

BURTON CONSTABLE

Exhibition Guide

3 April - 31 October 2004



MAIDS & MISTRESSES

Celebrating 300 years of Women
and the Yorkshire Country House

As part of the series of interlinked exhibitions across seven of Yorkshire's greatest country houses, this exhibition explores the colourful and highly individual women that lived at Burton

Constable from the Elizabethan to the Edwardian era. A female perspective of life in this great country house is presented



4 Amey, first wife of Cuthbert Constable

through the diverse experiences and accomplishments of its women.



Great Hall: A Lady & her Grand Tour

- 1 William Constable and his sister Winifred as Cato and Marcia Anton von Maron, 1772.
- 2 A Journal documenting 'My Brother's Illness' Winifred Constable, 1768-74.
- 3 Catherine Constable Joachim Smith, c1778, coloured beeswax.

In 1769 Winifred and her brother William embarked on their Grand Tour to Italy accompanied by a physician and a small retinue of servants. They were travelling in the hope of finding a cure for William's crippling gout, the symptoms of which were carefully documented by Winifred in her journal. The company travelled south into France where they made for Lyon to meet Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau was far more impressed with Winifred than with her rather pompous brother William. William records how Rousseau 'took a great fancy to her, (for) he understands English, she French, of her character he judged right, not so of mine'.

Whilst in Rome Winifred and William sat for their portrait to Anton von Maron. (1) Regrettably, due to von Maron's delay in completing the work, it was not shipped from Italy until December 1774, by which time Winifred had died.

In her journal, Winifred offers a detailed account of her brother's protracted illness. (2) The first entry appears 28 December 1768 and the final entry, for 7 April 1774, finds William 'perfectly well in all respects but still very lame'. With relentless devotion, Winifred catalogues the state of his health over five long years. However, the journal has additional significance. Due to the lack of alternative documentary sources, the journal remains the main source for the reconstruction of the itinerary of their Grand Tour, with scattered references and places-names jotted in the page margins alongside the daily health reports.

Winifred was the acknowledged mistress of Burton Constable Hall and, as William maintained, it was only with 'the help of my Sister' that the household ran as an 'exceedingly well regulated family'.

William was devoted to Winifred and confident and content in her ability to manage his household, and while she remained at his side, he was not inclined to take a wife. He eventually married Catherine Langdale in 1775 – the year following Winifred's death. (3)



3

Dining Room: Providing an Heir

4 Amey, first wife of Cuthbert Constable

British School, 1721.

5 William and Cecily Constable *Richard van*

Bleek, c1728.

6 Cecily Constable *Richard van Bleek, 1733.*

7 Winifred Constable *Richard van Bleek, 1733.*

8 Domestic Medicine: or, a Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines... *William Buchan MD, London, 1774.*



In 1719, Amey Clifford, the 5th daughter of the 2nd Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, married Cuthbert Constable at the tender age of fourteen. (4) Despite her youth, she was pregnant within their first year of marriage. Sadly her first child William died in infancy. Her second son, also named William, was

born 31 December 1721. (5) In keeping with expectation, Amey had successfully provided Cuthbert with an heir, and as a consequence could relax for a time free of the pressures of childbirth. It would be another three years before she gave birth to her daughter Cecily, (6) and a further six years elapsed before Winifred was born. (7)

Pregnancy could be very risky, and women were especially attentive of their health at this time. It was generally recognised that the birth itself and the period immediately following posed the greatest risk to both mother and child. William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* advised:



Many diseases proceed from the want of due care in child-bed; and the more hardy part of the sex are most apt to despise the necessary precautions in this state. This is peculiarly the case with young wives. They think, when the labour pains are ended the danger is ended; but in truth it may only then be said to be begun... (8)

Amey Clifford was just twenty-six when she died of smallpox in the sixth month of her fifth pregnancy in July 1731.

These charming portraits of the Constable children were painted by Richard van Bleek, a Dutch artist working in England who specialised in providing portraits for Catholic patrons.

