

George III and Kingship at Court in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain

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Amanda Westcott

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Abstracts

Short Abstract

This thesis explores the nature of kingship in late eighteenth-century Britain and its relationship to the court as a social body combining institutional and interpersonal relationships centered on the monarch. The court under George III encompassed a select group of loyal attendants and office-holders who worked to uphold the conservative moral and political values that accompanied the king's status, or *dignity*, as a sovereign ruler in Britain as well as in Europe. Scholarship of this period, however, has placed a greater emphasis on the expanding public sphere, where increased commercial and political activity outgrew the boundaries of early modern courts throughout Europe. This, alongside the political upheaval in Britain in the 1780s and George's illness at the end of the decade, have contributed to notions of courtly decline. A better understanding of late Georgian monarchy involves a re-evaluation of the court's structure and culture, as well as the style of kingship that it prioritized. The approach of this thesis challenges the notion of decline in this period and rejects the king's resulting associations with bourgeois domestic comfort. The court circle that he cultivated instead supported royal ritual and formality beyond the drawing rooms at St. James's Palace. The role of George's consort, Queen Charlotte, also significantly impacted his expression of kingship following the Regency Crisis. The aristocratic families employed within the queen's household helped to dictate court sociability, participating in the king's wider moral program and promoting the chivalric values that he cultivated at Windsor Castle. These courtiers also facilitated the king's connections to a wider European princehood. George III was thus enabled to express a particular style of kingship at a transformative time in his reign, marked not by decline, but by a persistent exercise of conservative, monarchical practice and a growing dependence on a select court circle.

Long Abstract

This thesis concerns the study of the court in Britain under George III as a social body combining institutional and inter-personal relationships centered on the monarch. It will further discuss the particular court culture that the king helped to facilitate, as well as the ways in which this system – a collective arrangement between the king and ruling class – developed in the 1780s and 1790s in response to political upheaval in Britain and wider changes in monarchical practice throughout Europe. There were various disruptions to the king's leadership over his court; most notable was the first episode of his illness and the ensuing Regency Crisis in 1789. The political conflict and reform of the royal household that preceded his illness and then the war with revolutionary France that followed underscored George's reliance on a select, interrelated group of trusted court officers who attended him, his consort Queen Charlotte, and their children. The social and cultural negotiations of the royal household during this period formed a network of courtiers that significantly shaped the expression of kingship in late eighteenth-century Britain.

This study of the court has its foundations in a rich scholarly tradition concerning both the king himself and early modern courts in Europe. Norbert Elias's understanding of the court as a theatrical venue for political performance endures, but his equally absolutist interpretation of *ancien régime* has prompted others to further question the developing and diversified political sphere of the eighteenth century. These discussions, however, have often surrendered to conclusions of an Enlightenment rejection of old courtly values in Britain by the reign of George III, as well as a courtly decline according to scholars such as John Adamson and Robert Bucholz. The king's strong associations with a paternal and patriotic image in the latter part of his reign have often steered interpretation to an oversimplified study of bourgeois domestic comfort within the royal circle. The court under George III requires the incorporation of more complex concepts – topics such as the honors system, eighteenth-century household structures, and royal relationships with the nobility – to supplement our understanding of late Georgian kingship beyond its potent public image. A central premise of this thesis is therefore to caution against the conflation of the court's perceived decline in this period with a nuanced shift in the nature of monarchical power, rooted in the relationships that both king and queen cultivated in their respective households.

The court in the eighteenth century remained a significant venue for social and political display. Its development under George III entailed considerable negotiation among the royal household, which continued to adhere closely to hierarchy and ritual while also allowing for personal friendships and a taste for country living to flourish. Inspired by the research of Clarissa Campbell Orr, this thesis will build upon notions of a particular court ethos and moral program that were supported by an elaborate network of courtiers. The relationships that George either cultivated or suppressed among the aristocracy reveals a unique approach to kingship, wherein a distinctive court culture was formed across several royal residences and alternative courtly venues outside of London, which engaged directly with the state of George's health, his personal interests, and his own understanding of the crown's status within a constitutional monarchy. Due to the king's centrality to the court's arrangement, each chapter is themed to address various expressions of that kingship and draws upon a range of source material, primarily the personal correspondence, diaries, and memoirs of various members of the court circle.

Foremost in his style of kingship was the way in which George navigated his court as it related to the operation of the royal household, in addition to the presence of the separate, yet connected, household of his consort, Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. The first of five total chapters seeks to address his role as sovereign head of a complex institution that faced increased interference from parliament in the 1780s. Few scholars have considered the king's relationship to the ruling class and its connections with the structure of his court. Royal correspondence with both ministers and courtiers at this time demonstrates how the king sought to redirect the political challenges away from the operation of his household in order to maintain what he considered to be the *dignity* of his crown. George associated some of the intangible elements of dignity, such as honor and public reverence, with more material concerns – principally, the Treasury's monetary provision for the upkeep of the royal household, as well as the attendance of particular aristocratic court officers and the ceremonial practices they could facilitate.

The following chapter transitions to an analysis of the king and queen's shared responsibility towards their dependents and the related notion of eighteenth-century household-families. Queen Charlotte's household became a significant alternative for those court officers who wished to avoid the parliamentary interference that had affected many positions within the royal household. Though the queen refrained from any involvement in politics, her position and the regular presence of her attendants among the royal family were further complicated, even politicized, in the wake of the king's first episode of illness and the Regency Crisis of 1789. A study of royal correspondence among aristocratic courtiers during this period, including members of the Harcourt and Brudenell families, alongside accounts of the Regency Crisis, reveal the gendered, social complexities of this court. The structure and activity of the queen's household emphasized Charlotte's considerable influence on the expression of her husband's kingship, especially during his ill health in the late 1780s.

Following on the themes of royal and aristocratic relationships, the third chapter reviews the king's investment in moral reform, particularly among the ruling class. George foremost expected good conduct from his immediate family, and those expectations also extended to the population of his court and were later facilitated by his adoption of Windsor as a primary royal residence in the 1770s. Windsor was then developed as a venue where the king could intersect the court's moral program with notions of chivalric knighthood that were inherent to the Gothic castle and its medieval, royal origins. George re-Gothicized Windsor Castle and placed a particular emphasis on divine worship at St. George's Chapel and its use as the original chapter house for the Order of the Garter. While he oversaw several different orders of chivalry in Britain, the Garter stood foremost among royal honors and was a practice specific to Windsor that, alongside the Windsor uniform and stag-hunting in the surrounding park, consolidated an elite circle of courtiers there. As a result, court attendance outside of London was very unlike the relaxed, bourgeois image of Farmer George circulated in the period. The kingship of George III frequently integrated elements of royal ritual and, especially at Windsor, chivalric values like religion and martial prowess. The promotion of these values and a wider court moral program also relied heavily on the service of dedicated members of the king's and queen's respective households.

Just as the king's public image as a domestic figure has obscured the complexities of his court and his residence at Windsor, discussions of nationalism in Britain

(especially at the onset of further war with France in the 1790s) have focused narrowly on the parallel image of a retired, paternal figure rather divorced from Europe. In a continued effort to revisit George's style of kingship within the structure and support of his court, the fourth chapter addresses his political and stylistic choices as a prince-electoral within the Holy Roman Empire. There are several valuable comparisons between George III and his contemporaries in Europe, notably the influence of the Enlightenment and its impact on the nature of monarchical power post-*ancien régime*. Though George did incorporate some Enlightenment practices at his court in Britain, his approach remained largely conservative and, owing to his connections to a wider European princehood, encompassed traditional practices such as the honors system and representations of soldier-kingship. In light of this and the politics of the *Fürstentum* in the 1780s, George ultimately remained protective of his Hanoverian identity. The concurrent participation of the royal circle, including Queen Charlotte's perpetuation of her own German identity, as well as the education and military training of their sons abroad, underscored the court as a significant venue for European interest during the period. The activity of certain noble courtiers also supplements this study, specifically the involvement of Earl and Countess Harcourt in their support of aristocratic *émigrés* during the French revolutionary wars and their Enlightenment connections to the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The court circle in Britain thus offered highly connected channels of information and influence throughout the Continent and powerfully supported George's kingship on a wider European stage.

