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MARGARET FARRINGTON: SOCIABILITY AND SANITY IN GEORGIAN ENGLAND

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Margaret Farrington was a single woman declared to be a lunatic in 1765 and moved with legal authority from a fashionable London residence to lodgings in her home town, Newcastle upon Tyne. Analysis of her possessions in an inventory and biographical details recovered by subsequent research suggest a life immersed in the sociability of the metropolis before her illness. Her subsequent care by her relatives is documented; this may have been a more typical form of care than institutional provision for people with mental illness, although the latter has received much more attention in previous literature.

Keywords: Georgian England; sociability; mental health; kinship networks; inventory; spinster

Social relations in Georgian Britain were governed by the concept of politeness, a belief among wealthy families that their education, money and social status produced behaviours that were balanced, undemonstrative, respectful and congenial.¹ One of the most feared challenges to the established order of society was mental illness. Insanity could ruin carefully-amassed family finances, taint the family name and reputation, and lead to exclusion from polite society.² For the victim, in an age before modern psychiatric medicine, a diagnosis could bring isolation, humiliation and sometimes violence. They were to be hidden from the sight of respectable people. This article examines the case of Margaret Farrington of Newcastle upon Tyne, who lived in London before she suffered from mental illness. Details of her life are few, and the most detailed information comes from an inventory of her possessions made by her legal guardian, William Clayton.³ Additional information on Margaret's illness was obtained from the Royal Letters Patent obtained to legalise her care by

¹ Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes: Consumption and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England' In: *The Consumption of Culture 1600–1800: Image, Object and Text*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 362.

² Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull, *Customers and Patrons of the Mad-Trade: The Management of Lunacy in Eighteenth-Century London* (University of California Press, 2003), p. 47.

³ Newcastle University Special Collections GB 186, Miscellaneous Manuscripts 12, W. Clayton Account book 1765–1781.

Clayton, from parish registers and probate records.⁴ Although sparse, these documents provide an insight into the social life of a provincial spinster in the capital, and an opportunity to compare the care that she received in her distress with the evolution of care for people experiencing insanity in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is regrettable that there are no surviving sources, such as letters, to hear Margaret's voice, and to learn if her affliction was constant, or if she was able to interact with the people and her environment during her illness, as some women diagnosed with insanity, such as Dorothea Fellowes, could.⁵

Evidence of a Life

Margaret Farrington's life and illness, including an inventory of her possessions drawn up in 1765 [Appendix 1], were recorded in a notebook initially used by William Clayton. This inventory is significant because it is a rare opportunity to examine ownership of consumer goods by a woman in Georgian Britain. Her status as an unmarried woman is key to this: as Amanda Vickery noted 'Married women's choices are concealed in the sources, since only spinsters and widows fell under the jurisdiction of probate, and inventory data dwindles in most areas after 1740'.⁶ As a spinster, she could own property and a business, and take out loans.⁷ Her situation was very different to that of married women who 'lacked an independent legal identity' and whose property, according to the legal principle of coverture, belonged to their husbands.⁸ Georgian society and many women (including Lady Elizabeth Montagu) disapproved of women who did not seek matrimony, but for those women who did not wish to be controlled by a husband, remaining single was 'a chance to live fuller and happier lives'.⁹ Margaret Farrington's single status may not have been by choice and she was not unique, as estimates suggest that there was a higher female population in London from the end of the seventeenth century and into the nineteenth century.¹⁰ This imbalance left a significant number of women unable to marry. As Bridget Hill noted, 'women of genteel upbringing, but with empty purses' (as Margaret Farrington's possessions indicate her to have been) were in particular difficulty due to societal stigma about them taking up work.¹¹ If Hill is correct that unmarried women were viewed as

⁴ Northumberland Archives, ZSW/642, Letters Patent granting custody of person of Margaret Farrington of Titchfield St. in Marylebone (Mddx) spinster and a lunatic to Wm. Clayton of Newcastle on Tyne esq., and also the management of her estates, 4th December 5 George III 1764.

⁵ Anna Jamieson, "'Comforts in her Calamity': Shopping and Consumption in the Late Eighteenth-Century Madhouse", *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 55.1 (2021), 83–102.

⁶ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 3.

⁷ David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby, 'Single People and the Material Culture of the English Urban Home in the Long Eighteenth Century' In: *Single Life and the City 1200–1900*, ed. Julie De Groot, Isabelle Devos, and Ariadne Schmidt (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 205.

⁸ Akihiro Suzuki, *Madness at Home: The Psychiatrist, The Patient and the Family in England 1820–1860* (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 2006), p. 23.

⁹ Derek Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth* (St Albans, Paladin, 1976), p. 121.

¹⁰ Bridget Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 225.

¹¹ Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics*, p. 231; Jamieson, "'Comforts in her Calamity'", 91, noted that Dorothea Fellowes (c.1744–1817) owned and rented out a four-bedroom house in Twickenham Common, Middlesex, also a fashionable area, and Fellowes had an inheritance of £10,000 from her father. She contested the diagnosis of insanity and was able to purchase luxury items to control her living environment in the madhouse Fisher House, Islington.

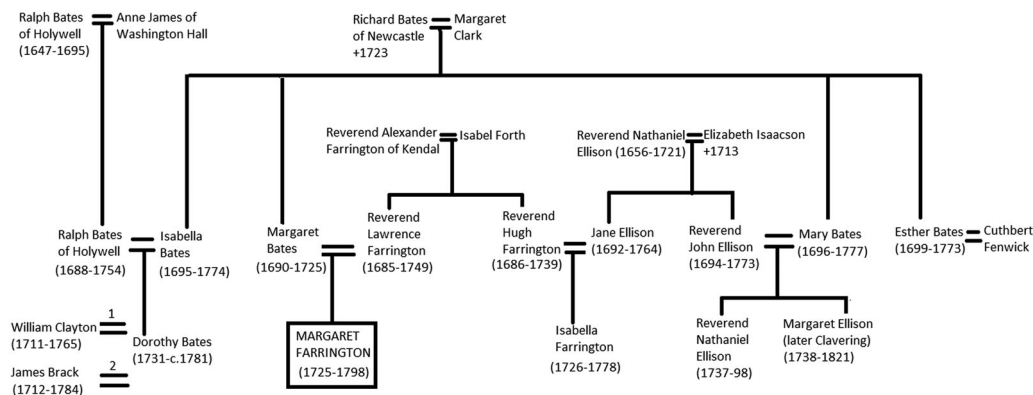


FIGURE 1. Family connections of Margaret Farrington.

‘social failures’,¹² Margaret’s diagnosis of insanity added yet more negative perceptions and confirmed contemporary misogynistic views that women as the ‘weaker sex’ were prone to irrationality.¹³ Margaret Farrington, though a spinster, was not in a position to reveal her possessions through probate because of her illness. However, her distress and the legal recourse taken by William Clayton to obtain Royal Letters Patent revealed her possessions in an inventory and provided insights into her life.

Much of the information about Margaret Farrington comes from the inventory of her possessions. Concerns have been expressed that inventories do not provide social meanings and often decontextualise objects.¹⁴ This is true of the Farrington inventory, as it is actually lists of items retained or sold off, and thus divorced from their settings within her home. Nonetheless the lists provide valuable insights into her life as she had retained these items whilst sane. Their meaning to Margaret is strongly stated in the inventory with phrases such as ‘Several manuscript sermons belonging to the Lunatic’s late father’ (a physical link through his handwriting to her father and recalling his voice that Margaret heard when he was preaching). The ‘pictures of her father and mother’, the inscribed silver cup from Whitehaven, pieces of plate and furniture, and even ‘books, pamphlets, plays, and novels’, may have had ‘little value’ in financial terms but were powerful recollections for an orphan of family and time spent together. Details of Margaret’s possessions and care revealed in the notebook and inventory are enhanced by other sources to enable comparisons with studies of sociability among Georgian women in the first half of her life, and the development of mental healthcare in England in her later years.

