

GEORGIAN CHIMNEYPIECES



by Neil Burton and Lucy Porten

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The Georgian Group

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Chimneypiece in the Chinese Dining Room at Buckingham Palace, originally in the Music Room at the Royal Pavilion Brighton. The chimneypiece was installed in The Pavilion in 1820; it was designed by Robert Jones and made by Vulliamy and Westmacott (The Royal Collection © 1999 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to present a series of photographs of Georgian chimneypieces in a chronological sequence spanning the whole of the period 1700 to 1840. The task is more difficult than it sounds. Accurate dating of individual chimneypieces, especially the more modest examples, is fraught with problems. Chimneypieces were considered by the Georgians, and indeed the Victorians, as decorative features, to be installed or moved as fashion or convenience dictated. Unless the actual design drawings and the bills for making and installation survive it is difficult to be sure when a particular design was carried out or whether it belongs in its present location.

The majority of the examples given here come from the National Monuments Record in Swindon and London and from the photo collection of the former GLC Historic Buildings Division, now in the care of the London Metropolitan Archive. The staff of the NMR and of other organisations have been unfailingly helpful and the NMR collection of photographs is huge but it seems that no one has ever looked systematically at the dating of chimneypieces nor collected together dated examples so the research has had to be done from scratch.

For the purposes of this book we have sometimes had to assume that a chimneypiece is contemporary with the building where it is found. For each decade within the period we give at least four examples and wherever possible we have given a regional spread. We have made an attempt to show examples of modest chimneypieces as well as the grander examples typical of country house interiors. The captions give the location (though usually not the full address, for security reasons) and the location within the building, where this is known.

MATERIALS

The majority of early Georgian chimneypieces were made of stone, because it was cheap and presumably because it was fireproof. The commonest forms of these early chimneypieces – plain bolection mouldings or stone slabs, were dictated by the material used. In many entrance halls and kitchens, stone continued to be used for chimney surrounds until the end of the Georgian period. Although marble had been used for high-status chimneypieces in the 17th century and early 18th century it was an expensive material. From the 1720s onwards marble – most commonly white statuary marble – came into use for more “ordinary” chimneypieces as an alternative to stone. In the preface to the second volume of his self-praising *Essay Towards a Description of Bath* published in 1749, John Wood claimed that

“about the year 1727....the chimneypieces, hearths and slabbs were all of Free stone and these were daily cleaned with a particular Whitewash....As the New Buildings advanced...Marble slabbs and even chimneypieces became common....nor did the proper chimneys or Peers of any of the rooms remain long without well Framed Mirrours of no inconsiderable size”

John Wood certainly improved the quality of architecture in Bath but in the matter of chimneypieces he was probably following a national trend. The “marble slabbs” he refers to were presumably what are now called marble slips – in other words the plain pieces of marble immediately surrounding the hearth opening and enclosed by the chimneypiece. Marble chimneypieces did not entirely displace freestone, which was still favoured by Palladian architects for entrance halls where a “masculine” treatment was deemed appropriate, but its greater refinement earned access to many living rooms.

Wooden chimneypieces also became common from the 1720s/30s. There were two obvious reasons for this; firstly work in wood was much cheaper than work in marble and slightly cheaper than work in stone and secondly wood-carvers could very easily produce the curving and delicate Rococo forms which were fashionable in the 1730s. A useful indicator of relative costs can be found in Richard Neve’s *City and Country Purchaser* first published in 1703.

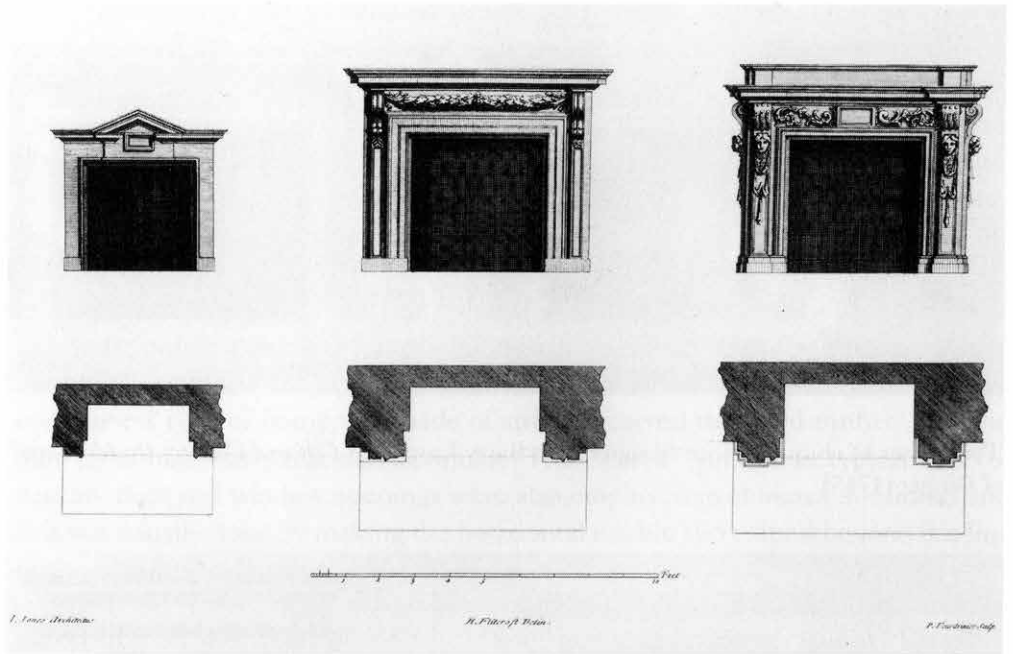
“Chimney pieces of Free-stone, wrought plain, are worth 10s. but there may be such Mouldings wrought in ‘em, as with their Coves and other members, may be worth 20, 30 or 40s. a piece. Chimney pieces of Egyptian or Black Fleak’d marble, or of Rance, or Liver colour’d marble, are worth (of an ordinary size) 12, or 14 l. a piece. Chimney pieces of Wood, are also of different Prizes, as 10,12, or 14s. to 20s, more or less, according to their largeness, goodness of the Stuff and Curiosity in the Workmanship”

The identical text appeared in both the 1726 and 1736 editions of the same work. This suggests that the cost hierarchy remained the same during the first half of the century and information from other sources, like the architect Thomas Farnoll’s Pritchard’s sketch book of the 1760/70s (now in the library of the American Institute of Architects) indicates that it remained unchanged in the second half of the century. Partly because of the cost difference, wooden chimneypieces had a lower status than their marble equivalents, though there are thousands of such pieces in country houses and other major buildings, often with very elaborate carving. Wooden chimneypieces were invariably painted. Most often they were painted to resemble stone though they might, on occasion be painted to resemble marble or other more expensive materials. There is no evidence whatever that wood was left unpainted and indeed many Jacobean chimneypieces made of oak which were originally intended to be left bare were painted by the Georgians.

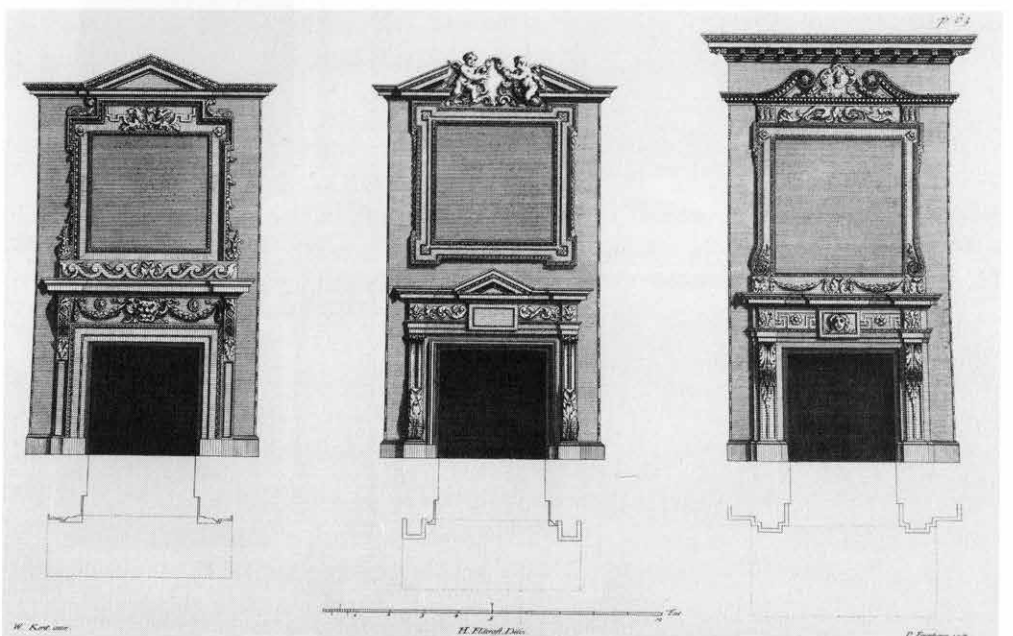
In the last quarter of the 18th century the basic materials of stone, marble and wood were frequently ornamented with other materials. At the top end of the social scale architects like Robert Adam produced designs for marble chimneypieces inlaid with precious stones or metals or classical cameos. In cheaper work, the ornaments previously carved in wood began to be cast in Composition or

“compo” – a mixture of whiting and glue-size – and applied to a plain timber surface. Papier mâché was also used for ornaments from the mid-18th century and sometimes for entire chimneypieces.

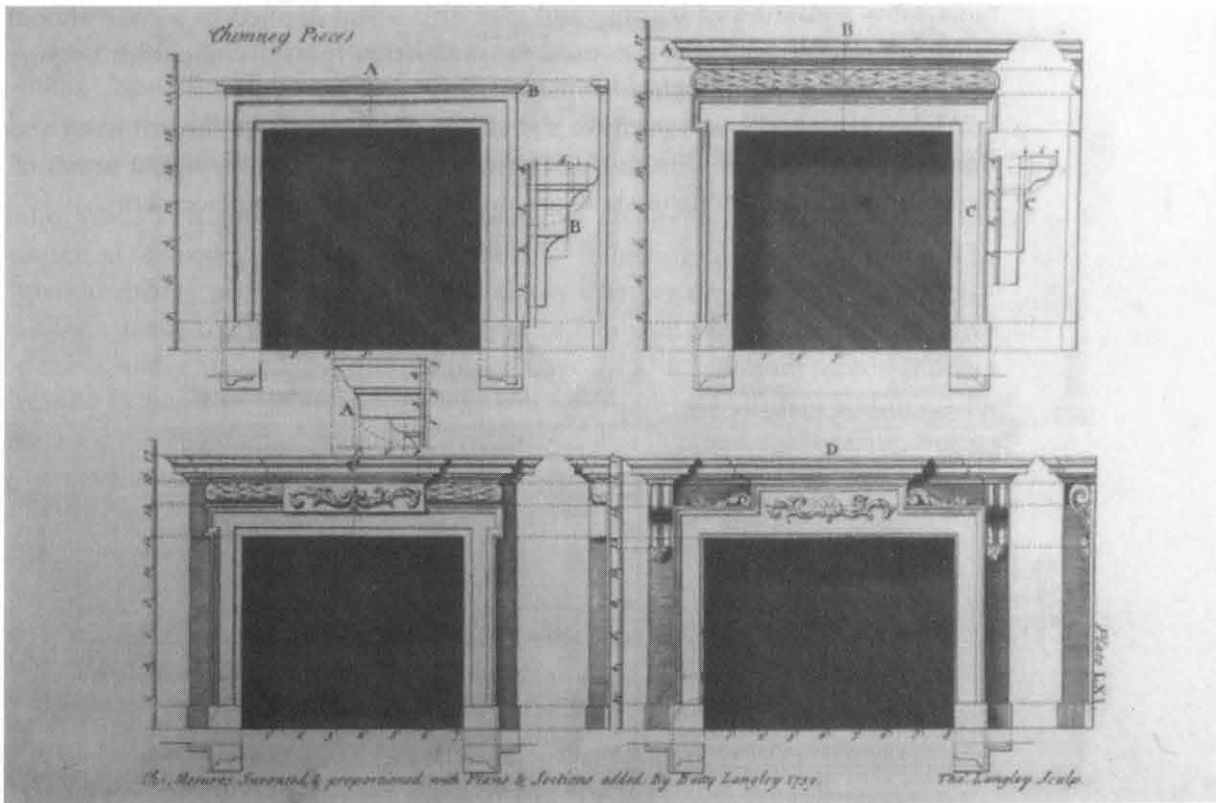
Whatever material was used for the chimney surround, the hearth itself was almost always made of a single slab of freestone set flush with, or just proud of, the floor boarding. Marble or slate hearths are usually later replacements.



