

Hidden lives: domestic servants in the European country house, c.1700-1850

This AHRC-funded network brings together heritage professionals and researchers from a range of disciplines and countries to share research on the lives of servants in country houses across Europe: a surprisingly neglected area that has huge potential to inform understanding and presentation of the country house. It comprises a series of four workshops through 2024 and 2025.

Call for Papers, Workshop 1: The material culture of country house servants

Manchester Metropolitan University, 23rd January 2024

The country house is known across Europe for its grand interiors and elite lifestyle, but heritage professionals and historians have increasingly noted the everyday activities and consumption practices that under-pinned life at the country house. This workshop will explore the ways in which servants, who formed the majority of the inhabitants in any country house, fitted into these processes. It will bring together researchers from a range of European countries to explore how the accommodation and possessions of servants varied across space and through the long eighteenth century, thereby bringing a broader context to our understanding of the country house and its material culture.

We invite papers on any aspect of the material culture of country house servants, but would particularly welcome contributions that focus on:

- how servants were tied into the spatial organisation of country houses
- the accommodation provided for servants, including rooms, decoration and furniture
- how servants' material culture was shaped by gender, nationality, race, hierarchy, changing notions of comfort, etc.
- the personal possessions of servants, including servants' boxes

Funds are available to help defray travel costs, with priority given to ECRs. Overnight accommodation will be provided by the organisers.

Proposals of c.300 words, a short biography, and an estimate of travel costs should be sent to Jon Stobart (j.stobart@mmu.ac.uk) and Kristine Dyrmann (Kristine.dyrmann@history.ox.ac.uk) by 20 November 2023.