

# APPROACHES TO THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF ELITE TERRACED HOUSES IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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The analysis of historical buildings should be an interdisciplinary study, with use and meaning being interpreted from diverse viewpoints such as anthropology, sociology, geography or economics, and drawing on documentary, archaeological, typological and stylistic evidence. Unfortunately, in the case of elite terraced houses built in the long eighteenth century (the period 1660 – 1825), this has not happened.<sup>1</sup> Much of the existing, but limited, literature is written from an art historical perspective.<sup>2</sup> It draws on a vast array of documentary evidence, relating to the individual property, development or city, as well as the wider social, political and economic climate of the time, but there has been little emphasis on archaeological methods or the social use of space.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, this paper focuses on the terraced house interior, arguing for the use of two methodological approaches. Firstly, that typologies formed from detailed and wide ranging cross-disciplinary studies are a vital first stage of interpretation, setting the materiality of the house in the context of historical, geographical, economic and political trends so that comparisons can be made between regions, dates or occupier status. They also provide the framework for the second, anthropological, approach, within which a further level of interpretation is made. The anthropological approach is concerned with the social use of space in the house and relates to specific people and places as identified in documentary sources. The detail and personal insight it gives is of utmost importance because it can provide explanations for, and links between, the questions raised in analysis

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<sup>1</sup> M. Simpson and T. Lloyd, *Middle Class Housing in Britain* (David & Charles; Archon Books, 1977), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> E. McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London: the Development and Design of the City, 1660-1720* (Manchester, 1999) p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> M. Jenkins, 'The View from the Street: Housing and Shopping in York during the Long Eighteenth Century,' unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2013. pp. 21-2; H. Grieg and G. Riello, 'Eighteenth Century Interiors - Redesigning the Georgian,' *Journal of Design History* 20(4) (2007), 273-289, p. 273; 275 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epm025>; J. Schlarman, 'The Social Geography of Grosvenor Square: Mapping Gender and Politics 1720-1760,' *London Journal* 28(1) (2003), pp. 8-28, p. 10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/ldn.2003.28.1.8>

of historical written records and the archaeology of the material record.<sup>4</sup> The material record is often incomplete, damaged or altered as a result of repairs, adaptations and modernisation, or even missing in its entirety where demolition has occurred and the site has been redeveloped. This can make the evidence difficult to interpret with any certainty. Similarly, the written record may not provide sufficient evidence for interpretation if it lacks a description of the relationship between the rooms or spaces, thereby leaving questions about configuration, status and use. Probate records, for example, include inventories which were created for the identification and valuation of artefacts in the home of a deceased person, and they were not concerned with the building design, the artefact's use or its cultural associations. Such documents may list room names, but not the location of the rooms in the building as this would probably have been obvious at the time of the document creation, and artefacts listed may not have been found by the probate officials in the room in which they were used. Furthermore, seasonal variations in an artefact's location would not be recorded, nor usage customs, and there could be subjective descriptions of age or quality. These factors could all lead to incorrect interpretations of an artefact's use, compounding the uncertainty of reliable interpretation of the building's use. In documentary archaeology, research is focused on understanding the lives of people, their material environment and how it was used, within the premise that artefacts, buildings and events have different meanings for different people.<sup>5</sup> The documents themselves are therefore a form of material culture and reflect influences on their creators, whether at the micro-scale of personal taste and finances, for example, or at the macro-scale of artistic or political movements. Comparison and cross-referencing of all sources of evidence is therefore required if we are to make holistic interpretations about space.<sup>6</sup>

A significant proportion of the key literature in this field is provided by those who took an architectural approach to analysis and this is particularly beneficial to the typological approach for interpretation of use. Summerson, for example, used documentary sources to set out the standard form of houses in the wider historical, political and economic

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<sup>4</sup> D. Arnold, (2006). *Rethinking Architectural Historiography* (Routledge, 2006), p. xvii.

<sup>5</sup> A. Wilkie, 'Documentary Archaeology,' in D. Hicks and M. Beaudry (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology* (Cambridge University Press, 2006, 13-33). p. 18; J. Moreland, *Archaeology and Text* (Duckworth, 2001), p. 117.

<sup>6</sup> Wilkie, 'Documentary Archaeology', pp. 13-14; p. 25; N. Stieber, 'Space, Time and Architectural History'. in D. Arnold, E. Ergut and B. Turan Özkaya (eds). *Rethinking Architectural Historiography* (Routledge, 2006, 171-82), pp. 179-80.

context.<sup>7</sup> Guillery considered the effects of legislation and the development of polite architecture, and his collaboration with Burton concentrated heavily on the plan form variations.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Kelsall and Muthesius focused on the material nature of the house and plan forms, identifying influences from architectural, economic and technological perspectives, with Muthesius also making brief reference to use of the internal space.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, Ponsonby used documentary and material evidence to interpret the home in the context of domestic life, while Vickery drew heavily on documentary evidence to understand the cultural and political aspects of life to which the house was merely a backdrop.<sup>10</sup> These studies provide important information about use and meaning, but on their own, do not relate closely enough to the physicality of elite terraced houses. The only significant published research to bring together typological and anthropological approaches is that by Cruickshank and Burton in their use of contemporary accounts of life, artwork, architectural drawings and formal records. They produced a more complete interpretation of the use of the house and how the architecture and inhabitants co-existed and influenced each other.<sup>11</sup>

### Typological approaches

It is generally accepted that there were few town house plan types during the long eighteenth century. It is also known from documentary sources that much of the housing of

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<sup>7</sup> J. Summerson, J, *Architecture in Britain, 1530 to 1830* (Yale University Press, 1993); *Georgian London* (Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> N. Burton and P. Guillery, *Behind the Facade: London House Plans, 1660-1840* (Spire, 2006); P. Guillery, *The Small House in Eighteenth-century London: a Social and Architectural History* (Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press in association with English Heritage, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> A. Kelsall, 'The London House Plan in the Later 17th Century,' *Post-medieval Archaeology* VIII (1974) pp. 80-91 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/pma.1974.004>; S. Muthesius, *The English Terraced House* (Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> M. Ponsonby, *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850* (Ashgate, 2007) pp. 2-7; A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (Yale University Press, 2003); *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> D. Cruickshank and N. Burton, *Life in the Georgian City* (Viking, 1990).

this period was built by speculative builders.<sup>12</sup> The plans form the basis of the typological approach because designs can be categorised by their resemblance to one of the small number of basic room arrangements and uses, and while typologies combining plan form and elevational composition do exist, they are even fewer in number. The chronology outlined below, describes how the key typologies were formulated, and appraises the value and reliability of the methods used.