The Long Gallery: Liberty & Independence

9 Lady Margaret Constable *Marcus Gheeraerdt the Younger, 1599.*

10 An Indenture between Sir Henry and Lady Margaret Constable 1610.

11 Out Hunting – An Episode in a Run with the Queens – Rosina, 2nd wife of Sir Thomas Aston Clifford Constable *John Dickinson, c1868.*

Lady Margaret was a woman of impervious religious beliefs. (9) Although her husband – Sir Henry Constable (d.1608) had made the pragmatic decision to suspend his recusancy, this portrait by the renowned Elizabethan court painter – Marcus Gheeraerdt the Younger – portrays a woman of conviction, an obstinate recusant, who, it was claimed, could not be 'reformed by persuasion or yet by coercion' and was even imprisoned for two years for her resolute beliefs. She may have been obstinate even difficult, but Margaret was also a loving and caring mother who was held in high regard by her son. Following the death of her husband in 1608, with inadequate provision made for her future 'dwelling or otherwise', her son, also Sir Henry, drew up a contract securing his mother's future care. The Indenture of 1610 states:

the said Sir Henry Constable... (having) a natural love affection and dutiful respect to the said Dame Margaret Constable his mother... hath demised granted and... lett... All those the roomes and chambers in his mansion or mannor house of Burton Constable aforesaid lyeing and being under the south ende of the great gallerie... with free libertie to her at all times... to have accesse into the said great gallerie to walke at her pleasure.

(10)



In 1865 Sir Thomas Aston Clifford Constable married his mistress of some years standing. With a veritable zeal for self-aggrandisement, the gold-digging Rosina Brandon emerged from social obscurity, and having placed Sir Thomas in 'an unfortunate position... (with) no otherway... out of it', she eventually secured his affections and became the second Lady Clifford Constable. **(11)** With failing health, Sir Thomas could do little to quell his new wife's passion for spending and when he died five years later, Rosina enjoyed the liberty and independence that wealth and widowhood secured. Having 'sacked' and relieved Burton Constable of a substantial amount of plate 'in finesome large loads' she bid farewell to Yorkshire.

Following a further two advantageous marriages, the colourful Rosina ended her days at Perugia in Italy, where in the Spring of 1905 she was described as 'completely broken down' with heart trouble and severe pains in the head which affected both her memory and 'brain power'. She continued to deteriorate, becoming increasingly eccentric and 'dirty and indecent in her language and habits'. Nevertheless, with a determination that her final resting place would be alongside her first husband – Sir Thomas Aston Clifford Constable – Rosina made provision in her will that the furniture and furnishings plundered from Burton Constable Hall would be returned on condition that she be buried in the family mausoleum at Halsham – where she rests to the present day.



The Long Gallery: Mistress of the House

12 Cuthbert Tunstall and his second wife Elizabeth Heneage *Richard van Bleeck, 1735.*

13 Display includes: Elizabeth Heneage's Household Account Book 1752-1756; Letters to Elizabeth Heneage from her 'dutyfull son' William Constable; the Will of Elizabeth Heneage 5 December 1765.

Following the death of his young wife Amey, **(4)** Cuthbert Constable married Elizabeth, 2nd daughter of George Heneage in 1735. **(12)** From the outset, Elizabeth had charge of a substantial country house and three young children. Elizabeth appears to have been a most



affectionate 'mother' to Amey's children. In 1743 she gave birth to Marmaduke. William was especially fond of his young 'brother' Dukey and always considered himself a most 'dutyfull son' to Elizabeth. **(13)**

A competent and caring mistress, Elizabeth not only commanded the love and respect of her family, but also the affections of her household staff. However, she did have her favourites and on her death in 1765 bequeathed twenty pounds 'to her old servant' Winifred Ffawcett and 'a year's wages... as well as all her wearing apparel' to her favoured 'woman servant Isabel Newxomb'. As mistress of the house, she undoubtedly furthered her husband's reputation as a man 'remarkable for his hospitality'.

The Long Gallery: Performers & Performances

14 Marianne, Lady Clifford Constable *Anonymous, c1830, alabaster.*

15 Miss Eliza Chichester *Anonymous, c1830, alabaster.*

16 A selection of ephemera relating to the Burton Constable Theatre.

17 Burton Constable Theatre Costume *c1843-60.*

18 Theatre side-screen *Anonymous, c1845.*

In 1827 Marianne Chichester married her cousin Thomas Aston Clifford Constable and became mistress of Burton Constable Hall. **(14)** Both Marianne and her sister Eliza had a passion for the Theatre **(15)** and although their earlier performances were held in the Long Gallery, by 1843 they had created their own theatre (in the present-day museum) complete with stage and fly tower. **(16)** Painted backdrops, side-screens and a selection of theatre costume survive to the present day. **(17)**

Marianne was a devoted patron of a number of theatrical performances held in Hull. Unfortunately not all the family shared her enthusiasm, as her brother Sir Charles Chichester recounts in his diary:

*Marian patronises the Hull theatre, so we were obliged to go... I was in great hopes of escaping the infliction, but such luck was not to be to mine. The play was 'She stoops to conquer' & 'the Momentous question'. The acting was not bad, but there was wont of life in it, perhaps owing to the wont of an audience, for here were only 31 people in the pit & about the same number in the boxes: at half price it became much fuller... The scenery was very good, one of the scenes was the Library at Burton Constable. **(18)***

The Green Dressing Room: Quieter Moments

19 *Recueil des Lettres de Madame la Marquies de Savigne a Madame la Comtesse de Gragnan, sa Fille Mme de Savigne, 1754.*

20 A selection of diaries and journals

21 Winifred Constable's writing table

Thomas Chippendale, c1760.