Reconstructing a Life

Margaret Farrington was baptised at All Saints Church in Newcastle upon Tyne on 9th December 1725 (Figure 1). She was the only child of the Reverend Lawrence

¹² Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics*, p. 226.

¹³ Roy Porter, *Mind-forg’d Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 105.

¹⁴ Vickery and Breen, cited in Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600–1750* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 89.

Farrington and Margaret Bates.¹⁵ They married in All Saints Church, Newcastle, on 2nd February 1724. Margaret Bates was one of the four daughters and co-heiresses of Richard Bates, a Newcastle alderman and a member of the town's Merchant Adventurers Company, the trading guild that held exclusive rights to export goods from the River Tyne and whose members dominated the Newcastle Corporation. Margaret Bates inherited £3,000 from her father on his death in 1723.¹⁶ Thus Lawrence Farrington married into a long-established Newcastle family and one with very substantial mercantile wealth. Tragically, Mrs Margaret Farrington did not survive her daughter's birth, for she was buried on 6th November 1725.¹⁷ Her daughter's baptism was a month after her burial. Mrs Farrington's fate recalls the terrible risks that childbirth involved for young women, even those from wealthy families.

Reverend Lawrence Farrington was not a native of Newcastle; he was baptised at Kendal, Westmorland, on 20th August 1685. His brother, the Reverend Hugh Farrington (1686–1739), a fellow of St John's College, University of Cambridge, was vicar of Elsdon in Northumberland and lecturer at All Saints Church, Newcastle, from 1715 until his death in 1739.¹⁸ The Farrington family history explains some of Margaret Farrington's possessions in 1765. Lawrence and Hugh were the sons of the Reverend Alexander Farrington (1660–1712), vicar and schoolmaster of Kendal in Westmorland and his wife Isabel Forth.¹⁹ Alexander Farrington was a noted preacher and after his death his sons divided his collection of sermons between themselves to use in their own sermons.²⁰ Lawrence Farrington's eloquence as a preacher was noted on his ledger stone and 'Several manuscript sermons belonging to the Lunatic's late father' were noted among Margaret Farrington's possessions in 1765. Another heirloom was a 'piece of family plate being a silver cup with a cup of 33 oz 7 valued at £4 10d per ounce, which appears by an inscription thereon to be a gift of the town of Whitehaven to the Lunatic's Grandfather'. This gift may have followed a disputed election for the post of preacher at Whitehaven in 1694. Reverend Alexander Farrington was elected, but a disagreement between the parishioners led to a second election which he lost. It was noted that many of those who supported Farrington 'were "substantial", either as contributors to the new chapel or as pew holders'.²¹ These wealthier parishioners may have given the silver cup to Alexander Farrington to show their appreciation of his abilities.

Hugh Farrington had three children with his wife Jane Ellison (1692–1764). She was the daughter of the Reverend Nathaniel Ellison of Newcastle (1636–1721). Her brother Reverend John Ellison (1694–1773) married Mary Bates (1696–1777),

¹⁵ Baptised at All Saints Church, Newcastle, on 23 March 1689.

¹⁶ Durham University Library Special Collections [DULSC], DPRI/1/1723/B3, Will of Richard Bates of Newcastle.

¹⁷ All Saints Church, Newcastle upon Tyne, burial register, 6 November 1725.

¹⁸ *Six North Country Diaries*, Surtees Society CXVIII (1910), p. 69, n.11.

¹⁹ *Antiquary on Horseback: The First Publication of the Collections of the Rev. Thomas Machell, Chaplain to King Charles II, Towards a History of the Barony of Kendal*. Transcribed and Edited by Jane M. Ewbank (Kendal: Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, 1963), p. 60, n. 60.

²⁰ *Six North Country Diaries*, Surtees Society, CXVIII (1910), p. 69, n. 11.

²¹ Christine Churches, 'Sir John Lowther and Whitehaven, 1642–1706. The Relations of a Landlord with his Estate'. University of Adelaide unpublished PhD thesis, <https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/19479/2/02whole.pdf>, pp. 230–234.

Margaret Farrington's aunt and another co-heiress of Richard Bates.²² Hugh and Jane's son and one daughter predeceased them. Isabell, their other daughter, died in 1778. There is no mention in Hugh or Isabell's wills of Margaret Farrington. Isabell was a spinster when she died and left gifts of money to named friends and their children.²³ Isabell appears to have played no part in her cousin's care from 1765–1778, when Margaret is mentioned in William Clayton's account book.

Lawrence Farrington continued his career in the Anglican Church after his wife's death in childbirth. Even before their marriage he was appointed as parish priest of All Saints Church, Monk Sherborne, Hampshire, on 13th December 1722. He was buried there in March 1749/50.²⁴ His ledger stone recorded (in Latin):

Here lies buried Laurence Farrington M.A. Vicar of this Parish. In theology and culture most skilled. In whose sermons Directness of Speech was happily tempered with finesse, and weight of reasoning with Christian simplicity. Who happily blended in his manners the great refinements of a courtier with the venerable severity of a Cleric. He both understood and sought to practise the delights of many languages, but he preferred to devote his many mental gifts to his religion, rather than to his reputation. He died March 20th, 1749, aged 64.²⁵

These references to Lawrence Farrington's 'theology and culture' and 'great refinements as a Courtier' alluded to his qualification as a Master of Arts, fellowship of Queen's College, University of Oxford, and his position as Chaplain to the duke of Chandos.²⁶ James Brydges, first duke of Chandos (1674–1744), lived a 'princely' life-style at his mansion Cannons in Middlesex, which he rebuilt in palatial style and filled the house with art and music.²⁷

Connections to the aristocracy, such as Margaret's father's service as the chaplain to the duke of Chandos, gave young women access to the 'private palaces' of London, particularly the magnificent houses around St James's Square, where Chandos was one of the fourteen aristocrats living there in 1721.²⁸ The Square was close to St James's Palace, the principal residence of Kings George I and George II and of the Royal Family. In these sumptuous residences royalty and aristocrats entertained their peers and those who sought to emulate their taste and obtain their patronage. As a member of the Chandos household, Reverend Farrington benefitted from the courtly and cultural connections of his patron. For example, in 1748 Farrington was a Governor of the Corporation for the Relief of Poor Widows and

²² Robert Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham: Volume 2*, Chester Ward (London: Nichols and Son, 1820), p. 79.

²³ DULSC, DPR/I/1/1778/F1/1-2, Isabell Farrington, spinster, of town and county of Newcastle upon Tyne [Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland] Will, 16 February 1778.

²⁴ *An Exact List of the Gentlemen and Other Freeholders that voted for the Knights of the Shire for the County of Southampton as the same was taken in the year 1734* (London, 1736), p. 54.

²⁵ Translation from Latin kindly provided by Mr David Cullum.

²⁶ H. R. Leighton, *The Bates of Northumberland* (Sunderland: S.A. Forster, 1905), p. 10, n. 7.

²⁷ Joan Johnson, 'Brydges, James, First Duke of Chandos' In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, 2010, <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/3806>.

²⁸ Christopher Simon Sykes, *Private Palaces: Life in the Great London Houses* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985), p. 45.