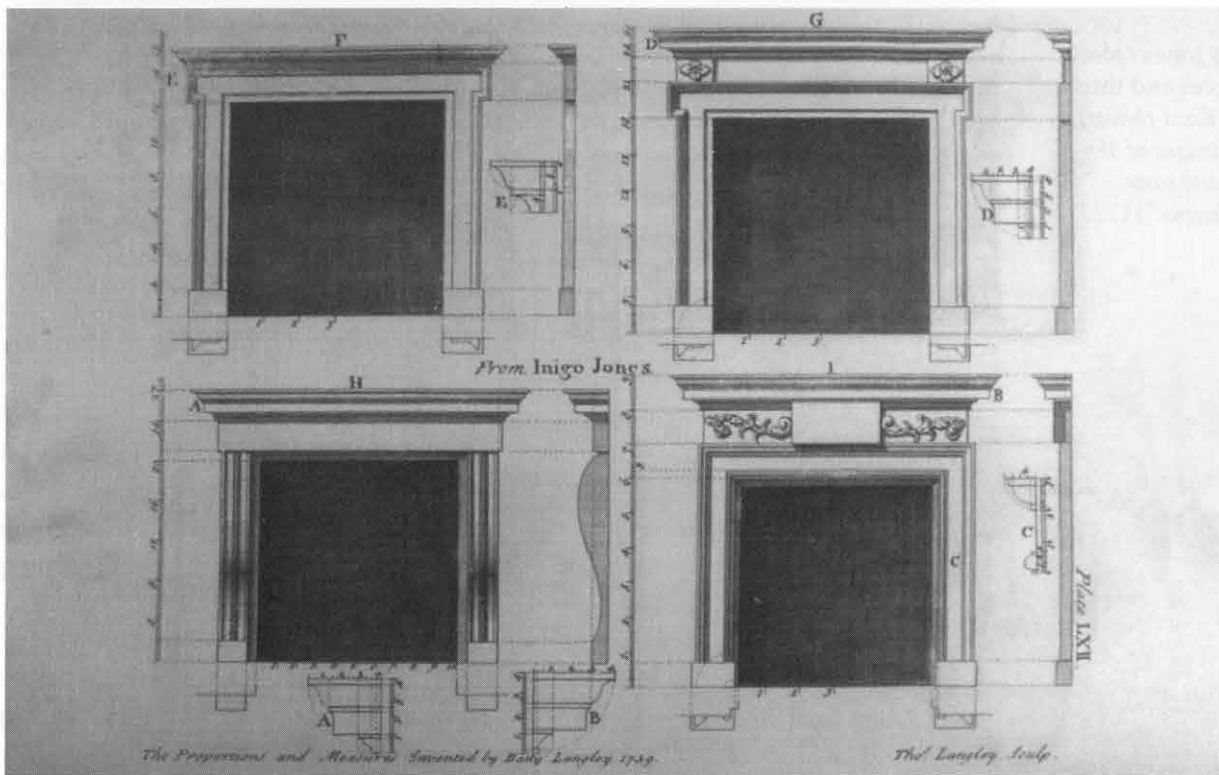
Three Inigo Jones (*above*) chimneypieces and three by William Kent (*below*) from “*The Designs of Mr Inigo Jones with some additional designs*” (1727)



GEORGIAN CHIMNEYPIECES



Two pages of chimney piece designs from Batty Langley's *City and Country Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs* (1745)



FORMS AND STYLES

Any discussion of an architectural feature as common as the chimneypiece must acknowledge the huge variety of types and the influence of such things as the time lag in new design ideas spreading from place to place – usually but not always from London to other parts of the country – regional factors like the availability of certain materials, or the availability of particular commercial products, and the effect of taste. This might be the taste of the patron, or of the designer or the fashionable taste of the moment.

The majority of chimneypieces from the first two decades of the century followed late 17th century forms in which the chimneypiece was principally a stone surround to the rectangular hearth opening. Many early Georgian rooms, even in modest houses, were lined with wooden panelling which was continued across the chimneybreast and the chimney surround would be set into the panelling, usually without any mantelshelf. Often there was a single large panel above the chimney opening and a mirror or painting might be set within the panel as an overmantel. Sometimes the moulded jambs of the surround were carried down to floor level, sometimes they terminated on blocks the same height as the skirting.

The plain surround might be enhanced by bands of repetitive ornament or moulding either above the hearth-opening or to either side. The introduction of marble slips around the opening necessitated a frame to enclose them and the commonest type of frame was made of strips of carved moulded timber. Egg and dart moulding was particularly popular. The “eared” surrounds typical of 17th century door and window openings were also employed in chimney surrounds and this was usually done by making the horizontal marble slip extend beyond the line of the uprights and enclosing the whole with timber.

From the early 1720s the influence of the fashionable Palladian style is perceptible in the forms and ornaments of the chimneypiece. Andrea Palladio’s published designs actually gave little help to chimneypiece designers who, in this as in other architectural matters, turned instead to Inigo Jones. As Sir William Chambers wrote in his *Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*

“Neither the Italians nor the French, nor indeed any of the continental nations, have excelled in compositions of Chimney-Pieces. I believe we may justly consider Inigo Jones as the first who arrived at any great degree of perfection in this material branch of the art. Others of our architects since his time have wrought upon his ideas: and some of them, particularly the late Mr Kent, have furnished good inventions of their own.”

Indeed, William Kent’s *Designs of Inigo Jones*, published in 1727, illustrates three chimneypieces by Jones and five of his own design which contain almost all the customary elements of early and mid-Georgian fireplaces, that is to say skirting blocks, Vitruvian Scroll and Greek Key continuous mouldings, moulded mantelshelves, console brackets either supporting the mantelshelf or flanking the jambs of the surrounds, tablets set above the hearth opening with carved ornament and overmantels often pedimented and flanked by columns.

Palladian architects in particular like to introduce relief sculpture into their designs. As Chambers also remarked,

“England is at present possess’d of many able sculptors, whose chief employment being to execute magnificent chimneypieces now happily much in vogue, it may be said that in this particular we surpass all other nations; not only in point of expence but likewise in taste of Design and goodness of Workmanship”.

His comment reflects the rather depressing fact that in Britain figure sculptors often had to diversify their activities to ensure permanent employment and their usual outlets were chimneypieces or sepulchral monuments.

One difference between Kent’s designs and those of Inigo Jones is that Kent invariably showed his chimneypieces combined with an overmantel in a form which was known in the 18th century as a continued chimneypiece. In their general arrangement continued chimneypieces harked back to the very elaborate overmantels of the 16th century rising from the top of the chimney opening to the ceiling; in these overmantels strapwork and primitive figure carving was often combined with armorial decoration to produce an overpowering statement of wealth and lineage. While still adding emphasis to the importance of the chimney, the Palladian version was more closely integrated with the architectural decoration of the rest of the room.

Isaac Ware, writing in the 1750s, explained it thus:

“...by simple we mean a chimney which terminates at its mantelpiece or by a pediment or some such arrangement over it: and by this kind of chimney continued up to the ceiling we understand an entire work finishing that part of the room and consisting of the proper or simple chimney and ornaments about correspondent to it in breadth, leaving a panel for a picture, terminated at the height of the room with sculpture accommodated in nature and degree to that of the lower part.”

Ware was a strong advocate of continued chimneypieces:

“It appears that in all rooms, except such as are hung” (with paper) “a continued chimneypiece may be allowed. In most it will be more proper than a simple one”.

Certainly the fashion for them was widespread, and many “simple” chimneypieces of the early 18th century had overmantels added to them. But by the 1760s, shortly after Ware was writing, continued chimneypieces began to fall out of favour. This may have been partly to do with the unfashionability of relief sculpture or of using paintings as overmantel ornaments but was probably just as much a consequence of the wider availability of wallpaper, which could provide a decorative chimney breast at a fraction of the cost of carved ornament. It became a fairly common practice to remove the upper parts of continued chimneypieces during the second half of the 18th century, leaving only the lower part with a plain surface above it.

In France, a continental country which preferred open fires to closed stoves, the most usual arrangement for most of the 18th century was to have a marble

A page of chimneypiece designs from William Chambers’s *Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture* (1759)

Designs for Chimney Pieces.

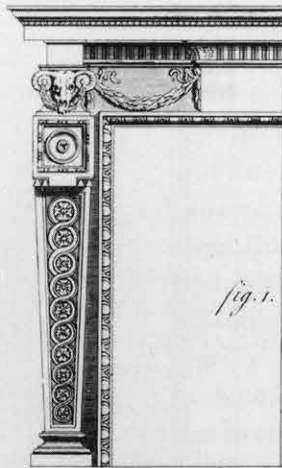


fig. 1.

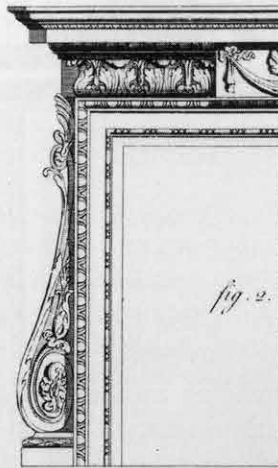


fig. 2.

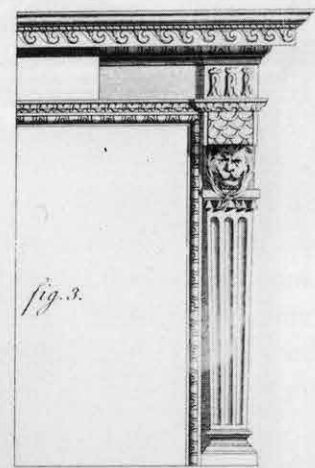


fig. 3.

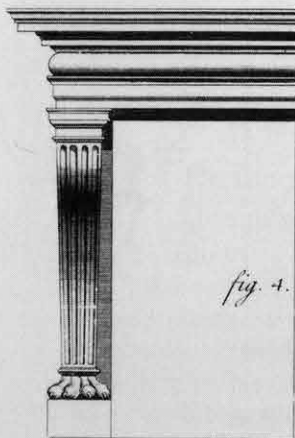


fig. 4.

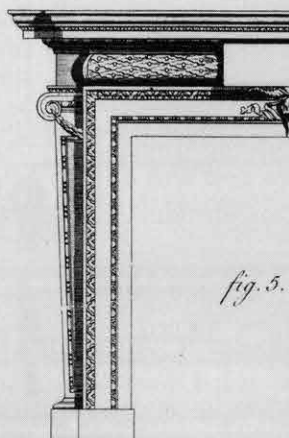


fig. 5.

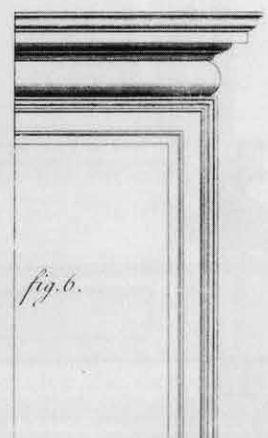


fig. 6.



fig. 7.



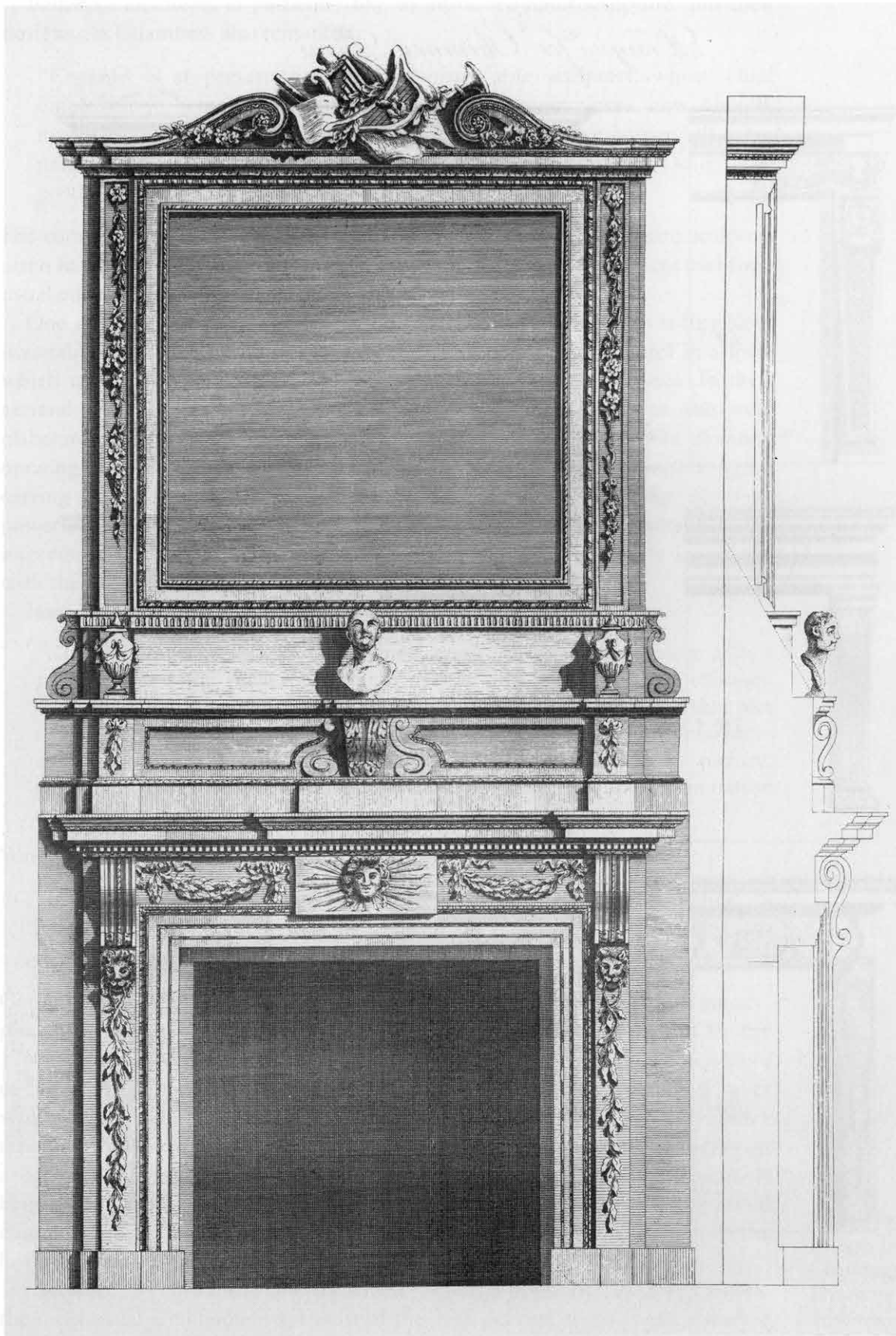
fig. 8.



fig. 9.

