Over View of Drawer Construction – Library Tables

This section begins the process of looking at the drawers that were constructed with Chippendale’s Library Tables.
Over View of Drawer Construction

**Picture/Brief Description of Harewood Library Table**

- Very ornate Neo-Classical design of library table with extensive applications of ormolu and marquetry. There are a number of drawers that are located in various locations around the table. The first drawer is one at the centre, between the two pedestals, which opens up from the front side of the desk. This drawer is large enough to hold architectural drawings. This drawer is locked with a key. This drawer extends the width of the entire table, as on the other, back, side of the centre of this table is a false drawer front. The next four drawers are located on each of the corners of the table and are, like the centre drawer, are locked with the same key. The front side of each of the two pedestals contain three more drawers. While these are not locked themselves, they are secured by the pedestal doors that close on these drawers. Again, the same key is used to open the cabinet doors.

**Location: Upper section centre of ‘front’ of Library Table**

- This drawer is large enough (extending the entire width of the library table) to hold large drawings such as architectural designs. As mentioned before, because this is such a large drawer, there is no drawer emanating from the other side - instead it is made to look like a drawer. The sides and bottom of this drawer are made of oak, while the front is made of mahogany and veneered with an interlocking circular patterned marquetry. This pattern of marquetry runs across around all sides of this library table. Besides its size, this drawer has most typical Chippendale characteristics such as long thin lapse dovetails on the front and short, thick back dovetails (The average angle for these dovetails is 84 degrees which as shown below produces a very long thin dovetail. While these dovetails are 15 mm long they are only 4 mm wide at the end.), the use of thin strips of wood (7mm) pinned to act as a drawer rail. On the back are through dovetails that are relatively short and thick. The sides and the back are all of fairly thick (10.5 mm) and very tightly, evenly grained oak.

- The bottom is also made of well-selected examples of oak that is 10.5 mm thick, with the grain running from side to side across the bottom of the drawer. It is attached to the bottom by the use of a rabbit joint into which the bottom is inserted then held in place by the 7mm thick railing that is pinned to it. On the front of this drawer is a small ormolu drop handle and it is locked with a single action bolt lock (this is shown in more detail in the appendix showing other constructional elements – see Appendix D.)

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1 It is assumed that the ‘Front’ side of the desk is the direction on which the drawers open. On the other side, the pedestals door open up to two sets of file storage areas. It is assumed that this is the backside of the desk.
### Over View of Drawer Construction

#### Harewood Library Table (con’t)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location: Upper section on either side of the centre 'drawer'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These drawers are located on the four corners of the table. On the front side, they rest on each side of a large centre drawer, on the back; they are on either side of a false drawer. The materials used for these drawers are the same as that used in the centre drawer – a finely evenly grained oak for the sides and mahogany for the front. Again, the face is decorated with a sequential circular design - executed in marquetry. Unlike the centre drawer, this has a small rosette executed in ormolu. As with the centre drawer these are locked with simple single bolt lock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are differences in how the drawers were constructed however. Since these drawers overhang on the outside of each drawer (see the top picture) the dovetails are not visible on this side (most likely Chippendale used a mortise and tenon joint on these locations.) On the inside (lower Picture) the dovetails are visible. As with the prior drawer, the dovetails used on the front are very long and narrow dovetails but they were slightly less narrow (an 82 degree angle,) resulting in a slightly wider end (5.8 mm average).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Also like the prior drawer the back dovetails are short and thick. The bottom of the drawer there is a thin (7 mm) strip of wood (oak) tacked on the bottom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Location: In Pedestal at front of desk

| ![Image](image2.png) |
| • These three drawers are located in both the right and left pedestals on the front of the desk behind a locked door. These drawers are located in the pedestals on either side of the large drawer that was discussed first in this table. The sides, back and bottom are made of oak, as are all other drawers, the front is mahogany. The handles for these drawers are gilted d-shaped drop handles. |
| • Shown are the front dovetails for these drawers. As before, these are long thin lapse dovetails. The only difference in the three drawers is the number of dovetails, the top has four, the middle has five and the lower has six. Obviously this accommodates the wider drawer sizes. The back dovetails (not shown) were the same as seen in the prior pictures. Furthermore, as before, those on the back are through dovetails. As with the prior examples, the back dovetails are shorter and are wider. It is also interesting to note that the number of dovetails in the back always equalled the number in the front. The bottom (not shown) was the same design as on the first two drawers. |

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2 The detailed statistics that are included in Appendix F show the sizes of these and the other dovetails as well as other key statistics concerning the drawer construction.)

