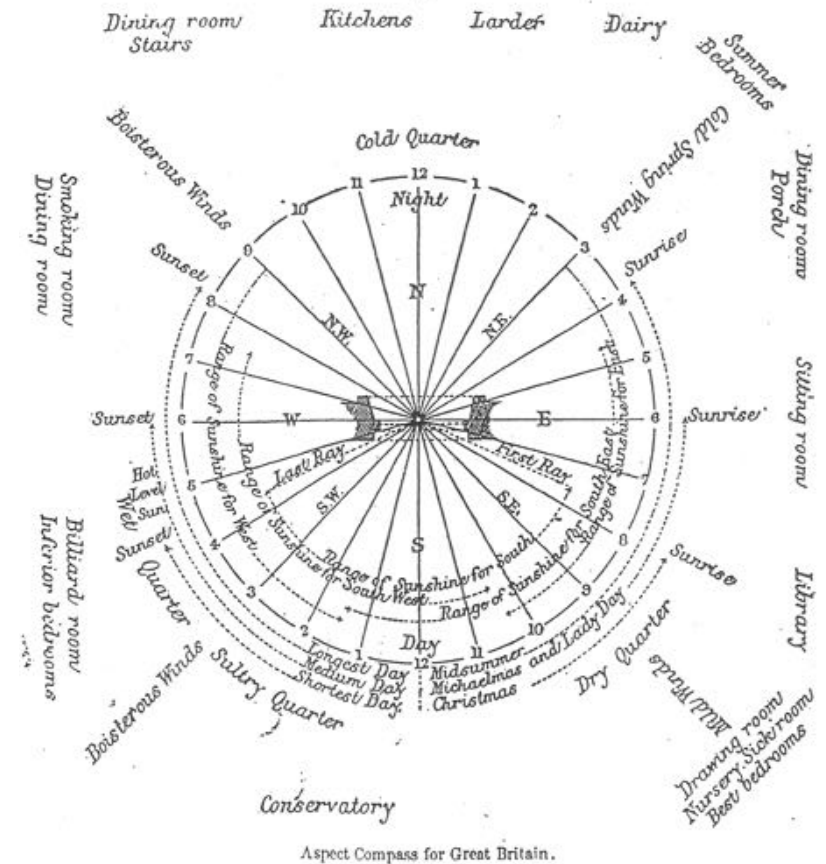


Figure 1. Robert Kerr's Aspect Compass combines a 24-hour clock (midnight at the top), a compass (north to the top), the seasonal changes of sunrise and sunset and the weather coming in from each quarter. Onto this is placed the plan of a window, here shown facing south, but theoretically turnable in order to show the times at which it would admit the rays of the sun.

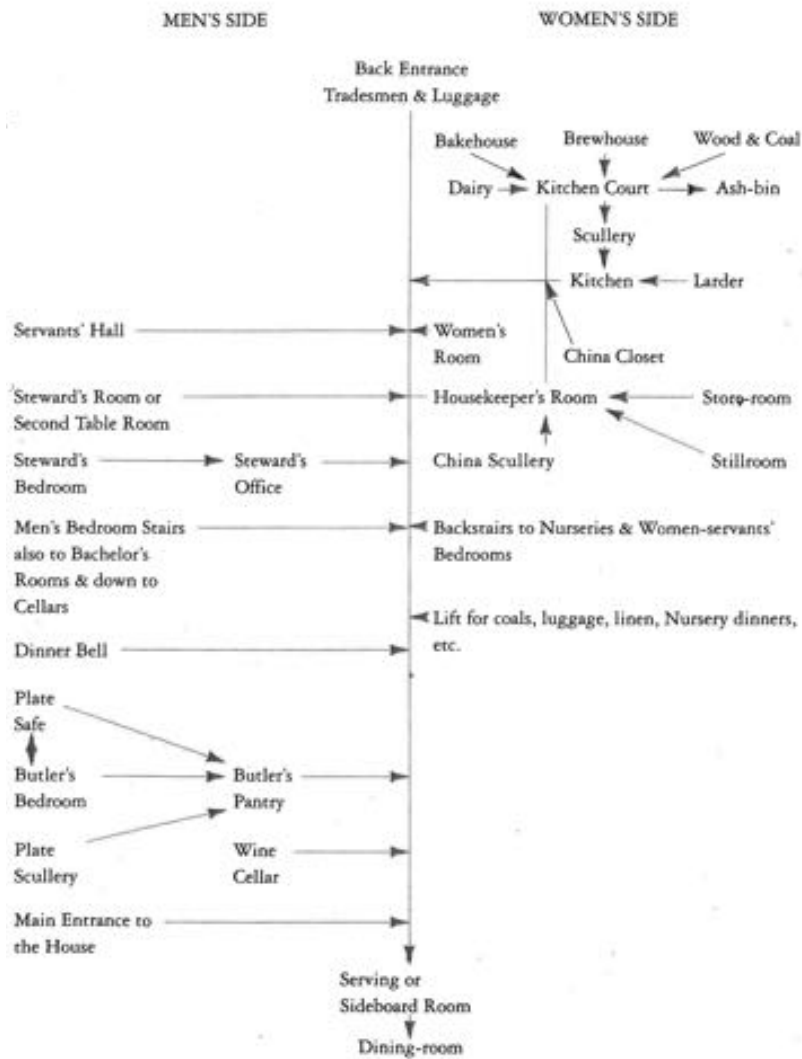


Figure 2. This theoretical flow-chart shows the ideal arrangement of service rooms required to efficiently process foodstuffs from the back gate through to the dining room. It provides an effective means of assessing the practicality of all historic kitchens, such as those shown in the following drawings.

terms of privacy, comfort, convenience, aspect, cheerfulness and elegance. Then followed room-by-room recommendations for each of the day rooms, the sleeping rooms, children's rooms, sanitary matters and thoroughfares. Next came the state rooms, and then on 'downstairs' to each kitchen, upper servants' lower servants' and laundry office, the bakehouse, brewery and cellars, and the servants' private rooms. Finally there was advice on architectural style, the required accommodation, and the cost of building country houses from a great 24-bedroom mansion at £40,000 down to a 4-bedroom villa at £850. Given this information any gentleman was able to develop an informed opinion of what his requirements might be in relation to his aspirations and his bank balance. This provided a series of options from the largest to the smallest, their culinary rooms alone comprising for;

1. a 197-room mansion		2. a 26-room house	
1 dining room	36x24	1 dining room	18x15
1 morning room	24x16	1 kitchen	16x14
1 luncheon room	16x16	1 larder	8x5
1 school room	16x16	1 pantry	8x5
1 kitchen	30x20	1 store/china closet	10x8
1 scullery	16x16	1 linen closet	6x10
5 larders	10x10	1 knife house	6x5
1 dairy	15x12	1 ashbin/W.C.	8x6
1 dairy scullery	15x12	1 coal cellar	10x7
1 bakehouse	18x12	1 wine cellar	10x7
1 oven	10x10	TOTAL	898 sq.ft.
1 flour-store	12x10		
1 brewhouse	20x14		
1 butler's pantry	16x16		
1 safe	10x10		
1 silver scullery	16x10		
1 service room	20x10		
1 housekeeper's room	18x16		
1 still-room	16x16		
1 store room	16x14		
2 store closets	10x8		
1 china closet	12x10		
1 steward's office	16x14		
1 steward's room	18x16		
1 servants' hall	30x16		

1 women's room	20x16
1 knife room	10x10
1 ash-bin	10x10
3 water closets	6x4
3 coal cellars	15x12
1 wood house	25x12
4 wine cellars	16x12
2 beer cellars	16x12
5 misc cellars	15x10
1 ice house	10x8
TOTAL	9,314 sq. ft.²

To those unfamiliar with the service rooms of country houses, their number and size as described above may appear gargantuan, but they are not. In fact they are quite typical of their period, as demonstrated by the plans of houses such as Llanhydrock of 1881-4 or Tyntesfield of 1863-8, each of which closely follow Robert Kerr's advice. It came as no surprise to find William Gibbs' personal copy of Kerr's *English Gentleman's House* still on the shelves of his library at Tyntesfield. Significantly, John Walter of *The Times* had not only read Kerr's book before commissioning his great house at Bearwood, but went on to employ him as his architect.³

One of the most discussed aspects of Victorian domestic architecture was its choice of style. The classical Greek and Roman revivals of the Georgian period has now passed out of fashion, but the Gothic Revival continued to flourish. Italianate and Elizabethan Renaissance were particularly popular in the mid-Victorian decades, these being followed by the 'Old English' and 'Queen Anne'. Those who wish to study this sequence in detail should consult Mark Girouard's masterly *The Victorian Country House* of 1979. However, this aesthetic aspect does not concern us here.

One of the problems of all classically-inspired houses was their demand for absolute symmetry in every facade. This had meant that service rooms had to be packed into any convenient space, regardless of their practical requirements. A favourite location was the basement, where individual offices usually led off a long spinal corridor with internal staircases and external doors at each end. In larger houses symmetry was maintained by placing the offices in linked wings, either one to each side of the main frontage, or a single one usually to the north and well hidden from polite view by dense plantations of evergreens. Those new houses to be built in the Gothic styles were amongst the first to abandon symmetry in their plans, introducing freer, more romantic outlines, that allowed

greater space for the increasing number of separate offices.⁴ However, some of the first houses of this type were functional nightmares, as typified by Todington, designed by its owner around 1819 (Fig. 3.). It was built on a huge scale as three almost symmetrical blocks, comprising the main residential rooms, the services and the stables arranged along a 525 ft./191 m. north-west to south-east diagonal. (Fig. 12.). The plan initially looks impressive, but further scrutiny reveals its numerous problems;

1. there is no external service door only a formal entry from the park, 120 ft./44 m. from the kitchen door.
2. the bakehouse is completely detached from the rest of the offices.
3. the back-kitchen/scullery has no back door, and has only a very awkward link to the kitchen.
4. the distance from the kitchen to the dining room is about 160 ft./58 m., involves crossing the entrance hall and has no dinner service room.
5. the larder is the only route into the back yard and toilets.
6. the housekeeper's and butler's rooms are arranged as a hopeless muddle, his pantry etc. being placed inbetween her own room, stores and maids' room.
7. the maids' room looks directly into the owner's private study.
8. the servants' hall is completely beyond the supervision of the upper servants.
9. the steward's room is completely isolated from the family rooms, the domestic offices and the back entrance, and therefore useless for their supervision.
10. the dining room faces south, and therefore will be in full, dark shadow when in use.

In order to avoid such irremediable problems it was necessary to develop a theoretically ideal model that not only arranged each room in its correct order to create an efficient production-line, but also clearly segregated the male and female offices (Fig. 3.). In addition, the environmental requirements already described had to be satisfied, none of the rooms occupied by lower servants should allow them to see into those of the family, and the upper servants should be provided with every advantage to oversee the lower ones and visually control the back gate. It took great experience and skill on the part of the architect to successfully combine all these elements into the design that was not only practically efficient, but also contributed to the overall external appearance of the house.

For the largest houses, the most common solution was to arrange the kitchens etc. around a rectangular service court. This provided good natural

light into most of the rooms and kept them all within secure visual and physical boundaries. Most were built between the 1830s and the 1870s, a period when agricultural incomes remained at their highest. The favoured position was off the north-east corner of the residential block, as at Pull Court of 1836-9, Mentmore Towers of 1850-55, Penrhyn Castle of the 1860s and Bearwood of 1865-70. Here their smoke, steam and smells were carried away from the house by the prevailing south-westerly winds, and they remained cool in its shadow during the hottest hours of the day. To use prose to describe the position of each service room and to place it within its functional sequence would be to create laborious confusion, this information best being presented graphically. In the illustrations, each room is numbered to follow the flow of raw materials and services from the back gate, through the kitchens etc. and on into the apartments in which the finished meals

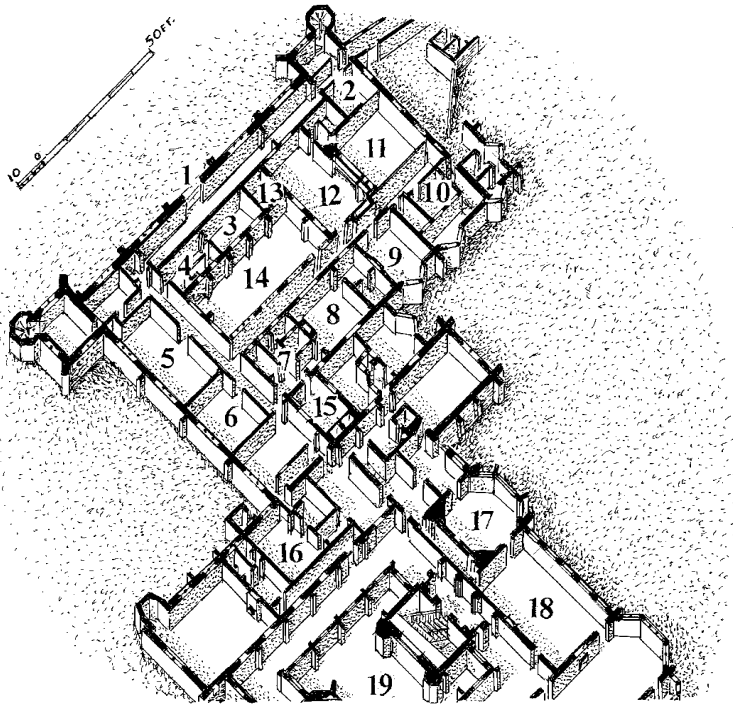


Figure 3. The Kitchens at Toddington, 1819. 1. East Entrance 2. Bakehouse 3. Cleaning Room 4. Boot Room 5. Servants' Hall 6. Housekeeper's Room 7. Housekeeper's (?) Stores 8. Butler's Pantry or Safe 9. Housemaid's Room 10. Larder 11. Scullery 12. Kitchen 13. Pastry 14. Court 15. Stillroom 16. Steward's Office 17. Breakfast Room 18. Dining Room 19. Court.