W. Chambers

W. Miller fecit



surround of a standardised curvilinear pattern with a large rectangular overmantel mirror in an ornamental frame extending almost up to the cove of the ceiling. This arrangement, so universal that it was known as the *cheminée à la française*, was not possible in England because no factory was able to produce the huge single sheets of glass required. Until at least the 1770s sizable mirrors in England had to be either imported (when they were subject to a tax of 75%) or made up from separate plates. The one kind of English chimneypiece that made regular use of large overmantel mirrors was, appropriately, the rococo type, whether in the “French” or “Gothick” taste, where the mesh of carved ornament could conceal any joints. In France most chimneypieces were of standard forms and made by artisans but in Britain architects and sculptors promoted the use of elaborate sculptural decoration, terms and even free-standing figures as chimneypiece decoration. The English overmantel was usually a painting contained in an elaborate tectonic frame often topped by a pediment rising to or above the cornice line. Where the architecture required it the overmantel might be a relief of stone or marble.

Ware devoted a whole section of his *Complete Body of Architecture* (published 1756) to the subject of chimneypieces. Like Chambers, he noted the lack of antique precedent, declaring that,

“We are in nothing left so much to the dictates of fancy, under the whole science of architecture, as in the construction of chimneypieces.”

He also propounded a rule a rule that where one of the five orders was used in a chimneypiece it should be subordinate to the orders used for the cornice and doors;

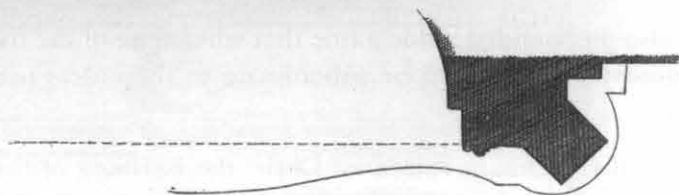
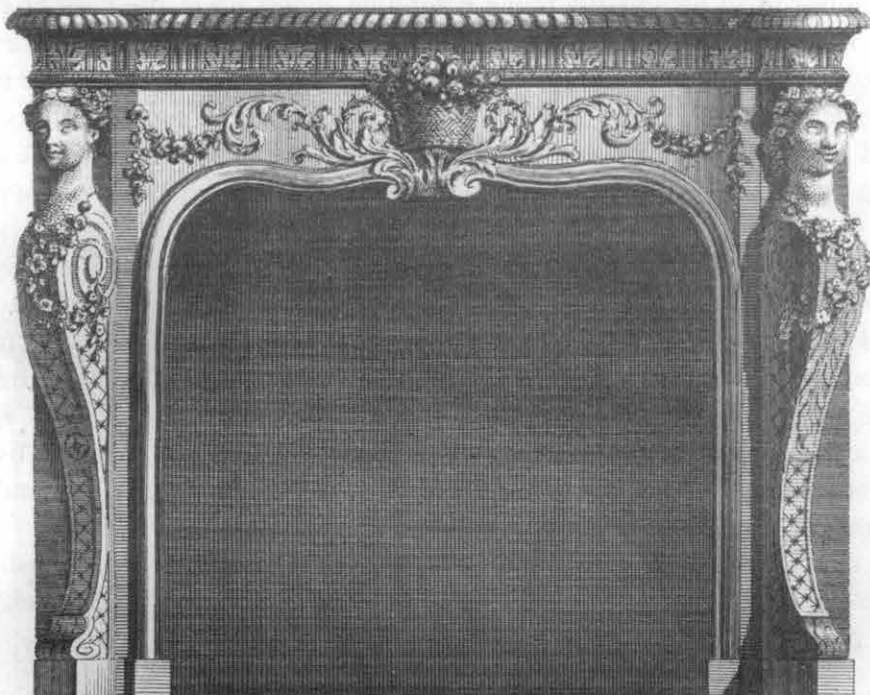
“...if the chimneypiece be Doric, the finishing of the walls should for that reason be an Ionic cornice; if the chimneypiece be Ionic the cornice should be Corinthian.... The door, being intended to receive the decoration of an order, has its natural place in this....the eye ranks it according to its height, as of a middle kind between the chimney and cornice”

As he himself admitted, “...we write upon a subject none has yet considered...” and it is doubtful whether many other architects and builders followed his idea of hierarchy, but it is quite clear that architects and builders did, on the whole, observe the rules of proportion dictated by the Five Orders when designing chimneypieces.

British 18th century architects seem to have been more directly concerned with chimneypiece design than their counterparts abroad. Chambers’ view has already been quoted; William Kent was clearly interested in the topic; Isaac Ware devoted over eighty pages of text to chimneypieces in his *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756); Robert Adam illustrated several of his own chimneypiece designs in his *Works in Architecture* and there were numerous 18th century pattern books containing chimneypiece designs based on the works of contemporary architects. This concern had notable consequences: the designs of architects fed into the work of masons, carpenters and joiners and British chimneypieces were generally far more architectural in character than those of abroad.

The specifically architectural character of English chimneypieces can be seen from the 17th century in the frequent use of the heavy bolection moulding as a

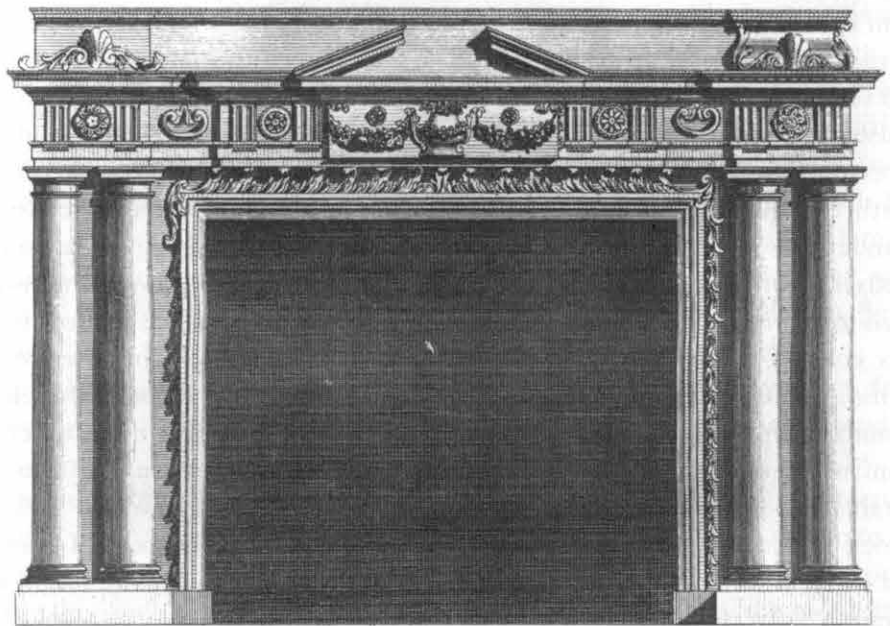
A ‘continued’ chimney-piece from Isaac Ware’s *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756)



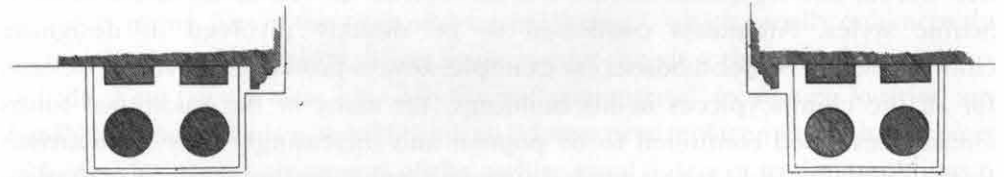
A chimneypiece in the French style from Ware's *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756)

common type of chimney surround. Such mouldings were part of the standard architectural vocabulary of the Restoration period and widely used for panelling and for door and window surrounds. In the early 18th century “eared” chimney surrounds were similarly derived from door and window surrounds. Both treatments show clearly that the square hearth was seen by designers of chimneypieces as an opening to be treated in the same way as door and window openings, with an aedicular surround. The jambs might be plain, or with elongated consoles, or treated as pilasters, or might boast freestanding columns while the horizontal member above the opening was treated as an entablature and the mantles shelf as a cornice. Carved console jambs are typical of the 1730s and 1740s, freestanding columns first appear as common features in chimneypieces of the 1750s. Isaac Ware suggested that the best arrangement was for chimneypieces to have paired columns on either side, but single columns were much more common.

From the mid 18th century onwards there was increasing diversity in chimneypiece forms. The aedicular and architectural treatment of chimney openings remained standard until the end of the century, along with some other elements current in the early Georgian period, of which the most common is the



A chimneypiece with paired columns supporting the mantel from Ware's *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756)



rectangular tablet over the hearth, which might be plain or carved with some mythological scene decorative scene. But alongside the conventional forms newer treatments appeared. Some of the more fashionable designers like Robert Adam chose to alter the proportions of their chimney openings, changing the traditional rectangular opening for something broader. Adam is also credited for introducing profuse decorative ornament on essentially flat surfaces – exactly what Sir William Chambers derided as “sippetts of filigree”. The ornament might be inlaid into or, more commonly, placed on the surfaces of a chimney surround. There are examples of such ornament in the 1760s but it becomes much more widespread in the 1780s when timber chimney surrounds with planted ornaments of “composition” were popular. Another variation whose pedigree is less obvious was the carrying up of flanking columns or pilasters to the underside of the mantelshelf, omitting any sort of “entablature”. This had the uncomfortable effect of making the mantelshelf look thin and insubstantial. Both these developments were consequences of a new view of chimneypieces as furniture rather than as architecture, a development underlined by the fact that most of the later 18th century furniture makers, like Chippendale, were prepared to supply chimneypieces as well as freestanding furniture.

As early as the 1780s the use of reeded decoration was becoming popular, both in timber and in marble chimneypieces. Presumably this motif was derived from classical sources, perhaps from the bundled fasces which formed a regular feature of neo-classical decoration. It also conveyed the impression of fluting, and reeded chimneypiece jambs were frequently used as an alternative to fluted pilasters. Around 1800 chimneypieces begin to appear with roundels or paterae at the junction of the jambs and the entablature or horizontal member beneath the mantelshelf. In a very short time the combination of reeding and roundels had evolved into a classic late Georgian design, to be found in thousands of chimneypieces, but equally on door and window surrounds and even in furniture from 1800 until the early 1850s. The pedigree of the roundel in this context is obscure. It has been suggested that the motif derives from furniture and certainly something very like it appears in some of the chairs in Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture* of 1807, which may derive ultimately from Roman examples. It may also derive from those versions of the Doric entablature where triglyphs alternate with roundels. Both Robert Adam and James Wyatt juggled with roundels and fluting in their schemes of decoration but so far it has proved impossible to pin down convincingly the origin of this chimneypiece pattern.