Following breakfast, genteel ladies engaged in the daily ritual of writing letters, diaries and journals. Letters were not only an effective means of networking, but they could also alleviate feelings of isolation and the sheer boredom that often accompanied life in the country house.

Following the arrival of a speedy and reliable postal-service in the early eighteenth-century, women could gossip freely with friends and relatives via the post! It was expected that women should write with elegance and flair, and volumes of published letters, like those first published in 1725 by the french writer Mme de Sevigne, were considered an appropriate model. **(19)**

A vast amount of personal correspondence survives amongst the archives of Burton Constable Hall. As the Clifford Constables prepared for their extensive tour of Europe in 1822, Mary Barbara wrote to her cousin (and future sister-in-law) Eliza Chichester expressing her gratitude for the 'drawer full of... letters' already received, but begged Eliza to maintain frequent correspondance, for she feared 'there is not much prospect of our meeting' and dreaded spending 'a year or two without seeing you'. The selection of diaries and journals is immensely varied in content and tone. **(20)** Whilst Winifred Constable noted her brother's every ailment in her journal of 1768-74 **(2)**, a number of the diaries are little more than appointment books. Although Marianne, Lady Clifford Constable and her sister Eliza offer an interesting account of their travels in Europe, the most fascinating journals document the travels of Mary Barbara Clifford Constable (later Chichester). She not only crammed her journals with historic accounts and detailed descriptions of the various sites visited, but her enthusiasm and ability to relay a good story with drama and suspense make her journals a fascinating read. They include an account of her introduction to Mlle Fouchet – an elderly lady, still living in Paris, who had 'visited and procured a Priest for the unfortunate Marie Antoinette whilst she was imprisoned.' Mary Barbara also recalls her encounter with the Parisian mobs in the early days of the 1848 Revolution.

The writing table on display was supplied by Chippendale, Haig & Co in 1772 for Miss Winifred Constable at a cost of 10 guineas. For an additional 18 shillings, they provided an accompanying 'damask leather cover', which no longer survives. **(21)**

State Dressing Room: With the help of the Master

22 Rustic figures drawn 'without the help of the Master' *Mary Barbara Clifford (later Clifford Constable), c1816.*

23 Miss Eliza Chichester, sketching *Anonymous, c1850, lithograph.*

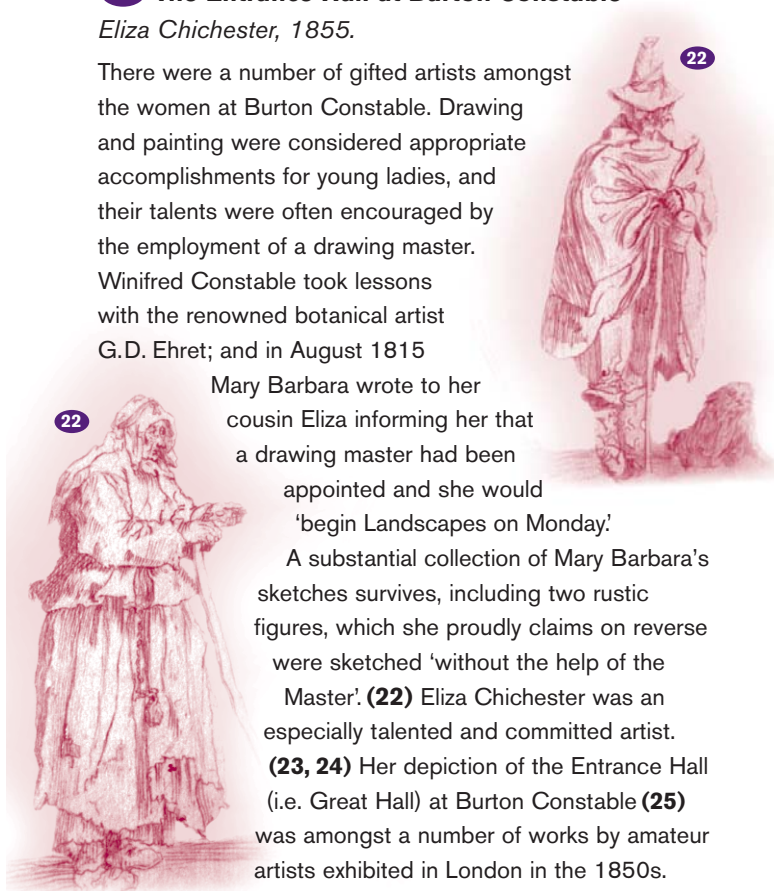
24 Table-top display including instructions for painting and drawing aids.