Children of Clergymen.²⁹ He may have planned to use these connections to marry his daughter Margaret to a wealthy husband, the union securing her future and, as a widower with no male heirs, ensuring that the ending of his family name was a prestigious sublimation. Ideally for Margaret, it would be a match with a loving husband to share the ‘pleasures of genteel family life’.³⁰

Life in London

The Letters Patent obtained by William Clayton stated that Margaret lived in Titchfield Street, in the London parish of Marylebone. Titchfield Street, now called Great Titchfield Street, runs north from Oxford Street. On John Rocque’s map of 1746, Titchfield Street was laid out as far as the junction with Mortimer Street, but much of the eastern side were gardens and beyond the street was still fields.³¹ Margaret lived in one of the many new streets created in the eighteenth century on the lands of aristocrats to the north and west of the City of London and around Whitehall. Grosvenor Square, Soho Square and Hanover Square, each comprising four terraces of houses around a communal garden for residents, stood to the south of Oxford Street, with Oxford Market on the corner of Titchfield Street and Oxford Street. To the west Cavendish Square was being laid out in 1746. Writing in 1750, the poet William Cowper noted the rapid advance of new streets across the countryside ‘Suburban villas, highway-side retreats, That dread th’ encroachment of our growing streets, Tight boxes, neatly sash’d’.³² The new houses, of standard designs, were of brick construction (following the post 1666 Great Fire of London building acts), with a basement below pavement level, a ground floor of two rooms, and two or three floors above.³³ These houses provided accommodation for wealthy families and individuals, particularly those from the provinces, to enjoy the London cultural and social scene. The area attracted professionals who, like the Reverend Farrington, who had dealings with aristocracy. In the 1770s the sculptor Joseph Nollekins (1737–1823) lived in a house on the corner of Mortimer Street and Titchfield Street, and the architect and joiner John Hobcraft (1720–1802) lived at 16 Titchfield Street.³⁴ Living here was a further means for Margaret to meet a wealthy husband, since it showed her taste, genteel manners and sociability to friends and those they knew, including potential suitors.

Margaret Farrington’s residence in London is an example of the trend noted by Joyce Ellis for wealthy single women to live in towns rather than the countryside.³⁵ Margaret was not marooned in a country house or in her father’s former parish in

²⁹ *An Abstract of the Charter Granted by His Late Majesty King Charles II ... for Erecting a Corporation for Relief of the Poor Widows and Children* (London, 1748).

³⁰ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (Yale University Press, 1998), p. 86.

³¹ Institute of Historical Research, *Layers of London*, 2021. <https://www.layersoflondon.org/>

³² Sarah Jane Downing, *The English Pleasure Garden 1660–1860* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2010), p. 25.

³³ Andrew Byrne, *London’s Georgian Houses* (London: The Georgian Press, 1986).

³⁴ Institute of Historical Research, *Layers of London*, 2021. <https://www.layersoflondon.org/>

³⁵ Joyce Ellis, “‘On the Town’: Women in Augustan England”, *History Today*, December 1995, 20–27.

rural Hampshire, but living in a prestigious part of London. Urban improvements throughout the eighteenth century, including street lighting, pavements, and public transport in the form of sedan chairs and hackney carriages, made living in British towns much more attractive for young women and widows.³⁶ London, with its close proximity of a variety of entertainments and many people of equivalent social status, offered young women an escape from boredom in the countryside or small towns. To the northwest of Margaret's house in Titchfield Street were Marylebone Gardens. These gardens, a rival to the more famous Ranelagh and Vauxhall Gardens, opened in 1650 and attracted visitors with a bowling green and gravel walks lined with fruit trees. Marylebone Gardens became popular after Daniel Gough became proprietor in 1736. He opened a banqueting room offering music and refreshments during the day for an entry fee of 12 shillings per season or sixpence per day, and suppers, dances and concerts in the evenings.³⁷ Promenading in the gardens at Vauxhall, Ranelagh and Marylebone was a means to be seen by prospective suitors and also to see the latest fashions sported by the *Beau Monde*, the leaders of taste in Georgian London.³⁸ Several British towns copied the London example and Newcastle had New Ranelagh Gardens and Spring Gardens a short distance outside the town walls from 1760.³⁹ Margaret owned a harpsichord and with her interest in music she may have listened to recitals in London's churches, danced at assemblies, and watched plays in the theatres around the Haymarket and Covent Garden.⁴⁰ Visitors noted the variety of goods and greater specialisation of shops in the capital, and ownership of the latest consumer goods in one's home provided the means to impress one's peers.⁴¹ This can be seen in the inventory of Margaret's possessions that indicate her home was a place of sociability.

Evidence of Sociability

The inventory of her possessions provides an opportunity to study the life enjoyed by Margaret Farrington in London. Although a spinster, she clearly had the means to entertain friends in her home, perhaps continuing her father's use of the house and its contents. For example, the inventory lists a settee and twenty-four chairs. This suggests that Margaret had a broad circle of friends, several of whom might visit at the same time – she was not an isolated individual. The items listed suggest that Margaret's residence (which may have been a suite of rooms if not a whole house) included a kitchen and dining room, a drawing room and at least one bedroom. There was one fender, a set of irons and a fender, a jack and three grates, suggesting at least three fireplaces. Comparison with contemporary inventories and

³⁶ Joyce Ellis, 'Regional and County Centres 1700–1840' In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Volume II 1540–1840*, ed. Peter Clark (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 673–704, 695.

³⁷ Downing, *English Pleasure Garden*, pp. 17, 24–25.

³⁸ Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde; Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 66–68.

³⁹ Downing, *English Pleasure Garden*, pp. 44–45.

⁴⁰ Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 231.

⁴¹ Hester Grant, *The Good Sharps: The Eighteenth-Century Family That Changed Britain* (Vintage, 2020), p. 23.

descriptions of London houses enable a tentative reconstruction of Margaret's accommodation, with service rooms in the basement, reception rooms on the ground and first floors and bedrooms on the upper floors.⁴²

The kitchen in London terraced houses such as Titchfield Street was usually in the basement, along with storerooms, a staircase to the ground floor and sometimes servants' bedrooms (if these were not in the attic).⁴³ There was often a gap between the front wall of the house and the pavement, called an area, which provided an exposed wall of the basement for windows to light the kitchen, and there was often a door from the area into the basement, reached by steps down from the pavement. Traders could bring supplies to the service areas without using the main entrance, which could be reserved for the house owners and their peers. On the other side of the area, beneath the pavement, were vaults for coal, ashes and stores. Before the introduction of kitchen ranges in the late eighteenth century meals were cooked on a grate over an open fire in a fireplace, in Margaret's house using the copper boiler, skillet, hash pan, frying pan and kitchen utensils listed in the inventory. Joints of meat could be roasted on a spit in front of the fire or hung in front of the fire on hooks.⁴⁴ Margaret owned a jack, a device using descending weights to turn the wheel from which meat-hooks were suspended; this ensured that joints of meat cooked evenly in front of the fire. The oak table listed in the inventory was probably in the kitchen for food preparation, and Margaret's servants could buy produce at the Oxford Street market south of her house. The servants could heat the box iron on the kitchen fire to press Margaret's clothes, whilst water would be heated in the copper tea kettle for use with Margaret's tea parties.⁴⁵

The main entrance in a London terrace house led into a hall, where the stairs were located and doors to the rooms on this level. The use of rooms changed throughout the eighteenth century, but if Margaret owned the whole house, as the amount of furniture suggests, the front room on the ground floor may have been a dining room. Here were the 'large mahogany dining table', 'six mahogany chairs with leather bottoms (several of them broken)', nine pewter dishes, two dozen plates and two dishes, six soup plates, a soup spoon, twelve brown hafted knives and forks and a case of china hafted knives and forks for fine dining, seven table spoons and twelve jelly glasses for service dessert. Atop the dining table would sit four French plate candlesticks. Margaret may have had beeswax candles in these candlesticks when she entertained her friends, so that they would note the higher expenditure on cleaner wax candles rather than the utilitarian, and smelly, tallow candles employed day-to-day and routinely by middling and poorer people.⁴⁶

The rear room on the ground floor was often a parlour, with a window onto the garden or yard. This was a more private room, perhaps where Margaret wrote to

⁴² Greig, *Beau Monde*, p. 40.

⁴³ Dan Cruickshank and Neil Burton, *Life in the Georgian City* (London: Viking, 1990), p. 53.

⁴⁴ Cruickshank and Burton, *Georgian City*, p. 79.

⁴⁵ The location of the kitchen in the basement or cellar was a common Georgian feature and reconstructions can be seen in several museums, including Joseph Pickford's House in Derby and the Georgian House, Bristol. A copper tea kettle and clothes irons are positioned on the kitchen range in the reconstructed layout of Joseph Pickford's House, Derby (Pickford's House, Derby, <https://www.derbymuseums.org/collection/period-rooms/>).