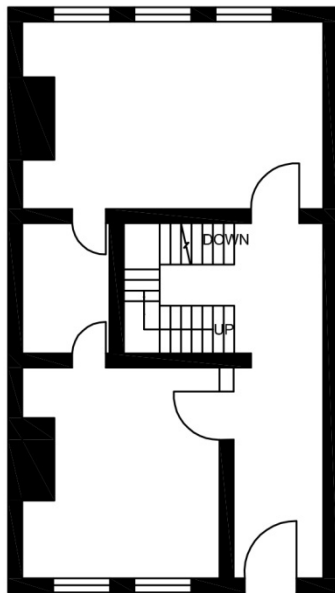


Figure 1. Typical ground floor plan showing the central staircase arrangement. (Author's own image based on information from A, Kelsall, 'The London house plan in the later 17th century,' *Post-medieval archaeology VIII* (1974) p.82 & 85).

Kelsall identified a common plan form for terraced houses in London in the period 1660-80 (Figure 1).<sup>13</sup> Typically four storeys high plus basement, they had a double pile plan, with the staircase positioned between the front and back rooms.<sup>14</sup> Documentary evidence and the findings from detailed archaeological examinations of the existing fabric were used in the formulation of the typology, but Kelsall encountered difficulties during the surveys because of the extent of re-building and alterations, an issue also noted by Laithwaite in his

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<sup>12</sup> Burton & Guillery, *Behind the Façade*, p. 11; Kelsall, 'The London House Plan'; Summerson, *Georgian London*.

<sup>13</sup> Kelsall 1974, pp. 80-81.

<sup>14</sup> Kelsall, 'The London House Plan.'

study of Totnes.<sup>15</sup> McKellar subsequently identified a comparable plan form, drawn by Moxon in 1683 (Figure 2), and this evidence further reinforces the value of cross-referencing the findings of documentary and archaeological approaches.<sup>16</sup>

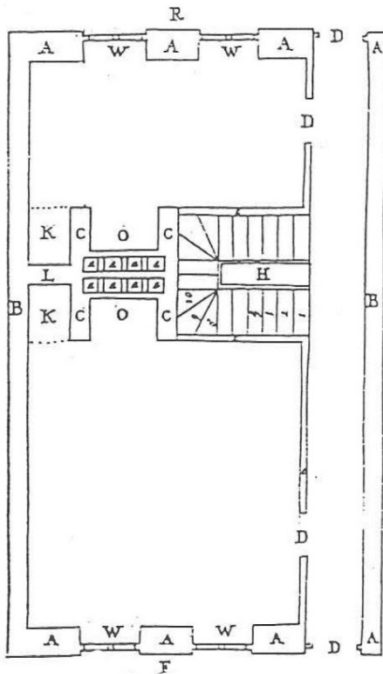


Figure 2. The 'Moxon' plan with central staircase and chimneys (E. McKellar, 'The City and the Country: the Urban Vernacular in Late Seventeenth Century and Early Eighteenth Century London,' in N. Burton (ed.) *Georgian Vernacular: Papers given at a Georgian Group Symposium*, 28 October 1995 (The Georgian Group, 1996) p. 12).

Summerson described a different plan form, with minor variations, used almost universally across the social scales from 1670, and so accepted is this type that it is often labelled the 'Summerson plan' (Figure 3).<sup>17</sup> It has a double pile layout with a passage to the side accommodating the staircase at the rear.<sup>18</sup> It was described as conforming to the London Building Act 1667, which was a response to the Great Fire, but Newman argued that

<sup>15</sup> Kelsall, 'The London House Plan,' pp. 80-81; pp. 86-7; M. Laithwaite, 'Totnes Houses 1500-1800,' in P. Clark (ed.) *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600-1800* (Hutchinson, 1984) pp. 62-98.

<sup>16</sup> E. McKellar, 'The City and the Country: the Urban Vernacular in Late Seventeenth Century and Early Eighteenth Century London,' in N. Burton (ed.) *Georgian Vernacular: Papers given at a Georgian Group Symposium*, 28 October 1995 (The Georgian Group, 1996) pp. 10-18, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Burton & Guillery, *Behind the Façade*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 49-51.

evidence from other towns and cities shows houses were changing in this period anyway.<sup>19</sup> Both authors used a historical context for their interpretations, but Newman's geographical perspective highlighted the complex factors involved in arriving at a reliable conclusion, demonstrating the importance of cross-disciplinary study.

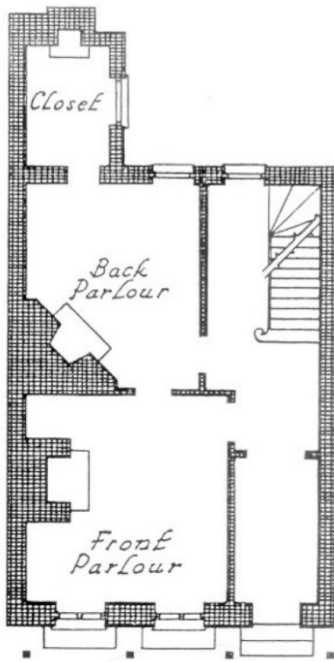


Figure 3. The 'Summerson' plan of a typical house of the period 1670-1700, conforming to the Act of 1667 (J. Summerson, *Georgian London*. (Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2003) p. 51). It shows the optional closet, rear staircase lit by a window on the rear elevation, and the fashionable corner fireplace in the back parlour (Burton & Guillery, *Behind the Façade: London House Plans, 1660-1840* (Spire, 2006) p.12).