The various elements of kingship that were discussed throughout the thesis are ultimately brought together and integrated into the final chapter, in a case study of the 1789 royal tour to the West Country following the Regency Crisis. A discussion on royal travel and its early modern precedents, in addition to a close analysis of the 1789 tour both helpfully illustrate George's unique approach to the expression of his kingship within a mobile and still very active court. This included an attention to his relationship with the nobility, the strong presence of the queen's household among the royal entourage, a participation in grand naval reviews, as well as meetings with his Privy Council and more formal, courtly gatherings in alternative venues. Frances Burney and Queen Charlotte herself wrote extant accounts of this tour, and the surviving correspondence among aristocratic courtiers indicates the significant presence of attendants who rejoiced in the king's recovery with the opportunity to ingratiate themselves in a reassembled court. This study also involves the important, though often overlooked, presence of lower-ranking attendants, who were compelled to negotiate rather ill-defined boundaries of royal relationships with the exacting protocol and duties of the court. Frances Burney remains a chief source for discussion, and the incorporation of her account provides new insight into the challenges of social mobility and hierarchy at court alongside its operation both in and outside of London. With the support of his courtiers, as elaborated in this chapter, George emphasized his connections to Britain's naval power, with its highest-ranking officers in attendance, and he likewise demonstrated the adoption of venues like aristocratic country houses for the protraction of royal ritual and formality into spaces beyond the court drawing room at St. James's Palace.

The development of the court at this time was ultimately one of negotiation in light of various disruptions due to the king's illness, political conflict within Britain, and war in Europe. The events of the 1780s and 1790s reveal a significant network of courtiers and royal office-holders that adapted to wider socio-political spheres of activity and

supported the resulting expressions of kingship, which adhered to established (often inherited) monarchical practices, such as soldier-kingship and moral reform. George defended the *dignity* of his crown and thereby sought to underscore those values – moral, religious, and chivalric – which would reinforce his authority among the ruling class and throughout Europe. A study of kingship in this period underscores the highly reciprocal nature of the relationship between king and court, particularly the nature of monarchical authority and the corresponding presence of aristocratic courtier-families, who continued to endorse and uphold that authority amid wider disruption. George III was thus enabled to express a particular style of kingship at a transformative time in his reign, marked not by decline, but by a persistent exercise of conservative monarchical practice and a growing dependence on a select court circle.

List of Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
BodL	Bodleian Libraries, Oxford
CUL	Cambridge University Library, Cambridge
DHC	Dorset History Centre, Dorchester
ERO	Essex Record Office, Chelmsford
GPP	Georgian Papers Programme
HL	Hurd Library, Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury
HPO	History of Parliament Online
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
RA	Royal Archives, Windsor
RCHM	Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts
RCT	Royal Collection Trust
RL	Royal Library, Windsor
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
WLC	William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, USA
WSHC	Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham

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Introduction

Kings and their courts seem an obvious pairing, but George III (1760–1820) is still chiefly recognized as a rather isolated, national figure. His identity was highly subject to contemporary popular opinion by the latter part of his reign, and in scholarship, he remains largely detached from the study of early modern royal authority. This doctoral thesis presents an original examination of the late eighteenth-century court and its role in the development of kingship beyond the propagation of a public, or received, image. Instead of the familiar country squire “Farmer George,” what of kingly George? The offered analysis employs both royal and courtier accounts to highlight the king’s operation within a distinctly aristocratic sphere, where the court stood as a dynamic assembly of office-holders who supported the conservative moral and political values that accompanied George’s status, or *dignity*, as a sovereign ruler in Britain as well as in Europe.

Kingship in this period was not a static concept but reciprocal in its relationship to the court. The style of kingship that George pursued helped to determine the nature of his court circle while also responding to changes in the court’s membership and organization over time. Many characteristics of late Georgian kingship were inspired by royal precedent, though others eventually developed in reaction to the changing socio-political landscape of the late eighteenth century and the corresponding shift in the nature of monarchical power. A closer analysis of the court and kingship of George III thus offers a better integration of his reign within the Hanoverian dynasty, as comparisons to his predecessors underscore both the continuities of the British court throughout the eighteenth century and particular variations that defined George’s style of rule.

The connections and activities of the court's aristocratic members testify to the central relationship between the monarch and the ruling class at this time. This thesis also examines spatial and material considerations that are represented in courtier accounts, particularly the royal residence at Windsor Castle and the many aristocratic country houses that hosted royal visits. With the inclusion of courtly venues, the analysis here demonstrates the court's capacity for mediation between prince and peers, royal and elite cultures. This approach, which involves a novel assessment of the court's membership and congregation, re-conceptualizes the nature of late Georgian kingship within a distinctive aristocratic context, unimpeded by wider public opinion and popular memory.

From the early 1780s, owing to the challenges of war, reform, and eventually his own illness, George became increasingly reliant on a small group of trusted aristocratic courtiers who upheld his representational as well as moral programs, especially his appeal to the *dignity* of the crown. George's consort, Queen Charlotte, was a central figure in the formation of this court circle, and her role in its curation would have a profound effect during her husband's first serious illness and subsequent Regency Crisis of 1788–9. Moreover, court culture under George III and the style of kingship that it advanced were not exclusive to the British throne featured in discussions on the formation of national identity in this later period. George's approach to the Personal Union instead generated several points of connection with wider monarchical practice in Europe. A clearer interpretation of late Georgian monarchy thus necessitates a re-evaluation of the court, its composition, and its negotiation of kingship.

This introduction will encompass a historiographical overview of both court studies and the general scholarship on eighteenth-century Britain, with an aim to

better integrate the relevant research questions of each strand into an approach that closely considers late Georgian kingship. In an effort to revise arguments on courtly decline by the late eighteenth century, the following discussion will also reflect on the various audiences who were witness to the development of monarchical practice under George III, including members of the growing public sphere and (of greater interest to this thesis) aristocratic courtiers and office-holders in the royal household itself. This discussion will also address the present scholarship on the Hanoverian dynasty, as well as studies specific to George III and his relationship with the ruling elite. The nature of kingship in this period is a primary point of interrogation, particularly the ways in which the court informed or else supported particular components of kingship, such as George's residence outside of London, his patronage, his commitment to the armed forces, and investment in the Personal Union.

The beginning of any current inquiry into early modern court culture is often met with the name of Norbert Elias and his 1969 work, *The Court Society*, a sociological study of a monarch's careful control over the ruling class through royal favor and patronage. Elias's highly influential understanding of the court as a venue for political performance – with court culture itself employed by rulers as an instrument of propaganda and control among and over the elite – continues to feature in discussions of monarchical autonomy.¹ His interpretation of the *ancien régime*, however, did not escape thorough critique by what is considered the “new court history” and a renewed focus on function. Jeroen Duindam articulated a full evaluation of *The Court Society*, wherein he refutes Elias's sociological approach and

¹ Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

his conclusions on the nobility's total subjugation to royal ceremonial, arguing instead that ceremonial preserved "the hierarchy of descent... a law to which all rulers were subject."² John Adamson has likewise argued for a "more diversified series of power relations," in which the ruling class possessed more authority than Elias acknowledged and played an essential role in multifaceted court hierarchy during the early modern period.³

Court studies specific to eighteenth-century Britain have been obscured by an emphasis on the expanding public sphere as increased commercial and political activity outgrew the boundaries of early modern court culture.⁴ Tim Blanning's work, *The Power of Culture and Culture of Power* (2002), is especially concerned with this concept, and his analysis of George III at its conclusion necessarily contains an emphasis on the king's popularity and corresponding alignment with the growing and increasingly vocal public cultural sphere. Blanning argues that by the 1780s public opinion became "the ultimate political legitimator" and proposes that the king held "an instinctive grasp that public opinion could be used as a powerful support for monarchical authority."⁵ This line of research looks to the seminal works of Linda Colley, namely *Britons* (1992), as well as her *Past & Present* article, "The Apotheosis of George III" (1984), both of which have anchored the king in a "far more assertively

² Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994), 181.

³ John Adamson, "Introduction: The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court, 1500-1700," in *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime, 1500-1750*, ed. John Adamson (London: Seven Dials, 2000), 17.

⁴ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Elaine Chalus and Perry Gauci, eds., *Revisiting the Polite and Commercial People: Essays in Georgian Politics, Society, and Culture in Honour of Professor Paul Langford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁵ T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 353-54.

nationalistic royal image.”⁶ Colley’s attention to a monarchical revival at the end of the eighteenth century presents an interesting, almost paradoxical study of the king’s associations with the domestic transposed onto a public stage – a phenomenon sometimes ridiculed by contemporaries, though never hated, and chiefly a product of the larger currents of nation-building and socio-cultural expansion.

More recently, John Brewer has echoed many similar arguments in his research on “high culture” in the eighteenth century, but very simply dismisses the court of George III as “shrunk into a *bürgerlich* household.”⁷ Blanning, Colley, and Brewer have all pursued very significant questions concerning the development of the cultural sphere in Britain but ultimately overlook the role of the court and its active, elite membership in the formation of George’s policies to uphold ideals that feature prominently in their research, such as Protestantism and English liberty. The monarch instead becomes another “commercial commodity to be sold,” as Hannah Smith notes.⁸ Such an approach frames kingship as a reactive, rather superficial process closely attuned to the whims of an ill-defined audience, not unlike the earlier critiques of Norbert Elias.