⁴⁶ Cruickshank and Burton, *Georgian City*, p. 75; Greig, *Beau Monde*, p. 42.

friends and relatives in Newcastle using the contents of the writing box later valued at one shilling. The £3 mahogany desk and the mahogany leaf table, with the spider table (so called because of the fashion for very narrow legs), and the chest of walnut tree drawers may also have been in the parlour, with some of the dozen chairs also listed. Here Margaret may also have kept the 'pictures of her father and mother' and the 'piece of family plate being a silver cup with a cup of 33 oz 7 valued at £4 10d per oz, which appears by an inscription thereon to be a gift of the town of Whitehaven to the Lunatic's Grandfather'.

Whilst dining with one's peers was often visible to passers-by on the street, a public statement of wealth and hospitality, whenever possible the drawing room, the principal space for entertainment, was located on the first floor to be out of public sight, indicating a more exclusive enactment of elite sociability. Drawing rooms often occupied the whole of the front of the house to provide two or three sash windows to light the interior. In the evenings, the 'three damask curtains' could be closed and the 'two lacquer'd sconces' provided candle light (wax not tallow), supplemented by mirrors to reflect the light, perhaps the '2 Glass frames ('broke to pieces and none of the glass remaining £0 10s') noted' in the inventory. The Wilton carpet (£5 5s) may have been a feature of this room, along with the six mahogany chairs and settee (usually positioned against a wall). Some indication of the polite pleasures enjoyed in the drawing room were the mahogany tea table, a 'Japan tea kettle' and lamp, a 'Japan'd tea chest', a 'mahogany teaboard', a 'small teaboard', a 'copper tea kettle', '7 tea spoons, tongs and a drainer' (of silver and valued at 19s 9d), and 'an old coffee pot'. The 'waiter' was the most valuable possession in Margaret's inventory, made of 25 ounces of silver and valued at £7 10s 3d. Waiters, or salvers, were flat trays with raised rims and often with feet so that they could stand on a table. They were frequently used whilst taking tea or chocolate. Waiters were intended for display and were often engraved with family insignia or inscriptions.⁴⁷ The second-most valuable item, a silver tankard of 27 ounces valued at £7 3s 3d was also primarily a display item, alongside the waiter.⁴⁸ Taking tea with company was an important social ritual for Georgian ladies, especially as coffee houses tended to be male preserves. The tea table was a place for 'feminine confederacy, gossip and slander' and 'a hallmark of female gentility'.⁴⁹ Margaret could use the 'small hand bell' to summon her servants to serve drinks to the company in the drawing room. The two card tables indicated another popular drawing room pastime. The first floor might also have a library or music room. Margaret's harpsichord indicated her musical accomplishments (as society expected of young ladies⁵⁰), whilst the 'book-case with a Chinese house on it' may have held the manuscript sermons, 'books, pamphlets, plays, and novels of little value'. The 'Indian cabinet' may also have stood in this room, along with some of the dozen chairs.

⁴⁷ Timothy Schroder, *National Trust Book of English Domestic Silver 1500–1900* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1988), pp. 206–207.

⁴⁸ Schroder, *English Domestic Silver*, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 274–275.

⁵⁰ Richard Leppert, 'Social Order and the Domestic Consumption of Music. The Politics of Sound in the Policing of Gender Construction in Eighteenth-Century England' in Bermingham and Brewer, *Consumption of Culture*, p. 517.

The references to India, China and Japan show that Margaret possessed items in the fashionable Chinoiserie style. Furniture, porcelain, wallpaper and tea drinking created what the Georgians imagined the exotic lands of the East to be like, though India, Japan and China were conflated into one image, internationalised further by the mahogany furniture (a product of Britain's flourishing slave trade in the Caribbean). The mix of identities recalls the description by Mrs Elizabeth Montagu, the famous bluestocking and colliery owner of Denton Hall in Newcastle, of her London house at 23 Hill Street, Mayfair. She was 'one of the first hostesses to create a room in Chinese style' in which to entertain her friends, describing it as 'like the Temple of some Indian god ... the curtains are Chinese pictures on gauze ... the chairs Indian fan-sticks with cushions of Japan satin painted'.⁵¹ If Margaret Farrington had not seen Mrs Montagu's drawing room she may have heard others describe it and she created a similar artifice in her own house in emulation.

The second floor would be given over to bedrooms containing the 'bedstead and curtains' worth £3, with the 'carpit and bedside carpit', the 'set of fire irons', 'a feather bed, bolster and pillow', large case of oak drawers, small mahogany case, and the listed bed linen comprising 'three pair of old sheets almost worn out' and three blankets. In addition to bedrooms there may have been a dressing room or closet, as three dressing glasses and a set of dressing boxes were listed, along with 'a port manteau' and a screen. Finally, 'all her wearing apparel with a gold watch' were listed. Atop the house, there may have been servants' bedrooms in the attic. The absence of items for servants may indicate that these were dispersed when Margaret's London servants were dismissed prior to her move to Newcastle. It is notable that 'wearing apparel' describes all of Margaret's clothes, which were not itemised (perhaps indicating that the list of her belongings was made by a man) and there was no mention of any jewels (other than the gold watch). A well-to-do woman would be expected to wear jewellery when entertaining or socialising,⁵² and bequests of jewellery were made by Margaret's female relatives: for example, her aunt Esther Fenwick bequeathed 'a Girdle Buckle set with Diamonds', 'Diamond Hoopings' and 'a pearl necklace with a Diamond loop'.⁵³ William Clayton may have retained any jewellery or it may have been sold in London. There is no mention in the documents of money from the sale of the London house or an inheritance from her father. Clayton may have used any money to pay for Margaret's care, or the exhaustion of funds spent in medical fees may have precipitated her move to Newcastle.

There is no information on Margaret's financial situation and how she could afford to live in London without the income of her father or a husband. She may have had periods of employment, for example as a governess. It is likely that the house was rented by or belonged initially to her father and Margaret inherited it, and many of the items in the inventory, on his death in 1749. Even if the house was rented, Margaret owned all of the furniture listed in the inventory; she was not relying upon a landlord to furnish her rooms, as occurred with many working people

⁵¹ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House. Great Ladies and Grand Houses* (London: Phoenix, 2004) p. 197.

⁵² Greig, *Beau Monde*, p. 48.

⁵³ DULSC, DPRI/1/1773/F2, Will of Esther Fenwick, 27 February 1764.

living in London lodgings.⁵⁴ She may have rented out rooms in the house to lodgers, perhaps other spinsters or widows who would provide company.⁵⁵ As an only child she inherited her parents' possessions and may have received funds with which to continue to live in London. No will has been located, but it is likely that Reverend Farrington named an executor and possibly a guardian for his daughter. This may have been his brother-in-law Ralph Bates (1688–1754). Ralph Bates belonged to the senior branch of the Bates family and held substantial lands north of Newcastle at Holywell, Northumberland, close to the North Sea coast, and at Newbottle in County Durham.⁵⁶ Ralph married Isabella Bates, another of the daughters and co-heiresses of Richard Bates of Newcastle in 1723 and they must have resided some of the time in London, for Ralph died there in December 1754 and was buried in St Dunstan's Church in the West, London.⁵⁷ Isabella Bates was buried in Newcastle in 1774 (though her Will was proved in London), leaving £1,000 to their daughter Dorothy Bates (1731–1778), cousin of Margaret Farrington.⁵⁸ Dorothy married William Clayton (1711–1765). Clayton was a merchant and a member of the Merchant Adventurers Company. He served as Sheriff of Newcastle in 1750, was elected as an alderman in 1755, and served two terms as Mayor of Newcastle, in 1755 and 1763. When Margaret Farrington fell ill, she was rescued by one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in northern England.⁵⁹

Legal Moves for Insanity

The sources do not indicate how Margaret Farrington's carefully constructed world of female sociability collapsed. There are no clues to the form or cause of her illness, or any treatment she received, only the description of her as 'a lunatic'. The broken glass frames and mahogany chairs suggest some violent episodes, or they may have been damaged and not replaced as Margaret slipped into insanity over a long period. Her affliction may have followed the death of her father in 1749, and before Margaret's move to Newcastle she may have had several years of care in London.

