

The Drawing Room



the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

The Drawing Room was the grandest room in the house and was used solely for entertaining.

What did the entertainment consist of?

Upon arrival, servants ushered guests to the drawing room to meet their hosts, before the company re-traced their steps to the dining room. After dinner the ladies would 'withdraw' to this room (hence its name) whilst the gentlemen remained in the dining room smoking and drinking port and brandy. The ladies would promenade, take tea, and perhaps catch up on the gossip, until the men rejoined them for cards, dancing and singing. Parties could go on until two or three o'clock in the morning.



Why is the drawing room on the first floor?

Positioning the room here meant that it could fill the whole length of the house, thereby creating the impression of a grand room.

Why is the room displayed like this?

The furniture is placed around the edge of the room, in a formal style, to provide space for dancing and promenade. A loose cover has been left on one of the chairs to show how the furniture was protected when the room was not being used. The shutters would also have been closed to prevent light damage to delicate fabrics and furniture and the expensive carpet covered by an inferior carpet, called a 'drugget'.



Above top: View of the Drawing Room

Above: Dancing the 'pollonaise' (still from Georgian House film)

The square piano and flute were essential in a room dedicated to entertaining, music and dance. In the 18th century, young people were expected to learn 'social accomplishments' such as playing the piano, singing and dancing. Demonstrating these skills at social gatherings was especially vital for young ladies, in the hope that they would 'marry well'.

By the fireplace there is a petit-point fire screen designed to protect the face from the heat of the fire – and to prevent the wax-based make-up worn at this time (by ladies and gentlemen) from running. The pastille burners on the mantelpiece were used for burning perfumed oils to scent the air. Despite their fine surroundings and fashionable clothes, the people were probably not as clean as we might expect!

The semi-circular tables and the mirrors are known as pier tables and pier glasses – ‘pier’ being an architectural term to describe the space between the windows. Candles were placed in front of the pier glasses to reflect more light back into the room.



Furniture & Fittings

The suite of seat furniture, dating from 1785-90, is gilt and white painted beech wood, with striped watered silk upholstery. The mahogany square piano was made by Edinburgh cabinetmaker Richard Horsburgh, c.1805. It has five octaves and no sustaining pedal – shortcomings remedied with the development of the more sophisticated grand or upright pianos. The boxwood and ivory flute dates from the early 19th century. One of the pier tables (situated between the windows) has its original base while the other base is a modern copy. The tops are made of modern Sienna marble.



The giltwood and gesso pier glasses are modern copies of a late-18th century example at Leith Hall, Aberdeenshire. The 18th-century style festoon curtains are made of silk taffeta specially woven by the Gainsborough Silk Weaving Company in 1975. William Linnell, carver and upholsterer, made the curtain cornices for Croome Court, Worcestershire, in 1761. Robert Adam, who designed Charlotte Square in 1791, re-decorated Croome Court in the 1760s. The ‘close’ (that is fitted) carpet was made in 2011 using an original 1797 design.

Above top: Detail of petit-point fire screen

Above: Richard Horsburgh’s square piano and the 18th-century style festoon curtains

Decorative China, Silver and Plate

The pastille burners on the chimneypiece are Derby, the figure is Bow, and the Glass Lustres are Edinburgh made c.1800.

Paintings – see separate sheet