The nobility themselves comprised a more defined and discerning audience to early modern representational splendor in courtly art and performance, which were generated in very specific early modern socio-political contexts, according to Adamson.⁹ The study of Britain’s aristocracy in the eighteenth century, by

⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 207; Linda Colley, “The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation, 1760-1820,” *Past & Present* 102, no. 1 (1984): 94–129.

⁷ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013), 25.

⁸ Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 245.

⁹ Adamson, “Introduction: The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court,” 9–10.

comparison, has largely moved away from the foundational research of Sir Lewis Namier and J.C.D. Clark, who emphasized aristocratic (and the latter, specifically Anglican) hegemony in this period.¹⁰ Namier’s prosopographical approach to the ruling classes has been criticized for its “atomised” incoherence,¹¹ but when placed more securely in the context of the Georgian court, it can help to integrate royal and aristocratic historiographies and better inform an understanding of the relationship between these interlocking groups. John Cannon has likewise sought to define greater unifying factors in identity and ideology between these important elite audiences and monarchical power, a group that (in Britain) he terms to be “one of the most successful of all ruling elites” – though his analysis does not fully extend to the institution of the court beyond questions of the peerage.¹²

J.M. Beattie was an early and important scholar in the assessment of the court in Britain post-1700 and argued that the royal household “continued to be an institution of more than merely ‘domestic’ importance.”¹³ Some of the subsequent scholarship, such as that of R.O. Bucholz, builds upon Beattie’s study of the workings of the royal household in this later period, employing large surveys of court office-holders throughout the long eighteenth century.¹⁴ Bucholz’s study of Queen Anne, however, ultimately sets the expectation of courtly decline from the early eighteenth

¹⁰ Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London: Macmillan, 1929); J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹¹ John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), viii.

¹² *Ibid.*, vii.

¹³ J. M. Beattie, *The English Court in the Reign of George I* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 2.

¹⁴ R. O. Bucholz, ed., *Office-Holders in Modern Britain*, vol. 11 (revised), Court Officers, 1660–1837, British History Online (London, 2006), <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/vol11>; *idem*, “The Database of Court Officers: 1660-1837,” accessed 24 February 2021, <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/>. Page numbers are not provided in the online format of Bucholz’s *Office-Holders*; specific sections will be hereafter specified.

century.¹⁵ Thus, Adamson's wider survey of court culture in the early modern period surrenders to conclusions of an Enlightened rejection of "old courtly values"¹⁶ and pomp in Britain by the reign of George III. There is a rather teleological vein of reasoning that fixates on a type of devolution throughout the Hanoverian dynasty and accepts George's supposed identification with the middle classes by the end of the period and his "bourgeois ideal of simplicity and domesticity."¹⁷ With these studies, there is also a tendency to prematurely anticipate a modern form of monarchy that does not fully reflect the sustained presence of the early modern, as well as George's connections to Europe, which extended beyond a patriotic Britain. To suggest this does not deny the proposed shift in monarchical authority during this period but instead emphasizes the utility of reinstating aristocratic perspectives, especially those concerning the Hanoverian dynasty, into the study of kingship and court at the end of the eighteenth century.

In consideration of the larger Hanoverian dynasty, there are a number of eighteenth-century monarchical practices to consider that, despite their later associations with a rather bourgeois public image, were set in motion long before George III succeeded to the throne. The following section will also address related questions of space in the continuation of royal precedent. Hannah Smith has hitherto significantly revised the narrative of courtly decline among the early Hanoverian monarchs, arguing for the court's continued importance as a venue "for the

¹⁵ R. O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

¹⁶ Adamson, "Introduction: The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court," 41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

negotiation and practice of patronage, social display, and politics.”¹⁸ In light of Colley’s discussion on nationhood, Smith also notes the “notoriously protean” nature of patriotism and demonstrates the fashioning of early Georgian kingship – with particular emphasis on Protestantism, militarism, and “indigenous courtly tradition” – to garner support and stability for the dynasty.¹⁹ George III encountered a negotiation very similar to his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather pertaining to the court’s role in eighteenth-century society. The Hanoverians indeed preserved the organizational framework of the royal household and likewise observed the traditional court calendar; this extended to “a great deal of finery” and formality in ceremonial court dress and the lavish decoration of royal palaces into the late eighteenth century.²⁰

Moreover, emerging ideas of Enlightenment simplicity and domesticity in royal representation were cultivated well before George III ascended to the throne, and increasingly for specific political purposes. George II and Queen Caroline of Ansbach both placed an emphasis on frugality and held a related “ideological commitment to early Enlightened ideas,”²¹ which in turn generated a considerable impact on the material culture of the court, as outlined in Joanna Marschner’s *Enlightened Princesses* (2017) exhibition and catalogue.²² Frederick, prince of Wales, though he died before inheriting the throne, also participated with his wife Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha in these intellectual and artistic traditions and, moreover,

¹⁸ Hannah Smith, “The Court in England, 1714-1760: A Declining Political Institution?,” *History* 90, no. 297 (2005): 41.

¹⁹ Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 20, 239.

²⁰ Nigel Arch and Joanna Marschner, *Splendour at Court: Dressing for Royal Occasions since 1700* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 35; see also Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 197.

²¹ Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 64.

²² Queen Caroline’s development of Richmond Gardens, for example, was a major showcase that combined court activity with intellectual and fashionable pursuits. Joanna Marschner, David Bindman, and Lisa L. Ford, eds., *Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

began to distance himself from courtiers and politicians associated too closely with aristocratic libertinism.²³ Reshaping his image to further embrace concepts of sexual probity was an attempt to avoid the public scrutiny that these relationships would inevitably invite, and it introduced a unique precedent for royal domesticity that Frederick's son would later adopt and find considerable success in the public eye. George III ultimately inherited a court system that faced somewhat opposing concepts of monarchy, being set apart in majesty while simultaneously embodying a moral example to be emulated in society.

This thesis moves away from the study of a received monarchical image, but it is important to still consider the role of precedent in the face of mounting public scrutiny. George III would often refer to the differing examples of his father and grandfather, though the question of audience remains disputed. Both Oliver Cox and Matthew Kilburn have set strong examples of doctoral research on questions of kingship for a public-facing monarchy and a corresponding political culture that employed a desired image of the English past “to make political ideas and political platforms increasingly legible to an ever-expanding audience.”²⁴ Firstly, Kilburn's thesis argues for a unique combination of precedents that emerged in the kingship of George III, which amalgamated two different approaches, “the armed and mounted one of his grandfather with his father's English gentleman prince.”²⁵ Both of these styles were rooted in the rivalry between fathers and sons, which had long plagued the

²³ Hannah Smith and Stephen Taylor describe the relationship between Frederick and Lord John Hervey, the latter attempting to establish himself as a royal favorite, though he was ultimately unsuccessful. Hannah Smith and Stephen Taylor, “Hephaestion and Alexander: Lord Hervey, Frederick, Prince of Wales, and the Royal Favourite in England in the 1730s,” *The English Historical Review* CXXIV, no. 507 (2009): 283–312.

²⁴ Oliver Cox, “‘Rule, Britannia!’ King Alfred the Great and the Creation of a National Hero in England and America, 1640-1800” (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2013), 10.

²⁵ Matthew Charles Kilburn, “Royalty and Public in Britain” (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1997), 132.

Hanoverians and was represented especially in the clashing ideologies of George II and Frederick, prince of Wales. An evaluation of their turbulent relationship better contextualizes the inheritance of George III and, as Kilburn demonstrated, his combination of two very different styles of rule.

The conflict between the royal generations was closely tied to the nature of contrasting political objectives and the particular audiences that were engaged. As Hannah Smith has discussed, there was an imperative for the early Hanoverians to ensure the loyalty of the army in order to secure the dynasty, so the adoption of military uniform and the attendance of military reviews became featured characteristics of their self-fashioning.²⁶ The concerns of Frederick, as king-in-waiting, arguably diverged not simply because of his open antagonism towards his father (though that was an exacerbating force) but also due to his distinctive engagement with a different audience in the widening public sphere. George II had blocked any possibility of a military career, so Frederick very actively involved himself with the nation's changing political landscape and associated closely with the "patriot opposition" to Sir Robert Walpole through the establishment of his own court circle at Leicester House.²⁷ Oliver Cox has examined the way in which the prince and members of his oppositional court employed the image of Anglo-Saxon King Alfred "as the embodiment of a particular mode of kingship" that appealed to public opinion in a variety of media, particularly through theatrical and musical performance.²⁸ In his combination of the two approaches, however, George III more closely adhered to the

²⁶ Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 109.

²⁷ Robin Eagles, "Frederick, Prince of Wales, the 'Court' of Leicester House and the 'Patriot' Opposition to Walpole, c.1733–1742," *The Court Historian* 21, no. 2 (2016): 140–56.