Clayton secured Letters Patent to become Margaret's guardian and he arranged for her to move to Newcastle upon Tyne.⁶⁰ The inventory noted that Margaret's possessions were sent to Newcastle from London in boxes, cases and packages, perhaps on one of the many colliers that plied between the coalopolis of Newcastle upon Tyne and London. This was an efficient use of ships full of coal on the southward voyage but whose capacious holds were used to transport goods on the northward return. On arrival in Newcastle, Margaret's possessions were appraised by George

⁵⁴ John Styles, 'Lodging at the Old Bailey: Lodgings and Their Furnishing in Eighteenth-Century London' In: *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700–1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven & London: Yale University Press), pp. 61–80.

⁵⁵ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 211.

⁵⁶ Ralph Bates of Holywell and Richard Bates of Newcastle (Margaret Farrington's grandfather) were grandsons of Thomas Bates of Holywell, Northumberland (1591–1638).

⁵⁷ Leighton, *Bates of Northumberland*, p. 19.

⁵⁸ DULSC, DPRI/1/1774/B3, Will of Isabella Bates.

⁵⁹ Leighton, *Bates of Northumberland*, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Northumberland Archives, ZSW/642.

Lowes and Elizabeth Pattison, who valued them at a total of £69 14s 7d.⁶¹ The practice of appointing assessors to value possessions prior to sale was often undertaken following the death of the owner, with the funds raised used to pay legacies or repay debts. The appraisal and sale of Margaret Farrington's goods symbolised her social death following her affliction. She would have no further need of furniture, cutlery, or cooking utensils in her reduced circumstances in Byker. Money raised from the sale of her possessions may have paid for her lodgings. Clearly her lodgings were smaller than the home she had enjoyed in London, perhaps reduced to a room containing her bed, screen and dressing table, and another with the large mahogany dining table and the dozen chairs, though what socialising she could undertake is unclear.

Having secured legal custody of Margaret Farrington, the Claytons found lodgings for her in Byker, a village on the north bank of the River Tyne to the east of Newcastle upon Tyne. Margaret was close enough for the Claytons to look after her, but far enough away from polite society and gossip. However, William Clayton died of apoplexy at his house in Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, on 5th December 1765 aged 54.⁶² His will was proved at Durham a week later.⁶³ His death was reflected in the change of handwriting in the notebook. It is unclear who continued to add information about the care of Margaret Farrington; it may have been one of William's brothers, either the Reverend Nathaniel Clayton (1708–1786), vicar of Kirkwhelpington in Northumberland, or Snow Clayton (1717–1789), a Newcastle merchant. Snow did not marry and, with his business in Newcastle, he may have been close enough to pay for Margaret's care by his sister-in-law Dorothy.

The new handwriting in the account book came after a gap of ten years in what is known of Margaret's care from 1765. During this time, Margaret may have received the £50 bequeathed to her in the Will of her mother's sister Esther Bates (1699–1773), the widow of another Newcastle alderman Cuthbert Fenwick. Esther's will was written in 1764 and by the date of her death in 1773 Margaret was ill. The family bond remained strong, for Esther noted that if she could not be buried with her husband she was to be buried in the same grave in All Saints Church, Newcastle, 'where my Mother + Sister [Margaret] Farrington lye interred'.⁶⁴ Esther did not mention provision for her niece Margaret's care, so may have had little involvement. Responsibility continued with Dorothy, widow of William Clayton. She remarried on 30th March 1769 to James Brack of Washington (1712–1784),⁶⁵ and had two further children, James (1770–82) and Dorothea (1774–1849).⁶⁶ Although the pedigree

⁶¹ George Lowes was probably the joiner and cabinet maker who made his will 10th April 1781. He lived in Friar Chare, Newcastle upon Tyne, and died unmarried (DULSC, DPR/I/1/1781/L7/1-2, Will of George Lowes, joiner and cabinet-maker, of Newcastle upon Tyne, 10 April 1781). There is no mention of any Farringtons in his will, so his connection to Margaret remains unclear. Elizabeth Pattison may have been Elizabeth Fenkill who married George Pattison 15th September 1725 at St Nicholas Church, Newcastle (DULSC, DPR/I/1/1776/P1, Will of Elizabeth Pattison, widow, of Newcastle upon Tyne, 23 June 1775).

⁶² John Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, Part 2, vol. 3 (Newcastle, 1840), p. 421.

⁶³ DULSC, DPR/I/3/1765/A120/2, Will of William Clayton of Newcastle, 12 December 1765.

⁶⁴ DULSC, DPRI/1/1773/F2, Esther Fenwick.

⁶⁵ DULSC, DPRI/1/1784/B11, Will of James Brack of Washington, 3 January 1784.

⁶⁶ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, p. 420. Dorothea took the name Clayton in 1819 as requested in the will of her half-brother Ralph Clayton, the son of William and Dorothy.

of the Bates family states that Dorothy died in 1778, the account book had payments to her in 1779 and 1780. Dorothy must have died by 1782, as James Brack requested in his will to be buried next to his late wife and son in Washington church. The first payment for Margaret was on 31st August 1775 with a note 'pd Mrs Brack on Mrs Farrington's account £92 10s'.⁶⁷ Further payments that may relate to Margaret's care by her cousin were on 5th May 1776 'pd Mrs Brack 2 yrs rent on the Close £6 5s'; 30th October 1776 '1 years allowance due 1st March last £45'; 12th February 1778 ('due 1st December last £37 10s'); 2nd June 1778 (£15); and 3rd July 1779 (£15). The last recorded payment to 'Mrs Brack upon allowance on Mrs Farrington's acct £15' was on 8th January 1780, just before the end of the book. Margaret was 54 years old at this time. With the death of James and Dorothy Brack by 1784, there was another change in Margaret's care, but it is unclear what this involved, and there is no further information about her until a notice in *The Monthly Magazine and British Register* for 1798, recording the death of Mrs Margaret Farrington at Milbank in the parish of Lamesley.⁶⁸ According to the Lamesley parish registers, Mrs Margaret Farrington was buried on 4th February 1798.⁶⁹ Perhaps a further indicator of the stigma attached to her illness, there is no memorial in the church or churchyard for her and she may have been buried in an unmarked grave.⁷⁰ On 16th April 1798, the Reverend Nathaniel Ellison, with Charles Wren and Christopher Carnes, gentlemen of Newcastle, obtained a bond for the possessions of 'Mrs Margaret Farrington, late of Mill Bank in the Chapelry of Lamesley in the County of Durham, Spinster Deceased' in the Consistory Court at Durham Cathedral.⁷¹ The bond noted that Reverend Ellison was 'the Cousin Germain, one of the next of kin, and by Decree of Court, the administrator' of Margaret's possessions. Nathaniel Ellison (1737–1798) was the son of Mary Bates, sister of Margaret Farrington's mother Margaret Bates, through Mary's marriage to the Reverend John Ellison of Newcastle. Reverend John Ellison was the brother of Jane Ellison, Margaret Farrington's aunt, who married Reverend Hugh Farrington in 1717. Possibly, the Ellisons assumed responsibility for Margaret's care after Dorothy Brack's death c.1780.

This was not quite the end of Margaret Farrington in the historical record, for on 8th November 1798 Margaret Clavering, widow, appeared before the Durham court to gain possession of Margaret Farrington's goods, as the Reverend Nathaniel Ellison died soon after obtaining the bond in April 1798.⁷² Margaret Clavering (1738–1821) was the sister of Reverend Nathaniel Ellison and also a 'Cousin

⁶⁷ Though Margaret was unmarried, the convention of the time was to give a spinster the title Mrs, rather than Miss. Dorothy Fellowes was also described as Mrs by her family when she was incarcerated, see Jamieson, "'Comforts in her Calamity'", 89.

⁶⁸ *The Monthly Magazine and British Register*, part 1 volume 5, (London: Printed for R. Phillips, 1798), p. 150.

⁶⁹ DULSC, DDR/EA/PBT/2/163, Durham Diocese Bishop's Transcripts, Parish of Lamesley 1765–1851.