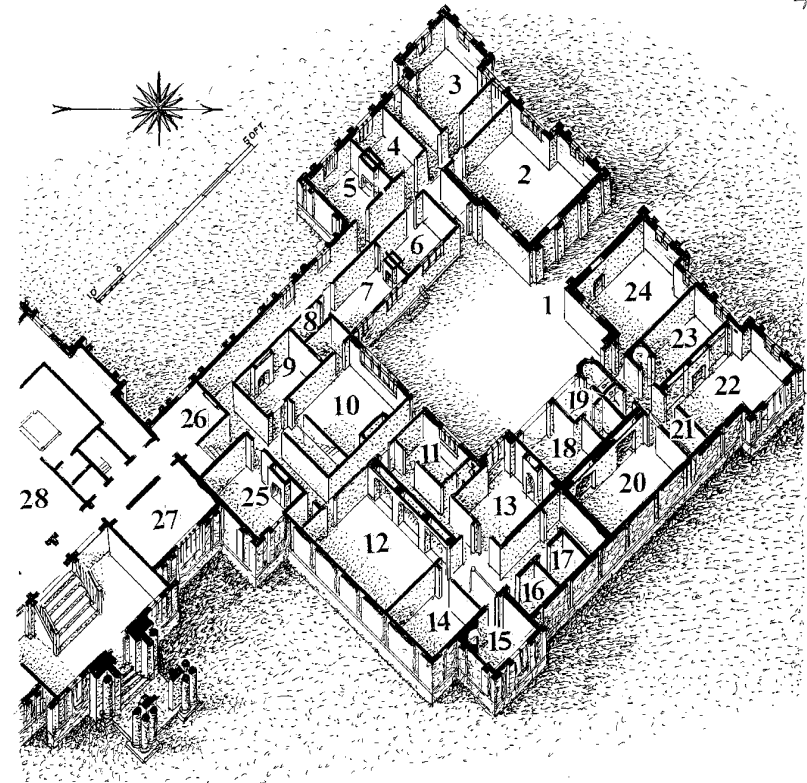


Figure 4. The Kitchen Court at Mentmore. Designed by Paxton & Stokes, 1859-55. 1. Back Gate 2. Servants' Hall 3. Housemaid's Room 4. Cleaning Room 5. Footmen's Room 6. Butler's Pantry 7. Strong Room 8. Stillroom 9. Housekeeper's Room & Store 10. Coals 11. Kitchen 12. Scullery 13. Pastry 14. Cook's Room 15. Milk Larder 16. Larder 17. Coals 18. Ashes 19. Wet laundry 20. Coals 21. Dry Laundry 22. Knife Room 23. Brewhouse 24. Gentleman's Dressing Room 25. Lobby/Dinner Service Room 26. Small Dining Room 27. Grand Hall, to Dining Room

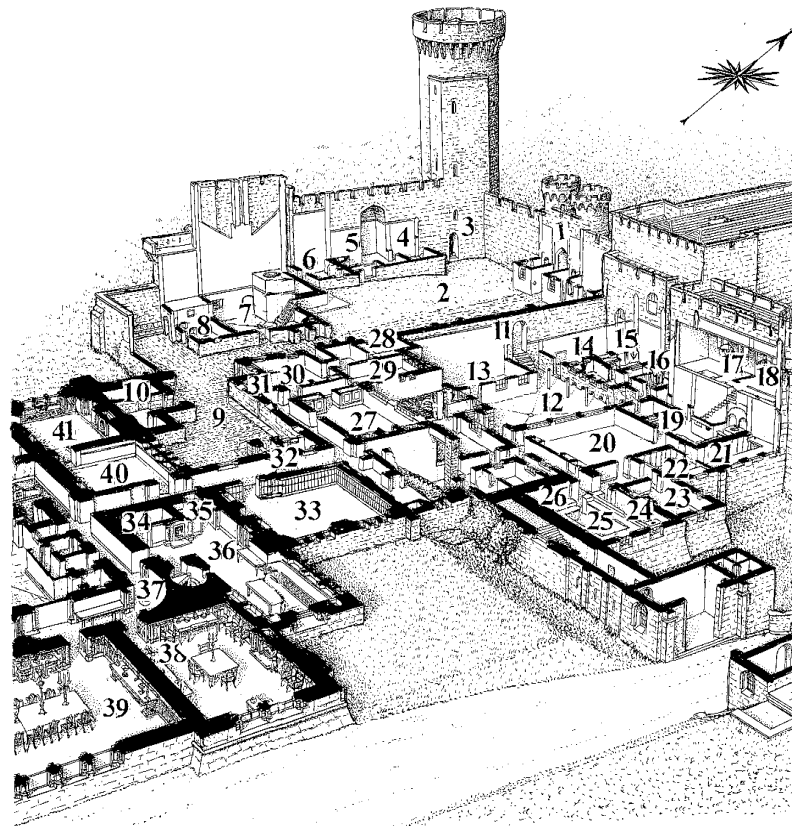


Figure 5. The Kitchen Court, Penrhyn Castle, 1869s. 1. Back Gate & W.C.s 2. Outer Court 3. Ice House 4. Store Room 5. Soup House 6. Gun Room 7. Brewhouse 8. Bakehouse 9. Inner Court 10. Store Room 11. Door to 12 12. Kitchen Court 13. Laundry 14. Dry Larder 15. Dairy Larder 16. Wet Larder 17. Kitchen Maids' Bedroom 18. Scullery Maid's Bedroom 19. Scullery 20. Kitchen 21. Pastry 22. Pantry 23. Cook's Room 24. W.C. 25. China Closet 26. Closet 27. Housekeeper's Room 28. Housekeeper's Store 29. Stillroom 30. Stillroom Scullery 31. Back Door 32. Servants' Hall 33. Servants' Hall 34. Plate Room 35. Plate Room 36. Butler's Pantry 37. Baize Door & Serving Table 38. Breakfast Room 39. Dining Room 40. Steward's Room 41. Lady Penrhyn's Boudoir

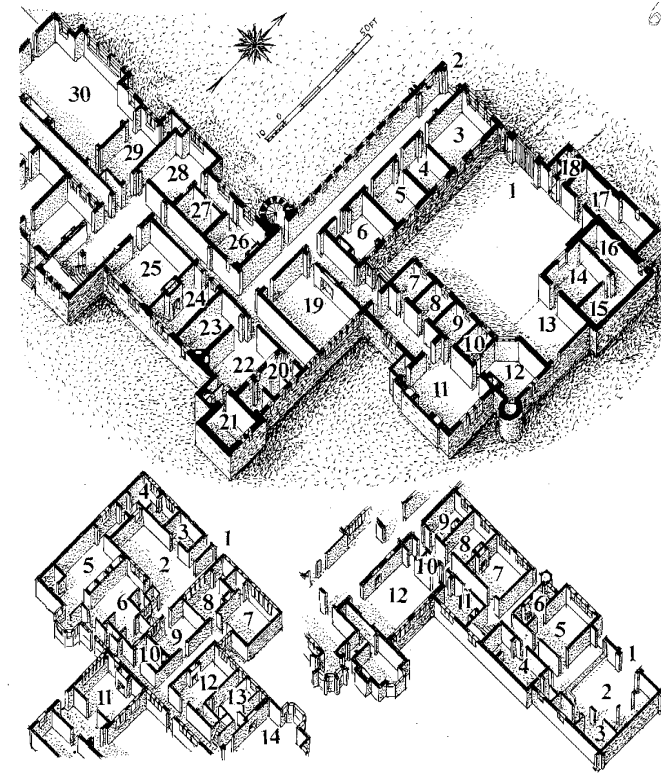


Figure 6.
 The Kitchen Court at Bearwood (Top). Designed by Robert Kerr, 1865-70. 1. Back Gate 2. Back Door 3. Housekeeper's Room 4. Store Room 5. Stillroom 6. Women's Workroom 7. Larder 8. Pantry 9. Pastry 10. Coals 11. Kitchen 12. Scullery 13. Cart Shed 14. Engine House 15. Coals 16. Boiler 17. Coal House 18. W.C.s 19. Servants' Hall 20. W.C.s 21. Cleaning Room 22. Brushing Room 23. Footmen's Room 24. Gun Room 25. Odd Room 26. Butler's Bedroom 27. Plate Safe 28. Butler's Pantry 29. Dinner Service Room 30. Dining Room.
 The Kitchen Court at Overstrand Hall (Left). Designed by Edwin Lutyens, 1899-1901. 1. Back Gate 2. Court 3. Coals 4. Larders 5. Kitchen 6. Scullery 7. Housekeeper's Room 8. Stillroom & Stores 9. Brushing Room 10. Man's Room 11. Servants' Hall 12. Butler's Pantry & Safe 13. W.C.s 14. Dining Room
 The Kitchen Wing, Didsbury Tower (Right). Designed by Thomas Worthington, 1865. 1. Back Gate 2. Court 3. Coals 4. Pantry & Larder 5. Kitchen 6. Scullery 7. Servants' Hall 8. Housekeeper's Room 9. Housekeeper's Store 10. Safe & China Closet 11. Butler's Pantry 12. Dining Room

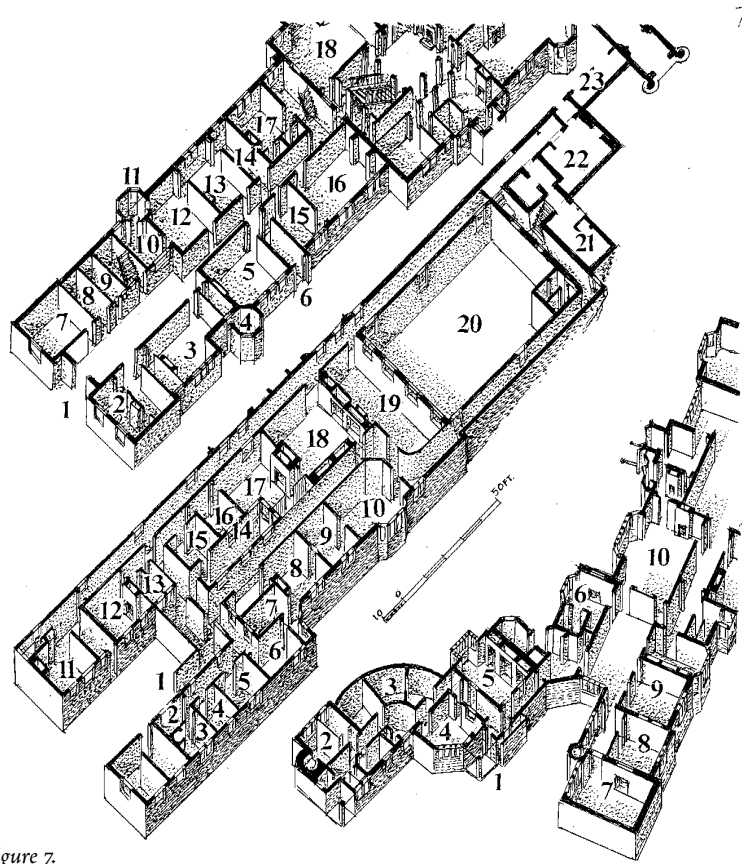


Figure 7.
The Kitchens, Dobroyd Castle, (Top). Designed by John Gibson, 1865-9. 1. Back Gate 2. Laundry & Drying Room 3. Brewhouse 4. Men's W.C. 5. Servants' Hall 6. Servants' Door 7. Coals 8. Wood 9. Boots & Knives 10. Larder 11. Game Larder 12. Pantry 13. Housekeeper's Room 14. Housekeeper's Store 15. Scullery 16. Kitchen 17. Butler's Pantry 18. Dining Room
The Kitchens, Clouds (Middle). Designed by Philip Webb 1881-6 1. Back Door 2.-10. Housekeeper's Rooms; 2. Store Room 3. Bakehouse 4. Game Larder 5. Larder 6.-7. Store Room 8. Still Room 9. China Closet & Linen Room 10. Housekeeper's Room 11.- 18. Cook's Rooms 11. Knives & W.C. 12. Cook's Rooms 13. Coals & Wood 14. Kitchen Court 15. Cold Meat Larder 16. Vegetable Scullery 17. Scullery & Cook's Closet 18. Kitchen 19. Servants' Hall 20. Court 21. Store 22. Dinner Service Room 23. Dining Room
The Kitchen, Hull Place. Designed by George Devey, 1872-6. 1. Back Door 2. Bakehouse 3. Larders 4. Scullery 5. Kitchen 6. Butler's Pantry & Bedroom 7. Servants' Hall 8. Stillroom 9. Housekeeper's Room 10. Dining Room

were served. In this way the manner in which the architect has managed to combine the multifarious demands of creating an efficient and manageable food factory can be most easily demonstrated and understood. For the courtyard plan, the chosen examples range in scale from Mentmore Towers (Fig. 4.), Penrhyn Castle (Fig. 5.) and Bearwood, to the much smaller and later Overstrand Hall of 1899-1901 (Fig. 6.). Fig 7. meanwhile, shows Muncaster Castle where the service rooms were extended from the kitchen court to occupy the north side of the main house, shortening the distance to the dining room.

