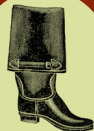
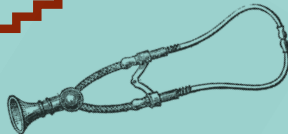
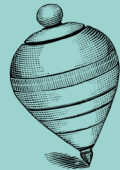


# EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE COUNTRY HOUSE



23rd Annual Historic Houses International Conference,  
Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates,  
History Department, Maynooth University

19-20 MAY 2025

# EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE COUNTRY HOUSE

Architects have always strived to build country houses that would function efficiently, comfortably and healthily, an aspiration memorably captured in Le Corbusier's dictum that 'a house is a machine for living in'.

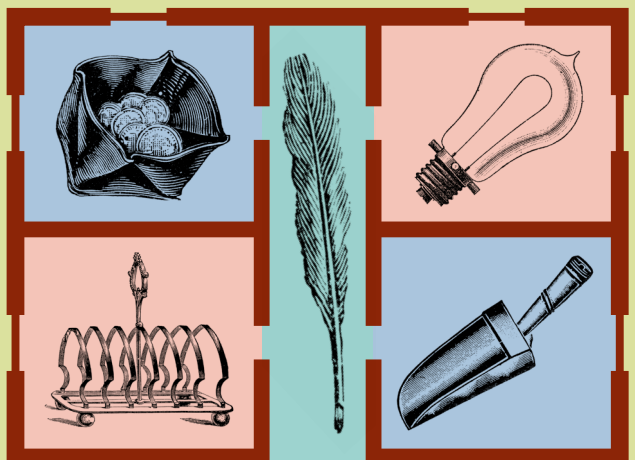


They were domestic residences and places of employment, with a broad base of staff tending to an elite few. The 23rd Historic Houses Conference, which will take place on 19-20 May 2025, will look at the ways in which country houses were designed, modernised, managed, financed, powered, provisioned and occupied with a view to being a functioning communal unit.

In what ways did the design of a house with specified zones for work and leisure reflect these social and work structures? How segregated were leisure, comfort, and domestic service?

How were household finances managed both above and below stairs? Who authorised purchasing and expenditure, and who was responsible for balancing the books? To what extent did cash or credit finance this lifestyle?

How and when did houses adopt advances in various technologies? Open fires giving way to central heating systems; running water making life more convenient and hygienic; gas and electricity improving lighting and power. What benefits and risks did these changes bring?



How were houses provisioned? From food-stuffs, whether homegrown or purchased, to linen, household utensils, clothing, and many other essentials, how was consumption in the big house linked to local or distant suppliers?

In an era before modern health provision how was medicine understood and dispensed? When were doctors, pharmacists or dentists called upon? To what extent were sickness and health understood in terms of hygiene, infection, diet, and even emotional wellbeing?



Behind the fine architecture, opulent décor and assembled art treasures, the country house was a well-regulated machine where occupants would go about their lives and duties in different ways. Were these households organised or chaotic, harmonious or discordant, efficient or wasteful?

*Everyday life* will examine these and many other themes relating to the experience of living

in country houses. Papers on these or other topics relating to country houses in Ireland, the UK, Europe or elsewhere will be considered.



**Abstracts of no more than 400 words should be sent to Professor Terence Dooley, Dr Ciarán Reilly or Professor Christopher Ridgway before 31 December 2024 at the following addresses:**

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