25 The Entrance Hall at Burton Constable *Eliza Chichester, 1855.*

There were a number of gifted artists amongst the women at Burton Constable. Drawing and painting were considered appropriate accomplishments for young ladies, and their talents were often encouraged by the employment of a drawing master. Winifred Constable took lessons with the renowned botanical artist G.D. Ehret; and in August 1815

Mary Barbara wrote to her cousin Eliza informing her that a drawing master had been appointed and she would 'begin Landscapes on Monday.'

A substantial collection of Mary Barbara's sketches survives, including two rustic figures, which she proudly claims on reverse were sketched 'without the help of the Master'. **(22)** Eliza Chichester was an especially talented and committed artist. **(23, 24)** Her depiction of the Entrance Hall (i.e. Great Hall) at Burton Constable **(25)** was amongst a number of works by amateur artists exhibited in London in the 1850s.



State Bedroom: Learned Ladies – Education & Improvement

26 Display includes: Guardianship account of Miss Lucy Clifford, 1792; Catalogue of books belonging to Eliza Chichester.

27 Table-top display includes a selection of books owned by the women of the house.

28 Eliza Chichester *P. Flor, 1835.*

As Catholics, the women at Burton Constable generally received a more rigorous education than was the norm. Although it was usual for daughters of the nobility and gentry to receive their education at home, Winifred Constable was sent away to be educated at the Bar Convent school at York and Lucy Clifford received her education at Liege.



The Bar Convent was founded in 1686, and provided education for the daughters of the Catholic gentry. The nuns were not only learned in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and the modern languages, but also in astronomy, philosophy, and mathematics.

As such, their charges could expect a far more rigorous academic training. However, the more usual feminine accomplishments were not ignored, and music, drawing, painting, needlework and dancing also figured on the curriculum. It was surely Winifred's lively mind as well as her feminine attributes that impressed Jean Jacques Rousseau when they met in Lyon in 1770.

When Lucy Clifford was schooled at Liege in the 1780s and 90s, the better part of her time was taken up with drawing, dancing and music lessons, with little or no time allocated to more academic pursuits. **(26)**

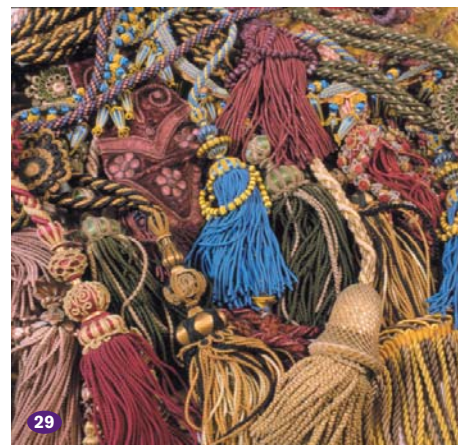
In the nineteenth century, Mary Barbara took advantage of the opportunities presented when a tutor was appointed to accompany her brother Thomas Aston on their European tour of 1822-3. Mary Barbara describes Monsieur Bole as 'remarkably clever' with the 'highest character' and although she attended M. Bole's lectures delivered each day on 'various subjects', she maintained her 'chief amusement is learning Latin which I like very much'. She would later take care to ensure her own daughters – Constantia and Amy – received a good education, supplementing their formal schooling (partly received at the Sacred Heart Convent School in Hull) with monthly examinations, which if pleasing, resulted in prizes for her girls.

Although the 18th century library was amassed by Cuthbert Constable and his son William, the additions made to the library during the nineteenth century by Eliza Chichester were considerable. It is evident from her substantial book collection that Eliza was an erudite young woman well versed in political history, theology, geography and poetry. **(26)** She could read French, Spanish and German and, along with her sister Marianne, was teaching herself Italian with the aid of Veneroni's *Complete Italian Master Containing the Best and Easiest Rules for Attaining that Language*. From her volumes of *Adelaide & Theodore; or Letters on Education: Containing all the Principles relative to three different Plans of Education; to that of Princes, and to those of young persons of both sexes* by Mme la Comtesse de Genlis, we may assume she had an interest in the facilitation of good education for 'both sexes'.