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_Fashionable Furniture Appendix D: Overview of Drawer Construction_
### Over View of Drawer Construction

#### Picture/Brief Description of Wilton House Library Table

- Produced by Chippendale for Pembroke House in London (currently in the Wilton House), this desk follows closely to designs that were provided in his third edition of *The Director*. Typical of many of his library tables, on one side there are two pillars with locking doors which cover two sets of three drawers (again this is identified as the ‘front’ side). Similar to the Harewood table, all of the drawers are made using oak on the bottom, the sides and the back and solid mahogany for the front. Unlike the Harewood desk, the three drawers in each of the pedestals are all the same size. On the other sides these two supporting sections contain file dividers as the original Harewood table. Another difference between this piece and the Harwood table is that instead of a top row of drawers on both the front and back of the desk, there is a large drawing table that unfolds from a drawer on the right side (as one faces the front) and a large drawer extending halfway across the length of the table on the other side. Since these two drawers (the drawing table and the large drawer on the opposite side, there are no drawers on the top row that open from either the front or the back of the table.

#### Location: Left Side opposite Drawing Table

- This drawer is located on the side, opposite from the drawing table. Like the centre drawer on the Harewood desk this is large enough to hold architectural drawings.
- Again, besides its size, this drawer has most typical Chippendale characteristics for drawers. However, the dovetails are not as slender as in the Harewood desk, nor are they as consistent. Also, in this case the front is made of mahogany without any veneers or marquetry.
- The desk draw for the folding drawing table is similar in terms of the number of dovetails There is one limitation in that the draw could not be pulled out all the way to expose the rear dovetails. As with the Harewood Library table, this drawer was locked with a single action, single bolt brass and steel lock.

( Same style as shown for next drawer.)

( Same style as shown for next drawer.)
Over View of Drawer Construction

Wilton House Library Table (Con’t)

Location: Front of desk in Both Pedestals (Behind Locked Doors)

- Front of desk, behind a locking door in the pedestal. As seen on the prior drawer and on the Harewood desk, the front dovetails are long and slender lapped dovetails. However, these are not as narrow as the Harewood table dovetails, they do start very narrowly (between 1 and 2 mm) and thus are more decorative than practical in their appearance. Besides this difference, the construction of these drawers is identical to the Harewood piece. The back dovetails are shorter and ‘fatter’ the bottom is inserted into a rabbet joint in the two sides and a rebate in the front, with a thin 4 mm piece of wood which is pinned to the bottom to protect the bottom of the drawer from the wear of moving in and out of the drawer cavity.
Chippendale originally made this library table for the library at Nostell Priory (where it currently resides), which was designed by the architect Robert Adam. This table represents one of the earliest times that Chippendale worked with Adams to design a piece of furniture specifically to match an Adam designed interior. This desk borrows some elements from both the Rococo and Neo-Classical designs, though it is predominately a Neo-classical design. Unlike the Harewood table, this piece did not make use of marquetry or ormolu; instead most external surfaces were covered with solid mahogany. In addition there are several components that are made of solid mahogany (such as the drawer fronts). The mahogany wood is decorated with carvings of lions and lion’s feet, and swags of garland.

Location: Top Pedestal Drawer at Back of Desk (Above File Storage)

• This is one of two drawers located at the top of each of the pedestals, on the back of the desk over the section with the vertical files. The sides and the bottom of these drawers were made of very carefully selected pieces of oak. This is consistent with both the Harewood and the Wilton table. Also as seen on the Harewood desk, the front dovetails are long and slender (82 degree angle and the end is less than 5 mm wide and the dovetail is 15 mm long) and the back dovetails are short (7 mm) and thick (5mm and the angle for the dovetail is 76 degree), and the bottom is held on by attaching strips of wood to the edge of the bottom with glue and small pins.

Location: Top Centre Drawer on Front and Back of Desk

• This drawer is in the centre of the backside of the desk. It is duplicated on the frontside of the desk. The two drawers not only appear the same in their design, they are structurally almost identical.