Instead of spacing their services rooms around an enclosed courtyard, many other houses had them arranged along a spinal corridor in a wing that usually, but not exceptionally, extended to the north. This was a well-established Georgian practice, its suitability for both large and small country houses ensuring its continuity through to the opening of the twentieth century. Their logical, linear flow from the back gate to the dining room was most efficient. It left the residential block free to enjoy open aspects to the south, east and west, and was easily rendered invisible by planting camouflaging trees and shrubs along their flanks. Whether relatively modest, as at Dobroyd Castle's 150 ft./55 m. example, or massive, as at Clouds, 250 ft./91 m. they were usually designed as simple rectangular blocks, but, in the hands of an imaginative architect, then could adopt a far more romantic form, as at the Tudor style Hall Place (Fig. 7.).

The majority of the country houses built during the Victorian period followed either the courtyard or the corridor plan, or else a combination of the two, with the courtyard leading into a corridor. Others incorporated their kitchens into the body of the house, bringing them closer to the dining room, as at Muncaster Castle (Fig. 8.). In their design and conformation, however, there was scope for great variety. This is seen in many architectural works, including studies of individual architects, or magazines such as *The Builder*, *Building News* or *The British Architect* kept in major reference libraries. The best modern and readily-accessible source of information by far is Jill Franklin's *The Gentleman's Country House and its Plan 1835-1914* of 1981. Remarkable for its wealth of deeply-researched, well-considered and beautifully illustrated content, it provides a uniquely comprehensive yet highly readable introduction to every aspect of country house architecture.

When visiting the long-deserted kitchen wings of Victorian houses, their layout, though varied, is usually straightforward and relatively conventional. Being constructed at the heart of extensive parkland, their architects were not constrained by the lack of space, while funding their construction was rarely a problem. It therefore comes as a surprise to come across kitchens that, while maintaining a practical production line, defy routine expectations. They are

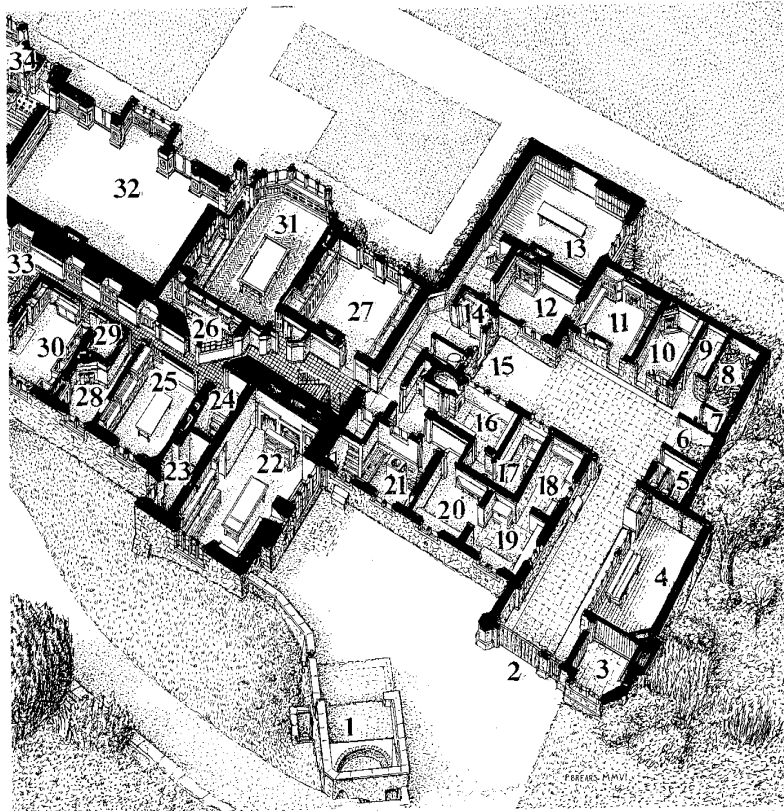


Figure 8. The Kitchens, Muncaster Castle. Designed by Anthony Salvin 1862-6. 1. Store & Ice House 2. Back Gate 3. Gun Room 4. Carpenter's Shop 5. W.C.s 6. Ashes 7. Coals 8. Wood 9. Knife Room 10. Boot Room 11. Brushing Room 12. Valet's Room 13. Servants' Hall 14. Lamp Room 15. Back Door 16. Bakehouse 17. Bakehouse Pantry 18. Larder 19. Larder 20. Larder 21. Scullery 22. Kitchen 23. Cook's Room 24. Cellar Stair 25. Stillroom 26. China Closet 27. Housekeeper's Room 28. Butler's Room 29. Plate Safe 30. Butler's Pantry 31. Billiard Room 32. Drawing Room 33. Dinner Service Room 34. Great Hall

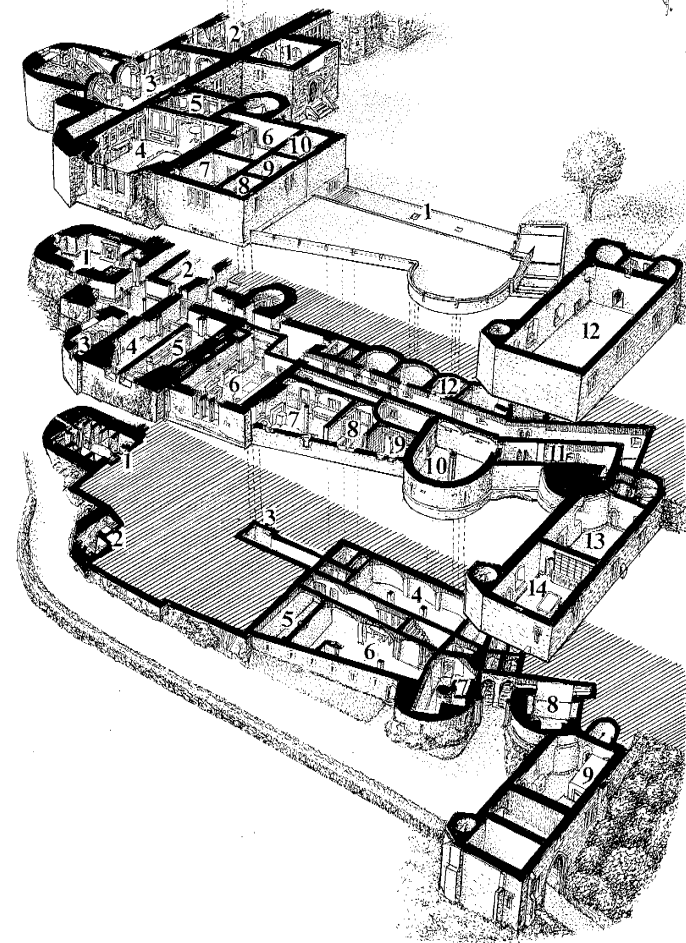


Figure 9. The Kitchens, Dunster Castle. Designed by Anthony Salvin, 1868-72. GROUND FLOOR (Top). 1. Entrance Lobby 2. Outer Hall 3. Inner Hall 4. Dining Room 5. Serving Room 6. Pantry Lobby 7. Butler's Pantry 8. Butler's Bedroom 9. Cleaning Room 10. Strong Room 11. Coal Hatches 12. Top Floor of Gatehouse BASEMENT (Middle). 1. Housekeeper's Room 2. Servants' Hall 3. Store 4. Maids' Room 5. Stillroom 6. Kitchen 7. Scullery 8. Pastry 9. Dairy 10. Upper Larder 11. Larder (?) 12. Coal chutes for kitchens (left) and house coal (right) 13.- 14. Top Floor of Gatehouse SUB-BASEMENT (Bottom). 1. Wine Cellar 2. Store 3. Coal Lift 4. Coals 5. Vault 6. Crypt 7. Game Larder 8. ? Estate Office Strong Room

quite rare, and are the result of having to overcome difficult sites. A good example of this type is at Dunster Castle (Fig. 9.), a medieval motte and bailey castle set on top of a high tor, with a later mansion encircled by a high curtain wall. Faced with this challenge, Anthony Salvin demonstrated his remarkable ability to mould a full range of residential and service rooms into practical yet aesthetically excellent forms just as a sculptor might shape clay. Using the advantages of the most modern technologies, he avoided the conventional wide-spreading single-storey by creating a new three-story block that occupied only a small part of the available space, and all below the level of the house. In this way he prevented the house from being plunged into closely-crowded, oppressive shadow, meanwhile improving its appearance by adding butler's pantries, bedrooms and servants' bedrooms in the high-turreted 'medieval' tower that still dominates the town and its surrounding countryside.

Having described the staff and buildings needed to serve major households, it is now possible to study the activities performed by the individuals who worked within them, starting from the top, with the house steward.

The Steward's Rooms

Only employed in the largest of households, the relationship between the master and mistress and the house steward closely resembled that between the directors of a company and their chief executive. His duties ranged from the appointment, control and dismissal of all the staff, except his employer's personal servants, to the implementation of their domestic policies and the control of their household expenditure. He was well paid for these responsibilities, around £50-80 p.a. according to contemporary writers, but in reality much higher. At Belvoir Castle he received £106, at Woburn Abbey £120 and at Petworth House £150, for example.¹ In addition he enjoyed free accommodation, all his food and a number of rooms for his use. These included a bedroom, an office, and a dining-cum-sitting room called the steward's room. These were located in strategically significant parts of the house. At Petworth, for example, his bedroom was close to the back door where he could hear anyone entering or leaving without his permission. His office, meanwhile, was usually designed to give him clear oversight of the back door, this position being ideal for receiving the suppliers and tradespeople who came to present their accounts, while also preventing them from penetrating further into the house. Where convenient, the mistress' boudoir or other day room lay close by, as at Penrhyn Castle, so that he was readily available to advise her or go over staff, financial or catering matters whenever she wished.

A large part of the steward's duties was devoted to the maintenance of accurate household accounts. In theory, the master was in control of all income and the payment of rents, taxes, cellar, fuel and garden accounts, while the mistress similarly managed all indoor expenditure. In practice, these were usually relegated to the steward, where one was employed, or else to the butler or housekeeper. Based on the advice of bankers, stock-brokers and land agents, an estimate of available annual income was made and then, using the evidence of previous years' accounts, a sum allocated for domestic expenditure over the coming year. This would then be paid to the steward in regular weekly or monthly instalments to settle the accumulated bills and wages. At the same intervals the

master or mistress was expected to inspect the various house-books for accuracy, checking that they remained within budget, and also to discuss all previous or forthcoming commitments.

In contrast to the workaday fixtures, desk and cupboards of his office, the steward's room was essentially a dining/sitting room furnished to the same standard as that found in gentlemen's houses. This reflected the status of its occupants, who were usually drawn from that level of society. In addition to the house steward;

'those who enjoy the right of dining here with him are such as the valet, the butler, the head cook, the housekeeper, the head lady's-maid, and the head nurse, with stranger's servants of equal rank, and some others occasionally or by invitation; not including, however, any persons of the lower grades, which is thus very clearly marked.'²

In addition, it served as a waiting-room for visiting upper servants and senior tradespeople coming on business matters. To fulfil these functions it was ideally located close to the kitchen, the upper servants' rooms and the back entrance. Frequently it was placed near the servants' hall too, ensuring that aural and visual control was maintained during mealtimes and evenings. However, unlike the windows of a servants' hall, that rarely permitted anyone to look towards the family's accommodation, those of a steward's room were given the freedom to do so, or to enjoy pleasant views over the encircling parkland.³ Usually large and impressive, perhaps 25 to 30 ft. long by 15 to 18 ft. wide (7.6 to 9.1 m. by 4.6 to 5.5 m.), they had their windows, doors and fireplaces arranged in an identical manner to those of the family dining rooms, and were finished in a similar manner, but of appropriately slightly lower quality.

The central area of most steward's rooms was occupied by a long mahogany or oak table, extra leaves being available to extend it whenever necessary. Around the walls, or drawn up to the table for the required number of diners, was a matching set of upholstered chairs such as Harewood's eighteen elm and horse-hair set, Saltram's eighteen Chippendale set, or Petworth's twenty five with leather-covered seats and backs (Fig. 10). For use at the green-baize and linen-covered table, a full range of tableware was maintained separately. It might have white or willow-pattern plates, green dessert plates, sets of dinner, dessert and carving cutlery, cruets and salts, and sets of rummers for beer and glasses for wine, along with jugs to carry the beer up from the cellar.