²⁸ The second chapter of his thesis examines the first performance of James Thomson and David Mallet's *Alfred: A Masque* on 1 August 1740 at Frederick's Buckinghamshire home, Cliveden. Though it is now chiefly remembered as the debut of *Rule, Britannia!*, Cox argues that the premiere was part of an effort to unify political opposition and placed King Alfred at the forefront of British national identity. Cox, "Rule, Britannia!," 25.

elite audiences that his grandfather had employed, likely because he never had the opportunity to engage an oppositional court. Though George did inherit the sympathetic moral imperatives of his father Frederick, he did not necessarily share the same resources or demands to carefully curate an appeal to the wider public.

If the king's audience was still relatively confined to elite society in a period of cultural expansion, then the question of space is a significant element in the perpetuation of royal precedent, as George inherited a variety of royal residences that were still subject to a developing public sphere. The Hanoverian court remained a significant arena for political and social exchange, but it did suffer from some confusion over a physical locus, an issue inherited from the late Stuart monarchs and exacerbated, according to Hannah Greig, by the "assimilation" of royal buildings into the metropolitan landscape.²⁹ Following the destruction of Whitehall in 1698, none of the succeeding monarchs from William III chose to reconstruct it. Court ceremony was instead transferred to St. James's Palace, but the government offices did not follow. The court thus became "one of several loci of power"³⁰ as other venues of the so-called "extra-parliamentary sphere," including coffee-houses, theaters, clubs, even racecourses,³¹ equally facilitated forms of political sociability among the ruling elite. Colley has described it as a "parasitic" relationship with London;³² such spatial politics, however, were a primary feature of the British court throughout the century. George III was participating in a much longer custom, wherein the court after 1698 adopted a "peripatetic" quality that divorced it from the concentrated and unified residential seat with a close proximity to government, which Adamson suggests

²⁹ Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 106.

³⁰ Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 211.

³¹ Oliver Cox, "'Newmarket, That Infamous Seminary of Iniquity and Ill Manners': Horses and Courts in the Early Years of George III's Reign," *The Court Historian* 24, no. 3 (2019): 269–81.

³² Colley, *Britons*, 199.

helped to define contemporary attitudes towards the function of a court.³³ Gradual dissociation between the crown and parliament, though it is often attributed to George III at the end of the century,³⁴ was a process that nevertheless began much earlier and was reflected in fabric of London itself.

In the continued assessment of spatial dynamics, Hannah Smith's formulation of the court as a venue remains an important approach to the study of the later Hanoverian dynasty and likewise intersects with research – namely that of Hannah Greig and Amanda Vickery, in their recent *Past & Present* article, “The Political Day in London, 1697-1834” – that employs a spatial turn to the study of the late eighteenth-century ruling class.³⁵ In the maintenance of St. James's Palace for ceremonial purposes, the court appears to decentralize, its structure implying something more permeable, wherein the elite networks that were embedded in the royal household as well as the general power of social arbitration might have better defined a court's boundaries than any physical proximity to government.

Continued renovations at St. James's throughout George III's reign ensured that the ceremonial center was not neglected, though it was increasingly in competition with other royal residences, which would host courtly pastimes and gatherings. In 1762, not long after his marriage and coronation, George purchased Buckingham House, only a short walk away from St. James's and in easy reach of both Westminster and the fashionable West End, where several aristocratic homes were situated.³⁶ Named Queen's House in honor of his bride, this London residence

³³ Adamson, “Introduction: The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court,” 10–11.

³⁴ Colley, “The Apotheosis of George III,” 104.

³⁵ Hannah Greig and Amanda Vickery, “The Political Day in London, 1697-1834,” *Past & Present* 252, no. 1 (2021): 101–37.

³⁶ The privacy and retreating nature of the Queen's House can be overemphasized. John Rocque's 1746 map of London shows the considerable proximity that Buckingham House held to St. James's Palace. Though the adjoining park did help to cushion the new royal residence against a bustling metropole, it

was considered a “retreat” rather than a formal palace, but its proximity to the center of court ceremony demonstrated the primacy of royal duties over the king’s pastoral leisure.³⁷ Kew Palace and Windsor Castle, George’s chief residences outside of London, were likewise situated within a relatively easy distance from the capital and suggest the continued royal participation in the aristocratic custom of commuting between town and country according to the season. Greig and Vickery discuss the further integration of the court into the aristocratic “ritual of visiting” throughout London, but there are still questions surrounding the wider spatial dynamics of these circles which combine royal ceremony with political sociability.

Many of the circles of sociability fostered at court were rooted in a sense of space, or venue, to which Smith, Greig, and Vickery all reference in their respective research. Moreover, the work of Jane Roberts, a former Royal Librarian, has proved an invaluable resource for a provisional approach to the spatial dynamics of royal residences and their rich material culture in the late eighteenth century.³⁸ Royal collections dating from this period are indeed significant, as royal patronage remained at the heart of court activity and involved many courtiers in the purchase, exchange, and even the creation of certain objects unique to royal and aristocratic spaces.³⁹

was not perfectly insulated, nor was it fully intended to be so. “Locating London’s Past,” 2011, accessed 3 April 2024, <https://www.locatinglondon.org/>.

³⁷ Jane Roberts, ed., *George III and Queen Charlotte: Patronage, Collecting and Court Taste* (London: Royal Collection, 2004), 115.

³⁸ Idem, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

³⁹ There are several examples of this which have been featured in Jane Roberts’s *George III & Queen Charlotte* (2004), as well as Joanna Marschner’s *Enlightened Princesses* (2014). For further research on Queen Charlotte’s interests in collecting and domestic crafts, particularly through her connections to the duchess of Portland and the artist Mary Delany, see also: Clarissa Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte: Scientific Queen,” in *Queenship in Britain, 1660-1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic Politics*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Madeleine Pelling, “Cutting, Slicing, Pasting: Royal Female Friendship and Domestic Craft,” *Georgian Papers Programme Blog*, 6 April 2019, accessed 23 March 2021, <https://georgianpapers.com/2019/04/06/cutting-slicing-pasting-royal-female-friendship-and-domestic-craft/>.

Moreover, a portion of the analysis in this thesis will accordingly consult art and architectural histories relating to the court's assembly at Windsor because of its importance as a royal residence from the late 1770s. The presence of courtier country houses located near Windsor, as well as the use of alternative courtly venues during royal travel, are also investigated. An analysis of the spatial organization of the court ultimately shapes a better understanding of its corresponding social organization and supports conclusions of the development of a court ethos and its connections to kingship. The adoption of Windsor as a residence allowed, by one example, for the king's interest in the Order of the Garter to flourish as he commissioned extensive neo-Gothic renovations to the castle which would magnify its ceremonies and celebrations. The surrounding countryside – with large tracts of land available for hunting and farming – likewise accommodated George's attention to the respective martial and Enlightenment components of his kingship.

The concepts of space and venues at court are further complicated by royal travel. Another major research question presented here pertains to the king's movements outside of London and examines courtly adaptation in the countryside and its relationship to the expression of kingship. This approach invites consideration of the exclusive, aristocratic circles convened in alternative venues away from London, including associations with high-ranking officers at military reviews and royal visits to the country houses of the nobility. Paige Emerick's recent doctoral research, entitled "Monarchy on the Move," probes the different styles of travel employed by both George III and George IV, which often resulted in contrasting images of kingship that were presented to public audiences.⁴⁰ One point of intersection that Emerick

⁴⁰ Emerick argues that each king's style of travel conformed to their different personalities. George III established a rather informal, localized approach to royal travel that suited both his hobbies and requirements for his health, whereas George IV indulged in a pageantry reminiscent of earlier royal

explores between father and son – and an element of kingship that appears fairly consistent throughout the Hanoverian dynasty – was an emphasis on military service.⁴¹ Reviewing troops and ships was a principal royal ceremony undertaken beyond the walls of St. James’s Palace and was regularly a feature of royal travel in the late eighteenth century.

Under George III, military reviews also involved a host of attendants with close connections to the army or navy who helped to bolster his position, not simply his image, as a soldier-king. Though royal travel was, from the 1780s, frequently associated with George’s health and public image, formal matters of ceremony allowed for the reassertion of royal dignity (a concept which will be further explored in a discussion on methodology). Moreover, Emerick raises important questions of logistical planning for royal travel and the perspectives of those who would accompany and host the monarch outside of London. While George IV is better known to have favored the country houses of his aristocratic courtiers while travelling,⁴² his mother and father also undertook many visits to the seats of local nobility and frequently honored their favorite courtiers with overnight stays *en route* to their travel destinations. Country house visiting developed significant court circles that helped to form the royal entourage and facilitate ceremony even in the countryside.

progresses, also venturing further afield to Ireland and Scotland. Paige Emerick, “Monarchy on the Move: The Royal Visits of George III and George IV, 1760-1830” (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2023).