Lower French Landing: Female Patronage – Decorators & Decorating

29 Selected passementerie and various items relating to interior design.

In keeping with their accomplishments in needlework, the women at Burton Constable delighted in interior decoration, decorative textiles and passementerie. **(29)** Numerous bills and vouchers bear testimony to their active patronage of artists, craftsmen, decorators and furniture makers. For example, in 1767 Miss Winifred Constable ordered paper and borders from 'John Mush at his Paper Hanging Warehouse near Monk Barr' in York, while in December 1857 Marianne, Lady Clifford Constable settled her account with William Binks & Son 'Painters, Gilders & Paper Hangers' of Hull for 'work done at Burton Constable per order of Lady Constable'.



The extensive collection of passementerie dates from the nineteenth century and although Marianne enjoyed her Parisian shopping trips, local suppliers in Hull such as G. & J. Carlill of Whitefriargate, and Fearn & Eastern of Market Place, provided much of the furniture and furnishings.

The Nun's Room (Lobby): Lady Chichester – An Officer's Wife

30 Mary Barbara, Lady Chichester with her two elder sons *Claude-Marie Dubufe, c1836*.

This display is devoted to Mary Barbara, Lady Chichester (née Clifford Constable) who was born, the eldest of three children, at Tixall Hall, Staffordshire, in 1801. Her father, Sir Thomas Hugh Clifford inherited Burton Constable in 1821 adopting the name Clifford Constable. In 1826 she married her cousin Charles Chichester – a distinguished army officer. Her surviving journals, letters, diaries,



scrapbooks and umpteen watercolours offer an invaluable insight into the life of a country house lady who despite being 'nursed in all that was elegant & splendid', would experience the trials and tribulations of life as a soldier's wife as she travelled extensively with her husband and young family.

The Chapel Passage: Catholic Gentlewomen

31 A Nun in Prayer (believed to be a sister of Cuthbert Constable) *Flemish school, c1700.*

32 Lady Katherine Constable *Robert Peake the Elder, 1590.*



The Constables are a Catholic family and through the

generations a succession of women have taken Holy Orders. The majority of nuns were of gentle or noble birth. Although there were nunneries in Yorkshire (albeit relatively few), the Constable women invariably entered convents in Europe.

All four sisters of Cuthbert Constable – Catherine, Anne, Mary and Cecily – entered the convent of St. Monica at Louvain in Belgium. **(31)**

Not all pious women were in the nunnery. It has already been noted that Lady Margaret was an 'obstinate recusant' who was imprisoned in the late 16th century for her beliefs; while Mary Barbara, Lady Chichester was described as a woman with 'a deep commitment to her faith' who believed that it was religion that gave 'hope for the future'. On her death, Lady Margaret bequeathed a considerable sum of money 'to be distributed amongst the poor of Burtswick, Elstronwick, Halsham, Lelley, Newton, Marton', while Lady Katherine Constable left money to the poor of London, York, Westminster and Southwark in 1591. **(32)**

Most gentlewomen were involved in some form of charitable work. This might involve visiting the poor and infirm on the estate or in the local workhouse or hospital. From 1835, handbooks were available to offer guidance to gentlewomen embarking on charitable work, which offered aims and ideals for the potential charitable visitor, such as the promotion of church-going and temperance.

Amongst her various 'good causes', Marianne, Lady Clifford Constable paid annual subscriptions to the Association for the more effectual Suppression of Cruelty to Animals and Queen Adelaide's Original Lying-in Institution, Cavendish Square. Closer to home, she

was active in fund raising 'in aid of the extension of the Hull Infirmary' in 1839. As patroness, alongside Lady Worsley, Lady Nelthorpe, Lady Strickland, Lady Sheffield and others, she 'stood at stalls and vended fancy articles' and in the process raised £2,063. An additional £150 was raised from the proceeds of a concert and ball held in connection with the bazaar.



The Great Drawing Room: Fun & Games

33 Games of Patience *Mary Jones Whitmore, London, nd.*

34 Tixall Hall and Church *Eliza Chichester, paper models, c1830.*

Card games were a favoured pastime, although there were those who became a little too enamoured and incurred heavy losses at the table. Thankfully, there were no addicted gamblers amongst the ladies at Burton Constable that can compare to the notorious Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, yet as mothers and wives, they could be plagued by the habits of their male charges. When Charles Raleigh Chichester confessed to Mamma that he had lost £16 playing cards he vowed he would not play again for at least six months! He swore that he had 'not the least intention of losing so much nor winning anything but ... lost at first and then wished to get it back' and consequently made 'a goose' of himself.