The forty years after 1800 were a period of eclecticism in architectural style. Chimneypieces in the better houses often reflected the contemporary interest in neo-Greek, neo-Egyptian, Gothic and Jacobethan as well as the more modern Soanic styles. Architects continued to be directly involved in designing chimneypieces. Sir John Soane, for example, always provided individual designs for all the chimneypieces in his buildings. Yet many of the traditional forms already described continued to be popular and increasingly they were artisan work. Chimneypieces with a reeded surround and corner roundels or with plain jambs and lintels with minimal mouldings were standard fixtures in late Georgian interiors. Simple designs of this kind in marble or wood could be provided more or less "off the peg" and allowed speculative builders to give an air of quality to their buildings. The demand for standardised designs was great both during and after the Napoleonic Wars when several booms in the housing market brought a corresponding increase in building activity. It is interesting to see how variety declined as production increased.

After the 1830s there was a perceptible trend towards the use of heavier moulding profiles and a greater use of stone or the native marbles, in preference to the white statuary marble typical of the 18th century. Another novelty was the introduction of arched openings of five-centred Tudor type instead of straight entablatures. Late Georgian chimneypieces of all kinds were very often combined with a large overmantel mirror, although such mirrors were clearly items of moveable furniture and not linked in any way with the chimneypiece which supported them.

CONCLUSION

Within the simple concept of a chimneypiece there is room for huge variation; the examples given here provide only an introduction to the subject. Even the humblest Georgian town house probably had six chimneypieces, a large town house might have twenty-five while large country houses and public buildings might have fifty or more. Within the broad pattern of development from “early Georgian” through “Palladian” and “Adam style” to “Regency and late Georgian”, architects, builders and furniture designers experimented with many different permutations of the chimneypiece form. At the top end of the scale were chimneypieces with elaborate carving and decoration including figure sculpture; at the bottom were the simplest surrounds of wood or stone.

What distinguishes the majority of British Georgian chimneypieces from Continental and from Victorian examples, and also from many modern reproductions, is an awareness of architectural proportion as governed by the Five Orders. Most 18th century chimneypieces were treated as architectural decoration not as furniture and often a conscious effort was made to integrate the chimneypiece with the other fittings. The blocks at the bottom of the surround were usually made the same height as the skirting board (below the moulding), wooden chimneypieces were painted, most often to look like stone or to match the paintwork on door and window surrounds.

Our modern attitude to chimneypieces is confused. Most people regard them as luxury items, part of the suite of “original fittings” which usually enhances the financial value of a property. Many seem to take the view that any chimneypiece will do. Few have a clear idea of what is “appropriate” in a given location and hardly anyone nowadays would think to relate a new replacement chimneypiece either to the correct ornaments of the architectural orders or to the mouldings of adjacent door and window surrounds or even to the height of the skirting. If the range of examples given here helps to promote a greater awareness of the evolution of chimneypiece design it will go some way to getting rid of the confusion.

1700
1710

1.
WHITEHAVEN
CUMBRIA,
QUEEN STREET
A stone
chimneypiece in a
fairly modest house.
The ornamental
iron grate is a later
insertion
(photo NMR)



2

2.
HANBURY HALL,
WORCESTERSHIRE;
bolection moulded
marble
chimneypiece in
entrance hall
(photo NMR:
ref BB99/4034)

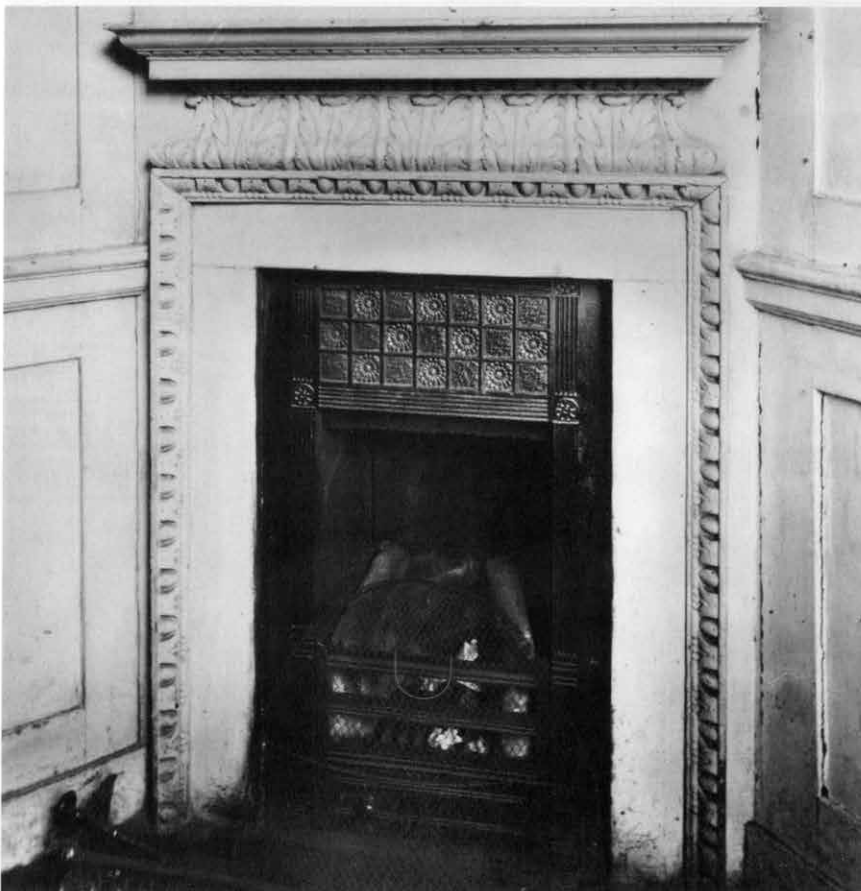


1700
1710



3.
DYRHAM PARK,
Gloucestershire:
a bolection moulded
surround of
"fleck'd marble"
(photo NMR:
CC52/11)

3

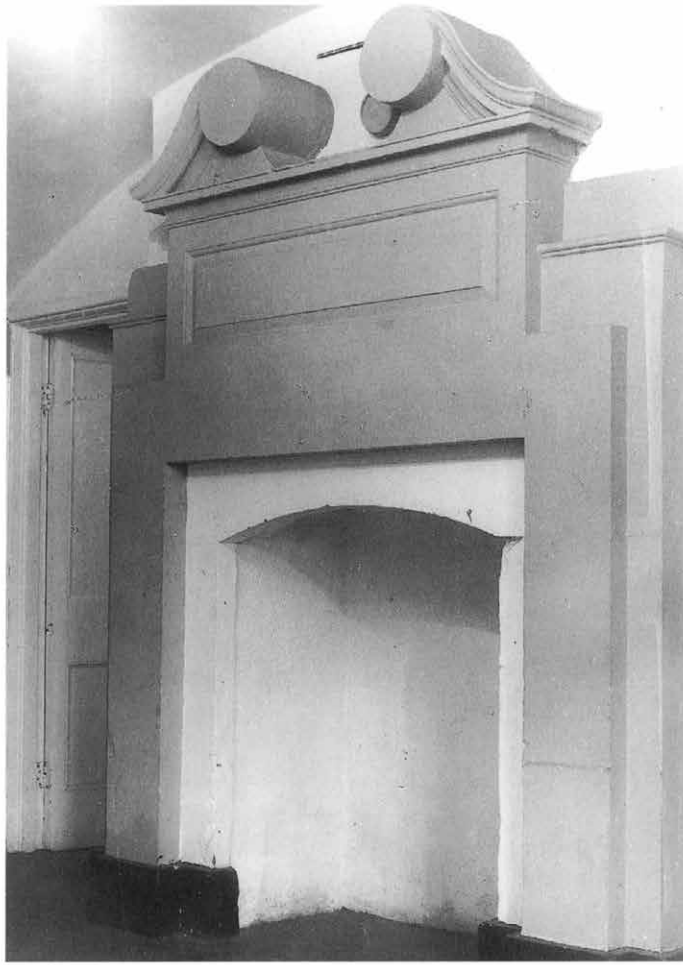


4

4.
LONDON, QUEEN
ANNE'S GATE:
corner fireplace in
first floor rear
closet. The
wooden egg and
dart moulding
encloses stone or
marble "slips"; the
grate is later
(photo Georgian
Group: ref a1991)

1710
1720

5.
KING'S WESTON
GLOUCS,
stone
chimneypiece in
basement kitchen
*(photo Conway
Library)*



5

6.
ST ALBANS, HERTS.
ROMELAND HOUSE,
an elaborate version
of a common early
18th century type
*(photo NMR:
ref BB74/6874)*



6

1710
1720



7.
GREAT YARMOUTH
DRURY HOUSE,
SOUTH QUAY,
parlour
chimneypiece
composed of
moulded marble
jambs and
entablature set
directly into the
panelling
(photo NMR:
ref. BB67/2278)

7



8

8.
WANSTEAD HOUSE
ESSEX,
COLEN CAMPBELL,
1715FF;
now in Wanstead
House, Cambridge:
a fairly modest
chimneypiece,
perhaps from a
bedroom; the
elaborate eared
surround, in wood
comes from one of
the most important
early Palladian
great houses
(photo NMR
ref: CC72/1657)

1720
1730

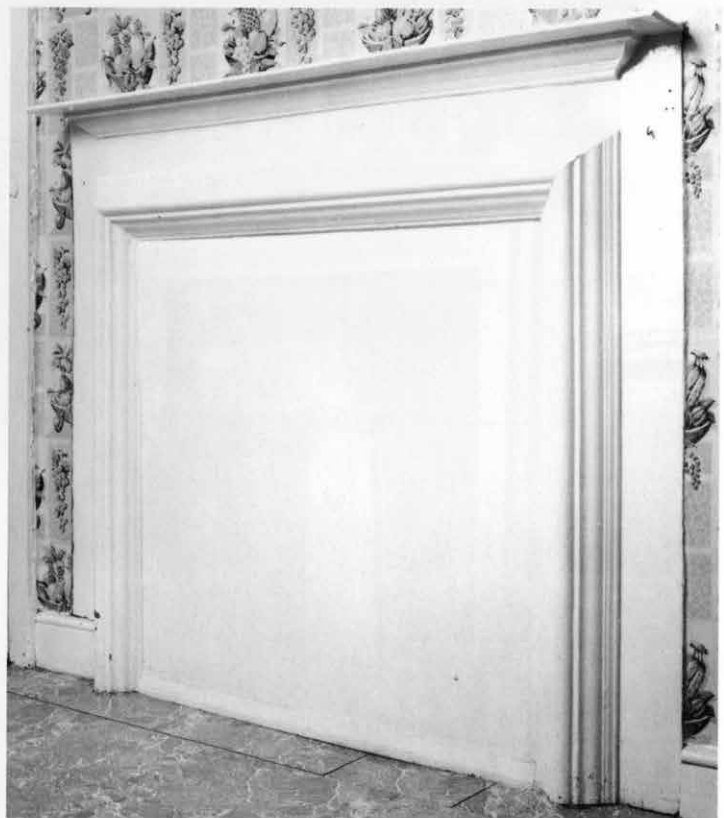
9.
BOSTON, Lincs,
Fydell House,
ground floor;
wooden
chimneypiece with
marble slips, an
eared surround
with egg and dart
moulding and an
elaborate
mantelshelf in the
form of a cornice.
The hob grate and
delft tiles are later.
*(photo NMR:
ref A44/6514)*



9

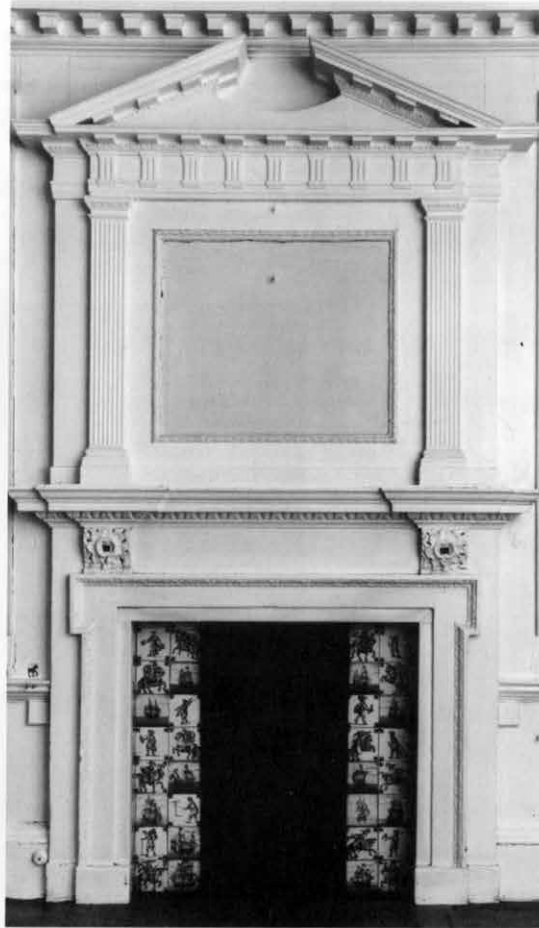
10.
HERTFORD,
ST ANDREW'S
STREET,
2nd floor;
a bolection
moulded surround
with an upper tier
of moulding. The
thin mantelshelf is
a later addition.
*(photo NMR:
ref BB76/4833)*