⁷⁰ Durham County Record Office, EP/Lam 14/22/1. Transcription of monumental inscriptions in the church and churchyard of Lamesley, St Andrew, compiled by J. Anderson, G. Corbett, D. Tait and K. Willans for the Northumberland and Durham Family History Society, June 1994. It is possible that a memorial was removed during the remodelling of the church in 1847 and 1883.

⁷¹ DULSC, DPRI/3/1798/A18, 16 April 1798, administration bond, penal sum £4,000; Margaret Farrington, spinster, of Mill Bank in the chapelry of Lamesley in the county of Durham.

⁷² DULSC, DPRI/3/1798/A68, 8 November 1798, administration bond, penal sum £10,000; Margaret Farrington, spinster, of Mil Bank within the chapelry of Lamesley in the county of Durham.

Germain and one of the next of kin' of Margaret Farrington.⁷³ Her family connections to the Bates, Claytons and Ellisons provided Margaret Farrington's care in her lifetime, and ensured that she did not disappear entirely from history.

Contemporary Views and Treatment of Mental Illness

Contemporary descriptions of mental illness distinguished between 'idiots', people with lifelong afflictions, and 'lunatics' whose affliction was seen as an aberration from their previous normal behaviour.⁷⁴ It is difficult to distinguish modern designations of mental health in historical sources.⁷⁵ 'Lunacy' was a very wide-ranging term covering many afflictions, including the effects of head injuries, conditions such as depression, grief and anxiety, or could be used against those who acted against societal and gendered norms of behaviour, such as childishness, or those unable to manage their business affairs.⁷⁶ Accusations of lunacy were used to remove individuals from control of property, such as Robert Hodgson of Hebburn's profligacy that eventually bankrupted his family.⁷⁷ 'Lunacy' accusations could also be used to exclude people from their inheritance or remove individuals who were inconvenient to their relatives. This was thought to be a frequent practice in the eighteenth century, and Daniel Defoe condemned the incarceration in madhouses of wives rightly displeased by their husbands' infidelities and widows 'lock'd up for the sake of their jointure'.⁷⁸ In the latter instance, an errant son could have his mother declared a lunatic to prevent her holding onto family property for the remainder of her life after her husband's death. Concerns about illegal use of lunacy allegations to incarcerate inconvenient individuals in madhouses led to a Parliamentary commission in 1763 and ultimately to the Act for Regulating Madhouses of 1774, which empowered Quarter Sessions to licence madhouses, but exempted charity asylums (such as Bethlem Hospital and St Luke's Hospital in London) and afflicted people in lodgings, such as Margaret Farrington.⁷⁹

Hogarth's image of sufferers in an asylum being mocked by paying visitors is one of the defining views of Georgian mental health provision, but it obscures both the

⁷³ Surtees, *Durham*, p. 79. Margaret Ellison had married George Clavering of Greencroft Hall, near Lanchester, County Durham, in St Andrew's Church, Newcastle, in 1777. There is no mention of Margaret Farrington in the Will of George Clavering (DULSC, DPRI/1/1794/C7, 18 June 1794), which is notable for the threats to disinherit his son and heirs if they did not abandon the Catholic faith and conform to the Church of England. Nor was Margaret Farrington mentioned in Reverend Nathaniel Ellison's will written in 1796 (DULSC, DPRI/1/1798/E1).

⁷⁴ Peter Rushton, 'Lunatics and Idiots: Mental Disability, the Community, and the Poor Law in North-East England, 1600–1800', *Medical History*, 32 (1988), pp. 34–50.

⁷⁵ A. Karenberg, 'Retrospective Diagnosis: Use and Abuse in Medical Historiography', *Prague Medical Report*, 110, no. 2 (2009), 140–145.

⁷⁶ Robert Allan Houston, 'Class, Gender and Madness in Eighteenth-Century Scotland' In: *Sex and Seclusion, Class and Custody. Perspectives on Gender and Class in the History of British and Irish Psychiatry*, ed. Jonathan Andrews and Anne Digby (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2004), pp. 45–67.

⁷⁷ Jose Bosworth, Pat Hudson, Maureen Johnson, and Denise Shillitoe, 'Sir Robert Hodgson, a Lunatic Knight: The Immediate and Long-Term Effects of Mental Breakdown on the Family of a Seventeenth-Century Gentleman', *Durham County Local History Society Journal*, 80 (2015), pp. 10–38.

⁷⁸ William L. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy* (Bungay: Routledge and Kogan Page, 1972), p. 223.

⁷⁹ Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker of the Mind*, pp. 155–160.

limited extent of incarceration and positive developments in the treatment of sufferers.⁸⁰ Suzuki observed that ‘the family was the primary locus for the care of the insane poor’,⁸¹ and Andrews and Scull noted that wealthy families often sought to avoid the costs and stigma of admitting a relation to an asylum or madhouse and instead housed them ‘in a quiet or secluded part of the country’ to be cared for by servants or family members.⁸² Within the range of medical treatments for people with mental illness, Margaret Farrington’s case fits closely with this emphasis on family care, as she was not put into an institution and lived in secluded lodgings in the villages of Byker and Lamesley, and not in the principal family residences in Newcastle and Northumberland.

As Porter noted, ‘incarceration was not government policy’ and the majority of victims were looked after by their families or communities, as with Margaret Farrington.⁸³ There were no facilities to hold large numbers of insane people: the notorious Bethlem Hospital (known colloquially as Bedlam) was the only specialist institution for insanity until the early eighteenth-century.⁸⁴ From mid-century, public feeling, motivated in many instances by Christian charity, led to the foundation of infirmaries and lunatic hospitals. Infirmaries were funded by subscriptions from wealthy individuals and town corporations. By publishing lists of subscribers, and their donations, they encouraged emulation by other moneyed individuals and also demonstrated publicly the largesse and Christian charity of subscribers.⁸⁵ The Newcastle Infirmary opened in 1753.⁸⁶ Infirmaries provided care that would enable patients to return to society and the rules of the Newcastle Infirmary excluded people with infectious diseases and long-term conditions, including lunacy.⁸⁷ Whilst private madhouses could provide for patients with relatives willing and able to pay for care, public provision for mental illness was required. St Luke’s Hospital for the Insane, founded in London in 1751, promised a more medical treatment of its inhabitants, especially as the increasingly distasteful practice of public viewing at Bethlem Hospital was banned at St Luke’s (though it still occurred).⁸⁸

St Luke’s inspired the foundation of lunatic hospitals elsewhere, including in 1765, the Newcastle lunatic hospital. This was the first provincial subscription lunatic hospital, perhaps because the distance from London gave the ‘least practical access to Bethlem and St Luke’s’.⁸⁹ The Newcastle lunatic hospital was intended for the

⁸⁰ G. Tomlinson, *The Rake’s Progress: A Series of Engravings by William Hogarth, 1697–1764* (Walton-on-Thames: Die Fledermaus Press, 2002).

⁸¹ Akihito Suzuki, ‘The Household and the Care of Lunatics in Eighteenth-Century London’ In: *The Locus of Care: Families, Communities, Institutions and the Provision of Welfare since Antiquity*, ed. P. Holden and R. Smith (London, 1998), pp. 153–75.

⁸² Andrews and Scull, *Customers and Patrons*, p. 47.

⁸³ Porter, *Mind-forg’d Manacles*, p. 11.

⁸⁴ Leonard Smith, *Lunatic Hospitals in Georgian England, 1750–1830* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2007), p. 8.

⁸⁵ Leonard D. Smith, ‘Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody’: *Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), p. 13.

⁸⁶ G. H. Hume, *The History of the Newcastle Infirmary* (Newcastle, 1906).

⁸⁷ *Rules for the Hospital for Lunatics for the Counties of Northumberland, Newcastle upon Tyne and Durham*. Undated but probably c. 1770. Newcastle Central Library Class 362.2 LO42 Local Tracts 1 Miscellaneous No 11A: NUTRHL.

⁸⁸ Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, pp. 136–137.