The Victorians invented a whole series of new card games including Napoleon, Snip-Snap-Snorum, Match and Catch, Picture Pumblechook and Mixed Pickles. For more solitary, reflective moments there was Patience and the ladies made good use of Mary Jones Whitmore's *Games of Patience* which offered umpteen variations on the game. **(33)**

Eliza Chichester was an accomplished model maker and her ambitious scale model of Tixall Hall and Church took pride of place when it was displayed in the Great Hall on its rosewood stand with glass dome. **(34)** Conversely, Marianne dabbled in wax flower making and a Miss Osborne, who 'had the honor of giving lessons to her Royal Highness Princess Victoria and many of the nobility' felt sure she would benefit from a few lessons in October 1836.

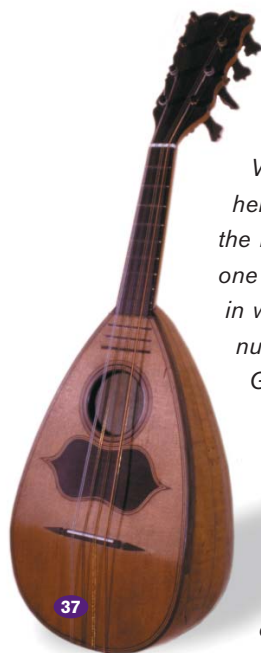


The Great Drawing Room: Music & Dancing

- 35 Music Cabinet** Erard, c1870; **Selection of 19th century sheet music.**
- 36 Harp** Erard, c1820; **Harp** Egan, c1825.
- 37 Mandolin** Anonymous, 18th century.
- 38 Table-top Musical Organ** George Pyke, c1755.
- 39 Eliza Chichester and Marianne, Lady Clifford Constable with her son Talbot in the Long Gallery** Taylor Bulmer, c1840.

Having ordered a set of 'musical glasses' in 1761, Winifred Constable asked her steward John Dunn to make enquiries regarding general care and basic instruction. Dunn replied:

Madm, I have, according to what you was pleased to mention in your obliging Letter, Discoursed once or twice with Mr. Sebuman... the Glasses (should be) tuned by Water; it is easy to mark to what height the water should rise in giving the Different Tones. It appears also that one might screw all the Different Bases, in wch ye Glasses are fixed, to a Board; number each Base, and number ye Glass belonging to it: This would give the position and order the Glasses should be placed in... I Doubt not Madm. but, if told in a line or two of instructions that the glasses number'd with such and such figures, answer'd this or that Note on the Harpsicord, you would play many Tunes in a week.



Regrettably, Winifred's musical glasses no longer survive. All the Ladies in the 19th century appear to have been accomplished musicians and it is evident from their collection of sheet music (35) that they could play the

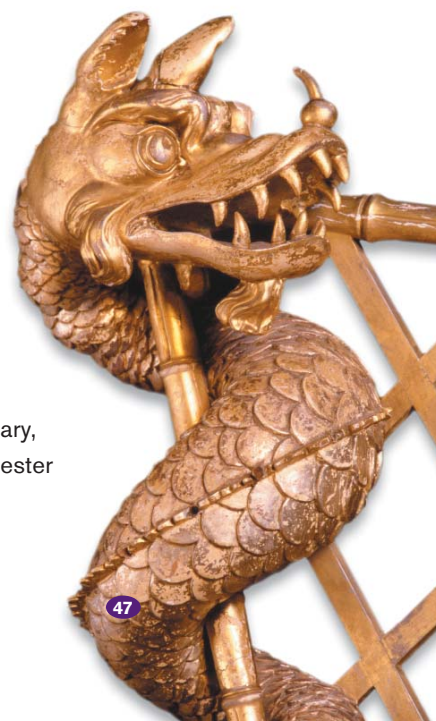
piano, harp, flute, flageolet, guitar and banjo. Hours were devoted to dancing lessons and there was great amusement to be had at the Assembly rooms, as Mary Barbara reports in November 1814:

there was a Gentleman (who had false calves to his legs) about 40 years of age who was dancing, he went down the 1st dance very well, but he jumped rather too much the 2nd being very heavy & behold! his false calves tumbled down to his ankles where they stuck out like two Great potatoes every body in the room were laughing & the poor man was so ashamed that he left his partner, pulled up his calves as well as he could, went out of the room & never appeared afterwards.