10





11



13



12

1720
1730

11.
WISBECH, CAMBS,
Peckover House c
1727,
1st floor room.
Similar to the
chimneypiece at
Fyddell House but
with a raised tablet
over the opening.
The overmantel
may be later. (*photo*
National Trust:
ref CAM 09 110Dc)

12.
YORK,
MINSTER YARD:
ground floor rear
room. The eared
surround and
ornamental brackets
supporting the
mantelshelf are
typical of the 1720s.
The overmantel
may be later (*photo*
NMR: ref YC2542)

13.
YORK,
MINSTER YARD:
first floor back
room. The eared
egg and dart
surround is set on a
stepped timber
backing which
supports the
elaborate
mantelshelf are
typical of the 1720s.
The overmantel
may be later
(*photo NMR: ref*
YC2543)

1730
1740

14.
LONDON
WHITEHALL,
Treasury
Buildings, designed
by William Kent
1737: a handsome
eared marble
surround with a
pulvinated frieze
and moulded
overmantel
*(photo NMR:
ref W117)*



14

15.
LONDON,
SOUTH AUDLEY
STREET, L.B.
WESTMINSTER:
1st floor front room
a very elaborate
stone chimneypiece
with both Rococo
and Palladian
motifs and the side
swags typical of the
1730s
*(photo Georgian
Group)*



15

1730

1740



16

16.
WHITEHAVEN,
CUMBRIA,
IRISH STREET:
1st floor room a
plain bolection –
moulded surround –
with a simple
timber mantelshelf
added above
*(photo NMR:
ref YO 775)*

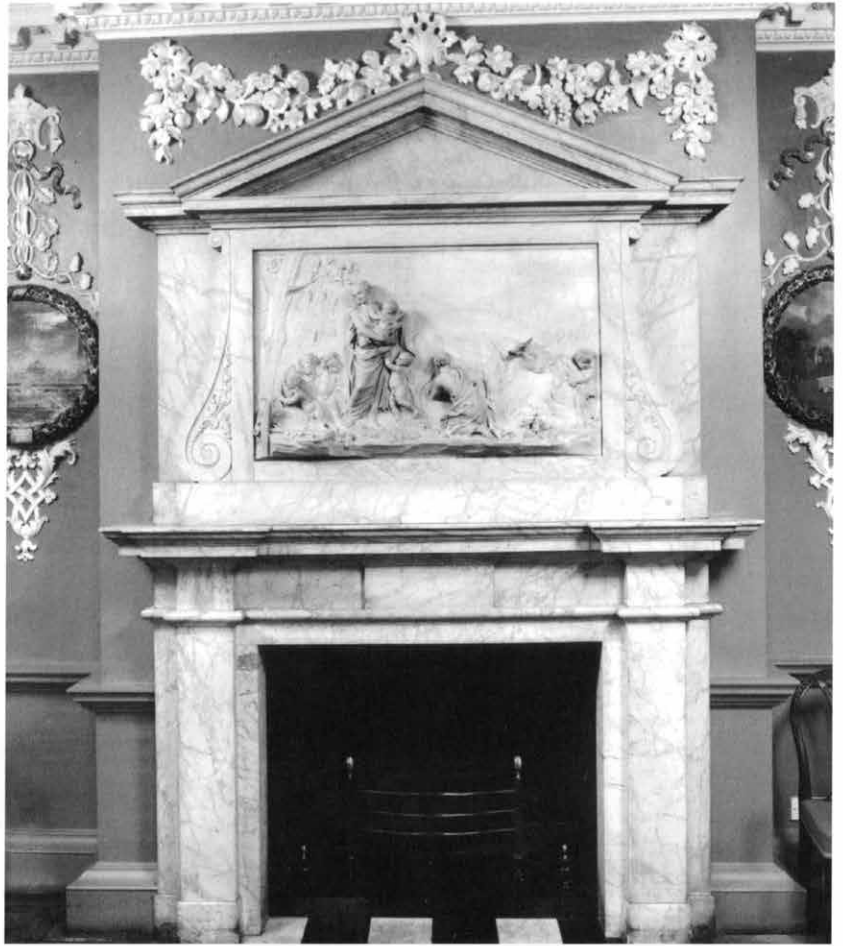


17

17.
RINGWOOD,
MANOR HOUSE,
SOUTHAMPTON
ROAD
a rather barbaric
version of a
continued
chimneypiece in
timber and plaster
*(photo NMR:
ref BB82/110)*

1740
1750

18.
LONDON,
Foundling
Hospital:
a continued
chimneypiece, all
in marble and with
a carved relief in
the overmantel
*(photo Conway
Library)*



18

19

19.
HIGH STREET,
HULL,
N YORKSHIRE,
1743, ground floor
front room; a plain
chimneypiece,
little more than
marble slips within
a timber surround,
the overmantel is
part of the original
arrangement, the
grate is a later
insertion.
*(photo NMR:
ref BB66/2789)*



1740
1750



20

20.
POOLE,
DORSET
plain marble slips
in a timber
surround with
elaborate consoles
on either side and
heavy swagged
brackets
supporting the
mantelshelf
(*photo NMR:*
ref CC80/189)



21

22



21.
THE CLOSE,
SALISBURY,
WILTS:
a distinctly curious
version of a
continued
chimneypiece.
The heavy brackets
above the surround
look odd but can be
found in many
other examples
(*photo NMR:*
ref BB74/2753)

22.
IRISH STREET,
WHITEHAVEN
a very simple
three-part stone
example with a
gothick ogee
entablature, the
stone hob grate
may be original
(*photo NMR:*
ref YO 774)

1750
1760

23.
YORK, BOOTHAM,
1st floor front room,
a continued
chimneypiece
designed by John
Carr
(photo NMR:
ref YC1633)



24

24.
QUEEN STREET,
WHITEHAVEN,
CUMBRIA:
ground floor, a
stone surround
within a simple
timber moulding
and a carved
timber mantle
above
(photo NMR:
ref YO771)



23

25

25.
ROYAL CRESCENT,
BATH:
an example of a
very elaborate
wooden
chimneypiece with
side consoles and a
fluted entablature
(photo NMR:
ref A46/3406)

1750
1760



26

26.
FELBRIGG HOUSE,
NORFOLK
dining room, the
chimneypiece
designed by James
Paine is
contemporary with
the Rococo plaster
decoration of the
walls, it was
intended to be
carved in stone or
marble but is made
of plaster
(*photo NMR:*
ref AA/789)

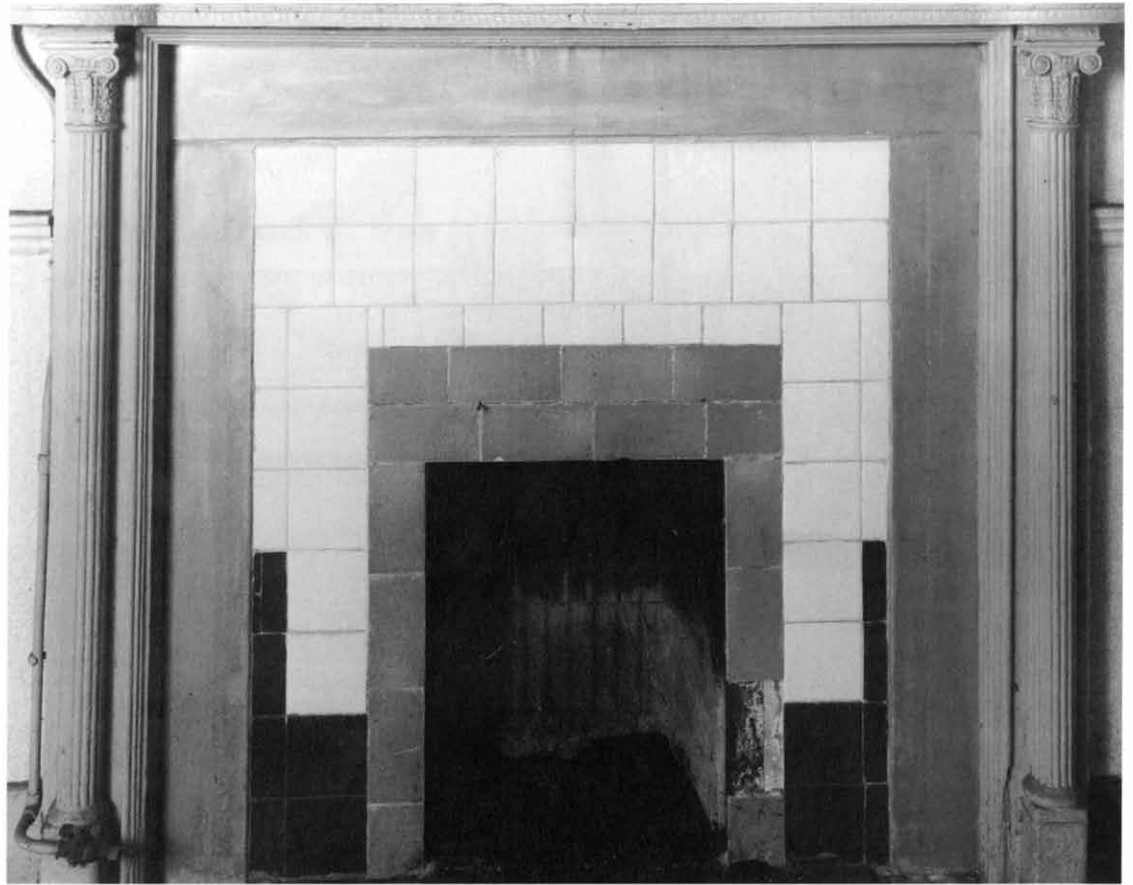


27

27.
BLANDFORD FORUM,
EAST STREET,
drawing room
an elaborate curving
marble surround in
Batty Langley
Chinese Gothick,
integrated into an
elaborate scheme of
plasterwork. The
innergrate is later
(*photo NMR:*
ref BB71/2851)

1760
1770

28.
LONDON,
DOMBEY STREET,
L.B.CAMDEN:
ground floor rear
room, a timber
surround enclosing
stone or marble
slips, the
entablature has
been omitted but
the mantelshelf
has a carved front,
the inner tiling is
modern
*(photo LMA:
ref 70/11480)*



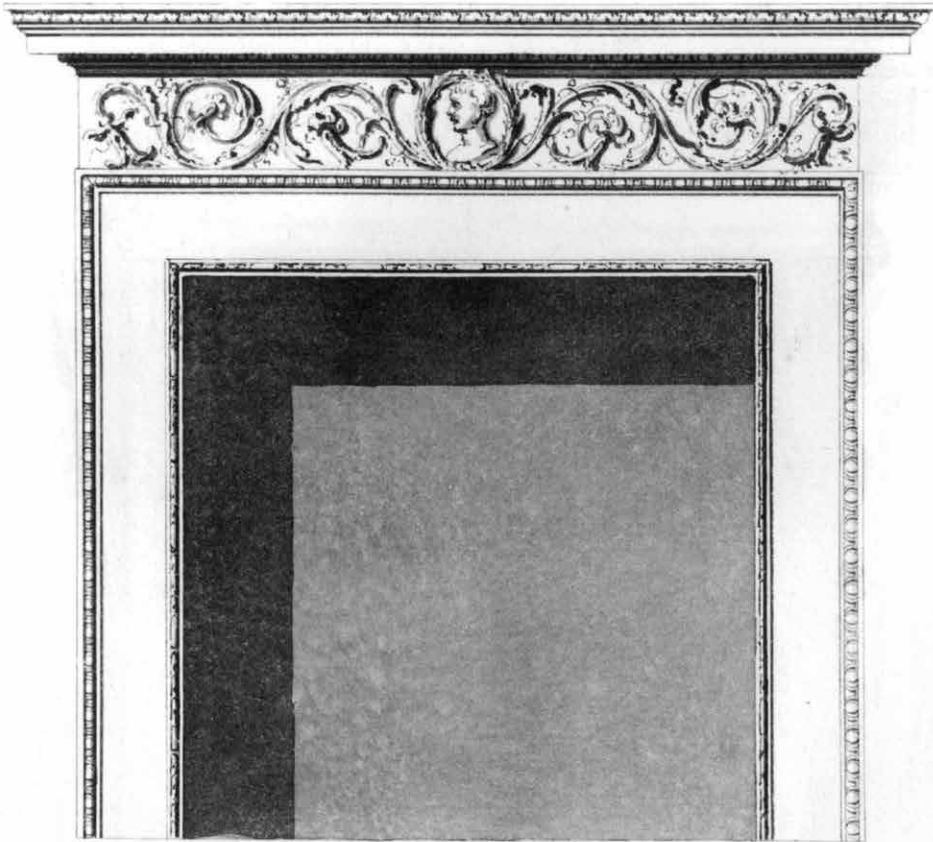
28

29.
LONDON, BERNERS
STREET, L B
CAMDEN:
many of the houses
in Berners Street
were designed by
Sir William
Chambers, this
handsome marble
chimneypiece with
freestanding Ionic
columns is typical
of good quality
London work of
the time
*(photo LMA:
ref 57/01159)*