Cruickshank and Burton gave a detailed account of all the floors in a 'common' house, using evidence from Ware's book *A Complete Body of Architecture* from 1756, and personal written accounts.<sup>20</sup> Similar in layout to the 'Summerson' plan, the kitchen, storage cellars and staff accommodation were located in the basement, with bedrooms on the two upper floors, but they found that the function of rooms on the ground and first floors had no clear trend (Figure 4). These very different document types widened the debate on the plan form typology, and importantly, demonstrated that documentary evidence is a form of material culture that needs to be cross-referenced to other sources to enhance the reliability of interpretations.

<sup>19</sup> R. Newman, (2001). *The Historical Archaeology of Britain: c.1540-1900* (Sutton, 2001) p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, pp. 51-60.

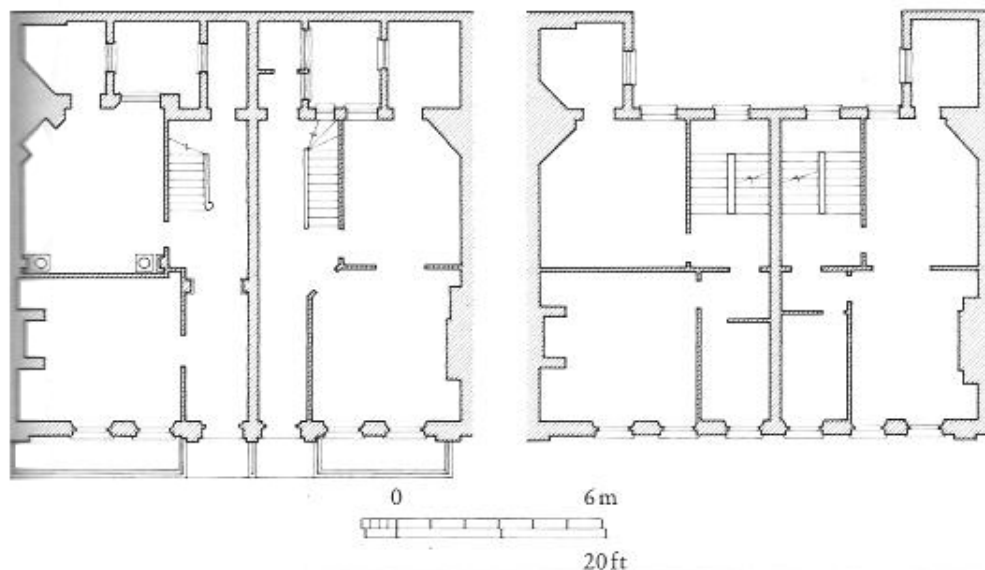


Figure 4. Ware's 'common' house plan, as demonstrated at 6-7 Firth Street, Soho, London (F. Sheppard, *Survey of London: Volume 33: St Anne Soho* (L.C.C. 1966) p. 154), redrawn by David Jenkins in D. Cruickshank and N. Burton, *Life in the Georgian City* (Viking, 1990) p. 53). Note that the two houses shown are of different sizes but the layouts follow the same arrangement.

The final typology in the chronology, dating to 1823-5 is that drawn by Elsam in response to the 1774 Building Act, in which buildings were divided into four categories, rated by sale value and size (Figure 5).<sup>21</sup> The purpose of this legislation was to consolidate the largely ignored Acts that had preceded it, and create structurally safe houses that would curtail the spread of fire.<sup>22</sup> Each of the categories had specific technical requirements, and so it followed, according to Summerson, that speculative builders found an optimum design for each type, resulting in standardisation of the plan form and the elevational treatment.<sup>23</sup> This standard form, the compromise between the economics of material quantities and streamlined construction techniques, and the need of the speculator to attract buyers and tenants to a house which could reasonably fulfil their lifestyle requirements, shows a clear link to legislative and economic forces which were themselves, the product of a wider historical context.<sup>24</sup> The importance of using these cross-disciplinary documentary

<sup>21</sup> Muthesius, *The English Terraced House*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>22</sup> S. Parissien, *The Georgian Group Book of the Georgian House* (Aurum, 1995) p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 124-6.

<sup>24</sup> Kelsall, 'The London House Plan,' p. 90; Simpson and Lloyd, *Middle Class Housing in Britain*, p. 10.

sources and perspectives to further our understanding of trends and development is again demonstrated.

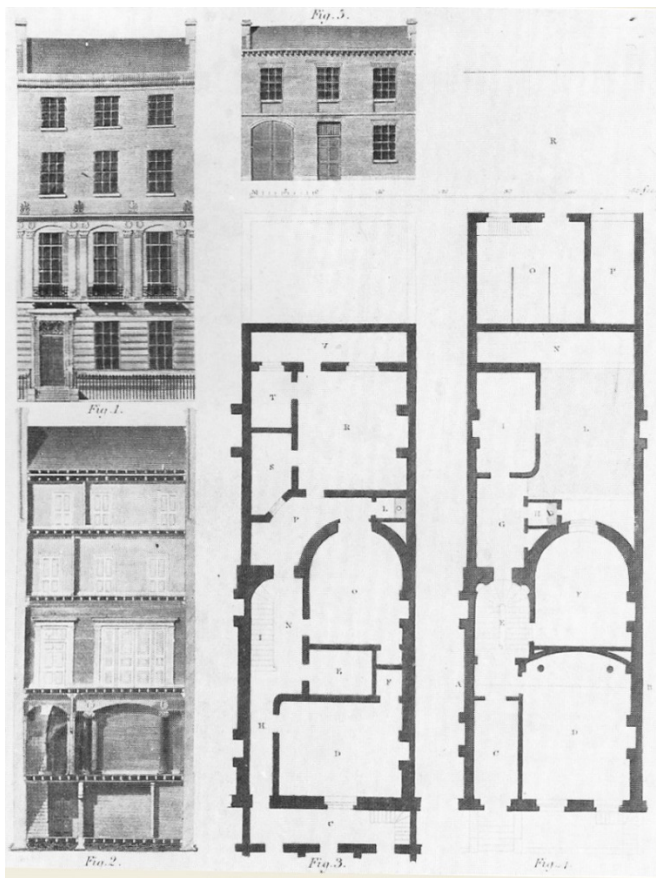


Figure 5. Elsom's/ Nicholson's drawings for a first rate London house showing the standard basement and ground floor plans, elevations and a section. The four classes did not all show the same extent of information, and none of the documentation includes a description (S. Muthesius, *The English Terraced House* (Yale University Press, 1982) pp. 82-3).

