

LLANBLETHIAN COTTAGE INVENTORY

By Luke Millar

The transcript of the Llanblethian Cottage inventory of 1819 is accompanied by a glossary and notes on those items which might be unfamiliar or require explanation to the general reader. Of several other gentry house inventories of roughly the same period and from this area, those from Old Hall, Cowbridge, of 1762 and 1778 have been chosen mainly for comparison, because some things had changed considerably during the intervening forty years, and others notably had not.

As one might expect, the furniture was of different periods and styles, although the minimal description made by the inventory takers often obscures such changes. So a 'mahogany chair' could describe two very different items, but the 'fancy chairs' in 1819 are very much nineteenth-century things, as is the 'sofa table', not made before about 1790.

There are no particular differences in the domestic appliances, mainly trivial items of daily life which have a fascination for us because they seem to put us in touch with the intimate details of people's lives, which thereby seem more real to us. Some such things are specified in detail, such as various kinds of trays. Others, such as brewing equipment and the methods one can deduce from them, would repay comparison with a wide range of inventories at different social levels.

In general, the inventory covers a comprehensive range of furniture and equipment, although it is rather short on carpets and curtains and entirely lacking tableware and silver. Curtains in particular were fashion items at the time, often elaborately draped on pole cornices or 'French rods', with cord pulls. Presumably all these things were retained by the Courtenays and taken with them to their next place of residence (perhaps Buckland, Devon).

[Mr Millar transcribed the following inventory retaining the spelling of the original. Ed.]

An Inventory of Household Furniture etc. the property of C. Courtney Esq. sold by auction at Llanblethian on Wednesday the 4th day of August 1819 by John Awbrey Auctioneer

1.	6 Pickling jars	0.4.6
2.	2 Tin coffee pots	0.1.3
3.	Coffee mill	0.4.3
4.	Pair of iron candlesticks	0.0.8
5.	Tin candlestick, snuffers & stand	0.1.2
6.	Gridiron & 2 forks	0.6.0
7.	Iron footman	0.10.6
8.	Iron boiler	0.5.0
9.	Do.Do.	0.5.0
10.	Iron digester	0.5.0
11.	2 iron saucepans	0.4.0
12.	Bell mettle kettle	0.4.0
13.	Tin saucepan and copper tea kettle	0.4.0
14.	Frying pan dripping pan & 2 skimmers	0.5.0
15.	Japan cannister & 1 Do.	0.4.6
16.	Cheese bonnet & cullinder	0.3.6
17.	3 Flat irons & stand	0.3.0
18.	Iron box & stand	0.3.0
19.	Brass warming pan	0.6.0
20.	Steelyard	0.6.0
21.	2 Knife trays	0.1.0
22.	2 Japan waiters	0.0.6
23.	6 table mats	0.2.6
24.	Plate rack	0.11.0
25.	Deal kitchen table	0.18.0
26.	6 Kitchen chairs	0.18.0
27.	1 Clothes horse	0.11.0
28.	3 Green chairs	0.13.0
29.	2 elbow Do.	0.9.6
30.	Barometer	1.2.0
31.	6 elbow chairs	1.13.0
32.	Mahy. card table	1.2.0
33.	Pier looking glass	1.10.0
34.	Sett of fire irons, fender & hearth brush	0.7.6

