CIBSE HERITAGE GROUP

PUBLICATIONS WITH INFORMATION ON BUILDING ENGINEERING SERVICES IN COUNTRY HOUSES

Including heating, gas & electric lighting, gas & electric generation, plumbing & sanitation, kitchens and catering equipment, laundry equipment & drying rooms

The Heritage Group has a large collection of brochures from National Trust and other Historic Houses from which a representative sample is included. Dates given are book publication dates.

1990 Lit from hydroelectric plant at end 19th century
1979
Short sections on gas & electricity and other services with pictures on fireplaces and chimneys
c.1990

Once provided with Perkins high pressure hot water heating: also with an ice-house
THE COUNTRY HOUSE GUIDE
FAMILY HOMES IN THE HISTORIC HOUSES ASSOCIATION
Anna Sproule and Michael Pollard

1988 Historic Houses Association
Marble Hill House

1991 Twickenham
The Last Country Houses

CLIVE ASLET

1982

Information & photos on electricity generation, telephones, laundry, kitchens, drying room, bathrooms, heating & centralised vacuum cleaning
The introduction of basic building engineering services advanced rapidly during the 19th century, and this is nowhere better illustrated than in the rise (and subsequent fall) of the large country houses of the Victorian period. Architect and writer Mark Girouard summed it up: “They were enormous, complicated and highly articulated machines for a way of life which seems as remote as the stone age, served by a technology as elaborate as it is now obsolete. The houses have now become, too often, stranded monsters with abandoned gasworks, abandoned billiard tables, gigantic boilers, and miles of pipes rusting in the basement, long rows of bells rusting in the back corridors, the butler’s pantry, brushing rooms and laundry empty…”

Victorian country houses were complicated because they had to accommodate so many people. The largest often had 40 or more indoor staff. The new rituals made it easy for friends and relatives to visit and to stay. They often brought their servants with them, so at its busiest a great house might contain 100 or even 150 people.

All of these people were organised into a strict pecking order and the house was strictly divided into reserved territories. Thus everyone knew their place in both senses of the word. Again, quoting Girouard: “The household was divided into family, guests and servants. The servants were divided into upper and lower servants; the family into culture and grown ups, the children into schoolroom and nursery. It was considered unfor- bearable for children, servants and parents to see or hear each other except at certain recognised times and places.”

This made many activities, such as meal times, extremely complicated. Main meals were often served in as many as five different places: the dining room, the schoolroom, the nursery, the steward’s room (upper servants) and the servants’ hall. Many houses also had a separate breakfast room.

The sexes were also divided: the mistress in her boudoir, the master in his study; the ladies in the drawing room, the gentlemen in the library and billiard room; the bachelor’s sleeping-quarters separate from those of the unmarried ladies; the men-servants separate from the maids. Optional extras “upstairs” might include a chapel, conservatory, ballroom, picture gallery or music room.

But it was “downstairs” in the domestic offices that the complications really began. There were more recognised divisions: kitchen offices, upper servants’ offices, lower servants’ offices, laundry offices, bakery and brewer’s offices, cellars storage and outhouses, servants’ private rooms, supertendences and thoroughfares.

The upper servants, such as the housekeeper and butler, had the housekeeper’s room and pantry respectively. Associated with these were the still room, wine room and china closet; and the plate safe, plate scullery and bed rooms. Lower servants’ rooms might include brushing room, knife room, shoe room and lamp room. The laundry department would include wash house, drying room, mending room, ironing room, folding room and laundry-nursery’s room (dry clothes in at one end, clean clothes out at the other). Last, but not least, came the kitchen with its scullery, pantry, meat larder, game larder, fish larder, dairy and dairy scullery.

All of these rooms and activities had to be provided with the appropriate engineering services. They had to be heated and lit, and sometimes ventilated. There had to be water supply and storage, and sewage removal. There were the services and apparatus for the storage, preparation and cooking of food, for doing the washing-up and doing the laundry—no matter what the bells (or summoning the servants). Often, these large houses were in remote locations and had to be virtually self-contained.

**Plumbing and sanitation**

Water closets were reasonably common; wash basins less so until the 1860s when "doukrooms" were provided off the entrance hall and often adjacent to the billiard and smoking rooms. Until some 30 or so years later, baths were often considered a luxury. After all there were plenty of servants to fetch and carry jugs.
Life in the FRENCH COUNTRY HOUSE

2000

Includes chapter “Plumbing or the Lack of it”
The Glory of the English House

Lionel Esher

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLAY PERRY

1991
History in pictures
1989 Isle of Wight, includes Queen Victoria’s lift
1990
Includes plumbing, lighting, boilers, water pumping & ice-making plant
1978
Includes chapter “Early Country-House Technology”
A COUNTRY HOUSE COMPANION
Mark Girouard

1987
Another version of “Plumbing or the Lack of it”
Believed late Victorian with wood engravings
Nr Lewes, E Sussex: Based on 1978 article
Domestic Engineering at Cragside

BY GEOFFREY A. IRLAM

1991 Electricity supply & lighting
(Visited by the CIBSE Heritage Group)
THE SEARCH FOR A STYLE

COUNTRY LIFE AND ARCHITECTURE
1897-1935

JOHN CORNFORTH

1988
A photographic record
THE DESTRUCTION OF THE COUNTRY HOUSE

1974
Photos of over 300 lost Country Houses

ROY STRONG  MARCUS BINNEY  JOHN HARRIS
Penshurst Place
TONBRIDGE KENT
the home of Lord De L’Isle VC KG

1990’s West Kent
1979

Information on 24 famous houses
HATFIELD HOUSE
Hertfordshire

Home of the Marquess of Salisbury

The Rainbow Portrait of Elizabeth I
One of the many fine paintings to be seen at Hatfield House

C.1996 Hertfordshire
The Country House in Perspective

Gervase Jackson-Stops

1990

With interior cut-away drawings
Sweetness and Light
The Queen Anne Movement
1860–1900

MARK GIROUARD

1977
An architectural and social history
The History of the English House

From early feudal times to the close of the eighteenth century

J. Alfred Gotch

MA, FSA, RIBA

Bracken Books
LONDON

1969 Norman to 18th century
ELTHAM PALACE

1999 Includes the Courtauld House
(Visited by the CIBSE Heritage Group)
1990 Sussex Downs, now restored
More information on historical engineering services in Country Houses is available on the CIBSE Heritage Group website, which is hevac-heritage.org

From the title page select Group Activities/Buildings with Historical Equipment which gives a list of engineering services.

For example, select Heating/National Trust Properties for photographs and information on heating equipment in a variety of Country Houses.