Most recently, Burton and Guillery proposed that the minor variations Summerson described within his basic type, deserve to be identified as a plan form in their own right, and they identified six London plan variants used across all social categories, and at varying times. These were: the standard, ('Summerson') plan, central-staircase plan, front-staircase plan, rear-wing plan, one-room plan and central-chimney ('Moxon') plan (Figures 6 & 7). Plan form information was sourced from secondary documentary evidence, but the importance of this typology is that it synthesises the findings from previous studies.<sup>25</sup> The authors also interpreted room functions in some houses, possibly based on biographical or

<sup>25</sup> Burton & Guillery, *Behind the Façade*, p. 10.



artistic documentary sources, and it is these, which will be discussed in the next section, that allow us to more fully understand the building use.

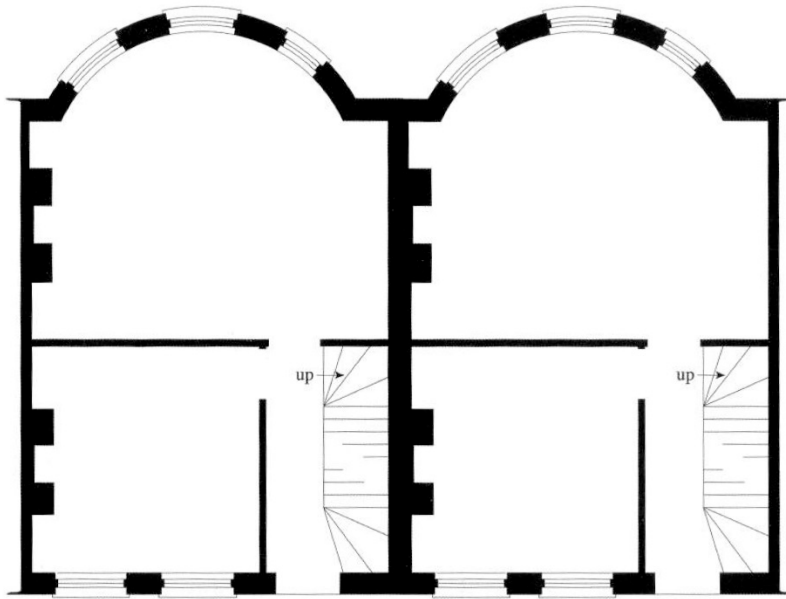


Figure 6. The front-staircase plan as identified by Burton and Guillery, and built between 1660 and 1790. This example is 162-164 New Kent Road and dates c.1790 (NMR, BI No 97375, plan based on survey by Elliot Wood Partnership, 1998, re-drawn by Alan Fagan in N. Burton and P. Guillery, *Behind the Facade: London House Plans, 1660-1840* (Spire, 2006) p. 113).

Of significance to the study of elite terraced houses is that the typologies all relate to London, but research does exist for the provincial towns and cities. In 1820s Exeter for example, houses such as those on Bedford Circus and Baring Crescent followed an arrangement known in London of basement kitchen, ground floor dining and drawing rooms, first floor drawing room and bedroom, and upper floor bedrooms, although there is no formal typology.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Ison described Bath as having a standard type of terraced house, and this also follows the same format as those described above (Figure 8).<sup>27</sup> Importantly however, he made the distinction between those houses which were built speculatively, and follow this standard plan form, and those such as The Circus which were built to the requirements of a particular user, and incorporate a diverse range of plans behind a uniform façade. Documentary evidence confirms that the houses were built under separate leases and Ison's comment that the staircases were positioned to suit the

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<sup>26</sup> R. Newton, 'Exeter, 1770-1870,' in M. Simpson and T. Lloyd (eds) *Middle Class Housing in Britain*, pp.12-43, p. 31; p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> W. Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bath from 1700 to 1830* (Kingsmead, 1980) p. 97.

arrangement of rooms allows us to interpret that given full choice, as opposed to the option of finishing a speculatively built carcass to taste, people have different priorities for room adjacencies, size and location.<sup>28</sup> This in turn may be interpreted as a reflection of the different values placed on aspects of life within the house.