35.	Sett of mahy tables	3.3.0
36.	Mahy card table	1.11.6
37.	Do. work table	0.12.0
38.	Do. celeret	0.15.0
39.	Do. Sofa	4.4.0
40.	Pair of curtains	0.7.0
41.	Piece of carpeting	0.11.0
42.	8 rush botom chairs	1.15.0
43.	A Telescope	5.0.0
44.	Sett of fire irons, fender & hearth brush	0.8.0
45.	1 eight day clock	7.7.0
46.	2 clothes flasks	0.6.0
47.	Beech tent bedstead	2.6.0
48.	Bed wt.76 lb. @ 1/6	5.14.0
49.	Pair of blankets	0.10.6
50.	Mahy. Chest of drawers	3.13.6
51.	Wash hand stand basin & ewer	0.13.0
53.	Deal dressing table	0.4.6
54.	2 Fancy chairs	0.4.0
55.	Sett of fire irons, fender & hearth brush	0.6.0
56.	Bed wt.102 lb. @ 1/7 lb.	8.1.6
57.	Do. Do.38 lb. @ 1/6	2.17.0
58.	Pair of blanketts	1.6.0
59.	Bedside carpet	0 9.0
60.	Do.Do.	0.12.0
61.	Mahy. bidet	0.6.0
62.	Do. night stool	0.14.0
63.	3 fancy chairs	0.7.0
64.	Dressing table	0.14.0
65.	3 Fancy chairs	0.7.0
66.	Bootjack & clothes horse	0.3.0
67.	Basin & ewer	0.1.6
68.	Bedstead & furniture	3.3.0
69.	Bed wt. 60 lb. @ 1/10	5.16.0
70.	Pair of blankets	1.6.0
71.	Mahy. chest of drawers	2.12.6
72.	Deal dressing table	0.13.0
73.	Mahy. night stool	0.13.0

74.	2 Fancy chairs	0.4.0
75.	Wash hand stand, basin & ewer	0.7.0
76.	Bedstead	0.7.6
77.	6 fancy chairs	1.1.0
78.	Oak bedstead	0.10.6
79.	1 Table	0.2.0
80.	Dinner service of ware	1.8.0
81.	Wooden clock	0.8.0
82.	Toasting screen	0.6.6
83.	Plate warmer	0.4.9
84.	Coffee oven(?)	0.8.0
85.	Dinner tray	0.6.0
86.	5 Baskets	0.8.6
87.	Coal skuttle and box	0.5.0
88.	Plate basket and bellows	0.7.0
89.	Chamber bucket & duster	0.4.0
90.	3 Candlesticks &c.	0.3.0
91.	Pewter dish & 2 plates	0.2.0
92.	Coat jack	0.1.6
93.	Stable bucket & 2 pails	0.6.3
94.	4 doz. of bottles	0.8.8
95.	4 doz. of Do.	0.8.8
96.	4 doz. of Do.	0.8.8
97.	Bottle rack	0.5.6
98.	Chopping board & knives	0.2.6
99.	Stool and chairs	0.2.0
100.	Vat	0.14.0
101.	Cooler	0.4.6
102.	2 tubs	0.6.0
103.	Funnel, mashing stick & cross stick	0.2.0
104.	Wheelbarrow	0.10.0
105.	Large screen	0.14.0
106.	Handbarrow	0.4.0
107.	Watering pot	0.2.6
108.	Dog house	0.12.0
109.	Flower stand	0.4.6
110.	Cucumber frame	2.2.0
111.	Half barrel	0.8.0

112. Do. Do.	0.9.6
113. Do. Do.	0.7.6
114. 3 small casks	0.9.0
115. Kneading trow	0.1.8
116. Safe, hoop & sieve	0.4.0
117. Sett of fire irons	0.6.6

	<hr/> £100.18.0
Total amount of disbursements	72. 0.5
	<hr/> £28.17.7

Augst 11th.1819 Settled Charles Courtenay

Disbursements

Paid for the carriage of the Catalogues	0.1.4
Paid Cryer	0.2.0
Paid Jenkins as per bill	1.8.7
Paid Dav. Jenkins	0.3.6
Duty	5.1.0
Making a catalogue, selling, collecting.the money &c.	4.4.0
Cash advanced	61.0.0