29

1760
1770



30

30
Design for a
chimney piece by
Sir William
Chambers dated
1763; a very simple
design, probably
intended to be
made in timber
*(photo Sir John
Soane's Museum:
ref 42/9/2)*



31

31.
YORK,
GILLYGATE,
first floor front
room; a timber
surround with
reeded jambs and
entablature, note
the carving on the
face of the mantel
shelf
*(photo NMR:
ref YC 133)*

1770
1780

32.
LONDON,
ADAM STREET,
L B WESTMINSTER
an elaborate timber
surround with a
great variety of
delicate surface
ornament; the
Regency cast-iron
grate is equally
elaborate
*(photo LMA:
ref B5491)*



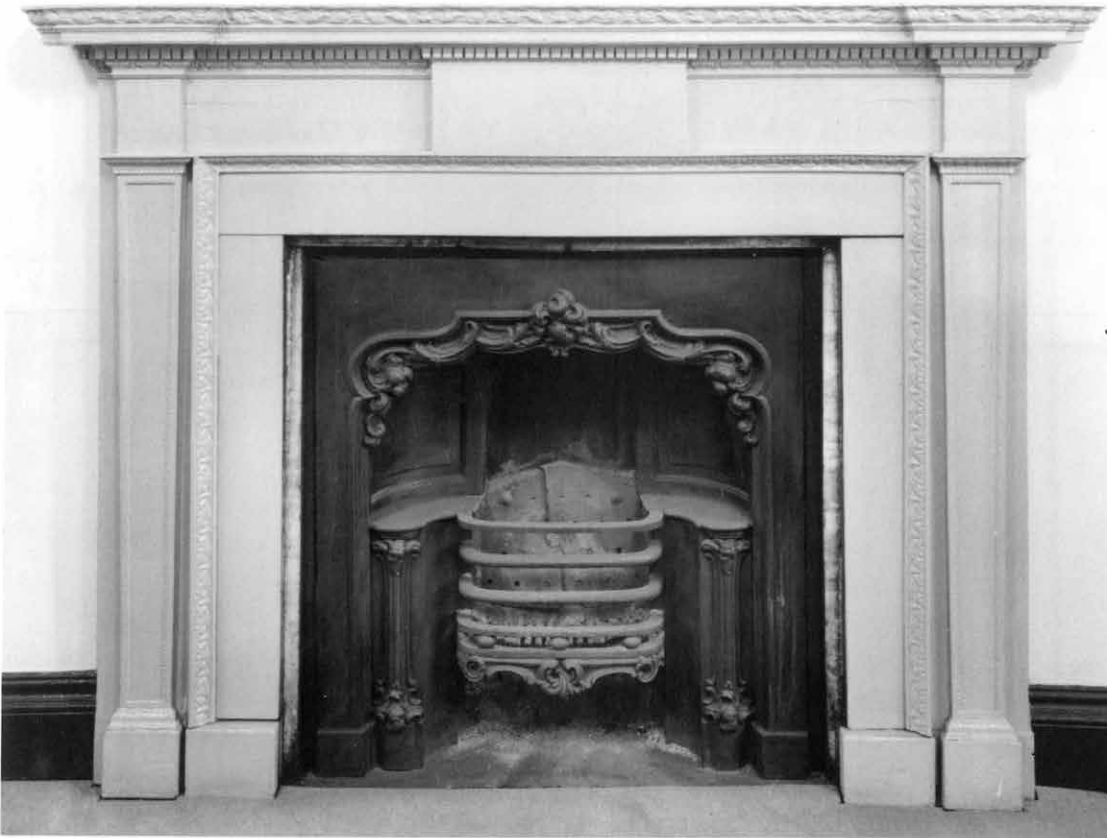
32

33.
LONDON,
DOWNING STREET,
probably by Sir
Robert Taylor
*(photo Georgian
Group: ref a3499)*



33

1770
1780



34.
HOLGATE ROAD,
YORK:
1st floor a rather
flat chimneypiece
in timber with
narrow flankin
pilasters and a
mantelshelf with
mouldings of the
Ionic order
*(photo NMR:
ref BB71/7387)*

34

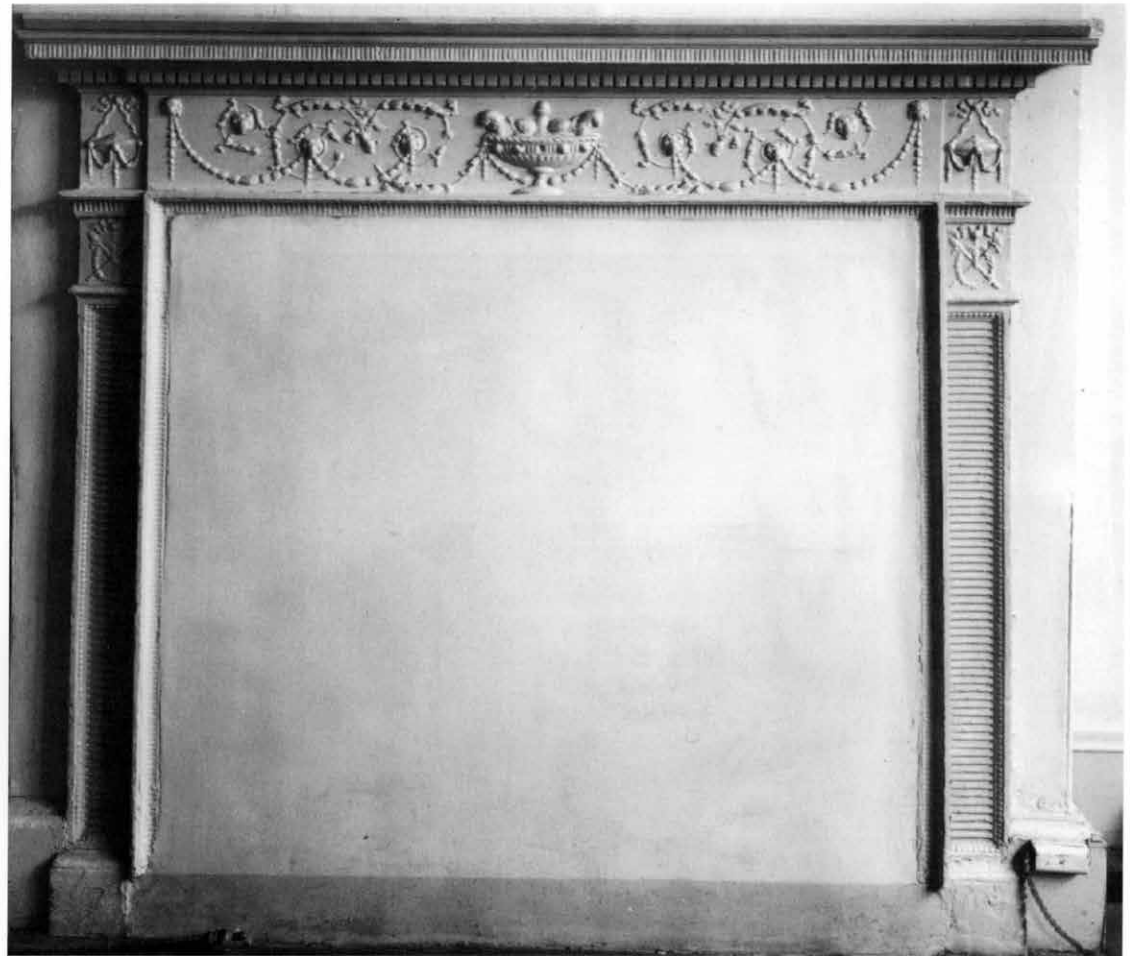
35



35.
CRICHEL,
DORSET,
dining room
chimneypiece, a
very fashionable
chimneypiece by
James Wyatt, of
various marbles
with broad
proportions and
double columns
(photo Country Life)

1780
1790

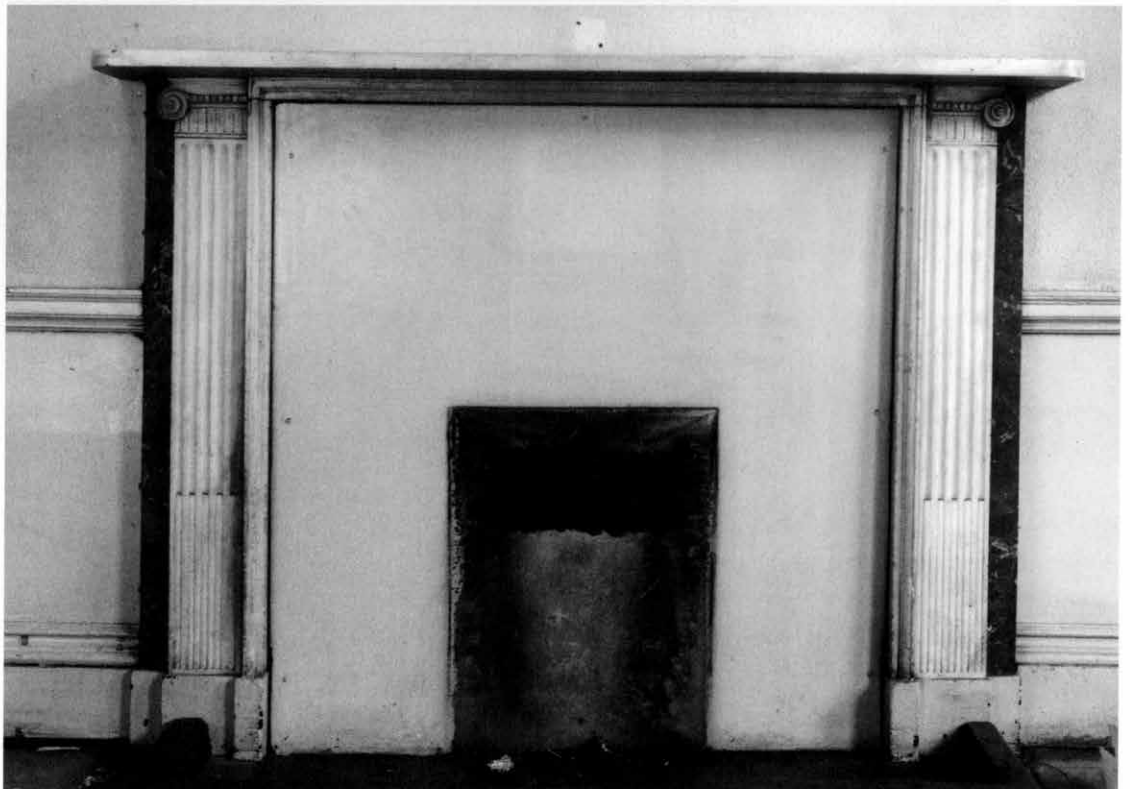
36.
YORK,
MICKLEGATE,
ground floor front
room, a timber
chimneypiece with
applied ornaments
in papier mâché
(*photo NMR:
ref CC71/853*)



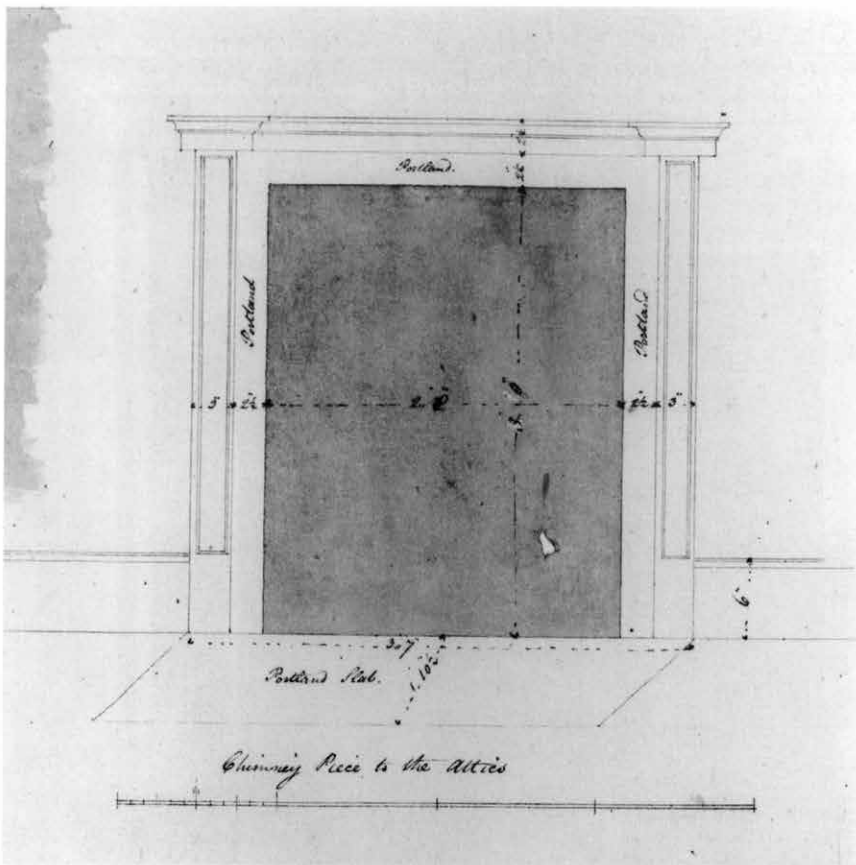
36

37

37.
LONDON,
BEDFORD SQUARE,
L B CAMDEN
a white statuary
marble surround
with Greek Ionic
half-pilasters
directly supporting
a plain marble
mantelshelf
(*photo Georgian
Group*)



