

The Bedchamber



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The bedchamber was not only regarded as a bedroom, but also an informal breakfast room and a ladies' sitting room.

Would there have been a bedroom on the ground floor?

It was a fairly common practice in Edinburgh to have a bedroom in this position, overlooking the garden at the rear of the house. The decoration and furnishings show that the bedroom was also a 'public' room, one to be shown off to guests. The lady of the house used it as a sitting room, for pursuing hobbies and receiving female visitors in the morning. Ladies would also gather here before going into dinner.



The Newliston bed with its original hangings

During restoration, seventeen layers of paint were removed from the walls, none of which are shown here! Instead wallpaper, typical of the design and colour of the period, was chosen to complement the centrepiece of the room, the four-post bed. Made in the last quarter of the 18th century for Sir Thomas Hog of Newliston (just outside Edinburgh), the bed retains most of its original hangings, embroidered by Lady Mary Hog in 1774. The original counterpane

unfortunately perished, but it would undoubtedly have reflected the design of the canopy. It has been replaced with a late 18th-century Indian cotton counterpane. Probably made up in Glasgow, it reflects the strong trading links between Britain and India.



Still from Georgian House film showing Mrs Lamont

What role did ladies, like Mrs Lamont, play within the household?

Ladies managed the household (girls were educated accordingly), which included overseeing the servants, keeping accounts, preparing dinner menus and entertaining. However, in late 18th-century Edinburgh, as incomes rose, wealthy households began to employ housekeepers to fulfil this traditional role. Ladies had more time for 'hobbies', or rather the social accomplishments expected of them, illustrated by the mid-18th-century boudoir spinning wheel

and the two mahogany workboxes which would have held sewing equipment. Needlework was often sold to raise funds for local charities.

Was there a bathroom in the house?

In a word, no! For all its elegance and fine furnishings, the house had no piped water or bathroom. Baths were only taken occasionally – bathing was thought to be bad for you! There were also practical difficulties: water had first to be brought from the public wells, heated in the kitchen and then carried upstairs to a tin bath. Washing was done using the washstand and bidet (at either side of the tallboy). In the passage between the bedroom and dining room there is an early 19th-century portable water closet called a 'receiver'. It did flush, but only to the copper pot in the drawer at the bottom. Scavengers, employed by Edinburgh Town Council, collected household waste (including human waste) daily.



*Above top: Early 19th century portable water closet - 'receiver'
Above: Detail of medicine chest*

Furniture and Fittings

The toilet table (to the left of the bed) is mahogany veneered, dating from c1780. It has five drawers, a pot cupboard and bidet cabinet. The Commode (to the right of the bed) is early 19th-century, mahogany veneered and satinwood strung. The kneehole dressing table, mahogany veneered and cross-banded, is mid 18th-century; the dressing mirror dates from c1790. The Serpentine-fronted chest of drawers, probably Scottish, with ivory keyholes and ormolu handles, is late 18th-century. The plain mahogany tallboy dates to c1800. The three painted beech wood armchairs, of Sheraton design, and covered with flowered chintz, are c1800; similarly, the mahogany framed winged – or 'lug' – chair. The Medicine chest – supplied by Messrs James Robertson & Company of George Street, is c1830. Such chests, containing drugs for treating minor ailments, would be found in most houses at this time. The Spinning wheel – a beech boudoir wheel made by Jameson of York. The carpet and runner are oriental.

Decorative China, Silver and Plate

On the dressing table are a pair of silver candlesticks, c1830. On the toilet table and commode are two Sheffield plate hand candlesticks, c1810–1815. Also on the commode is a Davenport night-lighted soup bowl or 'veilleuse', possibly the 'Gothic Ruins' series, 1810. The plates on the Hepplewhite hanging shelves are Chinese export, while the vases on the chimneypiece are Derby, c1815. The marriage chamber pot is Sunderland Lustre, the powder blue porcelain bowl is Chinese Qianlong, c1790–1800. The ormolu sconces are in Louis XVI taste.

Paintings – see separate sheet