£72.0.5

Glossary and Notes

7. Iron footman. A four-legged trivet of wrought iron with a flat top, used as a muffin or kettle stand. The top was level with a fire in a grate. Also used to keep plates hot (Gloag). In the Old Hall 1762 inventory there was an iron footman in the kitchen. For other references, see under 83 (plate warmer).
10. Iron digester. A stock-pot, for boiling down bones, etc. (OED).
12. Bell mettle. Bell metal, a tin, copper and zinc alloy resembling bronze.
15. Japan. Japanning, a kind of painting (Sheraton). Most frequently black and in general derived from the Japanese painting, as opposed to lacquering, fashionable from the late 17th century onwards.
21. Knife tray. Mahogany knife trays of the best kind have two partitions, with a brass handle which clasps over the edges of two

partitions, and screws to the sides, which are 3 or 3½ inches deep; the inside length 14 inches, and the width from 10 to 12 inches; observe, the sides of these knife trays are square up, not sloped as formerly (Sheraton).

22. Japan waiters. Presumably, at only 6d, small painted metal trays or salvers (OED). In the Old Hall 1762 inventory there were '3 small mahogany waiters' in the kitchen, and in the 1778 sale there were 'a large waiter' and 'two small ditto' in the butler's pantry. Also, in 1762 under 'plate', a 'Pontypool tea board' (a metal tray with japanned decoration made at Pontypool) and a waiter do. Mrs Margaret Gamage had a small waiter in the kitchen and another under 'silver plate' (Cilybebyll inventory, 1778)

An intriguing item in the Old Hall 1762 inventory is '7 mahogany stands to hold dishes on the table' in the hall. These would appear to be self-service things, perhaps for dessert, enabling the room to be early vacated by the servants (very necessary when business talk and gossip were the rule!)

- 28, 29. Green chairs. Very likely to have been Windsor chairs. Green painted examples were popular in gentry houses for casual use, often out of doors.
33. Pier looking glass. A tall looking glass, occupying a pier between windows.
38. Mahy. Celeret. A small mahogany chest probably with sloped sides, having an inner lining divided into six or more partitions to hold wine bottles. An item of dining-room furniture. Many sideboards had a 'celeret drawer' for this purpose.
45. Eight day clock. A long-case movement running eight days before winding. Simpler, cheaper movements were wound every 24 hours, and very superior ones might be month-going or even longer. From its value at 7 guineas, it is quite likely to have been a Henry Williams of Llancarfan piece.
46. Clothes flasks. Clothes baskets (OED).
47. Beech tent bedstead. A folding bed-frame of beech wood, with a removable canopied tester etc. Tent or camp beds were in general use in bedrooms during the first half of the 19th century. Their attractive 'snug yet genteel look' (Boswell, 1762) gave them an appeal beyond their original purpose. They were extensively used for travelling, to avoid verminous beds in inns.

53. Deal dressing table. Dressing-tables in smart bedrooms were often of deal (pine) because they were entirely covered with a fine cloth, usually white, called a 'toilet'.
54. Fancy chairs. Lightweight, ornamented chairs, probably cane-seated or upholstered.
56. Bed w[eigh]t etc. The 'bed' refers in general to the movable mattresses, feather bedding if used, and the bolsters and pillows (Sheraton). Unusually, there is no reference in this inventory to the materials used (e.g. hair, flock) but it was usual for the better class of bedding to have two or more mattresses. The practice of selling by weight is so far unknown elsewhere and may simply be the local auctioneer's convenient way of putting it together in lots. The different prices per pound (1/6d, 1/7d and 1/10d) must reflect varying quality.
68. Bedstead & furniture. The bed framing and attached upholstery, as curtains, tester, valance etc., as opposed to the separate bedding laid on it.
81. Wooden clock. A rare reference at this time. British movements, with wheels cut in hard close-grained woods such as box, were known in the 18th century, but the majority found are later 19th century items imported from the Black Forest region of Germany. The low value of 8/- probably indicates a cheap foreign import even at this date. Wooden clocks were made as early as the late 17th century in Britain and, at least fifty years earlier than this example, in Germany (information from Michael Legg). Furthermore, wooden clocks were brought into Britain by itinerant clock sellers from Germany as early as 1800 (information from William Linnard). So it is likely that this was a German clock.
82. Toasting screen. Probably a vertical open rack to hold toast in front of the fire, possibly supported on a metal stand, like a roaster or Dutch oven. Possibly a local auctioneer's term, describing what he saw. In the Old Hall 1762 inventory there is '1 brass toaster' and '4 steel ditto' in the kitchen.
83. Plate warmer. A device which stood before a fire, holding plates to be warmed or kept warm. There were various types, a common one being a 'cat', six turned spindles projecting from a turned ball centre. Which ever way you put it down it stood on its feet (hence the name) and the three uppermost spindles supported the plates.