The Chippendale Room: 'Man for the sword and for the needle she'

- 40 Sampler** Edith Chichester Constable, 1906.
- 41 Sampler depicting Canister Hall** Rebecca Hughes, 1820.
- 42 Felt-work pictures** 18th and 19th century.
- 43 A selection of printed designs for needlework.**
- 44 Design for ribbon work** Mary Barbara Clifford (later Chichester), c1815.
- 45 Ottomans** Richardson & Son, 1857; **Needlework** Marianne, Lady Clifford Constable and her sister Eliza Chichester.
- 46 Cheval screens** Anonymous; **Needlework** Lady Chichester, 1847.
- 47 Dragon Chair** Thomas Wilkinson Wallis, 1841.
- 48 Holland case covers.**

Needlework was not just an aristocratic pastime, but an occupation considered necessary and appropriate for all women. Genteel ladies were introduced to the basics of needlework at a tender age by way of the sampler – well illustrated by the delightful, albeit rudimentary, handiwork of Edith Chichester Constable of 1906. (40) It is assumed the more ambitious work by Rebecca Hughes



of 'Canister Hall' of 1820, was presented as a token of affection to a young friend at Burton Constable. **(41)**

As her skills advanced, a Lady's work became increasingly elaborate. Picture making in either wool, silk or felt was very popular. One of the most celebrated needlewomen producing work of this nature was Anne Elizabeth Morrith (d.1797). In the 18th century, the Steward – John Dunn – records 'worsted's' by 'Miss Morrith' amongst the collection at Burton Constable, which unfortunately do not survive. Thankfully, a selection of felt-work pictures executed by the ladies of the house in the 18th and 19th centuries remains in the collection. **(42)**

From the early 17th century pattern books of designs for embroidery make an appearance and in the 18th century there developed a fashion for copying paintings in needlework. **(43)** The ladies also designed their own patterns for needlework, well exemplified by Mary Barbara's design for 'ribbon work' of c1815. **(44)**

Marianne, Lady Clifford Constable and her sister Eliza embellished various items of furniture with their needlework including the two Ottomans supplied 'for needlework' by Richardsons of Hull in 1857. **(45)** In 1841, Thomas Wilkinson Wallis – a talented woodcarver practising in Hull – carved the elaborated Dragon Chair. This complicated chair incorporating six dragons 'twisted about so as to form four legs, two arms and the back' was designed by Marianne, who, in all probability, was also responsible for the rather incongruous floral needlework seat. **(47)**

Below stairs the women worked on domestic linens, while a woman in the nearby village of Sproatley provided Holland case covers to protect all the furniture in the house. Skilled needlewomen continue to work at Burton Constable Hall. Devoted NADFAS volunteers have not only made sun curtains and case covers to protect the furniture, **(48)** but have also undertaken a number of textile conservation projects under the guidance of Caroline Rendell, textile conservator.



49

The Staircase Hall: The Edwardian Country House Party

49 Edith, Mrs Chichester Constable *Sydney White, 1908.*

50 Gladys Hanly (later Mrs Chichester Constable) *Frank Brooks, 1913.*

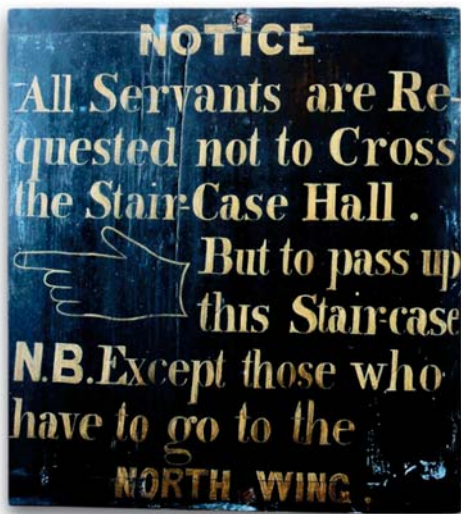


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In 1870 Sir Frederick Augustus Talbot Clifford Constable (1828-94) inherited Burton Constable Hall. He had married Mary Ann Herring of the Scilly Isles but unfortunately, theirs was not a match 'made in Heaven'. Talbot kept a mistress while Mary, it was feared, became rather too fond of drink.

There was talk of divorce, but it seems Mary's 'misconduct' was insufficient to offer just cause. It is not surprising, therefore, that Talbot died without legitimate issue and his estate passed through the female line to the Chichesters of Devon and Ireland. The house had been neglected since 1870. Talbot and his wife Mary had little interest and finances were limited partly due to the Agricultural Depression that hit home in the 1880s. When Lt. Col. Walter Raleigh Chichester Constable and his wife Edith Smyth-Pigott **(49)** embarked on their extensive restorations in the late 1890s, the house was in a 'deplorable condition'.