⁴¹ Ibid, 39.

⁴² Emerick closely studies the prince of Wales’s 1806 tour across northern England, wherein royal travel was centered on the grand and rather remote settings of noble country houses, compared to his father’s usual preference to first visit specific towns or cities with some country houses featured *en route*. Emerick, “Monarchy on the Move,” 110–14.

A study of the more intimate groups of aristocratic courtiers that were invited to gather at various royal residences and join the king during his travel requires further interrogation of the differences between the popular representations of George III and the realities of court membership and activity. Owing to the scholarship of Clarissa Campbell Orr, David Watkin, and the contributors to Joanna Marschner's *Enlightened Princesses* (2017) exhibition catalogue and Jonathan Marsden's 2005 symposium *The Wisdom of George III*, there is a renewed interest in these court circles as well as the nature of their intellectual activities beyond the king and queen's very domestic public image.⁴³ Campbell Orr has especially inspired an approach that looks carefully at the relationships between the monarch, his consort, and certain aristocratic families, particularly those who held offices within the royal household or the queen's own household.⁴⁴ Marschner likewise highlights the "polycentric" nature of the British court and opportunities for the Hanoverian consorts throughout the century to shape court culture through intellectual and artistic patronage alongside like-minded members of the ruling class.⁴⁵ The scholarship featured in *Enlightened Princesses* frequently grapples with the public and private "stages" maintained at court in light of the increasingly publicized performances of both royal power and domesticity.⁴⁶ The dominant narratives surrounding George's domestic associations in the public eye, however, misinterpret the royal family as a traditional, nuclear unit and

⁴³ Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Britain*; David Watkin, *The Architect King: George III and the Culture of the Enlightenment* (London: Royal Collection, 2004); Marschner et al., *Enlightened Princesses*; Jonathan Marsden, *The Wisdom of George the Third: Papers from a Symposium at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, June 2004* (London: Royal Collection, 2005).

⁴⁴ Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Queen Charlotte and Her Circle," in *The Wisdom of George the Third*.

⁴⁵ Marschner et al., *Enlightened Princesses*, 14.

⁴⁶ Joseph Roach's contribution to the volume discusses the unique parallels between theater and the court in the eighteenth century, wherein the princesses' "duty required them to perform private virtues as well as public acts for the general good." Joseph Roach, "Public and Private Stages," in *Enlightened Princesses*.

obscure the considerable networks that scholars have lately identified.⁴⁷ In reality, the court encompassed a large and complex organizational structure akin to what Naomi Tadmor describes as a household-family unit, wherein related and non-related dependents lived together under the authority of a householder.⁴⁸ An analysis of kingship that relies too heavily on public perceptions of the monarch is therefore at risk of oversimplifying the nature of court culture during this period and the social obligations that tied both king and queen not just to the nation at large but to their immediate circle of royal office-holders.

With the understanding of a wider royal “family,” Campbell Orr also compellingly frames the court in the late eighteenth century in terms of its related “circles of sociability,” highlighting the notable presence of aristocratic courtier-families like the Harcourts and the Portlands, who participated in established systems of royal patronage.⁴⁹ The early stages of research for this thesis pursued more specific questions of active courtier-families whose members held positions either in the royal household or in the queen’s household. Many of these noble families hosted the king and queen at their country seats in the south of England, which in turn became courtly venues for the demonstration and material articulation of friendships formed outside of St. James’s Palace. David Watkin notes that, though these royal visits are not usually featured in scholarship and biography on George III they very likely had an impact on the king’s own building practices at Windsor and Kew.⁵⁰ With further study, more detailed conclusions can be made on the influence not just of country houses but

⁴⁷ Campbell Orr critiqued Lucy Worsley’s *Courtiers* (2010) for approaching court studies in this way. Clarissa Campbell Orr, “Popular History, Court Studies and Courtier Diaries,” *The Court Historian* 17, no. 1 (2012): 6.

⁴⁸ Campbell Orr introduces this concept in her “Popular History” article, referencing Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 272.

⁴⁹ Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte: Scientific Queen,” in *Queenship in Britain*, 244.

⁵⁰ Watkin, *The Architect King*, 136–45.

of the aristocratic networks that shaped court culture and kingship itself. Second Earl and Countess Harcourt, for example, both held positions in the queen's household and welcomed George and Charlotte to their Oxfordshire villa, Nuneham House, on several occasions. The earl's brother, General William Harcourt (who would later inherit the earldom), was likewise a prominent courtier, holding office in the king and queen's households over a long career, much of which was based at Windsor, where he possessed his own country house, St. Leonard's Hill. The Harcourts were often in attendance during formal ceremonies as well as more intimate gatherings, and a closer examination of their involvement at court invites a better understanding of its networks, including the heterosocial and inter-generational relationships formed to promote a distinctive culture that supported royal authority.

Initial research questions for this thesis, however, focused rather too specifically on royal receptions at aristocratic country houses. An expansion in the project's scope has taken inspiration from G.M. Ditchfield's proposal of certain "visions of kingship." For George III, these included an Anglo-Hanoverian vision, a military vision, and a Protestant vision, together defining the king's approach to his dynastic legacy in Britain.⁵¹ In his earlier work, Ditchfield generally overlooks the court due to its declining function as a channel for political power, but his methodology is compelling in the way it situates a study of George III within the "prevailing political and intellectual currents" and appropriate context of the period, including the operation of high politics, the continued importance of religion and George's preservation of the "Anglican *via media*," along with questions of wider imperial politics, diplomacy, and the king's position as a prominent European figure,

⁵¹ G. M. Ditchfield, "Visions of Kingship in Britain under George III and George IV," in *The Hanoverian Succession: Dynastic Politics and Monarchical Culture*, ed. Andreas Gestrich and Michael Schaich (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015).

rather than a purely nationalistic one.⁵² The application of a similar approach (albeit on a smaller scale) will help to balance the study of both king and court in addition to prompting bigger, more impactful conclusions on the nature of late Georgian kingship and the continued importance of court studies on the assessment of eighteenth-century monarchy at large. Like Ditchfield, this thesis will “reaffirm the centrality of the monarchy” in high politics, religion, and patronage in late eighteenth-century Britain,⁵³ but also maintain an emphasis on the king’s relationship to his court throughout in the fulfillment of his kingly visions, which were a reflection of George’s dynastic ambitions, as well as the specific socio-political parameters of his position and relationships among the ruling elite.

Much of the initial research for this project was also under obligation to consider the neighboring biographical discipline with its advantages and limitations. Of the different varieties of scholarship on George III, the efforts of “popular” biographers tend to dominate, and George himself continues to be a regular subject, the latest publication having been released as recently as 2021.⁵⁴ These accounts suggest excellent detail and direction for a doctoral thesis, though their format tends to lend greater interest to the king’s private life and matters of personality, especially his upbringing.

⁵² G.M. Ditchfield, *George III: An Essay in Monarchy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 20, 107.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁴ Andrew Roberts, *George III: The Life and Reign of Britain’s Most Misunderstood Monarch* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).

Both John Brooke and Stanley Ayling produced seminal biographies of George III in 1972, the latter specifically writing “for the average man not for the scholar.”⁵⁵ While it is helpful to humanize the monarch to a wider audience – and, in the case of George III, revise a historical reputation that accused him of tyranny – some narratives are still at risk of framing the king as a rather isolated figure in the modern imagination, or even a Freudian product of a lonely childhood.⁵⁶ Following the unexpected death of his father Frederick, the prince of Wales, in 1751 the subject of George’s early education, for example, became a matter of national political interest and a topic confronted early on in biographical accounts. George II swiftly appointed governors at Savile House to further the interests and security of his own ministry while the dowager princess of Wales successfully maneuvered negotiations regarding her place on the intended regency council should her son inherit the throne as a minor.⁵⁷ Between the oppositional politics of his father, Frederick, at Leicester House and George’s friendship with John Stuart, third earl of Bute, discussions often dwell upon the influential figures who appear early in the king’s life. They are credited (rightfully) for cultivating ideas of patriot kingship, but the biographical format often ignores further complexities of the court system in favor of a focused, sympathetic representation, especially of a young king.

To detail a reign that lasted nearly sixty years is an ambitious undertaking, and while some biographers focus heavily on George’s childhood, another topic that

⁵⁵ John Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable, 1972), p. xvii; Stanley Ayling, *George the Third* (London: Collins, 1972).

⁵⁶ Ditchfield notes that George’s mental illness has especially contributed to his image as “a pathetic victim of an outdated medical and social consensus.” Sir Lewis Namier also presented an interesting, though limited, “study of personality” which employs psychoanalytical concepts to what is known about George’s upbringing and general behavior. Ditchfield, *George III*, 20; Lewis Namier, *Personalities and Powers* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955).

