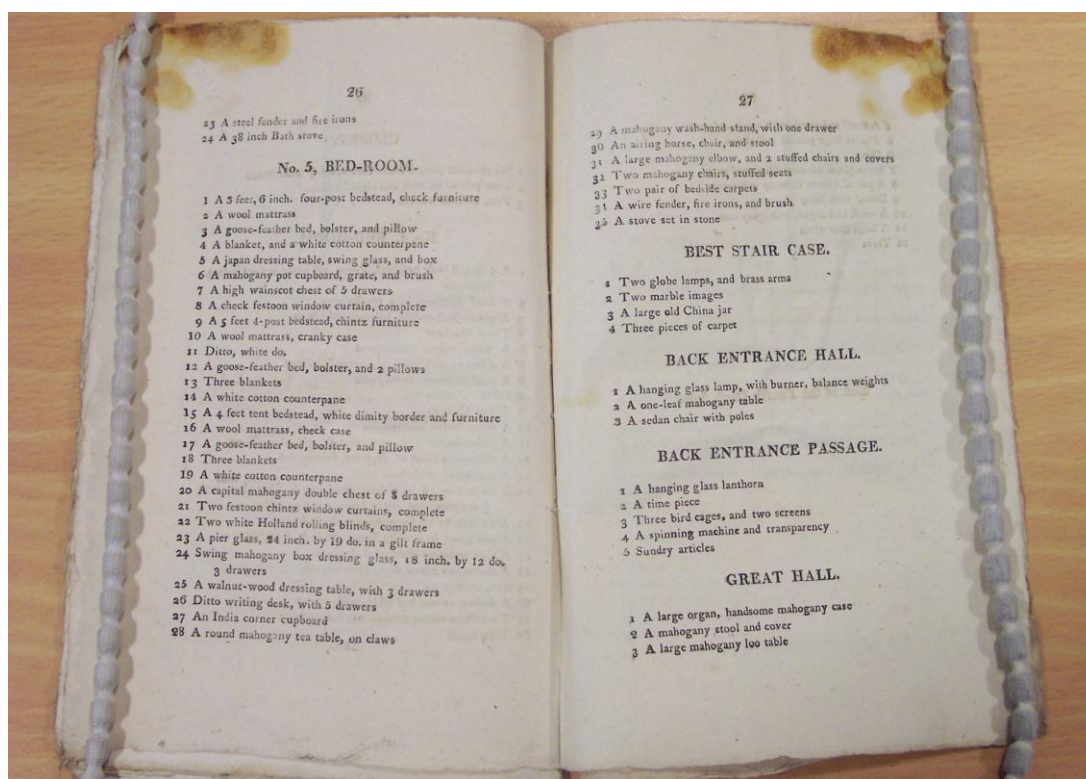


Document of the Month – April 2012

A printed sale catalogue for a furniture auction at the Priory, Warwick, 1809
(CR556/183)



This catalogue is a sale inventory printed in 1809 for the auction of furniture from the Priory mansion, Warwick. The document CR556/183 can be found in a collection of clients papers from Campbell, Brown and Ledbrook Solicitors in Warwick. These records came to the Warwickshire County Record Office after being found in the cellars of the firm's former offices on 2 Jury Street.

The sale catalogue is especially interesting as the building hosting the auction stood in Priory Park, the present location of the Warwickshire County Record Office. The Priory of Saint Sepulchre which was founded by the first Earl of Warwick was originally built on this land but in 1566 the priory buildings were replaced by a large mansion. In 1727 the Priory house and land was bought by Henry Wise who was born in Warwickshire and was employed as the royal gardener during the reign of Queen Anne. Under the Wise family ownership many alterations were made to both the Priory property and gardens including the addition of a terrace to the south of the house with a view of Warwick Castle. The Wise family lived in the property up to 1809 when the sale of furniture took place as the gentleman owner was 'leaving his country residence'. The Priory mansion had many subsequent owners who made further remodels and the Priory Bungalow, adjoining white house and the long wall bordering the record office car park are all that remains of the original 16th and 17th century mansion.

In the inventory there are a number of items including 'an India corner cupboard' which were possibly imported from Asia. By 1809 British maritime trade was growing and as a result of this and the formation of the East India Companies the availability of foreign consumer goods increased. There are also several items of oriental porcelain in the inventory which were at this time very popular with both the middling classes and gentry all over the country. Another fashionable item to have in the home in the early 1800's was mahogany furniture like the 'Round Mahogany tea table on claws' mentioned on page 26 of the catalogue. During this

time materials including mahogany were grown and shipped out of British colonial areas such as Belize whose industry was dominated by the production of mahogany until the middle of the 20th century. Also included in the sale catalogue is a sedan chair, which was a covered seat carried by two poles fixed on the bottom. The sedan chair originated in France but both one and two person models were available in Britain from the late 1500's.