1780
1790



38

38.
MIDDLESEX,
Bentley Priory:
design by Sir John
Soane for attic
chimneypiece;
Portland stone slips
enclosed in timber
with plain sunk
panels to the jambs
(photo Sir John
Soane's Museum:
ref 81/1/20)

39



39.
DODDINGTON
HALL, CHESHIRE,
bedroom
chimneypiece, a
very plainly
moulded timber
surround of the
late 1780s
(photo Country Life)

1790
1800

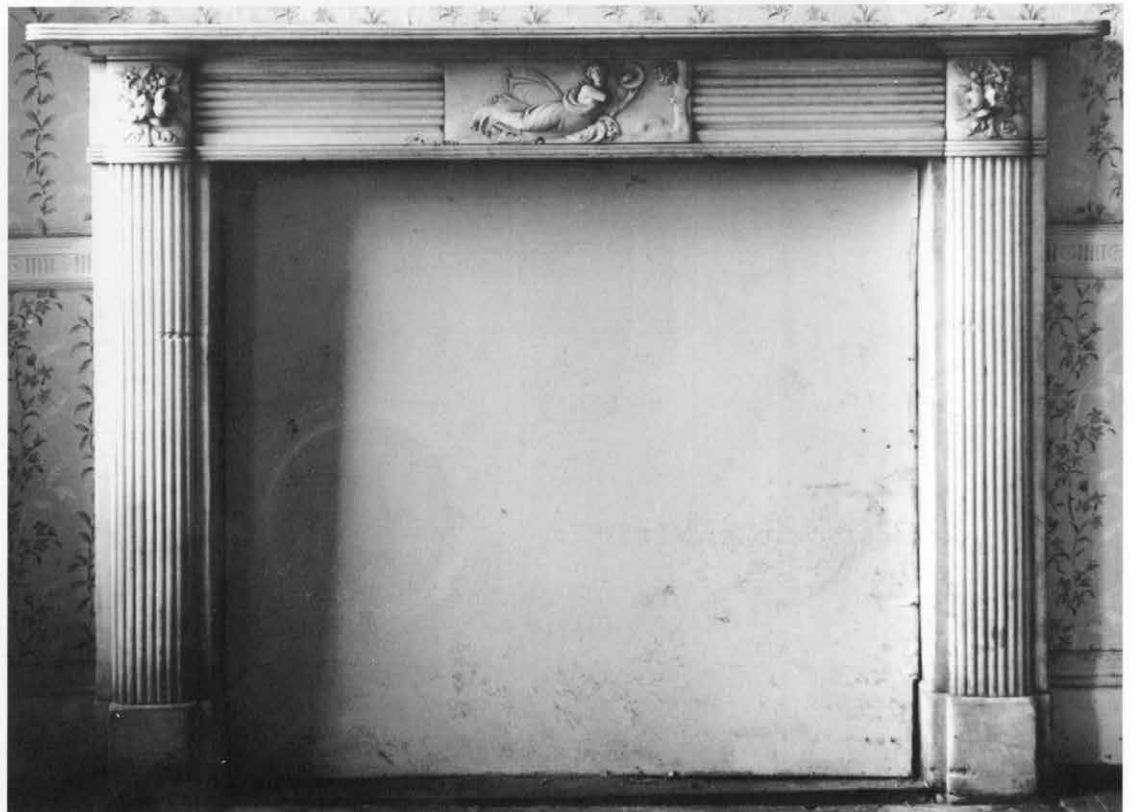
40.
DORSET,
MARKET STREET,
POOLE;
a timber
chimneypiece with
an unusual
treatment of the
mantelshelf which
is bowed out over
the reeded side
columns
*(photo NMR:
ref DM 1034)*

40

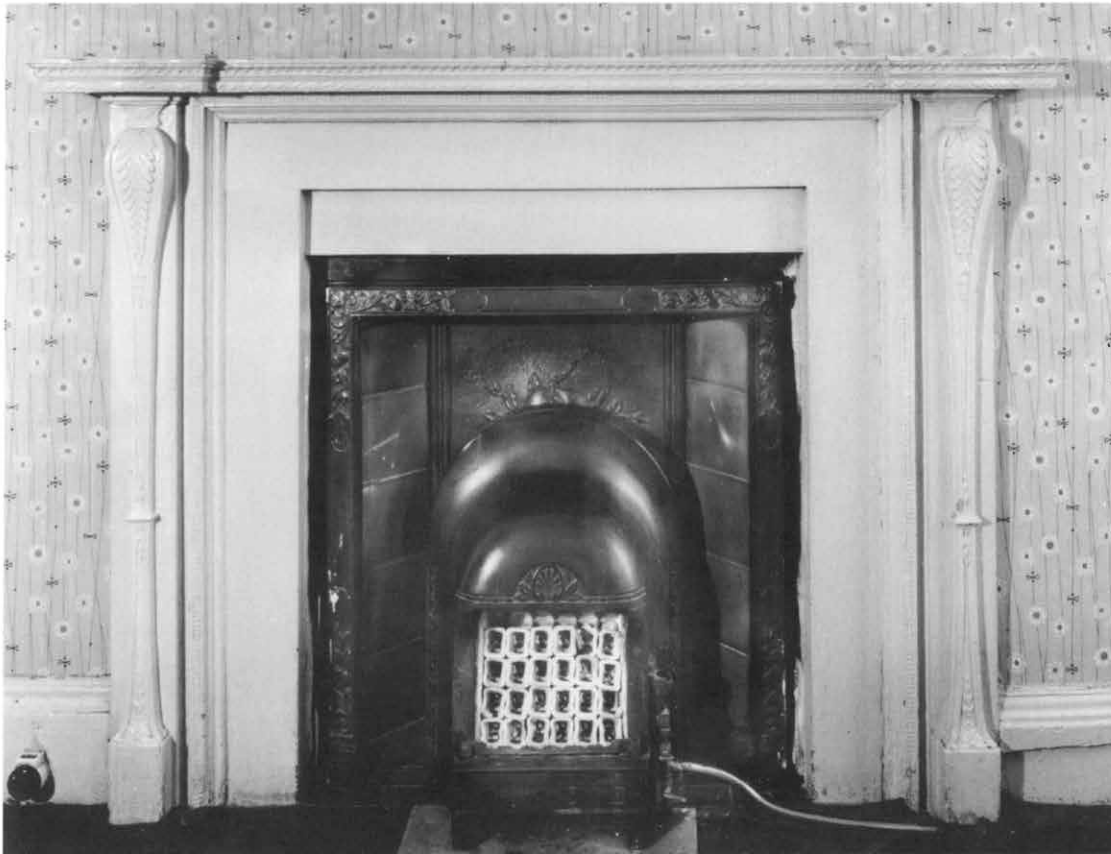


41

41.
LONDON,
KENNINGTON
ROAD, L B
LAMBETH:
white statuary
marble with
slightly convex
reeded jambs and
naturalistic floral
carving at the upper
corners
*(photo LMA:
ref 67/00404)*



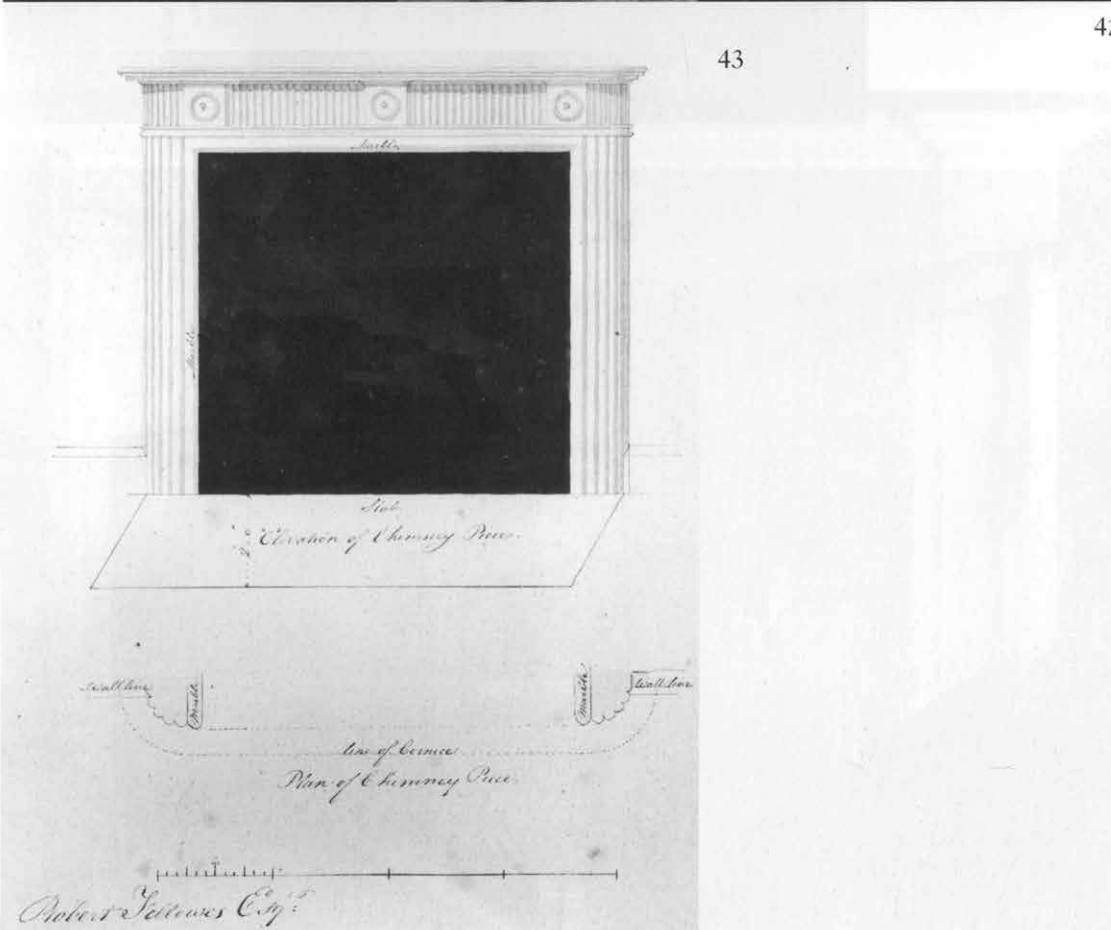
1790
1800



42.
LONDON,
MONTPELIER ROW,
L B LEWISHAM:
a timber
chimneypiece
clearly derived
from contemporary
furniture design
(photo LMA:
ref. 63/0352)

42

43



43.
Design for a
chimneypiece by
Sir John Soane,
probably intended
to be made of
stone or timber
with thin marble
slips; the
combination of
reeding and
roundels differs
from the common
"Regency" pattern
(photo Sir John
Soane's Museum:
ref 81/1/28)

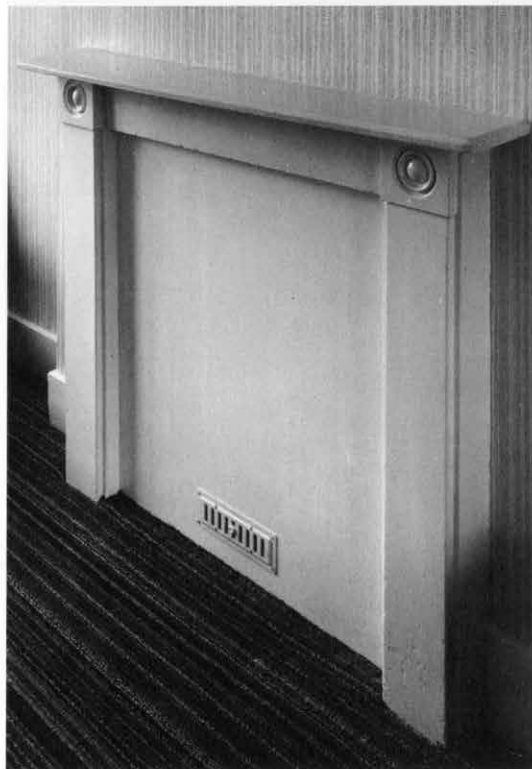
1800
1810

44.
LONDON,
MONTAGUE
STREET, L B
CAMDEN:
timber surround
with an oversized
later mantelshelf
(photo LMA:
ref 86/120/061/110)