Other items of furniture were arranged around the sides of the central Turkey or Brussels carpet. They included a large sideboard with knifeboxes, a

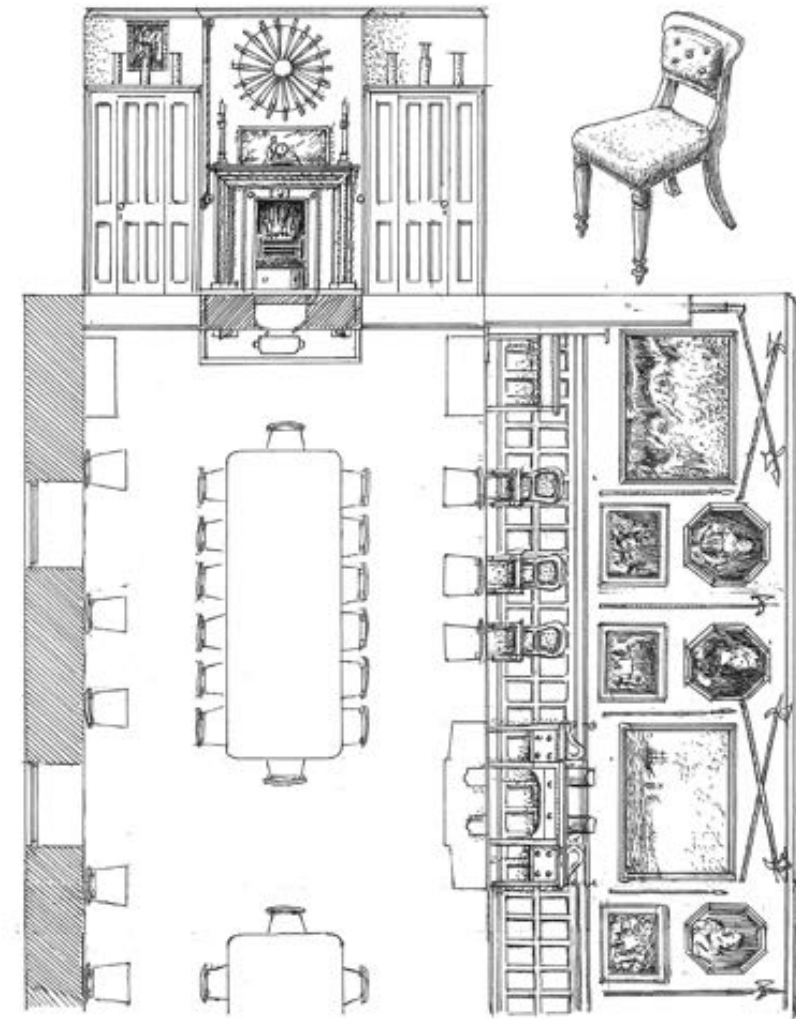


Figure 10. The Steward's Room, Petworth House. With its panelled dado, fine paintings, display of arms and high-quality furniture, this room shows that the upper servants in great houses enjoyed a lifestyle superior to that of the lower gentry and clergy. Here there were two dining tables and 25 chairs to accommodate both resident and visiting upper servants, but it is now used as a shop.

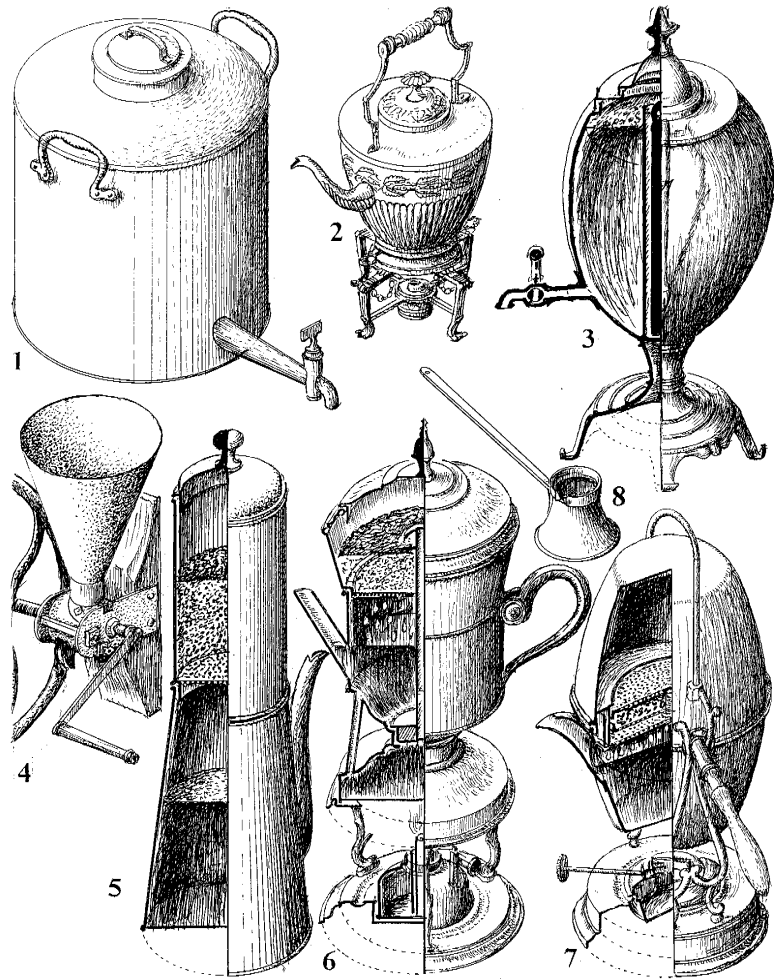


Figure 11. Utensils for making tea and coffee. 1. A Benham & Co. boiler or 'kitchen', c. 1890. 2. Harrod's tea kettle and spirit burner stand no. 367 of 1895. 3. A Benham & Co bronze urn with a central tube for its red-hot cast-iron slug, c. 1890. 4. The coffee mill at Boynton Hall. 5. A 'Colonel Hutchinson's' percolating coffee pot. 6. One of the percolating coffee pots at Petworth House. 7. An inverting 'Potsdam' coffee pot on its spirit-stove stand. 8. A pot for making strong Turkish coffee c. 1890.

number of side-tables, perhaps a dumb waiter, butler's tray and stand, and a folding screen to enclose the area just within the door, where the food was delivered. Sofas, card tables and draught or cribbage boards were available for the relaxed times when upper servants were not attending the family. Finally, there were decorative items, perhaps marble or bronze chimney ornaments, but always a selection of good-quality paintings, some equalling those shown in the state rooms. At Attingham Park, there was a group that depicted the Hereford cattle bred by the 5th Lord Berwick in the 1850s.⁴

The steward's room enjoyed the services of its own dedicated servant, the steward's room boy, usually a youngster commencing his career in service and paid only £6 - £8 in the 1890s. He was based in the adjacent stewards' room pantry, a small room usually having a table, dresser, sink and butler's trays needed to store, serve, wash and clean all the tableware, as well as holding stocks of clean tablecloth and napkins. By 8 a.m. he would have lit the steward's room fire and drawn up the required number of chairs. At Petworth he might also have to set up the second dining table and chairs kept there ready for the additional servants accommodated during house-parties. He would then lay the table/tables with their baize and linen cloths, a knife, fork and plate for each person, a cruet in the centre and a salt cellar at each corner. Since the housekeeper dispensed the morning drinks, a large tray with a teapot, coffee pot, slop basin, milk jug, sugar basin and cups and saucers was placed before her place at the end of the table opposite the steward (Fig. 11). Cold meats such as cold ham, roast or boiled pork or meat pie were placed before the steward, together with the carving knife and fork for him to serve the others, while rolls, a loaf of bread, dry toast and butter in its dish were placed on the table for general use. Sometimes bacon and eggs were provided too, perhaps dished onto the table or handed by the steward's room boy.

A similar procedure followed at 12 or 1 o'clock dinner, but with a tumbler or rummer for beer at each place instead of the tea-things and a table-spoon and salt cellar at each corner, the cruet retaining its central position. The dishes of hot meat and vegetables were placed on the table, the joints being carved by the steward or butler and the housekeeper, while the bread and beer were handed by the steward's room boy. He then cleared the table and re-set it with a dessert plate, knife and fork for each person, before placing the fruit and/or pudding upon it. After washing up and putting away the dinner things, the steward's room boy had to re-lay the table for 4 or 5 o'clock tea. For this, a laden tea tray was set ready for the housekeeper, just as for breakfast (but without the coffee), dishes of bread, butter, dry toast and plum cake set in the centre, and a small plate and knife at each place. Finally, supper was served

around 8-30 to 9 p.m., the table being set as for dinner, but with two knives and a wine glass placed for each person. Usually the upper-servants' supper served in large households comprised the hot meats, entrées and sweets brought down from the family dining room, and was accompanied by both beer and wine. Here again the steward, butler or housekeeper did the carving, while the steward's room boy acted as waiter, before clearing the table, washing up, and left everything tidy before completing his fifteen-hour day.⁵

CHAPTER FOUR

The Butler's Rooms

In all but the greatest households the butler was the senior indoor servant and controller of the male side of the domestic services. Where no steward was employed, he performed the same function, so much so that households with a steward rarely, if ever, kept a butler, the second-in-command being an under-butler. The butler's responsibilities were wide-ranging, including the security of the premises, the maintenance of the indoor services such as lighting and water supply, the care of the family's silver and glassware, the storage and service of all manner of drinks and the service of meals.¹ For these and other lesser duties his wages were between £25 and £50 around 1860 to £55-£90 at the end of the century, plus free accommodation and food.²

Being regarded as gentlemen, stewards wore good-quality civilian clothes. In contrast, the butler's position as an upper servant made it necessary for him to adopt superficially formal clothes, but with sufficient differences to ensure that he could never be mistaken for a gentleman. From the 1830s this was done by retaining outdated fashions. Robert Surtees describing a butler;

'dressed in nankeen shorts [yellow cotton knee-breeches], white gauze silk stockings, white neck-cloth and white waistcoat, with a frill as large as a hand-saw... a smart new blue Saxony [fine woollen] coat, with a velvet collar and metal buttons.'³

Similar clothing was still being worn twenty years later as when Anna Fay encountered a 'portly butler in white vest [waistcoat] and cravat and black coat' at Oakly Park, but by this time many had replaced their knee-breeches and cravats with trousers and dark-coloured ties or stocks as worn by Thomas Murray in an 1852 daguerreotype of the staff at Erddig.⁴ By the late 1870s the butler's formal dress worn throughout the afternoons and evenings when attending the family had usually become completely modernised with dark trousers, a cut-away short-tailed coat, and a white waistcoat worn over a stiffly-starched shirt front with an upright collar and white bow-tie. This was almost identical to polite evening dress, but he was still distinguishable from

a gentleman, partly by wearing it at an inappropriate time of day, and partly by continuing to wear white gloves.

When undertaking practical work in his pantry, some form of protective clothing was essential. In the 1830s this might be a large square-bibbed linen apron, or, as described by Surtees;

'a spruce green gamboon [woollen cloth] butler's pantry jacket with pockets equal to holding a powder flask each.'⁵

These were later replaced with aprons of green baize, a soft, hard-wearing woollen material, provided with linen strings. In the 1890s these were being sold at 3 s. 6 d./17½ p. each or 4 s./20 p. with a pocket, while stronger leather butler's aprons cost 3 s. 3 d./16 p. to 4 s. 9 d./24 p.⁶

The butler's pantry was also the main workplace of the footmen when neither waiting on the family nor being in readiness to wait upon them. In order to protect their clothing when polishing the silver, cleaning the knives or carrying out other dirty tasks, they had worn an overall, a waistcoat, a fustian (short-piled cotton) jacket and a leather apron, donning a white apron when called from these duties. By the 1890s this eminently practical wear had been replaced in the smarter households with elegant pantry suits. These comprised a short 'jeans' jacket, 23 in/58.5 cm down the spine, with long narrow lapels and three buttons, worn over a horizontally-striped waistcoat and dark trousers. These were to be worn 'for work in the pantry and about the house, but a servant does not, except by special permission, enter any of the rooms on service thus clad.'⁷

When serving the family their everyday meals, the pantry suit was upgraded to undress livery. This resembled the evening dress suits worn by gentlemen, the knee-breeches being replaced by trousers around the 1850s. In 1871-72 *The Sartor or British Journal of Cutting, Clothing and Fashion* described it as having a;

'Double-breasted coat, 6 buttons in lapels ... with plain cuff having one button above the top, and one button below - skirt short ... with a pointed sword-slash [the slit down the centre of the tail] and three large buttons on it ... Vest single-breasted with a roll collar of striped Valencia [a cloth of silk with wool, linen and cotton, woven in Spitalfields]. Trousers straight with whole fall fronts.'

Over the course of the next decade the double-breasted coat was replaced by ones having single breasts fastened solely by a pair of linked buttons, the rows of four large brass buttons to each side now being entirely decorative.

For slightly more formal occasions, semi-full dress livery might be worn, the same coats being accompanied by dark-coloured knee-breeches and silk stockings. If important guests were to be received, or an impressive display to



Figure 12. Butlers & Footmen. Butlers wore variations of gentlemen's clothes, these replacing light-coloured breeches (1. 1851) with trousers (2. Errdig, 1892) worn with tail coats, light waistcoats and white gloves later in the century (3. 1879). Footmen's undress liveries might have a blue coatee with grey epaulettes, a red and white striped 'vest' and black pantaloons (4. 1848) or uniform dark colour with rows of buttons and a black and yellow vest (5. 1894). These were replaced by a plain 'pantry jacket' (6. 1894) when below stairs. Semi-state uniforms had breeches instead of trousers (7. Petworth c. 1900), while state uniforms boasted silk plush material with silver and gold thread epaulettes, shoulder-knots, braids and buttons (8., 9., 1850. 10., 1894. 11. Lowther Castle c. 1900).

be made, only full-dress or state livery would suffice. Anna Fay found herself with a beating heart when two footmen in red plush breeches and blue coats with silver buttons took her cloak on entering Oakly Hall, while the six in identical dress that waited at dinner 'gave great elegance to the whole effect.'⁸ Full-dress liveries retained the general appearance of gentlemen's suits of the late eighteenth century, with tail coats, knee breeches and silk stockings, as well as a number of additional embellishments. Their materials, always of the best, using the finest woollen cloth or plush, a rich long-piled silk velvet that both absorbed and reflected the light, for their basic construction. Their colours were traditionally the two main colours of the family's coat of arms, but nouveau-riche ladies could not resist their vulgar excesses, as when the wife of a London lawyer of 1847 ordered a livery comprising;

'the love of a white coat and a pet of a canary waistcoat and a perfect duck of a pair of bright crimson plush knee what d'ye-callums.'⁹

In the opening decades of Victoria's reign narrow braids woven in gold or silver thread might be sewn along every hem, seam and button-hole, the buttons themselves being of silver or gilt, with epaulettes of silver or gold bullion. Later, the finest added broad ribbons of gold or silver around the arms, cuffs and buttons, as well as elaborate shoulder-knots and aiglettes hung from the right shoulder. A small dark silk bow or bag called a queue sewn to the back of the collar was the last vestige of the ribbon used to tie up the ends of the long-disused wigs.