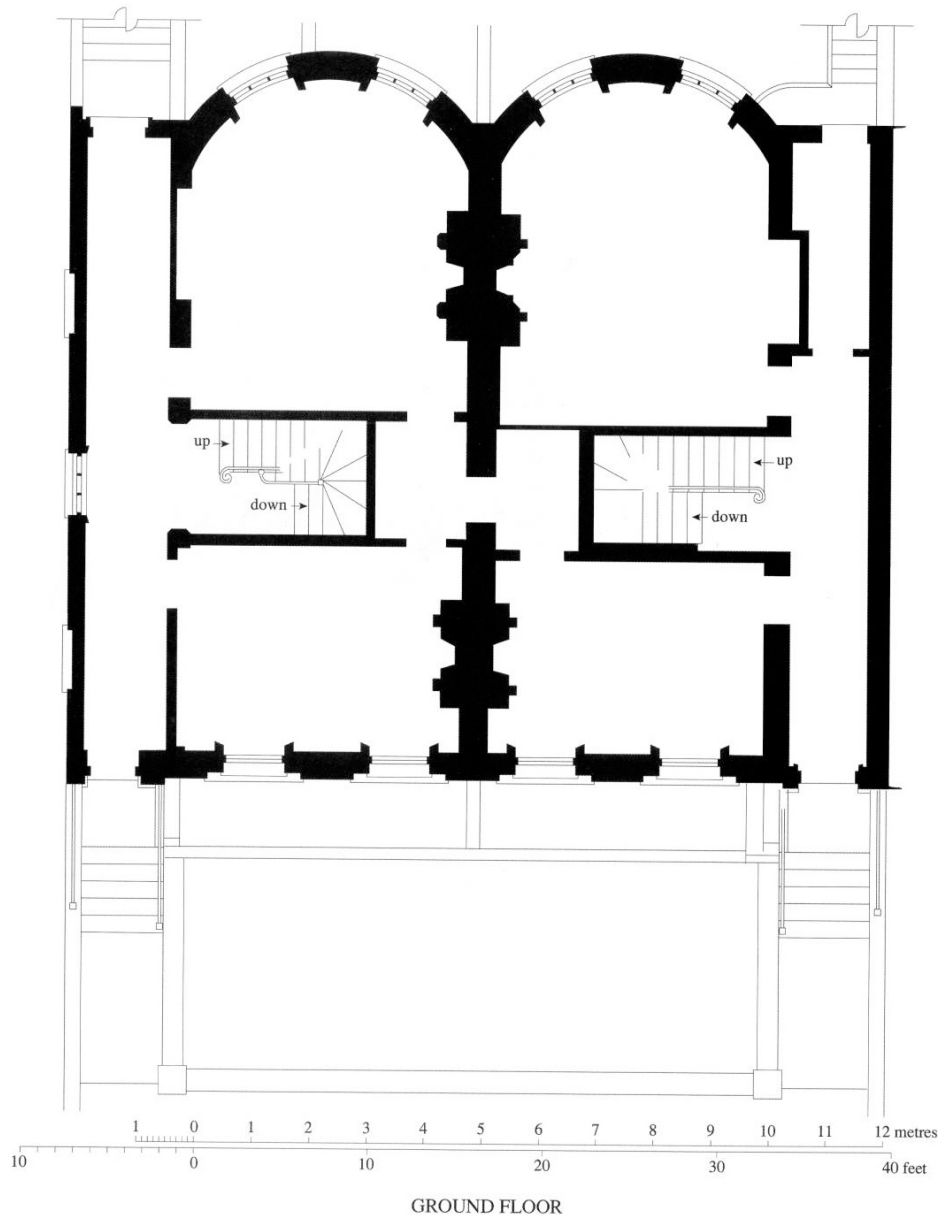


Figure 7. The central-staircase plan was revived towards the end of the 18th century. This plan of 122 & 124 Kennington Park Road dates to 1788. The recesses in the rear rooms were interpreted as locations for sideboards, and therefore the rooms were interpreted as dining rooms (NMR, GLC Drawing HB/403, 1955, redrawn by Alan Fagan in Burton & Guillery, *Behind the Façade: London House Plans, 1660-1840* (Spire, 2006) pp. 108-9).

<sup>28</sup> Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bath*, pp. 94; p. 97; pp. 230-231; Parissien, *The Georgian Group Book of the Georgian House*, p. 29.

None of the typologies include floor plans for every floor of the building, but those that are roughly contemporary with the houses in question (Ware's and Elsam's) do provide more information than those proposed in the last 70 years. This is possibly because the little evidence remaining now, whether archaeological or documentary, is not sufficient for a new and full hypothesis to be confidently proposed.<sup>29</sup> However, in a period when plans featured in pattern books, and internal walls tended to be load bearing, it is likely that the configuration of rooms was similar at all floors so perhaps previous researchers did not consider this information to be relevant to a typology that was not concerned to any great extent with the social use of the space.<sup>30</sup> Neither Kelsall or Summerson attempted to understand this aspect of houses so while the works are valuable in understanding the external influences on the material form, they do little to aid our understanding of daily life, customs, status or gender differences.



Figure 8. Although the façade is of uniform appearance, the plan forms at The Circus in Bath are each individual, reflecting the requirements of the original owners for whom they were built (W. Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bath from 1700 to 1830* (Kingsmead, 1980) p. 98. Image courtesy of Bath Preservation Trust). Within most of the houses, a plan type can however be identified. The party walls are wedge shaped in order that the rooms could remain square.

<sup>29</sup> Laithwaite, 'Totnes Houses 1500-1800,' p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, p. 118.

The utility of the typological approach to interpretation would be improved if there was more literature examining building designs. Firstly, we need to know whether houses built to the client's brief fit within a typology, and how this compares to a typology of speculative plan forms. Leech cautioned against studying only those houses which relate to a type, commenting on wide variation in the larger houses.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, we need to compare regional differences and how these vary at any given time; consider if and how the forms originated in London and spread to the provinces thereafter, and consider the influences of local political, economic and seasonal use factors. In the case of the central-staircase plan, Laithwaite identified a lag of 34 years between its appearance in London and subsequent use in Totnes, and a lag of more than 100 years in the case of the standard plan.<sup>32</sup> He attributed this to the configuration of existing plots in the town, and to the tendency to partially rebuild houses rather than start anew. Similarly, Girouard noted that the smaller towns only acquired terraces, squares and crescents once they had become desirable in the larger towns.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, there is huge potential in using the typological approach, but in its current state of development, it can only serve as a basic guide to the external factors influencing house form, provide a platform from which further contextual research can be undertaken, and act as a container for our second stage of interpretation – the spatial and anthropological understanding.

### **Spatial analysis and anthropological approaches**

Spatial analysis is concerned with determining the use of space by applying known cultural associations to a plan form based on room adjacencies, circulation, and binary opposites related to gendered space, temporal use or category, such as domestic or business use. Evidence for these cultural associations can be found through an anthropological approach to analysis and interpretation, with biographical information providing the link between the building, customs and peculiarities of use.

Evidence has shown that aside from being a physical form in which to live, the home also had to project the right image, related to the occupier's position in society, and the

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<sup>31</sup> R. Leech, 'Row and Terrace - Urban Housing in the 17th and 18th Century English City,' in G. Egan et al. (eds.) *Old and New Worlds* (Oxbow, 1999) p. 41-50, pp. 46-7.

<sup>32</sup> Laithwaite, 'Totnes Houses 1500-1800,' pp. 89; 92.