Although they faced a herculean task, the Christmas of 1899 saw the revival of festivities at Burton Constable Hall. Invitations were sent out to all the principal country mansions in the area and over a hundred guests were entertained with music, dancing and supper at midnight. The Edwardian era was a golden age for the country house party and in December 1911 'the old rafters of Burton Constable Hall... rung with glee and merry making' in celebration of Raleigh C. J. Chichester Constable's coming-of-age. Edith was evidently an accomplished hostess, as entertaining 300 guests was no mean feat. Thankfully, the Grand Ball was an unmitigated success, and its 'dazzling brilliance' was acknowledged by the local press. The great and the good of the county were invited. The tenants, tradesmen and serving staff were not neglected however, and they too were entertained at a second ball held on Boxing day.



As for gifts – Raleigh was presented with ‘a hunter and a pair of guns’ by his father; his mother gave him a fur coat!

Thankfully, unlike many country houses, Burton Constable did not lose its son and heir during the Great War, so did not have to face crippling death duties at that time. Nevertheless, the inter-war years were hard, and faced with overwhelming financial difficulties, the family were eventually forced to abandon Burton Constable. They moved to Wood Hall, a smaller house on the estate, where they remained until after the Second World War. In time, Brigadier Raleigh Charles Chichester Constable and his wife Gladys Hanly (50) would return – determined to maintain their ancestral home.

Stone Passage: Maids for Mistresses – Life Below Stairs

51 Mary ‘Nanny’ Dowdell *Anonymous, c1840.*

52 Display includes a selection of receipt books for servants’ wages, servants’ hall meal books etc. 1844-1854.

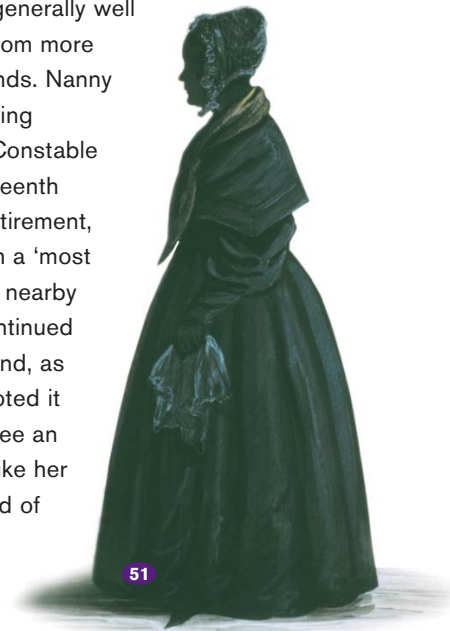
During the eighteenth century, domestic service was second only to agriculture as a source of employment, and as the century progressed servants were increasingly female – and as such were sexually vulnerable. Although a number fell prey to their Master’s advances, most were valued members of the household, well cared for, and justly rewarded for devoted and loyal service.

In 1769 Winifred Constable’s personal maid, described by her brother William as ‘a woman of spirit and feelings above her station, true friend, faithful, disinterested and dear to my heart... firmly attached by gratitude and friendship’, accompanied William and Winifred on their Grand Tour to Italy. In Florence she confessed to her employers that ‘an unfortunate passion (had) seized her at the age of 35 for a footman aged 25’.

Even though she was ‘neither beautiful nor young’ the provision of a pension by William meant that the footman was induced to marry her. This incident illustrates the more than usual care lavished on servants by William Constable – possibly due to the influence of his sister Winifred. The housekeeper in the 1750s, Mrs Conyers, was the recipient of careful medical treatment, attended not only by apothecaries from Hull and Beverley, but also by Malcolm Fleming MD, who had studied in Leyden and Edinburgh, and whilst the family were staying in their York house in Blake Street, by the eminent Dr Dealtry. Even the lower servants were given generous medical care. A single visit from John Liddle, surgeon and apothecary of Hull to attend to Elizabeth Wright, the laundry maid, cost more than her wages for a whole month.

Although most servants were from the poorer sections of society, some, such as the governess and the head nurse or nanny were generally well

educated and came from more prosperous backgrounds. Nanny Dowdell enjoyed a loving relationship with the Constable family in the mid-nineteenth century, and on her retirement, she was provided with a ‘most comfortable house’ at nearby Marton. The family continued to visit her regularly, and, as Charles Chichester noted it was ‘a pleasure ... to see an old attached servant like her made happy at the end of her days’.



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