When wigs had gone out of fashion in the early nineteenth century, the practice of powdering them was transferred to the real hair of the footmen. This involved removing the jacket, putting a towel around the shoulders and ducking the head in water before rubbing in soap to produce a lather and combing the hair stiffly into place. A powder puff was then used to dust on perfumed 'violet powder' or flour that dried to a firm paste.¹⁰ Now rarely, if ever, seen in their authentic context, the full-dress liveries and powdered hairstyles of the Victorian footmen added immensely to the grandeur of a country house entertainment, whether glittering in the sunlight of a 5 o'clock tea or glowing in the candlelight of a nocturnal dinner.

Ideally all the service rooms used by the butler and the footmen were located close together between the cellars and the dining room in a self-contained unit. Direct access to thoroughfares leading to the back door was to be avoided since it would pose a dangerous risk to security. In contrast, there should be good visual control of the front door, so that everyone approaching or leaving could be clearly observed and attended to as necessary. The same applied if there were separate servants' or luggage entrances. (See Figs. 4.-9.) The butler was usually

provided with a private bed-sitting room linked directly with his centre of operations, the butler's pantry, in order to maintain overnight supervision. In smaller households most of his everyday tasks were performed in the pantry, but in larger ones there were separate rooms for each particular task.

THE BUTLER'S PANTRY

The primary purpose of the Butler's Pantry was to assemble, distribute for use, and collect, clean and return to store all the silver and glassware used at the family's meals and entertainments. In some smaller houses the breakfast china might also be kept and processed here. In addition, this room served as the butler's office-cum-sitting room during the long hours before and after the times he spent in personal attendance on those 'upstairs'.

In order to officially perform the functions;

'A proper Butler's Pantry will be of a fair size, say from 12 or 14 feet [3.6 or 4.3 m.] square, up to twice that size. *The Fittings* consist of a small dresser containing a pair of small lead sinks, with folding covers, for hot and cold water respectively, large closets for glass &c., a moveable table, perhaps a napkin press, drawers for table-linen, shelving and hat pegs.'¹¹

In addition there would be a fireplace used both for room-heating and drying glass cloths etc. on a clothes horse, a number of chairs, perhaps a desk or secretaire/bookcase for paperwork and a number of mahogany butler's trays and stands ready for use.¹² Often a water gauge was fitted here, as at Uppark and elsewhere, so that the butler could assess the levels in the header tanks and instruct the footmen or odd man to pump up necessary additional supplies.

The most prominent features in the pantry were the large cupboards used to store the family's glassware. These might have solid panelled doors, as at Ickworth and Rockingham Castle, or glazed ones, as at Standen, that enclosed plain wooden shelves. The best, however, were completely lined in green baize and had curtains of the same material between the shelves, as at Belton House. Their contents included large sets of identical glasses used to serve every variety of ale, wine, cordial and liqueur, together with spring water, as well as their respective jugs, decanters, coolers, and carafes. Here too were the finger-bowls, the frosted-glass ice plates, sugar basins, condiments, and other glass tablewares, some indication of their range and scale is provided by the following list made at Petworth House in 1869;

Wine glasses	189	2 pt. Decanters	24
Champagne glasses	48	Coolers	52

Claret glasses	42	Finger glasses	204
Hock glasses	30	Condiments	12
Liqueur glasses	40	Sugar basins	6
Rummer glasses	72	Milk jugs	3
Tumblers	42		
	463		301 ¹³

This assemblage of 744 items kept ready for immediate use is typical rather than exceptional. In ducal households there might be vastly more, the Duke of Northumberland having, among others, two sets of matching hand-cut Sunderland lead crystal wineglasses, decanters, carafes etc. each of over 1000 pieces.

Having been polished before use at table and carefully returned to the pantry, the glasses had to be washed before being returned to their cupboards. This task was performed in true butler's sinks that were lined with lead and provided with wooden wash-tubs, usually lined before use with a piece of soft flannel. After an initial wash in warm not boiling water, the glasses were rinsed in a separate wash-tub and left to drain on a folded glass-cloth laid across a draining board. Ideally, as at Uppark, this was large and lead-lined, with a deep kerb around its rim to stop glasses either slipping off or being accidentally knocked. After standing for 5 or 10 minutes each glass was taken up in a soft cloth held in both hands, the left grasping the foot while the right dried the bowl, before being replaced in store. Washing decanters after their inside had been crusted and stained with wine, or water carafes furred with lime-scale, usually required the insertion of small pieces of coarse brown paper, bits of soap and a little washing soda, or else bits of soap and charcoal, in warm water, followed by a vigorous shaking. If this didn't work, either a piece of sponge tied to the end of a small stick, or a bottle-brush could be used to clean the interior surfaces. Having been rinsed, they were left to drain neck down in decanter racks either on the draining board or fixed over the sink. Unless this was done, a layer of unsightly and almost irremovable limescale would form within their bases. Finally they were polished with chamois leather, a piece tied to a short cane being used for their insides. Before inserting the stoppers, they were wrapped in paper to prevent them from sticking solidly into the necks, since attempts to remove a jammed stopper often caused the decanter to shatter.¹⁴

The centre of the pantry was usually occupied by a large deal table, its top covered in green baize. Here the silver was polished, unless a separate cleaning or plate scullery was provided close by. After use, the soiled items were first washed in warm water, using a natural sponge to remove the particles of food

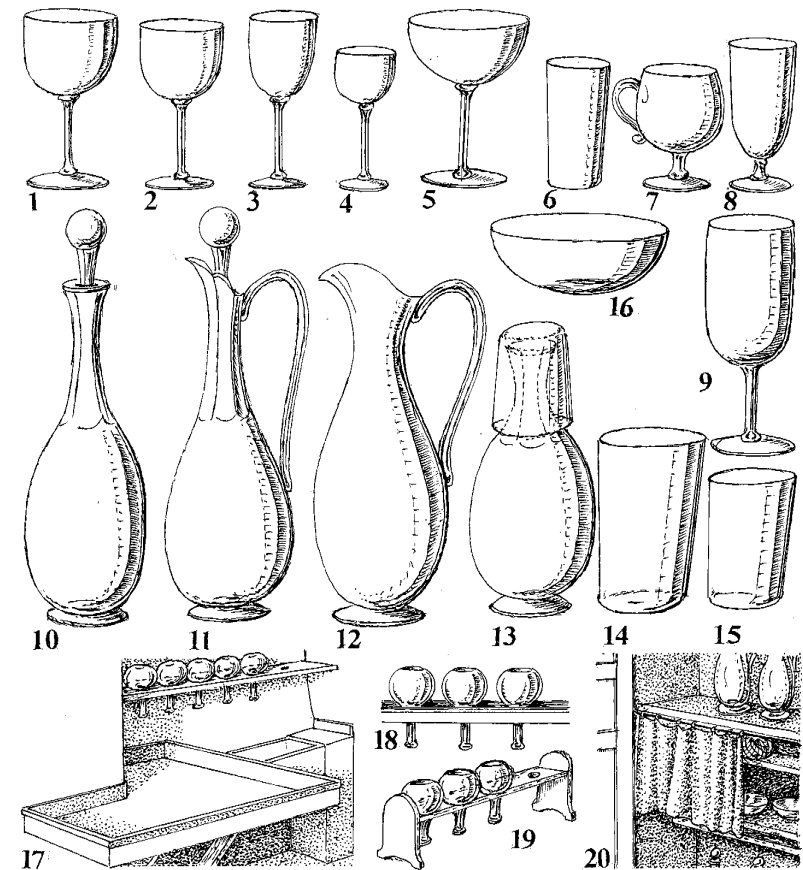


Figure 13. Drinking Glassware of the late 19th century for; 1. Claret 2. Port 3. Sherry 4. Liqueur 5. Champagne 6. Champagne tumbler 7. Custard 8. Jelly 9. Goblet 10. Quart decanter 11. Claret jug 12. Water jug 13. Carafe & tumbler 14. Soda-water tumbler 15. ½ pt. tumbler 16. Finger Bowl 17. Draining board. Uppark butler's pantry 18. Decanter drainer, Syon House 19. Decanter drainer, Brodsworth Hall 20. Glass Cupboard, Belton House.

and grease. They were then dried with cloths and rubbed over with whitening (soft, finely-ground chalk), rouge (iron oxide), or a patent plate powder either in a dry state or moistened with water. Some butlers then used either a plate cloth or a piece of soft leather to work up a fine polish on the plain parts, but butlers with the highest standards used their bare hands to achieve the best results. This was a painful process until the skin became sufficiently hardened, their rough appearance always being concealed when working upstairs by wearing a pair of white gloves. The next stage was to remove the polishing material that had accumulated in the decorative areas by the use of plate brushes of different grades of stiffness. The hardest were required for 'frosted' or mat areas, softer ones for the engraved lines of coats of arms and crests, and small ones like toothbrushes for details in high relief. The butlers took great pride in their polishing skills, particularly since both the family and their guests appreciated their quality as displayed at every mealtime. Many kept their particular methods as closely-guarded secrets, whether using methylated spirits ("spirits of wine"), oil, rottenstone or any other preferred medium.¹⁵

When not in use, the family silver was stored in a strongroom called a plate safe, a domestic version of a bank vault. This was essential due to the extremely high value of its contents, usually hundreds, often thousands of individual items of solid silver and silver-gilt (i.e. gold plated silver) mainly in the form of tableware. The structure of the safe was usually of extremely thick and solid masonry, the floor, walls and vaulted ceiling being constructed from large blocks of dense stone. Older examples might have thick fireproof iron doors secured by strong locks, while many later ones have much thicker doors with multiple locking bolts and more efficient locks, these being supplied by specialist bank-fitters such as Milner's. Since these were extremely heavy, requiring considerable effort to open and close, they were usually left open throughout the working period of each day, security being maintained by an inner barred door that could be easily locked and unlocked as items were carried either in or out. A good example of this kind still survives at Ickworth. With this degree of security, there was always the danger of someone being accidentally locked inside and potentially suffocating, the safe at Brancepeth Castle having an internal bell-pull as a precaution.

Due to the value of the plate, it required additional protection inside the safe. For this reason, and to provide security when being transported from one house to another, most large individual items, sets of tableware and canteens of cutlery were kept in stout wooden plate-boxes fitted with strong locks, handles and reinforced corners. Many also bore a brass plate engraved with the name of the owner, perhaps his address and also an inventory number. Their insides were neatly framed in wood and lined with green baize to provide a snug fit for

every item. Besides protecting each piece, these made any losses immediately obvious. The larger plate boxes usually stood on the floor, smaller ones being stacked either on stone shelves at higher levels or, as at Ickworth and Windsor, in glazed baize-lined cupboards fitted around the walls. At Windsor the baize was of an appropriate regal red.

Back in the butler's pantry, a tall cupboard with panelled doors was often to be found at the side of the plate-safe door. When opened, it revealed a folding bed, that hinged down, complete with its mattress, bedding and pillow, to accommodate the butler, under-butler or first footman who slept here every night. With a pistol or other firearm to hand, his duty was to protect the family silver from attacks of professional burglars. At Attingham Park in 1861 the butler had a 'Bedstead in Press' in his pantry, while at Uppark in 1874 it was called his 'Press bedstead'.¹⁶

THE KNIFE ROOM

In smaller houses knives were cleaned in the butler's pantry or perhaps even the scullery, but in larger establishments a separate knife room was located among the minor offices near the back door. The introduction of stainless steel knives around the opening of the twentieth century did away with the need for knife cleaning and polishing in most households, but in a number of country houses traditional carbon steel blades have continued in daily use through to today. The reasons for this unexpected continuance are twofold; firstly, they are as sharp as a razor and are vastly superior in use to stainless steel, and secondly, their fine silver, ivory or ebony handles match the remainder of the table cutlery. Their only drawback, both then and now, is that they require careful cleaning after every meal, since many condiments, pickles, vegetables and fruits rapidly stain their blades, while brief periods of damp lead to rust that bites into the metal.

An initial warm-water rinse to remove scraps of food and grease might be carried out either in a bowl or in a knife-rinser, a rectangular box with a lid pierced by many narrow slots. This enabled the blades only to go into the water, keeping both the delicate handles and the pitch that secured them in place perfectly dry. For the finest knives, those used by the family and guests, it was important to cause as little damage as possible by using a knife-board. This was a piece of fine-grained wood about 6 ins./15 cm. wide and 2-3 ft./60-90 cm. long, one side of which was wetted and rubbed with a piece of Bath brick, a chalky compound made at Bridgewater. After the board had been placed along the front edge of a table or bench, the person cleaning the knives took one in each hand, holding their blades flat

on the board at each end, their blades facing outwards. He then drew the blades towards the centre, maintaining a little pressure on their cutting edges, repeating the process a number of times and changing the knives from one hand to the other to ensure even cleaning. In this way the edges were honed to perfection and the sides polished while ensuring that there was no chance of the blades meeting edge to edge to cause irreparable chips. As the century progressed, various improvements were made, first by facing the knife board with buff leather and a thin coating of mutton suet and brick dust, then replacing the leather with linoleum and the dust with fine emery powder.¹⁷

Since the daily chore of cleaning knives took considerable time and effort, many families chose to employ a knife-boy, but these duties were no longer necessary after the 1850s when patent knife cleaning machines came onto the market. The leading manufacturers, Kent's and Masters', made cleaners in the form of a narrow-vertical drum enclosing leather-faced discs turned by a central handle, a number of slots around the top half of the perimeter being provided for the insertion of the freshly-rinsed blades.¹⁸ Having inserted a little polishing powder, it now only took a few turns of the handle to clean a number of knives at the same time. According to their makers, these machines cleaned both the thin and thick parts of the blades equal to new, doubled their working lives, and caused no injury to them. However, judging from the series of fine curved scratches found on many machine-cleaned blades, they often scoured rather than polished, fine table knives always being hand-cleaned to preserve their fine finish.