<sup>33</sup> M. Girouard, *The English Town: a History of Urban Life* (Yale University Press, 1990) p. 168.

furnishings and organisation carried cultural implications.<sup>34</sup> This can in part be demonstrated through a combination of typological and spatial analyses. Vickery noted that 'conventional architectural hierarchies decreed that the first floor rooms were the most impressive, the front rooms better than the back, the ground floor the most accessible . . . and the . . . cellars and . . . garrets the least desirable spaces in the house.'<sup>35</sup> It is also demonstrated in the work of other researchers, whether they specialise in documentary analysis or archaeological investigation.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Ponsonby's documentary research has shown that towards the end of the period, rooms increasingly had specialised functions, and Newman interpreted that this indicated a greater desire for privacy, with more order to the household. They both recognized that this coincided with discrete functions relating to the binaries of male and female, business and domestic, and day and night.<sup>37</sup>

While a consideration of binary opposites is certainly useful in aiding our understanding of spaces, there may be an unwitting application of current values, culture and understanding that is not relevant to life in Georgian society. Giles explored this issue in her paper on visibility and space in pre-modern England.<sup>38</sup> She argued that the use of space syntax to understand identity, status and privacy were susceptible to modern ways of thinking, and that archaeologists need to consider how past communities would have experienced the spaces. Grenville took a similar stance in her article about recording buildings, outlining her concern for how the meaning and function of material culture is understood. She believes that successful interpretation is dependent on the quality of the evidence, the questions we ask, and how we view the past from our modern perspective.<sup>39</sup>

This brings us to consider the importance of anthropological approaches. Vickery's documentary research on the lives of Georgian men and women at home showed that the

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<sup>34</sup> J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1985* (Methuen, 1986) p. 99; Newman, *The Historical Archaeology of Britain*, p. 91; Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>35</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 34.

<sup>36</sup> Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian city*; Jenkins, 'The View from the Street'; Burton & Guillery, *Behind the Façade*.

<sup>37</sup> Newman, *The Historical Archaeology of Britain*, p.86; Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, p. 103.

<sup>38</sup> K. Giles, 'Sensing and Believing: Visibility and Space in Pre-modern England,' *World Archaeology* 39(1) (2007) pp. 105-121. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00438240701676276>

<sup>39</sup> J. Grenville, 'Out of the Shutting Yards- One Academic's Approach to Recording Small Buildings,' in S. Pearson and R. Meeson (eds.) *Vernacular Buildings in a Changing World: Understanding, Recording, and Conservation*. (Council for British Archaeology, 2001) pp. 11-26, pp. 12-3.

house was not a private space in the sense we think of today, but the setting for a variety of social and work related encounters.<sup>40</sup> Hospitality was an inherent component of these encounters, transforming how spaces were used, and it is the nature of them, and the respite sought from them, that is the key to completing our understanding of what life was actually like.<sup>41</sup> Vickery noted that the inclusion of closets for withdrawal can be interpreted as an architectural response to needing more privacy, but the personal, and more reliable account, is only conceivable through documentary sources.<sup>42</sup> In reality of course, researchers use a certain amount of licence to interpret documents, perhaps comparing the writings of one person with a painting of a family deemed to be of equal standing or with a receipt for artefacts for a house of a similar type, and then applying the interpretation more generally. Although this highlights a need for caution, the following examples illustrate the value of anthropological and biographical evidence.

Cruickshank and Burton cited two descriptions of the female dressing room as a place for business as well as dressing, and Vickery's documentary research uncovered that dressing rooms were used for many activities including writing letters, reading, playing games or music, entertaining close friends and dining.<sup>43</sup> While evidence has indicated the rooms to be prettily and experimentally decorated at great cost, something which could be gleaned from archaeological analysis or contemporary images, Vickery used personal writings to argue that, for some women, the contrast between this feminine space and the masculinity of the rest of the house, was representative of the oppression of women in the home.<sup>44</sup> Even with considerable extant fittings and in-situ artefacts, we would be unlikely to accurately interpret what today would be considered an unusual combination of public and private uses, and to understand the symbolic meanings through the eyes of past occupants. Biographical evidence is vital for this.

A similar case may be examined for the dining room. Typological and documentary evidence may indicate the location for the room, while stylistic evidence and spatial analysis may indicate the public nature, high status, and masculinity of the space, but it would not be

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<sup>40</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 229.

<sup>41</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 9; *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 306-7.

<sup>43</sup> Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, pp. 55; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 150; p. 204.

<sup>44</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 104; p. 150.

possible to determine specific uses of the room without additional information.<sup>45</sup> According to Reid, the dining room was less elaborate in its decoration and furnishings than the other reception rooms.<sup>46</sup> Vickery, however, has noted that the most impressive artefacts were displayed there, and that the formality of rooms could be changed by rearranging furniture or artefacts, by the level of ceremony, and the status of the guests.<sup>47</sup> And so, it might seem peculiar, that in a public room that reflected the status of the household, the sideboard contained chamber pots. Indeed, even foreign contemporaries were surprised at the room's use and the apparent lack of distinction between public and private activities.<sup>48</sup> La Rochefoucauld commented that 'it is common practice to relieve oneself while the rest are drinking' while Simond noted that 'The operation is performed very deliberately and undisguisedly, as a matter of course, and occasions no interruption of the conversation'.<sup>49</sup> A reliance on archaeological methods of analysis for understanding the changing formality of the room or the role of the chamber pot is unlikely to provide anything more reliable than basic speculation, and so the use of an anthropological methodology proves vital to our understanding of a building's use.

## Case Studies

The information presented so far has made a case for the use of two very different methodologies, and the following case studies will now demonstrate how these can be brought together. The Grosvenor Estate in London was built speculatively, and despite documentary evidence showing proposals for the square and streets to consist of uniform rows of terraced house, they were actually built with a great mix of designs.<sup>50</sup> Records confirm a diverse range of elite householders who lived in the houses for an average of just 12-13 years before moving on, and this has provided useful documentary evidence.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, p.54; p. 70; p. 246.