⁸⁹ Smith, ‘Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody’, p. 15.

afflicted of Newcastle and the adjacent counties of Durham and Northumberland. The Newcastle Corporation provided the land on ninety-nine year lease at an annual rent of two shillings and sixpence, and contributed some funds, supported by subscriptions from wealthy landowners, clerics and merchants.⁹⁰ The hospital was located at the Wardens Close, a short distance north-west of the town, but notably outside the town walls and polite society. It was designed by the leading architect of the town, William Newton (1730–1798). The public face of the building was in a restrained Georgian style, its entrance flanked by columns and topped by a pediment, looking like a country house in the fields near the town. It was described in 1800 as:

in a retired situation, airy and healthful. The conveniences are numerous; the treatment of the unhappy patients humane, and suitable to their situations; from whence many have returned perfectly recovered.⁹¹

However, Newton's plan of the building showed that behind the polite public facade, patients were held in rooms arranged like cells around the rear courtyard.⁹² This courtyard had an entrance on the side opposite the town and wide enough to admit carriages, indicating that the patients were brought in discretely through the rear of the building, with the front door only for visitors. In 1827 Eneas Mackenzie, historian of Newcastle, described the:

chains, iron bars, and dungeon-like cells, presented to the unhappy inmates all the irritating and melancholy characteristics of a prison, and, at the same time, were highly injurious to their health and lives. Many of the cells were close, dark, cold holes (less comfortable than cow-houses).⁹³

Although the Lunatic Hospital was primitive by later standards, the Corporation had made some effort to provide for sufferers, and the institution was widely supported by private subscriptions from Newcastle's leading inhabitants and by some Corporation funds. Doctors from the Newcastle Infirmary made visits to the patients of the Corporation's Lunatic Hospital.

The second type of facility for people affected by mental illness was the 'mad-house' or privately-run asylum. These premises received much criticism, contemporary and from historians, as their proprietors were believed to be motivated primarily by profit. Families were charged fees for the care of their distressed relative, though the standards of care varied widely. Some mad-houses were custodial, keeping the patient detained to prevent harm to themselves and others, but others were well-intentioned and sought to restore the patient to full health and a return to society.⁹⁴ Around the time that Margaret Farrington returned to Newcastle, a private asylum opened in the town. This was called St Luke's House and was owned by Dr John

⁹⁰ John Brand, *The History and Antiquities of the Town and County of the Town of Newcastle upon Tyne* (London, 1789), p. 422.

⁹¹ John Baillie, *An Impartial History of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne and its Vicinity* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed by & for Vint and Anderson, 1801), p. 344.

⁹² Northumberland Archives, ZBL/269/69, Sketch of a ground plan of an Hospital for Lunatics

⁹³ Eneas Mackenzie, *Historical Account of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Including the Borough of Gateshead* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1827), p. 525.

⁹⁴ Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy*, p. 168.

Hall, who was a doctor at the Newcastle Infirmary.⁹⁵ Hall proposed to the governors of the Lunatic Hospital that another story could be added to the existing building, at a cost of less than £120. The motive for this was financial, as Hall believed that each of these additional patients could be charged up to £30 per annum for their accommodation, more than £10 more than fees for the other patients. The additional sum income would pay for a further six poor people to be accommodated in lesser circumstances.⁹⁶ This is a clear example of the 'Trade in Lunacy' noted by Parry-Jones.⁹⁷ The governors declined Hall's proposal, but he clearly believed that such provision for wealthier patients would be profitable and he opened his establishment in the Spital Tongues area of Newcastle. Originally called New House, he renamed the house St Luke's (a provincial evocation of the London institution) when it became an asylum in 1766, and it was renamed Belle View Retreat in 1795 (pre-empting the well-respected The Retreat, York, opened in 1796).⁹⁸ John Boswell, brother of the famous author James Boswell, was a patient at St Luke's and James Boswell stayed at Dr Hall's house in Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, when he visited his brother.⁹⁹ Both the public and private asylums were outside Newcastle, on the Town Moor, indicating the stigma attached to mental illness. Even with these locations outside the gaze of the busy town, their locations were well known. Dr Hall advertised in the local newspapers, stating his fees were from £20 per annum in 1767.¹⁰⁰

The establishment of specialised hospitals and madhouses mirrored changes in techniques to treat sufferers. At the extreme, some practitioners believed that the violence exhibited by some patients should be met by violence from those who had charge of them: some sufferers were beaten to shock them into obedience.¹⁰¹ Insanity was viewed by some sections of society as God's judgement for misdemeanours, and the afflicted were at best moral lessons to be pitied and their examples avoided, or at worst sources of entertainment. Other practices included restraining patients by chaining them to walls or beds, or in strait-jackets. The prevailing belief was that insanity was a physical defect like 'the gout or asthma'.¹⁰² The continued belief that illness, including insanity, was due to the imbalance of body humours (dating back to Hippocrates in the fourth century BCE) determined what was done to the afflicted: forced vomiting and purging by emetics, bleeding by opening veins or by leeches, or even more painful cupping (applying hot cups to the skin to produce blisters).¹⁰³ When King George III was affected in 1788–89, his 'treatment' included

⁹⁵ P. M. Horsley, *Eighteenth Century Newcastle* (Newcastle: Oriel Press, 1981), p. 126.

⁹⁶ John Hall, *Narrative of the Proceeding Relative to the Establishment of St Luke's House* (1768), Newcastle City Library, Local Tracts L362.2 D1219.

⁹⁷ Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy*.

⁹⁸ Thomas Faulkner, Peter Beacock, and Paul Jones, *Newcastle & Gateshead: Architecture and Heritage* (Newcastle: Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2014), p. 49. This house, now named White Knights, is a private residence.

⁹⁹ J. Le Gassicke, 'History of Psychiatry on Tyneside' In: *Medicine in Northumbria: Essays in the History of Medicine*, ed. David Gardner-Medwin, Anne Hargraves, and Elizabeth Lazenby (Newcastle: Pybus Society, 1993), pp. 277–85.

¹⁰⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 3 October 1767.

¹⁰¹ Porter, *Mind-forg'd Manacles*, p. 214.

¹⁰² Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, quoted in Porter, *Mind-forg'd Manacles*, p. 39.

¹⁰³ Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy*, p. 193.

blistering his scalp and legs (to force the malady from his brain to his extremities).¹⁰⁴ He was also ‘encased in a machine which left no liberty of motion ... was chained to a stake ... frequently beaten and starved, and ... kept in subjection by menacing and violent language’.¹⁰⁵ If such treatment was fit for the ruler of the British Empire, it was not withheld from many of his poorer subjects.

Although brutality was employed by some practitioners, others looked for new treatments to cure their patients. Developments in anatomy revealed the existence of nerves and so insanity was seen by some as aberrations in electrical impulses. Consequently, electric shocks were used by some doctors to reset the nervous systems of patients.¹⁰⁶ Drugs, including opiates, were employed to control behaviour and make patients passive if they were agitated or violent. Inevitably there were also quack remedies, their contents closely guarded by those who sold these concoctions and claimed to cure patients. Although these techniques may not have proved effective, they did show that contrary to the image of incarceration in Bethlem Hospital, there were practitioners, particularly in smaller madhouses, who were willing to experiment and try to cure their patients.¹⁰⁷

More important was the change in belief among practitioners from the incurability of madness (and thus confinement of sufferers) to the view that victims could be cured.¹⁰⁸ This was encapsulated in the dispute between John Monro and William Battie. The Monro family ran the Bethlem Hospital for 128 years, but despite their extensive experience of treating sufferers no attempt was made to investigate the causes of insanity. Indeed, Monro viewed insanity as intractable.¹⁰⁹ William Battie (1703–1776) was one of the governors of the Hospital and the first Physician to St. Luke’s Hospital, as well as proprietor of madhouses in Islington and Clerkenwell.¹¹⁰ In his important *Treatise on Madness* of 1758, Battie condemned the coercive methods used at Bethlem Hospital and attempted to categorise the forms of mental illness, believing that patients had to be treated as individuals who could be cured with the correct treatment.¹¹¹ He believed that ‘Original Madness’ was due to congenital defects and could not be cured, but ‘Consequential Madness’ could be cured by management.¹¹² Management included control of the patient’s environment and mind. The environment was to be one removed from any people, places or objects that might disturb the patient. Controlling the patient’s mind led to two approaches. One

¹⁰⁴ Timothy Peters, ‘Royal Medical Entourages: Analysis of the Roles of Doctors during the Episodes of Madness of King George III’, *The Court Historian*, 24, no. 1 (2019), p. 50.