The steel forks used by the servants were similarly subject to staining and rust. They were usually cleaned by being thrust either into a small tub or jar filled with damp hay and fine sand, or a tightly-bound bundle of hay or straw mixed with fine sand or brick dust. Next a narrow stick faced with chamois leather and a little brick dust was used to polish their sides and between their prongs.¹⁹

Having been cleaned and polished, both knives and forks were held in a damp cloth in the right hand as their steel parts were drawn between the folds of a dry cloth held in the left. The left hand then gripped the steel parts as the right hand wiped the handles down to their tips. This was necessary not only to keep the metal perfectly dry, but also to remove any fine grit that would crunch between the teeth at the next meal.

For centuries the butler's prime function was the provision and serving of all the drinks required by the household, most of these being kept in the cellars.

THE BEER CELLAR

Most families were still brewing their own ale and beer in the 1830s, this task being undertaken by the head brewer, the butler or a skilled female servant according to the size of the household. The quantities required were enormous, the occupants of Trentham Hall drinking 12,000 gallons/96,000 pints a year, while even modest Uppark kept 1,190 gallons/9,520 pints in stock.²⁰ The construction, use and products of the domestic brewhouse have been fully explored in Pamela Sambrook's excellent book on *Country House Brewing in England 1500-1900*. Being physically detached from the country house, the brewhouse will not be discussed here, this account starting with the arrival of the beer in the cellar. Today many people use this word to describe any room located below ground level, but in country houses it retained its original meaning as the storeplace for beers and wines.

In some households the beer was still trundled from the brewhouse into the cellar in barrels, but this was a laborious and potentially dangerous process, and did nothing to improve the beer. For these reasons many others installed an underground pipe along the same route to a tap in the cellar. That at Chatsworth ran beneath the hot-houses, where thirsty gardeners installed a tap to draw off their own illicit supplies.²¹ Within the beer cellar long rows of horizontal barrels were mounted across two strong parallel beams known as stillions, stillages or stills supported on short legs, pillars or low walls. Each barrel in turn now had a large funnel called a tun-dish put into a bung hole bored into its topmost stave, and was filled using buckets, a lead or copper-lined wooden gutter or a leather-pipe. The hole was then left open so that the frothy ferment could run down the sides into a dripping tub placed beneath. Only when fermentation had ceased was the top bung-hole stopped, a spile-pin for ventilation inserted into a hole in the bung, and the contents left to settle. For small beer and table beer for everyday consumption this took at least a week, after which quantities could be run off over the next six or twelve months through a spigot-tap driven into a hole close to the bottom of the vertical front of the barrel.

THE ALE CELLAR

Most table beers were a little weaker than modern ordinary bitters and mild ales, but country house brewers also made strong October ales quite unlike any commercially-brewed products. Double the strength of today's beers, they were the colour of pale straw and extremely intoxicating, being drunk in wineglass-sized ale glasses and never by the pint. Instead of being drunk within a year, such

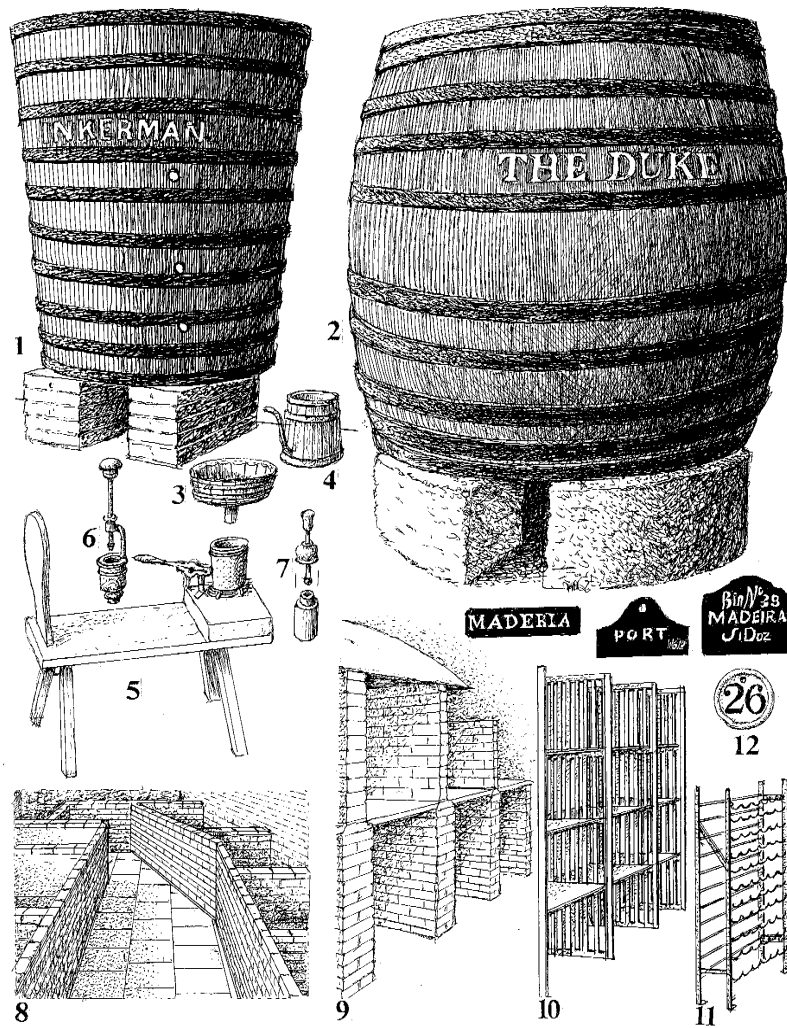


Figure 14. The Ale & Wine Cellar. 1. & 2. Bell cask, and strong ale casks, Powis Castle. 3. & 4. Tundish & tub to collect overflow from casks, Shibden Hall 5.- 7. Bottling stool, Belvoir Castle, with cork drivers. 8.- 9. Wine bins, Uppark, and the Vyne. 10.- 11. Iron Wine bottle racks, Greenway & The Vyne. 12. A selection of painted metal and a glazed pottery winebin labels.

ales took at least that time to settle, but would then last and improve over much longer periods. Some were brewed at a child's birth in preparation for its twenty-first birthday and the expected celebrations throughout the family's estates. For this reason, vast quantities were left undisturbed in specially-made casks in separate ale cellars. To prevent fresh air and its wild yeasts coming into contact with the ale and turning it sour, a technique had been developed that formed a thick anaerobic scum across its surface and keeping it in bell-casks. These huge straight-sided vertical casks, still to be found in the cellars of Brancepath and Belvoir castles, tapered from top to bottom, so that the scum would be gradually compressed and maintain its seal as the ale was run off. Two at Chirk Castle bear the painted inscriptions of 'ALMA' and 'INKERMAN', probably recording the dates in which they were filled by using the names of the contemporary Crimean war battles. 'INKERMAN' has a succession of spigot-holes spaced down its front, indicating the stages at which its contents were drawn off. It probably held around 450 gallons/3,600 pints, but some houses had much smaller bell-casks, Wrest Park having one of 70 gallons/560 pints for example.²² Other ale casks were even larger than the bell casks, taking the form of massive, squat barrels mounted vertically on strong masonry plinths. One at Shugborough Hall named Lord Anson held 900 gallons/7,200 pints, while a number at Chirk Castle, including 'THE DUKE' each held about 1,000 gallons/8,000 pints.

Some years ago I was invited to visit the Earl of Halifax's brewhouse, the last to operate in any English country house. Here Clarence Helliwell, his head brewer, allowed me to try a wineglass of his strong ale, a memorable experience that made instant sense of descriptions written over the previous three centuries. When it had been served at the coming-of-age of Lord Irwin;

'There were bodies laid all over the place, of the unwise who thought they could drink beer, [one] little chap in an army greatcoat lying in the grass with a chair at his bottom, also lying at his side. He was completely 'blindo' ... quite incapable of speech of any kind, in fact his eyes could not focus properly either.'²³

Outside the country house, the brewing industry had entered a period of rapid expansion firstly promoted by the Duke of Wellington's Beerhouse Act of 1830 and then by the development of railways that revolutionised the transport of heavy goods. Now, for the first time, the products of Barclay & Perkins of London, Allsop & Sons and Bass, Ratcliff & Gretton of Burton on Trent and other major brewers became readily available in both casks and bottles. Buying instantly available supplies of a uniform quality and predictable price made the maintenance of a brewhouse, its brewing staff and large areas of cellarage

unnecessary. It is not surprising that most country houses had ceased to brew by the end of the nineteenth century, or that later houses needed only tiny cellars for storing their few casks and cases of bottles.

THE WINE CELLAR

The use of wine in most country houses was restricted to the family, the steward's room and, for culinary purposes only, the kitchen, but even so it was consumed in vast quantities. In just four months in 1839-40 2,400 bottles were drunk in the Duke of Rutland's Belvoir Castle, for example.²⁴ Lord Berwick's cellars at Attingham Park held 400 bottles of sherry, 300 bottles of port and 140 bottles of Madeira along with other wines, while at Erddig even the modest Yorke's stocked 1,164 bottles of port, 72 bottles of sherry, 36 of claret and 24 each of Madeira, ginger, raisin and elder wines, the latter probably having been made by the housekeeper.²⁵

It was customary for most of the wines to be purchased from merchants while still fresh, then being allowed to mature over the next two to five years in a wine-in-the-wood cellar. Once clear, mellow and completely fermented, it was transferred into the stock of bottles, these often having been bought in the eighteenth century such as those remaining in the cellars at Hardwick Hall. Having been rinsed with a piece of chain or lead shot inside to remove any tartar and then up-ended in a bottle rack to drain and dry, they were assembled at the side of the cask. Here the butler stooped to one side of the spigot-tap with a lamp on the other so that he could check that no sediment ran into the bottles as they were slowly filled, one being corked as the next received its contents. The corks, already scalded, left until cold and then dried, had to be compressed and softened using a hand-powered cork-press before being put into a container on a corking-stool. Sitting astride, the butler then placed each bottle in turn into a cylindrical leather vessel fixed before him before using a cork-driver to cork each bottle, the vessel effectively containing both the wine and the dangerous broken glass should the bottle shatter. Having trimmed the cork level with the neck he next dipped it in molten bottle-wax, and stamped it with a seal bearing the name of the wine and the family's coat of arms, so that the bottles were now ready for long-term storage in a separate wine cellar.

The older practice was to lay the bottles down in insulating sand or sawdust in open-topped masonry bins, a method that contained flying glass and showering wine when secondary fermentation and weak bottles caused loud explosions. Later, vertical bins became universal, usually with cupboard-like shelves made of stone-slabs supported between brick walls. Having levelled a bed of dry sand on the floor and shelves of each bin, the first tier of bottles was laid down with

their necks supported on a long wooden lath. A second lath was then placed across the bottles, about an inch from their bottoms, to support the necks of the second tier, laid head-to-tail above the first, further tiers being added in the same way until the bin was full. It was good practice to mark the top of each bottle with chalk or limewash to show where any crusts or deposits had settled, so that these should not be disturbed when carried upstairs for use. Finally, the contents of each bin were identified by a label, and, together with the number of the bin, recorded in the cellar book. Available ready-printed from stationers, these were laid out as;

Quantity or kind of wine [e.g.]	Port	Madeira	Sherry
No. of Bin	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3
Quantity in bottle			
Added during the Week			
Total			
Consumed during the Week			
Stock in Hand			
In Wood			

This would usually be submitted to the master or the steward on a weekly basis, not only as a matter of good management, but more importantly to check that no unauthorised consumption had taken place. Butlers could easily become alcoholics, masters who suspected that this was happening wisely taking control of the cellar book and cellar keys. A further precaution was to adopt the vestibule system in which wines from the cellar were withdrawn for daily or weekly use into an outer part, thus ensuring the security of the main stock. It was also customary for the master or steward to stretch a short length of linen tape between the opening side of the cellar door and the door frame, fixing each end with blobs of sealing wax impressed with a signet seal to ensure that the contents remained undisturbed when the family were absent for long periods. The maintenance of a wine cellar always involved much more than security, however, the butler having to constantly monitor temperature, humidity, leakage and fretting (fermentation), and undertake medication (changing the properties of sub-standard wines), fining and decanting as necessary.