⁵⁷ John L. Bullion, “‘To Play What Game She Pleas’d without Observation’: Princess Augusta and the Political Drama of Succession, 1736-1756,” in *Queenship in Britain*, 207–35.

predominantly features in these accounts is the American Revolutionary War. John Brooke, Jeremy Black, and most recently Andrew Roberts all subtitled their works on George III to draw attention to the colonial failure that nearly drove the king to abdication in 1783. Ultimately, this emphasis echoes much of the sympathetic narrative concerning George's early years and presents the king as a rather hapless victim of his circumstances alongside waning political importance, not a tyrannical ruler grasping further power. A similar concept is promoted when these accounts approach the end of the king's life and concluding ill health; Brooke and others associate George's final years sequestered at Windsor with the fate of the court itself, "whose political and social dimensions were beginning to shrink."⁵⁸

The concerns of this thesis are much more targeted than sweeping biographical narratives, and as a result restore some nuance to the king's position in a highly aristocratic circle, neither isolated nor hopelessly unsuspecting. The latter part of George's reign, including his illness, instead underscored the strength and activity of his court. Ultimately, as David Cannadine notes, existing research on the British monarchy owes much to the genre of biography, but more compelling scholarship undertakes a "historical mode" that does not over-personalize kingship and approaches the question of monarchical agency with greater sensitivity.⁵⁹ The biographical format generally lends itself to ideas of George's extreme "conscientiousness"⁶⁰ but not necessarily a sense of proactive policy-making or control over the ruling class. On the other hand, some scholars would argue that George did intentionally cultivate a "myth of ordinariness" by the 1780s in order to

⁵⁸ As referenced in Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 242.

⁵⁹ David Cannadine, "From Biography to History: Writing the Modern British Monarchy," *Historical Research* 77, no. 197 (2004): 298.

⁶⁰ Jeremy Black, *George III: Madness and Majesty*, Penguin Monarchs (London: Allen Lane, 2020), 33–34.

rehabilitate royal authority into a palatable consumer good,⁶¹ but this conclusion continues to disregard the presence of his court as a potential instrument of monarchical agency in the expression of kingship – a theme which this thesis seeks to further address.

Somewhere in between these two conclusions there is another strand of biographical writing that better situates George III within the wider domestic context of his immediate family, including his wife the queen consort and their fifteen children. Olwen Hedley's 1975 biography of Queen Charlotte was the first to invite the female presence within the royal family more fully into studies of late Georgian monarchy.⁶² Flora Fraser and Janice Hadlow have both followed in this tradition, with an eye to the many different family members who encircled George III, the conflicting interests they often held, and the increasing challenge of conducting domesticity on a public stage.⁶³ Unfortunately, the expansive timelines of these biographical accounts – the latter beginning her narrative with the very first of the Hanoverian kings, George I – only serve to highlight George's ultimate "failure" to secure an irreproachably moral and domestic dynasty.

With an inclusive emphasis of the royal family, these works do engage with the interested parties of courtiers who served not only the king but were in frequent contact with the queen and their many children, similar to the research of Clarissa Campbell Orr and Joanna Marschner, described above. For instance, Fraser's examination of the six princesses helps to reveal the engaged networks of aristocrats

⁶¹ John Barrell references Linda Colley when he writes about George III's "myth of ordinariness." John Barrell, "Weymouth Amusements," in *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 105; Colley, *Britons*, 233.

⁶² Olwen Hedley, *Queen Charlotte* (London: J. Murray, 1975).

⁶³ Flora Fraser, *Princesses: The Six Daughters of George III* (London: John Murray, 2004); Janice Hadlow, *The Strangest Family: The Private Lives of George III, Queen Charlotte and the Hanoverians* (London: William Collins, 2015).

within the court and the extent to which they formed the wider royal “family” and worked to support royal authority. She describes how, as the daughters of George III grew older, they increasingly relied upon Lord and Lady Harcourt “as sounding boards for the great world, from which they were aware they lived secluded.”⁶⁴ To a wider audience, this might imply that the princesses had been sheltered away in a recognizable domestic circle without a true realization of the semi-professional networks at play and their accompanying preoccupations with rank and propriety. Most of the popular histories listed here, concentrated either solely on the king or encompassing the wider royal family, address an impressive breadth of material that has helped to identify useful sources for further study and research questions pertaining to the aristocratic interests of the court. With these considerations, this thesis grounds the study of late Georgian monarchy in the particular membership and formalities of an eighteenth-century court, while also avoiding an over-emphasis on domesticity or a nuclear family.

As a counterpoint to the overarching biographical narratives, the following research centers particularly on the events of the 1780s and the courtiers that feature most predominantly throughout the decade. This was, arguably, the most significant decade in George’s reign in terms of his court. Linda Colley has referred to this period in time as the “apotheosis” of George III in terms of his public image and popularity,⁶⁵ but it also marked a significant new phase for the court itself. The early 1780s brought about major reform of the Civil List and, consequently, a cull of positions in the royal household. Though his economical and scrupulous qualities may have been communicated to the wider public, such challenges George considered very personal

⁶⁴ Fraser, *Princesses*, 169.

⁶⁵ Colley, “The Apotheosis of George III.”

attacks, and he was compelled to defend what he considered the foundations of royal authority – namely the funding and personnel needed to properly maintain his court. Of the offices in the royal household that remained, many were politicized, which consequently lent a unique importance to the queen consort's household at this time, where favored courtiers found more reliable employment and were welcomed into a substantial network of aristocratic families invited to attend both king and queen within an exclusive royal circle.

The 1780s also saw the recruitment of several distinguished courtiers, including Earl and Countess Harcourt, the earl of Ailesbury, the earl and countess of Courtown, and Colonel Stephen Digby, among others. All of these royal office-holders became prominent, trusted attendants throughout the decade. They likewise facilitated the court's adaptation outside of St. James's Palace and throughout the countryside, many hosting the king and queen at their country seats, travelling with them into the West Country, and even establishing additional residences at Windsor as convenient accommodation for their attendance there.

From 1786, following Margaret Nicholson's assassination attempt at the entrance to St. James's Palace, the king seemed to have shed the negative associations with Britain's defeat in the American Revolutionary War and the subsequent period of ministerial disruption. It was a formative period, and many scholars have attempted to explain the overarching national developments that appeared to coincide with George's popularity and public image. A closer study of the court, however, must probe and better differentiate the audiences concerned. Very soon after the 1786 assassination attempt, George and Charlotte conducted their third visit to the Harcourts at Nuneham House (Oxon.), which included an additional trip to Blenheim Palace and a formal visit to the University of Oxford for a thanksgiving address

hosted at the Sheldonian Theatre. This royal visit was one of the first clear examples of the court circle's adaptation to alternative venues outside of London and its facilitation of royal ceremony throughout. When George became seriously ill at the end of the decade, this style of royal travel was especially useful in accommodating the recommended treatments for the king's health while upholding royal duties, such as the reception of local corporations, military reviews, and even Privy Council meetings. Aristocratic courtiers were not only the mainstay for continued expressions of kingship in places such as Weymouth and Plymouth – they were the principal audience to it.

The 1780s was also a significant decade, as some scholars have argued, for George III to begin to “experiment with a new character,”⁶⁶ but these efforts were then compounded by much larger socio-political developments and, in a fortunate combination of circumstances that resonated with public opinion, proved extremely popular for the monarchy in Britain. In an effort to restore a more nuanced understanding of audience in the expression of kingship, this thesis looks closely at the elite circles involved, particularly those in close contact with the king through royal offices in his or his consort's households. George's “new character” related in some respect to the court's adaptation following the 1782 reform, but in terms of elite exclusivity, he had always upheld the importance of rank, which was closely tied to court office. The more prestigious, ceremonial offices required someone of a high rank, usually an earldom or above, and George enforced this rule also in Queen Charlotte's own household.

⁶⁶ Barrell, “Weymouth Amusements,” 105.

R.O. Bucholz's volume titled "Court Officers, 1660–1837," published in the series *Office-Holders in Modern Britain* (2006), has provided a useful starting point in order to gauge the organization of the royal household throughout the eighteenth century. Bucholz's online "Database of Court Officers" has likewise supplemented the many other lists of office-holders appointed to the satellite households of royal consorts and children. Membership within these related establishments, particularly those among the highest ranks, helped to determine much of the court's culture and activity by virtue of their employment and participation. The attendants engaged under George and Charlotte were not only their first line of defense, so to speak, and an insulating layer that cushioned them from the wider public, but frequently the first to witness and even partake in royal pastimes, which contributed to the king's style of rule and the moral court ethos that he frequently encouraged. The ways in which the king related to his peers and the particular elements of elite society that he embraced at his court are both principal points of inquiry in terms of the intersections between royal and aristocratic cultures.