¹⁰⁵ Countess Harcourt, quoted in Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁶ Porter, *Mind-forg’d Manacles*, pp. 184–5.

¹⁰⁷ Leonard Smith, *Private Madhouses in England, 1640–1815: Commercialised Care for the Insane* (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2020), p. 207.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, *Private Madhouses*, p. 208.

¹⁰⁹ Porter, *Mind-forg’d Manacles*, p. 128.

¹¹⁰ William Battie was estimated to have a fortune of between £100,000 and £200,000 from his income from private madhouses (Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull, *Undertaker of the Mind: John Monro and Mad-Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), p. 154).

¹¹¹ William Battie, *A Treatise on Madness* (London, 1758), pp. 94–97. His views were rejected by John Monro, Physician (and owner) of the Bethlem Hospital, in his riposte *Remarks on Dr Battie’s Treatise on Madness* (London, 1758).

¹¹² Smith, *Lunatic Hospitals*, p. 140.

was for the practitioner to establish a strong individual relationship with the patient. This could include ‘fixing with the eye’ and tones of voice as employed by Francis Willis upon King George III, intimidating and encouraging when required.¹¹³ Coercion could be used alongside other treatments including drugs. An alternative approach was to employ gentleness, as promised by Dr John Hall at his Newcastle madhouse,¹¹⁴ fostering a domestic environment with exercise, diet, reading and gardens, with the staff acting as parental figures for the patients, an ethos employed from the 1790s at the York Retreat run by Quaker proprietors.¹¹⁵ There is no information about the medical treatment provided by Margaret Farrington’s extended family. She was accommodated with some of her more distinctive furniture (including the ‘bookcase with a Chinese house on it’, ‘Japan’d tea chest’ and ‘Indian cabinet’) and possessions from London, perhaps to provide a familiar environment in her lodgings. Given their extensive connections in Newcastle Margaret’s family may have consulted Dr John Hall or his successors in the Newcastle lunatic hospital and St Luke’s; doctors may have visited her in her lodgings as she was not confined in an institution. Margaret’s survival for thirty-three years after her diagnosis in 1765 suggests that she was well looked after by her family, even if she was not cured of her affliction.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The small notebook containing the inventory of Margaret Farrington’s possessions and notes on her care revealed much about her life, the first half in the brilliance of Georgian London and second half hidden from view of all but her relatives. Evidence from genealogical and legal sources demonstrated the impact of poor medical care upon pregnant women, the extensive efforts of parents to raise and prepare their daughters for marriage within polite society, and the location and range of possessions acquired to entice friendship and suitors in the metropolitan milieu. However, this veneer of sociability quickly faded away when insanity was diagnosed and Margaret Farrington was rescued not by the refined socialites of Marylebone who recoiled at the illness she suffered, but by traditional kinship networks and familial obligations that embraced her and cared for her close to her provincial place of birth. Her life demonstrates that despite the emphasis upon the creation of a shared genteel identity the ‘polite and commercial people’¹¹⁷ of Georgian Britain were also fathers, daughters and cousins; blood remained the strongest bond to hold those who fell from the stars and provide care and, where possible, treatment for their illness.

¹¹³ Porter, *Mind-forg’d Manacles*, p. 209.

¹¹⁴ Smith, *Private Madhouses*, p. 210.

¹¹⁵ Smith, *Lunatic Hospitals*, p. 150.

¹¹⁶ Dorothea Fellowes lived for twenty-six years in Fisher House private madhouse (Jamieson, “‘Comforts in her Calamity’”, 92).

¹¹⁷ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 1).

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Appendix

Newcastle University Special Collections GB 186, Miscellaneous Manuscripts 12, W. Clayton Account book 1765–1781

Newcastle upon Tyne 8 March 1765

A Schedule or Inventory of the Several goods and effects of Margaret Farrington Spinster, a Lunatic, which have come to the hands of William Clayton Esq. Committee of the estate and person of the said Margaret Farrington.

First the following goods have been sold at the appraisal of Geo Lowes Joiner and Cabinet Maker and Elizabeth Pattison, Widow.

6 Mahogany chairs	£6
1 Settee	£4
1 Mahogany Tea Table	£2
2 Card Tables	£3
1 Wilton Carpet	£5 5 s
2 Dressing Glasses	£1
1 Mahogany Leaf	£0 5 s
1 Mahogany Desk	£3
1 Chest Walnut Tree Drawers	£1 1 s
1 Oak Table	£0 7 s
1 set of Irons and a Fender	£0 0 s 15 d
1 Jack	£0 0 s 10 d
1 Grate	£1 1 s
2 Grates	£0 15 s
1 Copper Boiler and Copper Skillet	£0 12 s
1 Copper hash pann	£0 2 s 6 d
1 Copper frying pann	£0 3 s
3 Brass Candlesticks	£0 4 s
1 Japan Tea Kettle and Lamp	£0 7 s

1 case of China hafted knives and forks	£1 4 s
1 Mahogany Tea Chest	£0 4 s
6 Small Kitchen utensils	£0 1 s 6d
1 Box Iron	£0 2 s 6d
12 Jelly Glasses	£0 2 s
12 brown hafted knives and forks	£0 7 s
1 Writing Box	£0 1 s
1 Bedstead and curtains	£3
4 French plate candlesticks (much wore)	£1 10 s
2 Do for tapers	£0 5 s
3 Do Casters and Case	£0 7 s 6d
9 Pewter dishes	£1 3 s 6d
2 Dozen of Plates and 2 dishes	£1 2 s 2d
6 Soup plates	£0 4 s 4d
1 Voider	£0 2 s 6d
3 Stuff Damask window curtains without rods	£3 3 s
2 Lacquer'd Sconces	£0 2 6d
1 Small Hand Bell	£0 1 s
1 Fender	£0 1 s 6d
6 Mahogany chairs with leather bottoms (several of them broke)	£3
1 Old Coffee Pot	£0 3 s
2 Glass frames (broke to pieces and none of the glass remaining)	£0 10 s
Boxes cases and other package in which the goods came from London	£0 10 s
Plate:	
1 Punch Ladle	£0 9 s 10d
2 Salts	£1 4 s
1 waiter (25 oz)	£7 10 s 3d
1 tankard (27 oz)	£7 3 s 3d
1 soup spoon	£1 3 s 1d
7 table spoons (13 oz)	£3 11 s 8d
7 tea spoons, tongs and drainer	£0 19 s 9d
Total:	£69 14 s 7d.

The following goods are now in the possession of the said Margaret Farrington at her lodgings in Byker near Newcastle upon Tyne.

A feather bed bolster and pillow,
 3 blankets,
 a large case of oak drawers,
 a small case mahogany,
 an Indian cabinet,

a book-case with a Chinese house on it,
 a large mahogany dining table,
 a spider table, a dozen chairs, a carpit and bedside carpit, a set of fire irons, a dressing glass, a set of dressing boxes,
 a Japan'd tea chest,
 a mahogany teaboard,
 a small teaboard,
 a copper tea kettle,
 a port mantua, a screen,
 a candle box,
 a grater,
 three pair of old sheets almost worn out,
 all her wearing apparel with a gold watch,
 several books pamphlets, plays, and novels of little value.

The following goods of the said Margaret Farrington remain in the possession of the said William Clayton.

The pictures of her father and mother

A piece of family plate being a silver cup with a cup of 33 oz 7 valued at £4 10d per oz, which appears by an inscription thereon to be a gift of the town of Whitehaven to the Lunatic's Grandfather

A harpsicord without a frame

Several manuscript sermons belonging to the Lunatic's late father