• One thing stands out as different from some of the other drawers is that it has a large lip on the bottom which acts to enhance the decoration (adding the curved shape to the bottom of the drawer) and as a drawer stop (hence no need for the small hexagonal shaped pieces glued to the frame) The dovetails and the bottom are very typical with Chippendale’s workshop. The front dovetails are long and slender, the back are wide and thicker. The bottom has small strips around the edge, which are pinned to the drawer bottom and glued to the edge of the side.
Over View of Drawer Construction

Nostell Prior Desk (Con’t)

Location: Top Centre Drawer on Front and Back of Desk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image1" alt="Image" /></th>
<th><img src="image2" alt="Image" /></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Same back design as for the prior drawer.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image3" alt="Image" /></th>
<th><img src="image4" alt="Image" /></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Location: Front of Desk, Within Pedestal behind Door

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image5" alt="Image" /></th>
<th><img src="image6" alt="Image" /></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Same back design as for the prior drawer.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Like the previous two desks by Chippendale, this desk has, on the front of the desk, drawers behind a lockable cabinet door. The two differences from the Harewood desk are the inclusion of the top drawer behind the door, and the fact that the four drawers behind the door are all the same size and design. Recall that in the Harewood table, the three drawers that were located behind the locked doors were different sizes. In that case, the lower drawers were larger than the higher drawers.

• The constructional elements were, however, the same or very similar to the Harewood table. The individual drawers, again, have very long slender front dovetails, and somewhat short and thick dovetails in the back. In both the front and back there are five dovetails. The bottom again consisted of a thick (6 mm) piece of oak that has been attached with a rebated sides and a rebate cut into the front, followed by a thin strip of wood attached with steel pins on top of the bottom piece.
Over View of Drawer Construction

Picture/Brief Description of Dumfries House Library Table

• This desk follows closely to the overall design of the desk that was made for Wilton House. The features on this desk are the same as for that desk (one side has dividers to organise files and on the other two sets of three drawers – all of this behind locked doors. On one side, a large drawer pulls out to expose a folding drawing table – again this is similar to the table at Wilton House and the other side is a large drawer that is designed to hold large pieces of papers such as architectural drawings. One difference with this piece vs. the Wilton House desk is the fact that most of this desk has a very simple non descript style while the drawer handles are a very distinctively Rococo design (Also, these are very high quality d-shaped handles that are made out of a gilded metal.)

Location: Front of Table in Both Pedestals

• This table has six primary drawers (the others are the container for the drawing table and a small drawer incorporated within the drawing table drawer). Each of these six drawers is the same size and they are in the front side of each of the two pedestals. As seen before the front dovetails are long and slender, the back are short and fat, the bottom is held on by strips of wood that are glued and pinned with steel pins around the two sides and the front (bottom) of the drawer. Furthermore, the number of front dovetails is the same as for the back.

Location: Drawing Table on Left Side of Desk

This is the drawer, which hides the drawing table.

Note this drawer could not be pulled out all the way, so the back dovetails could not be viewed.
Over View of Drawer Construction

Dumfries House Library Table (Con’t)

Location: Drawing Table on Left Side of Desk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></th>
<th>(Back dovetails were inaccessible.)</th>
<th>(Same back design as for the prior drawer.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Location: Within Drawing Table Drawer

- This very small drawer is incorporated within the drawing table drawer. It is specifically designed to provide the user with the implements to draw (e.g. pens, ink, sandbox, and sponge box). The first photograph shows the three compartments that contained the ink, sponge and powder for drawing in ink.

- While the front and the back are similar to other Chippendale drawer constructions (the use of oak on the sides, back and bottom and mahogany on the front, long skinny lapsed dovetails on the front, and relatively short and thick dovetails on the back), the bottom is different. Instead of holding the bottom of the drawer in with a small strip of wood that is pinned on to the body of the drawer. This one only uses a rebate with the bottom inserted into the rebate and glued in with a few pins to hold it in place. It is most likely that the addition of the small strip of wood to the bottom was viewed as unnecessary because of the small size of this drawer.
Over View of Drawer Construction

Picture/Brief Description of Victoria & Albert Dressing Table

According to the V & A files, this dressing and writing table was made for the Harewood by Chippendale. It is decorated with the same, general style as other pieces (The Harewood Library table discussed earlier, as well as a set of library stairs). There are two sets of drawers that are behind the two doors on each of the pedestals. At the top, is a drawer, which contains the dressing table features such as a folding mirror, compartments for brushes, perfumes, etc. In the keyhole section, between the two pedestals, is a small locked cabinet, in the two pedestals are three drawers. Each of these locks with the same key that opens the top drawer and the middle cabinet.

Location: Each of the Two Pedestals

These three drawers follow the material conventions that Chippendale used on the prior pieces of furniture but the construction techniques did differ. First of all the front dovetails, are not the long slender dovetails that were included on the other pieces. Secondly, a cock beading was used on the edges of the three drawers. Like the Wilton and the Dumfries library tables, each of the three drawers was the same size.

The back and the bottom are constructed the same way as the other drawers.

Some of the differences between this piece and the other Chippendale pieces of furniture are discussed in detail within the main content of the thesis.