As with the supply of beer, the coming of the railways caused a great change in the way in which supplies reached the country house. When wine had to be transported by horse-drawn wagons or canal barges, only casks were feasible for bulk quantities, but now cases of ready-fined and bottled wines could be obtained within a few days merely by telegraphing an order to a distant merchant. This resulted in the rapid decline of bottling in the country house cellar, but still left

Water Supply

the butler responsible for the safekeeping of huge stocks of expensive wines. As J.J. Stevenson advised in 1868 “smaller bins holding a few dozen would suit our modern custom of drinking many different kinds of wine. They may easily be formed out of the ordinary large bins by wooden divisions.”²⁶ In response to this need, manufacturers began to produce iron-framed bottle racks to line the cellar walls, doing away with the former sand and wooden laths. One at Greenway is a typical example as stocked by Harrod’s, a twelve-dozen model costing 12 s. 11 d. if painted or £1 8 s. if galvanised in 1895.²⁷

THE DINNER-SERVICE ROOM

Also known as the service room, this was where everything for dinner was assembled and kept ready for serving into the adjacent dining room. In smaller houses, or where other rooms were used for meals, its function was performed by a small table camouflaged by a tall folding screen just within the door. In larger houses, particularly where the kitchens etc. were some distance away, it was essential, if food and tableware were to arrive at table both punctually and hot. As at Lanhydrock, this room required a serving table, stands for butler’s trays, a linen press, a stool and a steam-heated hot closet.²⁸ When Stuart & Smith quoted for the serving room hot closet at Dunster Castle in 1870, they suggested;

‘One hot closet 6’ 6 ins. by 2 ft. 4 ins. [1.68 m. by 71 cm.]. Bright steam table top, 2 sets steam coils inside closet, wheel steam cocks, frontage 2 ft. 9 ins. [84 cm.] high, folding doors on bright bands and necessary fittings.’²⁹

This was considered too large, and so a smaller one was fitted. Here the essential communication between the butler and the cook in the kitchens below was provided by a speaking-tube. This had a cup-shaped mouthpiece fitted with a whistle-cum-plug at each end. By removing the plug at one end and blowing down the tube, the plug at the other whistled to attract attention, after which a conversation could take place. This was certainly better than the earlier wire – or later electric battery-powered bell systems, but communication was greatly improved with the introduction of house telephones from the 1880s.

The tasks described above formed only part of the butler’s duties. Those he performed ‘upstairs’ demanded a combination of considerable experience and tact gained through years of working up through the ranks of boy and footman. Many others involved those unseen aspects essential, are now largely forgotten. One of these is witnessed by the wood-bladed snow shovels in the pantry of Dunster Castle, with which the footmen cleared the gutters each winter without damaging the leads. Others included the control of the bell systems and telephone switchboard, and also the internal maintenance of the water supply.

Today, when clean, healthy water is plentifully available at low cost to virtually every home, it is easy to forget that this is largely due to the huge investment in public services over the last 150 years. Before that time, and much more recently in rural areas, the provision of adequate water supplies was one of the major concerns of every household. Without sufficient water, life became impossible.

Preston Hall, Uppingham, had to be left unoccupied for years and could be neither sold nor let since, despite having sunk nine well shafts, no water could be found. Similarly two water-carts had to be in constant use to serve the Hareby estate near Spilsby in Lincolnshire, its eight wells remaining constantly dry.¹ To overcome these problems large sums were often expended on setting up water works to supply each country house. Some relied on rainwater, springs, streams and rivers, each having its own particular range of advantages and problems. In theory, rainwater, having been distilled by nature, was perfectly pure and therefore ‘soft’, while water from other sources was contaminated with minerals and therefore ‘hard’. This is a great simplification, however, but many country houses tried to collect both types, hard being preferred for culinary use and soft for laundry, either serving for other purposes according to local availability.

RAINWATER

The annual rainfall varies considerably between one part of the country and another. In the eastern counties about 24 in was typical, while in western counties such as Cornwall it could average some 48 in, or well over 75 in in Cumbria. In the simplest method of collection, the fall-pipes from the gutters fell directly into a large coopered water-butt, but the more usual practice was to pass the water through a simple filter into a masonry storage tank set below ground level. By the 1890s C.G. Roberts of Haslemere, Surrey, had invented an effective rainwater separator that ran off the first flush of every shower, since this contained all the debris washed down from the gutters, before passing the subsequent cleaner water into the tanks.² However, most systems continued to filter the water through sand, gravel or porous stone before it entered the tanks. There are numerous

examples of this basic design. At Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire, for example, there are rectangular rainwater tanks set in both the kitchen and stable yards to serve the brewhouse, conservatory and other offices. Here there were copious supplies of spring water, so rainwater was relatively unimportant, but the situation was quite different elsewhere, especially where there were few alternatives.

This was certainly the case at Ickworth, the great Suffolk mansion built by the Earls of Bristol between 1795 and the 1820s on a site devoid of running water. The main source came from the huge domed central rotunda, the local 22 in rainfall on its 11,300 sq. ft. providing 129,000 gallons of water each year. This came down the fall-pipes into a circular 1,500 gallon masonry tank or 'well' sunk below its basement-level area. Entering at one side of a vertical cross-wall, it was filtered through sand before running clear into the other side, from where it was piped off for hand-pumping to a high-level cistern. In 1863-4 Waller & Sons increased the capacity of the 'well' to 4,000 gallons by sinking it 16 ft. deep and converted two adjacent cellars into tanks holding a further 17,000 gallons to serve the increasing demands of new water-closets and bathrooms. By 1909 even these works proved inadequate leading Frederick, 4th Marquess of Bristol to call in A.C. Blomfield to make further improvements, these including provision of a large sand-filled filter and electric pumps. The east wing containing the family's private rooms and domestic offices had its own separate system, its 6,000 sq. ft. roof providing 11,000 cubic feet, or, at 6.23 gallons the cube, 68,500 gallons of soft water each year. From fall-pipes at the western end the rain fell into a catch-pit and small filter before entering storage tanks below the northern side of the area ready for use in the laundry, kitchen and nearby offices. It is revealing to appreciate that this house had potential access to almost 200,000 gallons of rainwater each year, a source which is relatively unused today.³

SPRINGS

In many ways, the best source of hard water was a spring at a higher level than the house, so that it was only necessary to install a pipeline either running directly down-hill, or in an inverted syphon that first dipped down before rising once more. This method had served many medieval and Tudor palaces, castles, monasteries and major households, conduit houses being built over the spring to keep the water clean and pipelines laid to deliver supplies down to the domestic offices.⁴

Over the following centuries many country houses continued to take advantage of gravity-fed spring water supplies wherever possible. At Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire, springs fed cisterns in the roof that supplied the kitchen, scullery, a sink adjacent to the larder, the dairy and the wash-house, the house having been built across the floor of a deep valley. From around 1770 Harewood

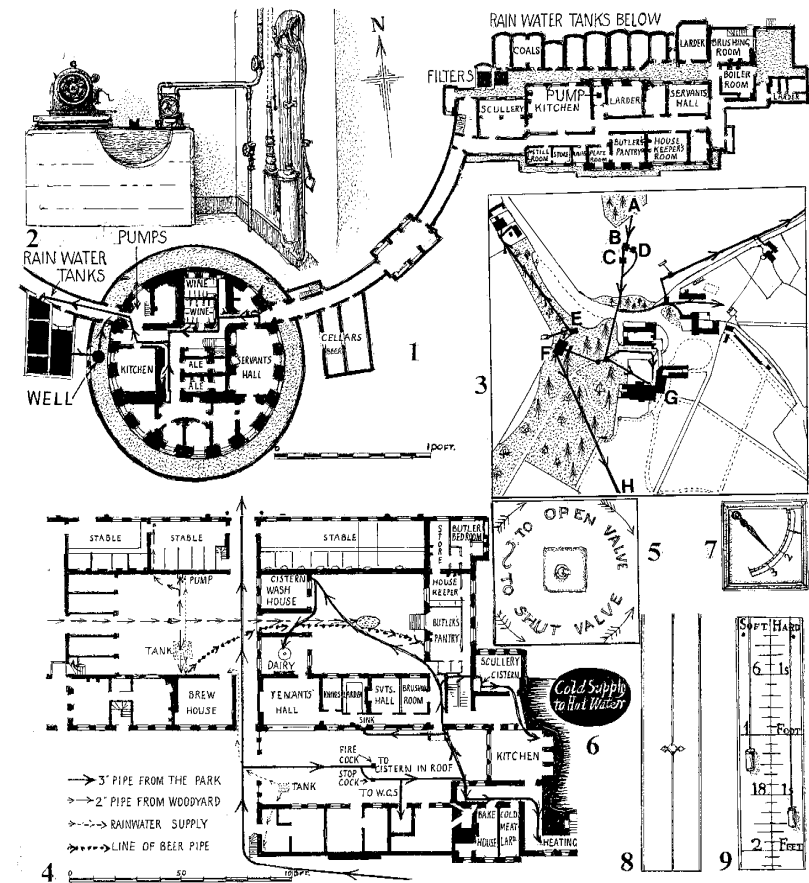


Figure 15. Water Supplies.

1. Ickworth basement showing the rainwater collection and filter system and the pump over the 47 ft. deep, 6 ft. diameter well beneath the east wing kitchen.
2. Ickworth's original force pump and its electric replacement of 1909.
3. Standen's 1890 springwater system showing; A. spring-fed well B. pump C. water meter D. spring E. 500-gallon header tank F. 22,000 gallon filter G. Standen house and water tower H. overflow pipe.
4. Dyrham Park's springwater, rainwater and beer pipe systems.
5. Penrhyn Castle, slate valve cover, 1860s.
6. Supply pipe label Rockingham Castle.
- 7-9. Cistern indicators at Uppark, Ickworth and Ormesby Hall.

House, West Yorkshire, piped its water from a spring on Lodge Hill over half a mile from the house, while at Dunster Castle, a spring at Broadwood Farm two and a half miles away supplied a 40,000 gallon reservoir on top of the Tor overlooking the house. Constructed in 1870, it still supplies both the castle and the village below. The expense of such feats of engineering were amply repaid by centuries of plentiful trouble-free pure water.

GROUNDWATER TANKS

Where there was a high water table the simplest method of obtaining a supply of hard water was to excavate a broad, shallow tank a few feet below ground level, to collect the surrounding seepage. This was successfully used at Wollaton

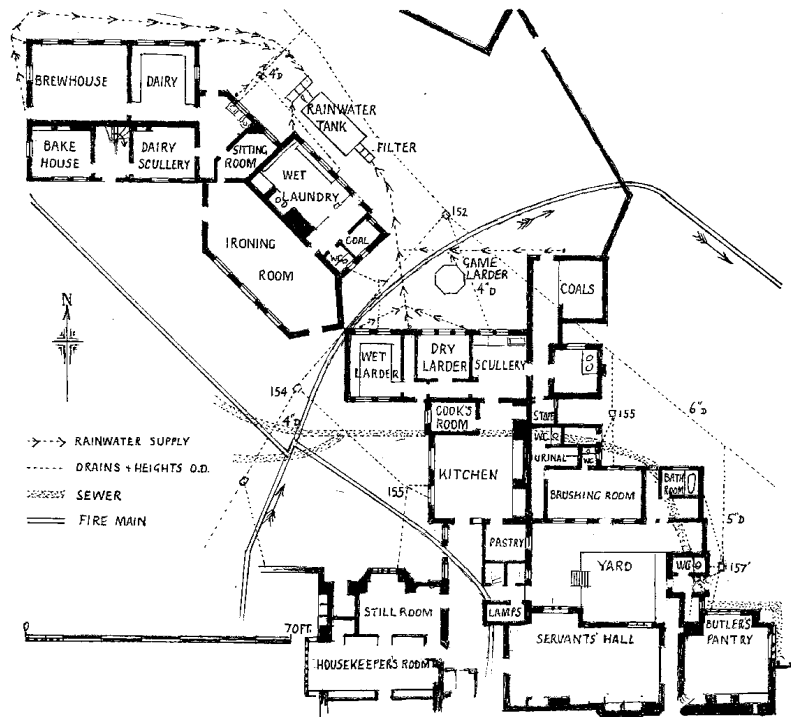


Figure 16. Water Supply & Drainage, Audley End, c. 1900. Rainwater from the brewhouse, laundry, larder and coalhouse blocks was filtered into the rainwater tank (1.) while drains from all the offices were directed into the gravity-flow sewer (2.-2.). Only the fire main (3., 3.-) and supply to the sinks were provided from the pump-filled cisterns at the top of the house.

Hall and also at Tredegar House, where Viscount Tredegar installed a carbonating plant by Flugel & Co. of London so that the butler could make soda water in the cellar. It should be stressed that these tanks were not springs, since they held static rather than flowing water.

WELLS

In areas where the only practical source of hard water lay below ground level, it was necessary to sink a well to penetrate below the water-table. In some areas this might only be a few feet, while on areas such as the chalk Wolds and Downs it could be over 300 ft. Although the deadly pollution of overflowing privies and overcrowded cemeteries found in urban contexts were almost non-existent in country houses, it was still advisable to locate wells under cover in order to avoid the ingress of dead animals, leaves or foul surface water. It was also essential to keep the well-shaft well away from the foundations of a building, otherwise its rigidity would cause the building to crack as the soil alternately expanded or contracted through wet winters and dry summers. For these reasons wells were often located in the centres of rooms at basement level, although their pumps might be a few yards away in a more convenient position. When the large early Georgian vicarage at Alton, Hampshire, was demolished in the 1960s, the well was found to lie beneath the dining room, for example, the pump pipe being continued along a narrow vaulted brick tunnel to a pump in the middle of the stable yard, a typical arrangement. At Ickworth the well supplying the kitchen was dug out beneath the kitchen floor with the pump and an inspection hatch by the adjacent larder. To most modern architects and property managers such a common practice remains unknown, the deep voids lurking beneath seemingly solid floors being totally ignored.

In order to ensure an adequate supply, the bottom of the well might be opened out to a greater diameter in order to maintain the level of water seeping in from the surrounding countryside strata. The simplest method of raising supplies to the surface was a simple well bucket lowered on a rope from a winch above. Most well buckets were coopered barrels with a hinged loop handle attached to a length of heavy chain. The chain was essential, for without it the bucket would simply float on the surface instead of capsizing and filling with water. In the late nineteenth century galvanised well buckets were introduced, these being wider at the middle than the ends, but still working in the same way.