<sup>46</sup> R. Reid, *The Georgian House and its Details* (Bishopsgate Press, 1989) p. 86.

<sup>47</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 206.

<sup>48</sup> Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, p. 125.

<sup>49</sup> Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, p. 42.

<sup>50</sup> Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, pp. 103-104; p. 123; Girouard, *The English Town*, p. 160.

<sup>51</sup> M. Port, 'West End Palaces: The Aristocratic Town House in London, 1730-1830,' *London Journal* 20(1) (1995) 17-46 pp.24-7 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/ldn.1995.20.1.17>; 'Town House and Country house: Their Interaction,' in D. Arnold ed. *The Georgian Country House: Architecture, Landscape and*

No. 50 Grosvenor Square was built in 1726, and demolished in 1848. The physical arrangement of rooms was comparable to the standard plan, probably reflecting the geographic and economic constraints of speculative building in London, but being a particularly large house, there was an extended wing to the rear. Plans from c. 1737 indicate a basement kitchen and service suite, ground floor reception rooms, a first floor dining room and drawing room, with bedrooms to the upper floors (Figure 9). By 1751 however, an inventory listed an ante-room and dining parlour to the ground floor with a great room and drawing room to the first floor (Figure 10).<sup>52</sup> Based on evidence for varied dining room positions generally, this change was not unusual, and was also demonstrated at nearby 25 Brook Street and 29 Grosvenor Square.<sup>53</sup>

Schlarman described how in the absence of assembly rooms, the London town house was the venue for social gatherings, and a typical evening visit involved movement between hall, drawing room and dining room, via an impressive staircase, allowing occupants to demonstrate their good taste.<sup>54</sup> She interpreted, with the aid of contemporary letters about the grand staircases in Grosvenor Square, that this took place here, and also that the public spaces of the houses, were projected to the outside world via the large windows overlooking the square. Thus the combination of a typological plan form and documentary evidence enabled the interpretation not only of the typical use of space in the context of general trends, but also the actual use and probable meaning for the occupants at different times during its occupation.

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*Society* (Sutton, 1998) pp. 117-38, p. 138; Schlarman, 'The Social Geography of Grosvenor Square,' pp. 18-20; F. Sheppard, *Survey of London: Volume 40: The Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair, Part 2 (The Buildings)* (L.C.C. 1980) p. 114.

<sup>52</sup> Sheppard, *Survey of London*, pp. 165-6.

<sup>53</sup> Cruickshank and Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, pp. 54.

<sup>54</sup> Schlarman, 'The Social Geography of Grosvenor Square,' pp. 21-3; p. 26.



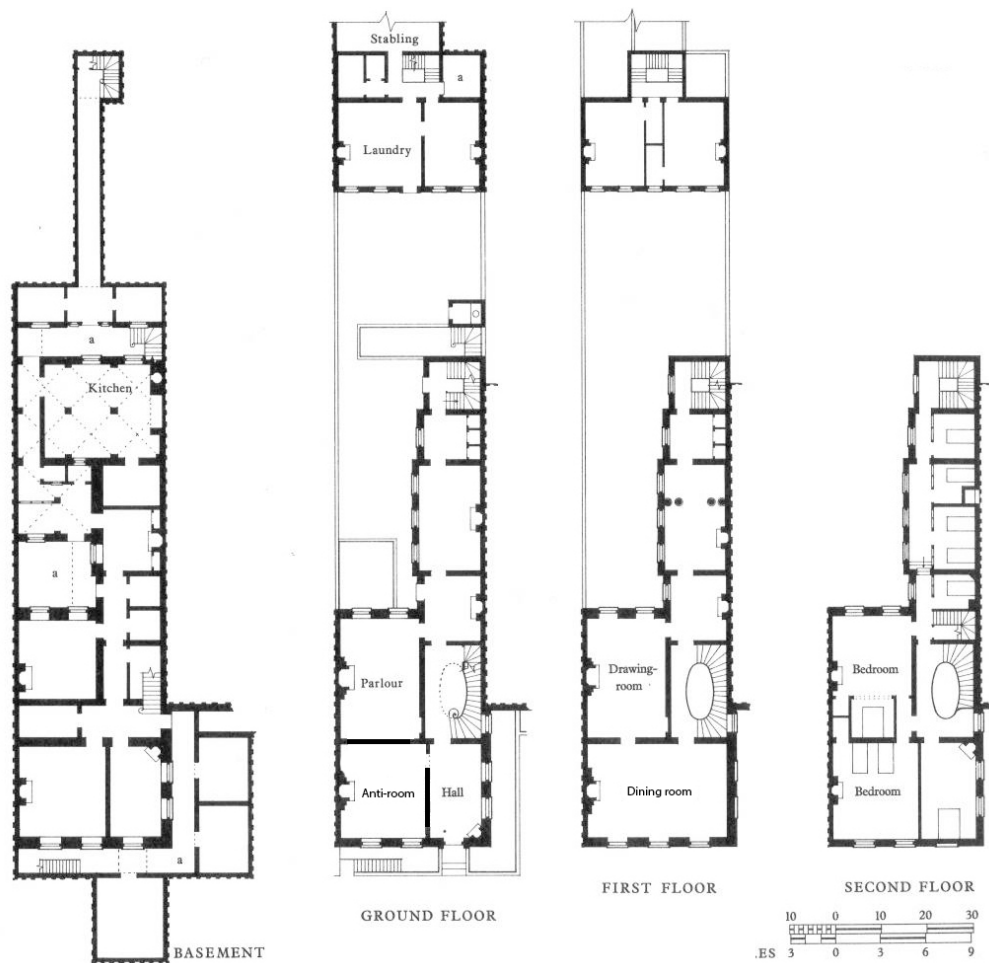


Figure 9. The floor plans for No. 50 Grosvenor Street dating to c.1737, adapted from *The Survey of London* (F. Sheppard, *Survey of London: Volume 40: The Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair, Part 2 (The Buildings)* (L.C.C. 1980) p. 166).