In a close analysis of courtly relationships, the principal sources employed for this thesis largely include surviving correspondence, memoirs, and diaries. Concerning the former, there is ample literature that explores the employment of eighteenth-century correspondence as source material, including both its opportunities and limitations.⁶⁷ While it is important to consider letter-writing more fully in the context of "epistolary performance," as Bruce Redford describes it,⁶⁸ the products

⁶⁷ Susan Whyman is one of the foremost names in the scholarship on epistolary culture in the long eighteenth century, and her research testifies to the rich volume of material that can be cultivated from correspondence. Susan Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶⁸ Bruce Redford, *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 2.

themselves lend considerable insight into court culture and identify many of the active courtier networks developing in the period. George III, like most of his contemporaries, relied upon the epistolary form to communicate a wide range of information – intellectual, political, emotional, practical – and the process of letter-writing remained a very personal one, especially as the king refused to employ a private secretary until his eyesight began to fail in 1805.⁶⁹ J.W. Fortescue and A. Aspinall have both published comprehensive, annotated volumes of George’s extant correspondence that span his lifetime.⁷⁰ More recently, the collaborative Georgian Papers Programme has helpfully supplemented the publications with digital access to material from the Royal Archives, a large portion of it comprising letters in addition to earlier essays written by George as a young prince.⁷¹ These resources have contributed significantly to an intimate understanding of the king as both a father and a ruler, since correspondents range from members of his immediate family, predominantly his sons, to a sizeable group of ministers that cycled throughout his reign.

Though it is already frequently referenced in scholarship, royal correspondence merits further study, particularly in the language that George employed to communicate more abstract ideas and values. For example, his use of the phrase *the dignity of the crown* often related to the justification of his royal position, and it appeared specifically during negotiations over the royal household’s reform in 1783, which is explored in a greater detail in the first chapter. Moreover, the king’s

⁶⁹ Sir Herbert Taylor was appointed in 1805 as Private Secretary to the king, thereafter serving Queen Charlotte in a similar position at the establishment of the regency.

⁷⁰ Aspinall also published annotated editions (in eight volumes) of the correspondence of George III’s eldest son and namesake, the prince of Wales. J.W. Fortescue, *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to 1783*, six vols., (London: Macmillan, 1927-1928); A. Aspinall, *The Later Correspondence of George III*, five vols., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962-1970).

⁷¹ “Georgian Papers Programme,” <https://georgianpapers.com/>.

extant letters to his eldest sons also demonstrate not just an emphasis on good and honorable conduct (as might be expected) but an added duty, by virtue of the status that they had inherited, to be good examples to their peers and the nation at large.

While the “official” correspondence of George III continues to be an essential resource, an examination of the court circle has prompted further consultation of archival material belonging to the interested courtiers themselves. These letters are indispensable in the study of the relationships formed between royalty and nobility; they reveal the rather *ad hoc* processes behind the activity of the inner court circle, with an equal though often juxtaposing emphasis on royal ceremony and dignity. A small but important supplement to the official correspondence can be found in the letter books from the Hurd Library at Hartlebury Castle near Worcester, which holds the correspondence between George III and his close friend, Richard Hurd, a former bishop of Worcester.⁷² Hurd was a significant, almost fatherly confidant to the king, and his letters give unique insight into George’s views on religion and education. Some important additional correspondence was gleaned from the manuscript *Shelburne Papers* at the William L. Clements Library, which provided particular details on the reform of the royal household in the early 1780s and the negotiations held with court officers who oversaw certain departments, such as the Lord Chamberlain and the Master of the Horse.⁷³

The following are the principal aristocratic families of interest to this thesis owing to the extant correspondence, both published and manuscript, that details their connections to the court under George III. To start, the Harcourt family and estate

⁷² Many thanks to the Hurd Librarian, Christine Penney, for providing the transcriptions of this letter book. Bishop Richard Hurd Letter Book 12, Hurd Library, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire.

⁷³ Many thanks to Terese Murphy and the William L. Clements Library for providing digital access to these papers. William Petty, 1st Marquis of Landsowne, 2nd Earl of Shelburne Papers, vol. 125, WLC.

papers, which are housed in the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford (much of which was published by descendants in the late nineteenth century), comprise a section devoted to royal correspondence.⁷⁴ Simon Harcourt, first Earl Harcourt, was a devoted courtier and early governor to George III when prince of Wales, later becoming Queen Charlotte's first Master of the Horse. Though Simon Harcourt's eldest son did not at first share the same enthusiasm for the king or queen, their family papers are now a testament to the second earl George Simon's reconciliation to the court. By the time he and his wife Elizabeth had joined the queen's household in the 1780s, they wrote frequently to both George and Charlotte, as well as to many of their children. The Harcourt papers also reveal that the eldest princesses by this period were often recruited to write on behalf of their mother in order to arrange attendance and communicate royal wishes, though as they grew older it is clear that they developed their own relationships with their parents' aristocratic courtiers.

Several other noble families with ties to the court collated their own collections of royal correspondence, some of which survived through the interference of later generations to preserve and establish a form of dynastic inheritance, though some of the material has been largely overlooked. Stored inside the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre archives in Chippenham is the correspondence of Elizabeth Herbert (née Spencer), countess of Pembroke, as well as the papers of various members of the Brudenell family, including Thomas Brudenell-Bruce, the earl of Ailesbury, his nieces Mary Stopford (née Powys), the countess of Courtown, and Elizabeth Townshend (née Powys), Viscountess Sydney, alongside their respective branches of the family. Pembroke's correspondence with the queen and several

⁷⁴ Edward William Harcourt (ed.), *The Harcourt Papers*, twelve vols., (Oxford: printed for private circulation by J. Parker and Co., 1880); see also Royal letters, 1751-1826, 1885-1910, n.d., MSS. Eng. d. 3880-3883, e. 3653, Papers of the Harcourt Family, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

princesses was almost immediately discounted as “Georgian Tittle-Tattle” by a succeeding Lord Herbert who gathered and edited the material,⁷⁵ but the contents nevertheless demonstrate a strong attachment formed between these women and the resulting courtier-family networks, which continued only to expand as the countess’s eldest son, the eleventh earl of Pembroke, who was Vice-Chamberlain to the king from 1784 to 1794, would go on to marry Catherine Semyonovna Vorontsova (spelled Woronzow), daughter of the Russian ambassador to Britain. Successive generations of Herberts would likewise continue to marry into other prominent courtier-families (a subject that is expanded further in the second chapter of this thesis).

Like the countess of Pembroke, the earl of Ailesbury secured a trusted position under Queen Charlotte, first as her Lord Chamberlain and afterwards her Treasurer. A portion of his correspondence with king, queen, and the wider court circle has been published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission,⁷⁶ and the material left at Chippenham also includes fairly extensive records of the queen’s household expenses and the corresponding letters that attempted to resolve the concerning state of her finances.⁷⁷ Moreover, Ailesbury’s correspondence represents a significant kinship network anchored at court. Through both elevation and appointment, the king honored several members of the extended Brudenell family, beginning with Ailesbury and all three of his brothers, and by the 1780s, later generations were welcomed and similarly recognized. Many of the letters that Ailesbury exchanged with family members

⁷⁵ Possibly Henry Herbert, who became 17th earl of Pembroke in 1969. Correspondence from Queen Charlotte and her daughters the Princesses Charlotte, Amelia, Elizabeth, Mary and Augusta Sophia to Elizabeth Countess of Pembroke and Catherine Countess of Pembroke, 1785-1819, 2057/F4/47, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham.

⁷⁶ Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Fifteenth Report: Appendix. Part VII, The Manuscripts of the Duke of Somerset, the Marquis of Ailesbury, and the Rev. Sir T. H. G. Puleston, Bart.*, C (Series) (Great Britain. Parliament) 8552 (London: HMSO, 1898).

⁷⁷ One hundred and seventeen letters, statements of accounts and other papers concerning the Queen's Treasury, 1767-1806, 9/34/38, WSHC.

involved some form of court news, featuring especially in the conversations with his niece, the countess of Courtown, and her husband. Among the members of this growing family, as evidenced in their letters to Ailesbury, was a camaraderie centered on their roles of service under the king and queen. One small but striking example is the language that the earl of Courtown employed when writing in 1780 to the earl of Ailesbury on their shared, loyal silence in regard to the anticipated elevation of another family member,⁷⁸ which “shews that we are qualify’d to be good Courtiers.”⁷⁹ There is a pride as well as an exclusivity in their family membership and, in turn, members’ access to royalty.