In the Old Hall 1778 sale there was an 'Iron cat' in the great parlour, perhaps used there to warm plates before the 'Bath stove' in that room. Also in Old Hall in 1762 there were 'two twig plate warmers' in the kitchen, probably open wickerwork baskets, one later described by the auctioneer in 1778 as 'a basket to warm plates before the fire', as well as a separate 'wicker plate basket', a 'copper plate warmer' and a 'footman'.

85. Dinner tray. The dinner tray is for taking up dishes and plates to the dining table; their sides are $3\frac{1}{2}$ " deep all round, with handle holes in each side which may be made of good Honduras [mahogany], but the bottoms should be of Spanish. The length of the largest dinner trays are 32", and width 2 feet; full size tea trays are nearly the same (Sheraton). In the Old Hall 1778 sale there were 'One mahogany dinner tray' and 'one ditto glass ditto' and 'one ditto small ditto'.
88. Plate basket. A china plate basket. Such baskets, made of mahogany, with fretwork sides and a brass hooped handle, were used for carrying heated plates from the kitchen to the dining-room, where they could be transferred to the haster (aka a plate warmer or a footman) set down by the fire to keep them warm. The basket had an octagonal base and seven vertical panels or facets, the eighth being omitted to allow the plates to be piled and lifted out easily (Gloag).
92. Coat jack. Possibly one of the uses of this term as a lifting or holding device, i.e. a coat stand or hanger.
93. Stable bucket & 2 pails. The terms bucket and pail were apparently synonymous.
100. Vat. A vessel, probably wooden, for brewing the malt (mashing) and, after boiling and cooling, to contain the fermenting wort. This use of a dual purpose vessel indicates a modest, farmhouse scale production, probably making both strong ale and 'small beer' (OED).
101. Cooler. A shallow vessel, having a large surface area, for cooling the hot wort after boiling with hops and before fermenting it.
103. Funnel, mashing stick and cross stick. Brewing equipment. The funnel was probably for delivering the loose hops. The mashing stick was probably a stick with other short sticks fixed through it to make a stirrer to stir the hot mash. The cross stick was probably

a split stick which, laid across the mash tub, provided a springgrip to hold the wort stick as it was gradually raised to allow the wort to run out. See William Cobbett, *Cottage Economy* (1831). Old Hall had a brewhouse where we find in 1762 '3 brewing vates', '2 trandells' (unidentified) and two 'brass boylers', together with pails etc.

115. Kneading trow. A trough for kneading dough.

A Note on Llanblethian Cottage by the Editor

The view of Llanblethian Cottage in a mid-nineteenth-century watercolour by Col. W. H. Taynton indicates that it was a substantial Georgian house with a veranda, not unlike the neighbouring Hill House. Edward Sterling and his family lived there from 1809 to 1814 and they were succeeded by Charles Courtenay who was almost certainly, by a change of name, later to become Sir Charles Throckmorton, the seventh baronet of Coughton Court, Warwickshire. The old house was demolished at the very end of the nineteenth century and the Vicarage (now the Old Vicarage) was built on the site.



Watercolour by Col. W. H. Taynton, c.1850. Cowbridge History Society.

SOURCES

The Courtenay inventory is in the Warwickshire County Record Office, CR 1998 Box 83.

The two Old Hall documents are in the Glamorgan Archives, the 1762 inventory is DEd 450, the printed sale catalogue of 1778 is DE 689.

Margaret Gamage's inventory is in the National Library of Wales, Cilybebyll 247.

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