

books, particularly for those who may wish to recall their knowledge, even though it may be a challenge to write them.

The author and publisher are to be commended for producing a book on such a seemingly niche topic that is copiously well-illustrated and thoughtfully and vividly written. The academic community, more broadly, could break further ground by explaining the key geometrical, mathematical and scientific concepts, which indeed might require further well-considered diagrams, equations and formulas, to fully integrate the sciences and the humanities. This book's great delight is showing how the discipline of land surveying so evidently accomplished this with some impressive scientific and artistic intent.

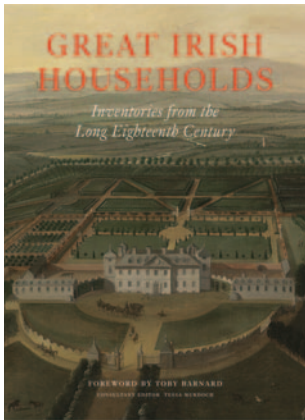
Tessa Murdoch (ed.)

GREAT IRISH HOUSEHOLDS:

INVENTORIES FROM THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

(John Adamson, Cambridge, 2022) isbn 978-1-898565-17-8, 435pp, 27x21cm, 58 illus, £75 chb

review by David Fleming



THE CONTENTS OF THE BIG HOUSE OFTEN REFLECTED the economic circumstances, tastes and fashions of its owners or occupiers, and their predecessors. Occasionally inventories were compiled for valuation, disposal after death, or simply to know what belonged and where. They are important for understanding how households were furnished and how possessions were arranged or stored. They can also reveal how fashion and utility might have altered interiors over time, especially where more than one exists for the same house. *Great Irish households* reproduces eighteen inventories dating between 1703 and 1821. Most are from houses located in Leinster, three from Ulster, and one each in Munster

(Lismore Castle) and Connacht (Elphin palace). All except five (Borris, county Carlow; Carton, county Kildare; Killadoon, county Kildare; Kilrush, county Kilkenny and Newbridge, county Dublin) are taken from public archives. Succinct and useful introductions to each inventory are provided by Jessica Cunningham, Rebecca Campion, Edmund Joyce, Alec Cobbe and John Adamson. All eighteen have been very carefully transcribed, noting erasures, additions and superscript.

The extent of a house's contents largely depended on how regularly it was occupied. Those that were regularly lived in contained all that might be needed, whereas a dwelling only occasionally inhabited might be minimally furnished and decorated. The contents of Lismore in 1703, which had been largely abandoned by the earls of Cork and Burlington after the 1640s, betrays the austere and utilitarian use of the house, then occupied by the

agent. Silver and china, for example, are not recorded, though ten new drinking glasses had been recently delivered. By contrast, the contents assembled by the Butlers, earls and dukes of Ormonde who flitted between their residences in Kilkenny, Dublin and London, illustrate all the grandeur and material comfort that one might expect of the kingdom's premier peer and its lord lieutenant. Ormonde furnished Dublin Castle with new items, but what he might have acquired from his predecessors is not revealed, though the inventory was intended to appeal to his successor who might wish to purchase items for his own stay. What is revealed is the movement of goods and chattels from Dublin to Kilkenny and London once Ormonde's administration had ended in 1707. What stands out are the number and variety of paintings and tapestries and in what rooms they were hung. Befitting the family's attachment to the Stuarts, Ormonde displayed portraits of Charles II and 'King James' (though which one is not stated; the index states James II) in the Duke's dressing room. Other rooms also displayed royal images intermixed with the Butlers and others. The inventory also itemises books belonging to Lady Ormonde, which were mostly devotional, but included 'A Dromatick Romance'. Indeed, there is so much detail in the Ormonde inventories that they deserve continued scrutiny from scholars.

Detail depended on what the inventory was intended for. After death, items had to be accounted for and disposed of. That for the deceased Robert Howard, bishop of Elphin, in 1740 provides a stark contrast to Ormonde opulence. Though wealthy, the inventory hints that Howard lived as he preached, in frugal comfort, preferring to acquire books, of which 383 are listed, rather than expensive furniture. Usefully the compiler, John Adamson, has identified most of these titles in an appendix. Much of Howard's furniture was oak rather than the increasingly fashionable mahogany, and his cellars were stocked with ale rather than wine, though the existence of wine glasses suggests that claret was served.

The 1742 inventory of the deceased Captain Balfour is that of an auction sale, indicating in addition the prices realised and the purchasers. Though Balfour is not identified, this must have been Captain Harry Townley (1693-1741) of Piedmont, county Louth, who inherited his uncle's estates and changed his surname to Balfour. Intriguingly, this inventory gives a sense of the typical purchaser at a mid-century Dublin auction. Fifty-four (or thirty-seven per cent) of all successful bidders were women.

A rare insight into a Catholic household, that of the Lattins of Morristown, county Kildare, is included, providing a glimpse of a well-off family with a 650-acre estate in 1773. None of the contents betray a religious affiliation, though what the forty-one prints on the walls of various rooms might have depicted is not stated. It was a practical house, with all the utensils that might be expected of a busy demesne establishment. But there were signs of material comfort and wealth. Eleven champagne glasses are recorded, along with a chocolate pot and four chocolate cups, together with a blancmange mould and four blancmange cups, though 'cracked'. Another inventory of a Catholic house, that of the longer established and more wealthy Kavanaghs of Borris, county Carlow, was made in 1818, just before its owner, Walter Kavanagh had converted to the established church. The inventory is not entirely satisfactory, as it was compiled when the house was undergoing renovation, and therefore many items were either in storage elsewhere or not included as part of the probate process.

Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)
MARCUS VALERIUS CONSECRATES
DECIUS MUS
one of six DECIUS MUS tapestries
in the Ormonde Collection at
Kilkenny Castle
(courtesy Office of Public Works)



Another reason for preparing an inventory was to seek compensation for the loss of goods and chattels, as was the case at Castlecomer, county Kilkenny, which had been burned by the United Irishmen in June 1798. Revealingly, the inventory points to the emergence of items devoted to leisure and entertainment: a grand piano forte, music stand, four card tables, a backgammon table, and a lotto box, all in the drawing room. There was another room devoted to billiards. Indeed the inventories of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries point to the prevalence of luxurious objects, such as busts, vases, commodes, carpets, sofas, china flower pots, ink stands, amongst many other wares.

Nearly all of the inventories record both the principal rooms as well as those allocated for nurseries, cellars, dairies, brew houses and servants' quarters. Perhaps the most extensive household itemised here is that of the dukes of Leinster of Carton, for 1818. Beginning at attic level with its twelve rooms, it descends through bedrooms, dressing rooms and closets, to dining rooms, libraries, studies, and beyond to the steward's office, housemaid's room, lumber passage, servants' hall, scullery, and various cellars. Outside, the contents of houses for brewing, baking, slaughtering, washing, blacksmithing, painting and coopering, besides accommodation for the steward, gardener, sportsman, post boys, shepherd and many others, were all itemised. In the pinery, 353 pineapples were being cultivated, with thirty-five in fruit. The gardener lived in some comfort, residing in a house with a parlour, kitchen and bedroom, which boasted an eight-day clock and a mahogany sloping desk. Indicatively, one of the most popular gardening manuals of the period, Miller's *Gardener's dictionary*, was recorded in his house.

Uniquely, only one of the eighteen houses retains its possessions, that of Newbridge, county Dublin, the seat of the Cobbe family. Here Alec Cobbe introduces the extensive 1821 inventory, detailing the vast array of furniture, crockery, plate, linen, glass and china, besides a list of books, which was then not as extensive as it had been

when Archbishop Charles Cobbe had first occupied the house. Perhaps surprisingly, the portraits and pictures were not recorded. This and the early nineteenth-century inventory of Mount Stewart, county Down, describe items, such as curtains and furniture, in more detail than earlier lists. For example in Mount Stewart's Pink Bedroom, there was a 'Chevaux-de-Frise Cornish and Valences printed cotton furniture and drapery, lined with pink silk worsted fringe and tassels'.

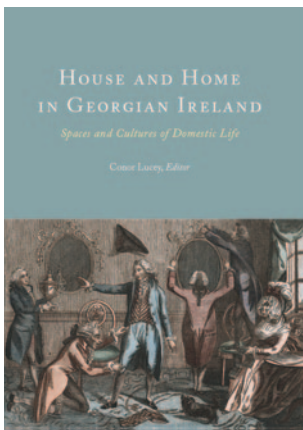
The book is dedicated to that great authority on Irish furniture and objets d'art, the late Desmond FitzGerald, Knight of Glin. His encouragement and that of the Irish and British organisations established to foster interest in Ireland's architecture and material culture are all acknowledged in influencing and helping to produce this book. Taken together, these inventories demonstrate how the Irish landed elite furnished and decorated their houses. Much like the living arrangements, contents were distributed according to their function and expense. Equally they point to absences. In many cases portraits and books are not recorded, even in a cursory way. Similarly, as Toby Barnard highlights in his foreword, it is difficult to find regional variations. The one exception, perhaps, are the fifteen Londonderry solar grates found in Mount Stewart in 1821, the invention of the Earl of Londonderry. One of the things that make this volume incredibly useful is the detailed, thematic index that draws each object together, allowing for comparison across the houses. There can be no doubt that *Great Irish households* will be a stimulus to further study. Indeed, there is still much to be done not only within the Irish and British contexts, but also with the great houses across Europe, which might situate what was happening in Ireland within a broader framework.

Conor Lucey (ed.)

HOUSE AND HOME IN GEORGIAN IRELAND: SPACES AND CULTURES OF DOMESTIC LIFE

(Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2022) isbn 978-1-80151-026-4, 288pp, 25x18cm, 85 illus, €50 hb

review by William Laffan



NEITHER LE CORBUSIER'S DEFINITION OF THE HOUSE as a 'machine for living' NOR Maeve Brennan's designation of the home as a 'place in the mind' (Brennan's childhood home in Ranelagh haunts her fiction) is unproblematic. Nevertheless, taken together they rather neatly bookend a field of historical research into the domestic sphere that has proved particularly fertile in recent years. On the one hand, studies of interior architecture have prioritised function over the formal concerns that had long dominated scholarship, though, of course, acknowledging the fundamental link between the two. On the other, much recent research has explored the meaning, emotive