Where wells were particularly deep, a hand-wound winch was impractical, particularly since the weight of the sodden bucket and wet well-rope could easily exceed that of the water being raised. The solution in some Tudor properties was to turn the axle by means of a large treadmill in which either a man or a donkey steadily walked to bring up a single bucket, as at Burton Agnes and

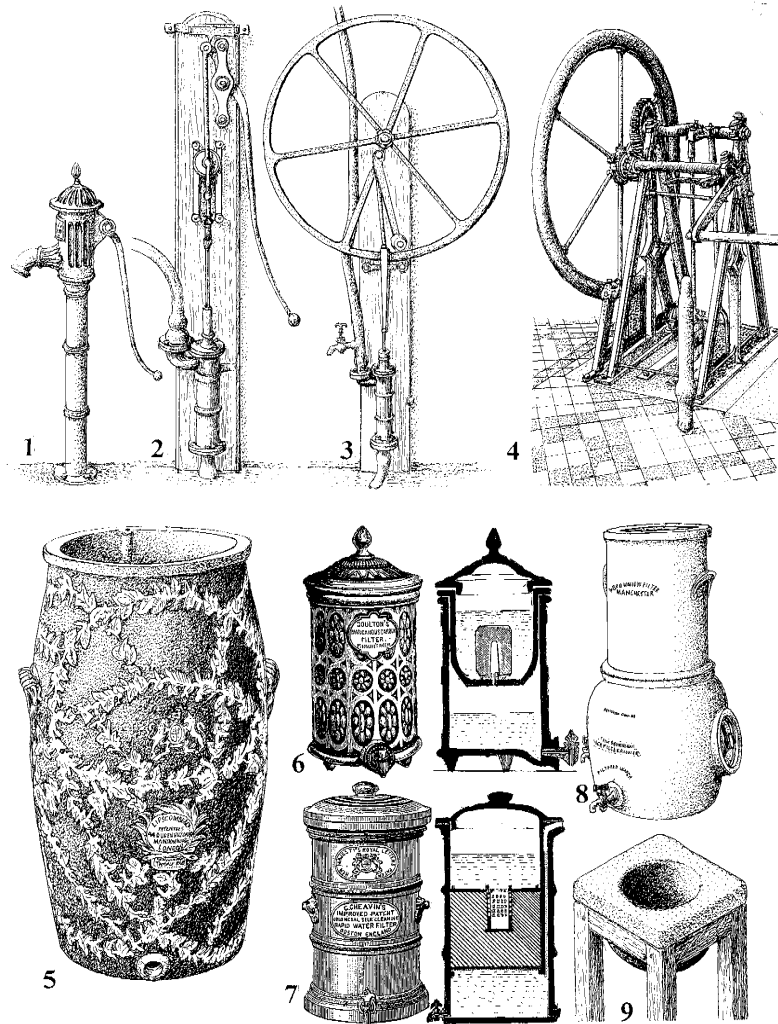


Figure 17. Pumps & Filters. 1. Cast-iron lift pump, Audley End. 2. Force pump, Powderham Castle. 3. Force pump with flywheel, Dunham Massey. 4. Two-cylinder flywheel force pump, Castell Coch. 5. Harewood House's Lipscombe & Co. London, filter. 6-7. Doulton's patent manganous carbon filter and Cheavin's self-cleaning filter, both c.1881. 8. Mumcaster Castle's Brownlow filter with an ice compartment for chilling the water, 1907. 9. A traditional sandstone filter-stone in its wooden stand.

Carisbrooke Castle. An even greater efficiency was achieved by using two well ropes and buckets on the same axle to counterbalance each other, one rising as the other descended, as at Grey's Court.⁵ These devices proved so effective that they remained in use throughout the nineteenth century.

In England, the use of pumps rather than buckets to raise the water from wells had started in the late fifteenth century. The simplest device was called a lift-pump. This had a single one-way 'clack' valve or flap at the head of the pipe ascending from water level, the water sucked up by alternate strokes of the leather-rimmed piston within its enclosing cylinder being discharged from a spout at the top. Such pumps were ideal for relatively shallow wells or cisterns where the water had to be raised for only a few feet above floor level as when filling boilers, sinks or buckets. Earlier cylinders were usually made of lead, later ones of cast iron, only the finest being of expensive brass, while the shafts, cranks and handles that required greater strength were usually of wrought iron. Where water had to be raised to a higher level, especially up to a cistern on an upper floor from where it could be run off to convenient taps, it was necessary to use a lift and force pump. This had an additional valve at the upper end of its cylinder so that each alternate stroke would force the water up the ascending pipework. The sucking action of these pumps was dependant on air pressure, and so they could not raise water from more than around 26 ft., being far less efficient as they approached that depth. For this reason deep-well pumps were ideally mounted on strong beams about 12 ft. above the water level, an iron pump shaft and a supply pipe rising to the surface.

Up to the twentieth century most pumps were powered by an odd man or footman, this being one of their most arduous duties, as shown by the following table;

Height to be raised	Diameter of pump	Diameter of suction pipe	Water raised per hour @ 30 strokes/minute
14 ft	6 in	4 in	1,640 gallons
20 ft	5 in	3 in	1,140 gallons
30 ft	4 in	2½ in	723 gallons
40 ft	3 in	2½ in	555 gallons
50 ft	2½ in	2 in	412 gallons

Since water weighs 10 lb to the gallon, houses such as Ickworth that required a 50 ft. lift had to raise a 68 lb volume of water at each stroke. The leverage provided by a long pump handle with a heavy knob on the end to act as a counterweight relieved the effort to a small degree. However, even if the rate of one stroke every two seconds could be maintained it would still take several hours each day to pump the water for a large country house.

Even in smaller houses pumping made heavy demands on the normal staff,

as shown on the 'Outline of Work for Odd Man' displayed at Berrington Hall. Here a deep well and storage tanks lay beneath the service court, with further tanks above. Starting at 6 a.m. each day he had to pump for half an hour, along with other duties before fetching milk from the dairy at 7.45. With only a half-hour lunch break, he had to pump again from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., his twelve-hour day being extended from 7.30 p.m. to 10 p.m. for work in the butler's pantry when there was a large house party.

This hard labour was partly relieved when pumps were given rotary motions aided by heavy flywheels, and when two cylinders were operated by a single crank shaft to equalise the motion, as at William Burgess' Castell Coch. A further improvement was to use horses or donkeys as the source of power, either being harnessed to a horizontal beam that turned a vertical shaft, around which they steadily plodded. As part of Anthony Salvin's remodelling of Petworth House in the 1870s, a brick-paved ramp was provided in the wood yard to enable a donkey to enter a tunnel that passed beneath the servants' wing to a shallow-domed subterranean pump-house. Similar pumps were used at Powderham Castle, Felbrig and Earlam Hall, where Percy Lubbock remembered how, 'under a sort of brick cloister was a pump, a great beam that revolved. For half an hour every morning it was dragged round by a white horse with a measured thumping and thudding' as it refilled the cisterns.⁷

From the sixteenth century a number of houses having a supply of flowing water utilised its power to raise supplies using a water wheel. At Heath Old Hall the c.1660 spring-powered waterwheel remained in use throughout the Victorian period, with a new 18 ft. iron wheel from around 1860.⁸ The river-powered wheels of 1679-80 at Windsor Castle, of c.1706 at Blenheim Palace and of 1782 at Coultershaw, for Petworth House, were similarly maintained or improved, the latter pumping at least 20,000 gallons a day up to 1960.⁹

Around 1770 a new, simple and almost maintenance-free water-pumping device called a ram-pump was probably invented by John Whitehurst of Derby. It required a constant stream of low-pressured water to descend a sloping pipe, an air vessel and a series of valves causing its own kinetic energy to be released in regular pulses. Most ran away to waste, but a quantity was pushed up a pipe to a higher-level reservoir or cistern. These were extremely popular, being widely advertised in builders', gardeners' and country magazines, most raising one-seventh of the supply up to five times its fall.¹⁰

It is hardly surprising that the great industrialist, inventor and developer of hydraulic power Lord Armstrong (1810-1900) should have developed a hydraulic engine to raise spring water to a reservoir 50 ft. above Cragside, his impressive Northumberland mansion in 1870. By damming the Debden Burn to create a 35

ft. head of water, he fed its high-level supply first into one end of a large horizontal cylinder, driving its single cylinder in one direction. The flow was then reversed, pushing the cylinder back again, this constant reciprocating motion operating a force-pump that fed into one side of a conical reservoir high above. This created a whirlpool effect, the centrifugal force sweeping any solids to the sides and down into the base, leaving only the clear water to be drawn off.¹¹

Towards the end of the nineteenth century some properties experimented with the use of wind pumps, the rotating blades of a metal windmill mounted on a tall pylon turning a crank-shaft and a long connecting rod to operate a force pump. Being dependant on the wind, their supply was subject to the vagaries of the weather, sometimes racing, and sometimes remaining idle. For this reason they were not widely adopted for country house use, one installed at Standen in the 1890s being taken down after a few years due to poor performance.

The provision of a good reliable supply of good, clean, potable water could be difficult to maintain, whatever technology might be available. Circumstances varied greatly between one house and another. Many household archives contain lengthy correspondence, reports and plans from hydraulic consultants brought in to solve distressing problems. The plans can be particularly informative, often giving the height above sea level of every significant reservoir, cistern and tank, along with their flow estimated in gallons per hour. They reveal that many houses, particularly those with self-acting supplies that run constantly and cannot easily be stopped, conceal massive slate, lead-lined wood, iron or galvanised tanks, often of several thousand gallons, in their upper storeys. Their overflow, again in huge quantities, is then discharged down hidden pipes, perhaps terminating in a fountain as an essentially practical yet ornamental means of relieving its pressure. A good example of the potential problems faced by a country house is provided by the records of Powderham Castle. Here a hand-operated force pump supplied 'remarkably good' water from its fourteenth century well to the kitchen and scullery. By the late 1830s this was proving inadequate, and so a new well was sunk in an elevated plantation nearby. Three days every week a boy led a horse here to pump water into a large open-topped reservoir, these works costing £300, plus £30 a year for the boy and horse. Problems with this system were the subject of a report by John Drew in 1844, but no action was taken until John W. Martin of Exeter confirmed in 1874 that although the new well water was excellent, it was being polluted by the thick green scum and even thicker layer of foul offensive mud in the reservoir. His recommendation of a filter that could process four gallons of water per minute was rejected, but the reservoir was cleaned out and given a corrugated iron roof. In 1891 Mr. Bradshaw, the castle's new tenant, complained of his fear of drinking

water from this most unhygienic of sources, but again the owners took no action; it was his own fault if his servants failed to serve him from the medieval well!¹² This situation was far from unique, and although a family and its servants may have become acclimatised to their own water, their visitors were much more likely to experience difficulties with it.

Given that a household's water could contain quantities of natural minerals, smoke, dust, bird-droppings or leaves, or have been left static for prolonged periods, it often became unpalatable. By the 1870s, and probably much earlier, 'impure and offensive water' was being rendered 'perfectly sweet' by putting a little fresh powdered charcoal into its storage cask, or by filtering it through freshly-burnt and pulverised charcoal.¹³ Specially-made filters in the form of tall glazed stoneware vessels with a filling hole at the top and a brass tap further down had been developed by the 1850s. Capable of keeping a gallon or two of clear water ready for drinking or culinary use, they were frequently found in the butler's pantry in many houses, including Uppark. Some had a cup on top to hold a sponge to strain out any coarser particles as the water was being poured in, while most were divided into three chambers. The top one acted as a reservoir, the middle held a filter of powdered charcoal, a compound block of charcoal bound with pitch or resin, or a material called silicated carbon, while the bottom one contained the filtered water. Some others, such as Sawyer's filter, conducted the water directly into the bottom section, so that the water passed upwards through the charcoal, this having the advantage of allowing any sediment to settle out before filtration.¹⁴ As the nineteenth century proceeded these filters were manufactured by the leading English stoneware potteries, their surfaces being decorated with sprigging or coloured glazes to turn them from purely utilitarian artefacts into fashionable household accessories. Many remained in use well into the twentieth century, even where local authorities introduced plentiful piped supplies.

Today most country houses rely on 'town water' but the availability of their earlier sources can still be useful. When, for example, a late twentieth century drought hit Yorkshire, the staff at Harewood House had only to operate a valve in the basement to bring in copious supplies through its original two-hundred year old pipes from a hillside spring.

Whether gravity-fed or piped from a high-level cistern, the water was usually delivered to the scullery, kitchen and other domestic offices by brass taps set over their lead-lined, copper, wooden or pottery sinks. Here it was used to wash and rinse foodstuffs, utensils and tableware, as well as serving as a cooking medium and ingredient before being discharged down the plug-hole and into the drains. From the mid nineteenth century the wide lead drain pipes were formed in a double bend to form a seal against drain gasses and a trap to catch

scouring sand, food debris and fat. These could cause complete blockages if allowed to accumulate, having to be removed using a strong wire hook or a batch of hot salty water. The larger kitchens, such as those at Harewood and Petworth, therefore installed large rectangular cisterns high on their walls, a ball-cock keeping them full of water which, by the pull of a chain, sent a powerful flush down the drains after every meal. Usually the drains fed into larger sewers that discharged their raw contents into a natural watercourse some distance from the house. Although the water supplies of country houses remain largely unknown and unappreciated, they represent a great investment in technology. Without them all the fine facades and interiors would have been rendered entirely useless.