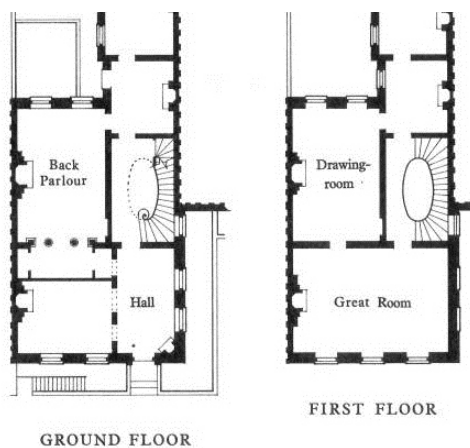


Figure 10. The ground and first floor plans as described in the inventory of 1751, show the dining area which had moved to the ground floor back parlour and the modifications to the internal walls which were probably made to create a servery area. Adapted from *The Survey of London* (Sheppard, *Survey of London: Volume 40: The Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair, Part 2 (The Buildings)* (L.C.C. 1980) p. 166).

No. 7 Charlotte Square in Edinburgh is another speculatively built terraced row but being of a later date, 1791, the façade is uniform despite the houses beyond having individual designs. The National Trust of Scotland restored the house and operates it as a museum. The plan is a minor variation of the standard plan, interpreted to reflect the custom in Edinburgh of having the chamber on the ground floor at the rear (Figure 11). The original position of the dining room is less certain and now occupies the ground floor front room, a decision based on stylistic evidence of the chimney piece. Decorative colour schemes have been re-created from archaeological evidence, and furnishings and artefacts date to the end of the Georgian period. The dining room is presented to include the dining table set out symmetrically in accordance with Georgian etiquette, and a sideboard complete with chamber pot (Figure 12).<sup>55</sup> This is a good example of the plan form typology adjusted to reflect a regional variation, and supplemented with both archaeological evidence specific to the building, and biographical evidence of customs, to produce a credible interpretation of life within the house (Figures 13 & 14).

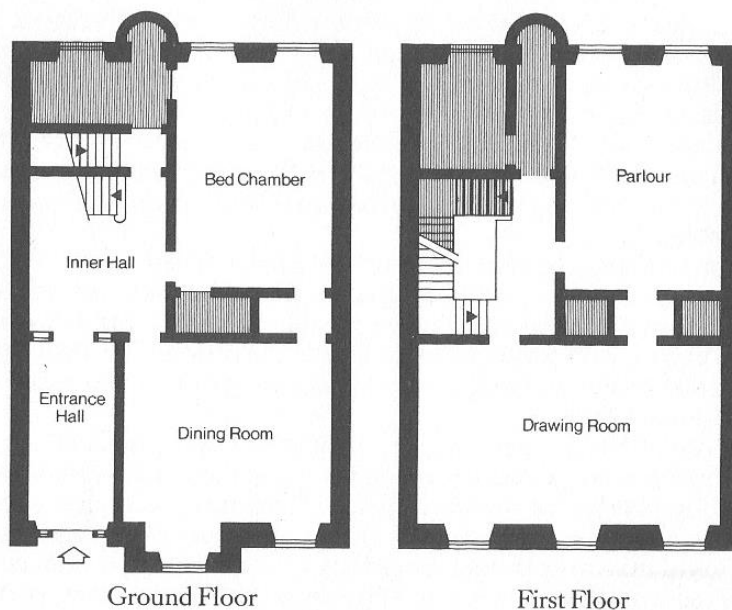


Figure 11. The ground & first floor plans of No. 7 Charlotte Square are similar to the standard Georgian plan, but the position of the rooms reflects local custom (D. Learmont, *The Georgian House* (The National Trust for Scotland, 1983) p. 4).

<sup>55</sup> D. Learmont, *The Georgian House* (The National Trust for Scotland, 1983) pp. 3-8.



Figure 12. The plain décor to the dining room is typical of the period. The original fireplace is beyond the formally laid table, and the chamber pot is stored in the sideboard to the left (Image courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland. <http://www.nts.org.uk/Property/>) [Accessed 5 March 2014]).



Figure 13. The evening's activities in the drawing room, seen from the square (Image courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland. <http://www.nts.org.uk/Property/Georgian-house/>) [Accessed 5 March 2014]).



Figure 14. John Lamont and his gentlemen guests drink alcohol and use the chamber pot when the ladies have left the dining room (Image courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland. [http://www.nts.org.uk/Learn/virtual\\_georgian.php](http://www.nts.org.uk/Learn/virtual_georgian.php) [Accessed 9 March 2014]).

## Conclusion

This paper has shown that the analysis and interpretation of elite terraced houses of the long eighteenth century has much to offer, despite the current status of cross-disciplinary research being at a fairly embryonic stage. The formulation of typologies, albeit, only relating to London at present, allows us to appreciate the value and interest in categorising types to reveal continuity and change between regions and through time, and relate this to the wider context and societal trends. The second important use of typologies, is that they provide the framework for spatial analysis and anthropological interpretations that would be somewhat detached from the built environment if we could neither reference spatial adjacencies or circulation, or place a biographical event in the context of a built structure and its wider context. Anthropological approaches to interpretation focus on specific people and events, but in contrast to formal documentation, the evidence only occasionally connects to an identifiable building. Although this creates a heightened need for caution during interpretation, the great value in this approach is that it allows us to understand customs, beliefs and feelings associated with the use of space in the home – aspects that cannot be known about or interpreted from a purely archaeological or architectural approach.

Future research should focus on development of the typologies and integrate them firstly with stylistic and anthropological approaches, and secondly with the findings of formal spatial analyses, to test and refine the assumptions and interpretations.

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Joanne Harrison is an architect who, after several years in practice, returned to academia to specialise in heritage conservation. Having completed an MA at the University of York, she is now undertaking a PhD. Her research interests are in housing and regeneration, notably the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century terraces designed for the working-classes. Current research is concerned with the heritage significance and protection of the back-to-back terraces in Leeds, and the potential conflict with the viability of their continued use. The multi-disciplinary approach spanning architectural, archaeological, historical and sociological methods has a special focus on engaging community stakeholders.

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