44

45.
LONDON,
BEDFORD PLACE,
L B CAMDEN:
2nd floor rear; a
cheap stone
chimneypiece –
now painted – with
plain jambs and
roundels
(photo LMA:
ref 70/4/HB/3232)



45

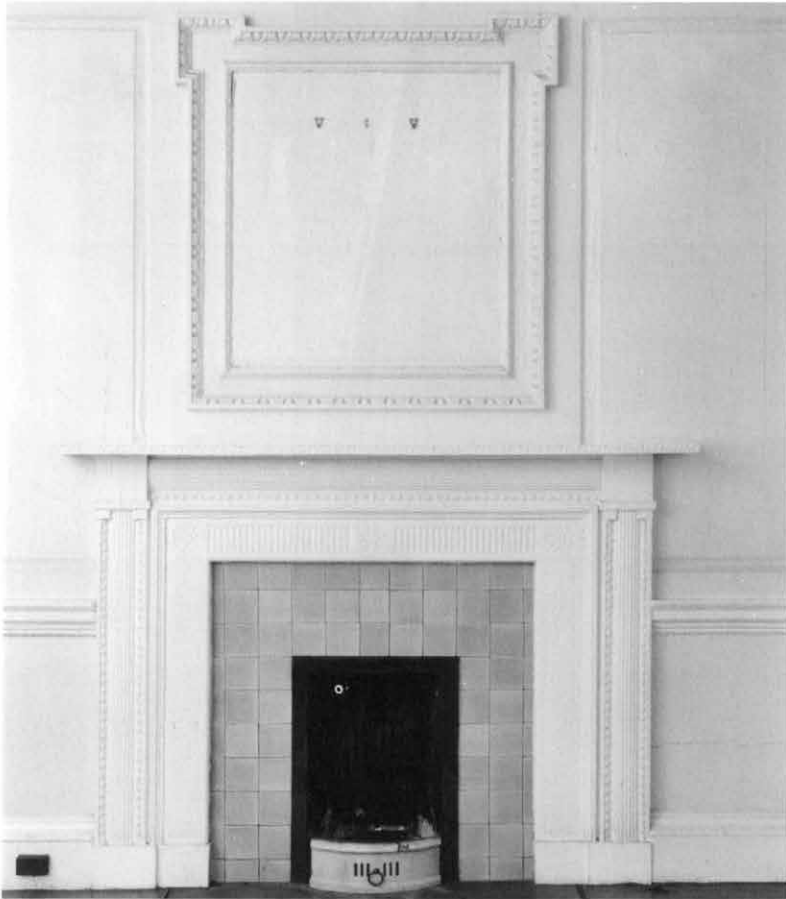
46.
FLAUDEN,
HERTS:
a very plain and
simple
chimneypiece of
stone and timber
(photo NMR:
ref BB78/8667)



46

1800

1810



47

47.
YORK,
BOOTHAM:
1st floor front room;
an elaboration of
the reeded
surround type;
possibly there were
originally
ornaments in the
upper angles
*(photo NMR:
ref YC 680)*

48



48.
ENCOMBE HOUSE,
DORSET:
an elaborate carved
stone chimneypiece
with a broad hearth
opening
*(photo NMR: ref
BB71/11,875)*

1810
1820

49.
LONDON,
TREDEGAR
SQUARE, L B
TOWER HAMLETS:
1st floor front room;
a good example of
the reeding and
roundel type with
heavier mouldings
than early
examples,
probably in stone
or marble but
painted over
(photo LMA:
ref 73/120/256/6)



49

50

50.
CAMBRIDGE,
HILDERSHAM
HALL:
an ungainly timber
neo - Jacobean
chimneypiece
(photo NMR:
ref BB78/5246)



1810
1820



51

51.
LONDON,
REGENT SQUARE,
L B : basement
rear room; a plain
stone surround in
the servants'
quarters of a
London terrace
House
(*photo LMA:*
ref 85-1178)

52



52.
Illustration from
Ackermann
Repository 1816; a
chimneypiece of
Mona Marble in
the Tudor style

1820
1830

53.
LONDON,
WHITEHALL,
Treasury office,
L B Westminster:
designed by Sir
John Soane and
made in stone or
marble – a massive
stylised version of
the reeding and
roundel type
(*photo NMR:*
ref WI 9)

53

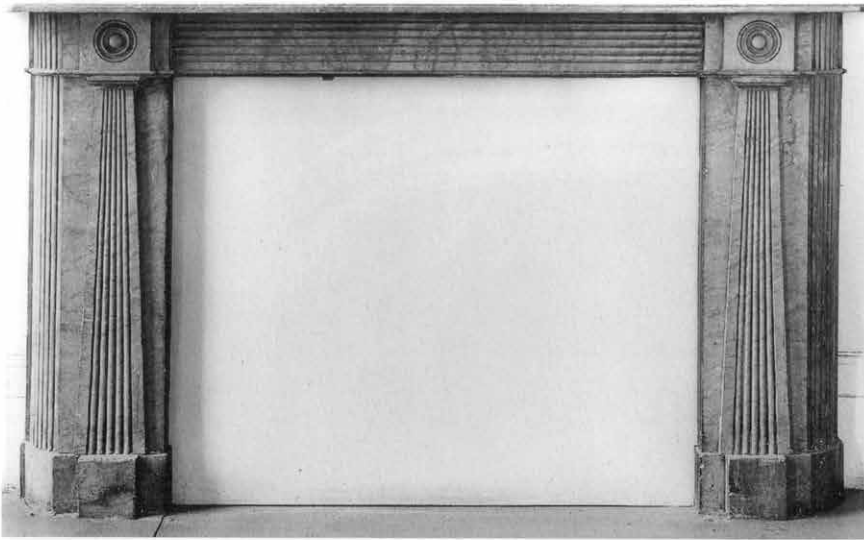


54

54.
BATH,
BATHWICK HILL:
dining room; a
timber
chimneypiece with
applied
composition
ornament
(*photo NMR:*
ref AA471/1043)



1820
1830



55

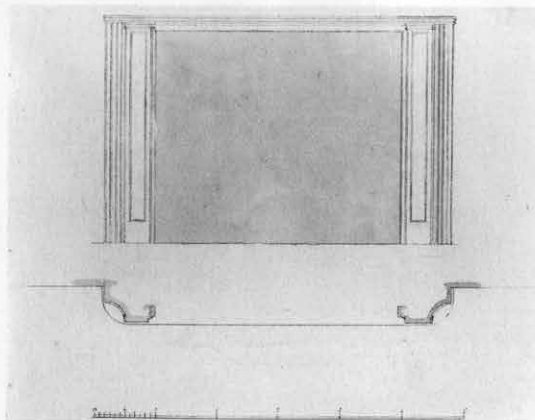
55.
LONDON,
RICHMOND
TERRACE, L B
WESTMINSTER:
reeding and
roundel presented
in the primitive
Greek manner
*(photo NMR:
ref. BB69/4535)*



56

56.
LONDON,
ALWYNE VILLAS,
L B ISLINGTON:
a classic reeding
and roundel
chimneypiece in
marble; the grate is
later
*(photo LMA:
ref 76/673)*

57



57.
Design by Sir John
Soane, 1825
*(photo Soane
Museum: ref 81/1/9)*

1830
1840

58.
LONDON,
CARLTON HOUSE
TERRACE:
staircase hall; a very
heavy marble
chimneypiece with
unexpected
references to the
1720s in the raised
moulded
decoration
(*photo NMR:
ref. BB67/3463*)



58

59.
NEWTON
LONGVILLE,
BUCKS:
ground floor;
reeding and
roundel with an
additional central
roundel
(*photo NMR:
ref BB63/1175*)



59

1830
1840



60.
LONDON,
LLOYD STREET,
L B ISLINGTON:
reeding and
roundel in white
statuary marble
*(photo LMA: ref
73/7/120/346B/7)*

61

60



61.
LONDON,
GLENGALL
TERRACE,
SOUTHWARK,
ground floor rear; a
very plain stone or
marble surround:
the standard
builders' alternative
to reeding and
roundel
*(photo LMA
ref: 74/994)*

A SHORT READING LIST

PATTERN BOOKS

William Kent: *Designs of Inigo Jones with some Additional Designs* (1727)

Abraham Swan: *The British Architect* (1738)

Batty Langley: *The Builder's Director* (1747)

Abraham Swan: *Designs for Chimneypieces* (1748)

Isaac Ware: *The Compleat Body of Architecture* (1756)

William Chambers: *A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture* (1759)

Thomas Chippendale: *The Gentleman and Cabinet maker's Director* (1762)

John Crunden: *The Chimneypiece Maker's Daily Assistant* (1766)

William Pain: *The Practical Builder, or Workman's General Assistant* (1774)

MODERN WORKS

S Ramsay & J Harvey: *Smaller Georgian Houses and their Details 1750–1820* (1919/23, new edn. 1977)

Alison Kelly: *A Book of English Fireplaces* (1978)

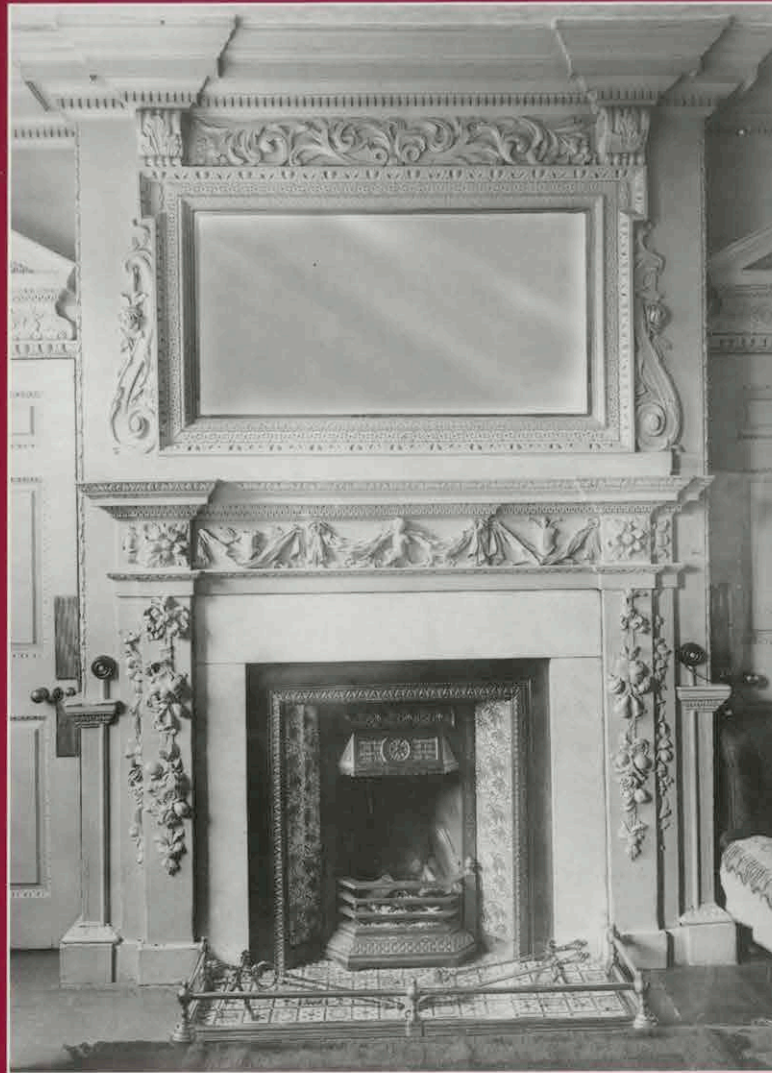
Nicholas Hills: *The English Fireplace* (Quiller Press 1983)

Roxana McDonald: *The Fireplace Book* (Architectural Press 1984)

Christopher Gilbert & Anthony Wells–Cole: *The Fashionable Fireplace* (Leeds City Art Galleries 1985)

Andrew Byrne: *London's Georgian Houses* (1986)

Alastair Laing: The English Eighteenth Century Chimneypiece in The Fashioning and Functioning of the Country House, *Studies in the History of Art*, 25 (National Gallery of Art, Washington 1989)



(photo Georgian Group)

An Elaborate timber chimneypiece and overmantel from the 1720s in the principle room of a house in Highgate, North London



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