The correspondence of the earl of Ailesbury was intentionally preserved, especially the letters written by the king and queen themselves, which formed an important, woefully overlooked record of court activity, particularly from the 1780s. Such source material requires a closer analysis of the social dynamics of kinship as it relates to a courtier-family’s shared experience at court, similar to a prosopographical approach, though hopefully not so susceptible to what some critics considered the “atomised” representations of Sir Lewis Namier.⁸⁰ Which offices family members held, and under what department in the royal household, how they represented the duties of office or attendance to each other, and in what ways court life became a family tradition that continued to affect several generations of Brudenells – these are all central considerations to the construction of a courtier family tree.

In addition to correspondence, this thesis has benefitted greatly from recent scholarly efforts to amass and annotate additional material directly produced by the

⁷⁸ The earl of Ailesbury’s brother, James Brudenell, became Baron Brudenell in 1780.

⁷⁹ Twenty-six letters from James Stopford, 2nd Earl of Courtown, and his wife Mary, Lord Ailesbury’s niece, 1767-1794, 9/35/305, WSHC.

⁸⁰ Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, viii.

court, such as in the *Memoirs of the Court of George III* (2015) and *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney* (2011-2019). The former is a book series that includes volumes such as *The Memoirs of Charlotte Papendiek* and *The Diary of Queen Charlotte, 1780 and 1794*,⁸¹ both edited by Michael Kassler, which provide very detailed insight into certain court processes, especially those that took place outside of London, when the king and queen were at Kew, Windsor, or travelling further into the West Country. The queen's diary, for example, gives a brief glimpse into the royal routine established at Windsor by the 1790s, as well as the experiences of the royal entourage at the latter end of their 1789 tour into the West Country. Papendiek's memoirs likewise reveal the close-knit communities formed within the lower ranks of the royal household, particularly among the many artists and musicians summoned to the royal residences at Kew and Windsor. Additionally, the Georgian Papers Programme has made accessible the manuscript journals of Colonel Robert Fulke Greville, in three volumes, which span his service as Equerry to George III and later one of his Grooms of the Bedchamber.⁸² Many of the aforementioned collections of correspondence also feature various memoirs and journals of aristocratic courtiers, most notably Lady Harcourt's memoirs of the Regency Crisis⁸³ and the earl of Ailesbury's quotidian accounts dating from the 1780s.⁸⁴

Life-writing is a type of source material that is more clearly at risk of anecdotal reminiscence rather than more "objective" representation due to the

⁸¹ Michael Kassler, ed., *The Memoirs of Charlotte Papendiek (1765–1840): Court, Musical and Artistic Life in the Time of King George III*, vol. 1, and Michael Kassler, ed., *The Diary of Queen Charlotte, 1789 and 1794*, vol. 4, *Memoirs of the Court of George III* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015).

⁸² Journal of Robert Fulke Greville, vol. 1, 1781–1794, RCIN 1047047, Georgian manuscripts in the Royal Library on medical matters, Royal Library, Windsor; Journal of Robert Fulke Greville, vol. 2, Journal of His Majesty's Most Serious and Afflicting Illness, 1788–1789, RCIN 1047014, RL; Journal of Robert Fulke Greville, vol. 3, Summary Narrative, 1819, RCIN 1047015, RL.

⁸³ Edward William Harcourt, ed., *The Harcourt Papers*, vol. 4 (Oxford: printed for private circulation by J. Parker and Co., 1880), sec. "Memoirs of the Years 1788-89."

⁸⁴ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 269–90.

fragmentary nature of its survival or the particular approach that the writer adopted. The novelist Frances Burney produced the most obvious instance of this in her heavily stylized court journals. She was not allowed to write professionally or publish while employed in the queen's household, so Burney instead infused much of her authorial voice into her accounts. These journals are essentially a large collection of letters to close family members and related sections of writing, which Burney herself edited many years later, concerning her personal struggles adjusting to the highly restrictive nature of court life and the high drama among its many characters. In her writings, she is the protagonist who fights to overcome much of the prejudice that was inherent to the social hierarchy of the period and further exacerbated in royal spaces. While Burney's journals are perhaps the fullest and most detailed accounts of the court in the 1780s, it is helpful to consider them alongside the available contemporary material, however fragmented. If life-writing is evaluated collectively – in a form of dialogue together, like the associated correspondence – it weaves a rich tapestry of court culture which reveals many of the shared values and loyalties of attendants across a range of social backgrounds. In an analysis of the 1789 royal tour embedded in the final chapter of this thesis, the combination of court narratives provides a wonderfully detailed composite that underscores the realities of royal travel with a large group of aristocratic courtiers and other attendants. When viewed in conversation, these sources ultimately inform a better understanding of the court circle that encased George III and Queen Charlotte and, as a group, facilitated the former's approach to kingship.

Courtier sources, while incredibly rich in detail, must in part be supplemented by newspaper reports – initially to obtain a fuller picture of logistical arrangements of royal ceremony at St. James's as well as royal travel further afield, but primarily for

comparison between aristocratic experiences and views of the wider public, which tend to diverge significantly. In newsprint, royal movements are more easily traced throughout different venues and give a sense, though from an outsider's perspective, of court activity specific to the location. Sources belonging or adjacent to the court circle, by contrast, give privileged insight into the socio-political dynamics at work and lend more weight to the formalities and aristocratic people involved.

The relationship between king and court was certainly a co-dependent one, and due to George's centrality to his court's arrangement, each chapter is themed to address various expressions of his kingship in that context. The first two chapters assess the structure of the court and its relationship to the royal household as well as the establishment of the queen consort, with concurrent developments in both households producing a dominant circle of aristocratic courtiers. Subsequent chapters further probe the nature of royal ceremony outside of St. James's Palace, including alternative court venues at Windsor and within aristocratic country houses, as well as the king's approach (through his court circle) to monarchical practice on a wider European stage.

The first chapter is an introductory discussion on the definition and structure of the court under George III, as well as his associations with the aristocracy, particularly during the economical reform and ministerial disruption of the early 1780s. Parliamentary interference and the politicization of certain court offices in this period forced the king to negotiate changes to the royal household. Royal correspondence with ministers and courtiers at this time demonstrates how George sought to redirect the political challenges away from the operation of his household in order to maintain what he termed the *dignity of the crown*. He associated some of the intangible elements of dignity, such as honor and reverence, with more material

concerns – foremost the Treasury’s monetary provision for the upkeep of the royal household, in addition to the attendance of particular court officers and the ceremonial practices that they could facilitate. This initial discussion challenges the dialogue of courtly decline under George III and argues for the court’s continued importance as a venue for cultural and political expression. In spite of reform and political conflict, the king attempted to uphold the notion of an ancient and dignified monarchy, which would further assert his sovereignty over an increasingly factional ruling class.

The second chapter seeks to further integrate concepts of eighteenth-century household management into the study of the royal household, which has not yet attracted notice in discussions of the period’s “household-families,”⁸⁵ as well as householders’ responsibilities for “œconomy.”⁸⁶ The term “royal family” in public discourse often denoted its primary members but in royal correspondence, “family” also referred to court officers and members of the royal household. Moreover, both the king and queen observed a duty to their dependents, including lower-ranking attendants, whose salaries, pensions, and perquisites formed a chief part of household expenditure. In light of the reforms and political conflict of the 1780s, this chapter primarily explores the growing primacy of the queen consort’s household (a separate establishment from the royal household) and the principal court officers employed there. Queen Charlotte refrained from a direct involvement in politics, but her position and the regular presence of her attendants among the royal family were further complicated, even politicized, in the wake of the king’s first episode of illness and the Regency Crisis of 1789. A study of the correspondence between king, queen, and

⁸⁵ Naomi Tadmor, “The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Past & Present* 151 (May 1996): 111–40.

⁸⁶ Karen Harvey, “œconomy and the Eighteenth-Century House: A Cultural History of Social Practice,” *Home Cultures* 11, no. 3 (November 2014): 375–89.

courtiers, as well as surviving accounts of the Regency Crisis from members of the royal circle, will lend insight into the nature of courtly relationships – especially among the aristocratic families who devoted much of their time in attendance at royal residences aside from St. James’s Palace. The gendered, social complexities of this court are a significant and underexplored topic that emphasizes the influence of Queen Charlotte in the expression of her husband’s kingship, especially during his ill health in the late 1780s.

The third chapter will turn attention to court activity and identity outside of London, in particular the king’s adoption of Windsor Castle as a primary royal residence in the late 1770s. Here, George cultivated a court circle that facilitated his efforts to implement a wider moral program among the ruling class, employing the neo-Gothic style in his renovations to the castle, as well as traditional royal pursuits specific to his residence at Windsor, including stag hunting and the chivalric ceremonies of the Order of the Garter. Court ceremonial was not confined to St. James’s Palace; the king and queen hosted a number of ritualized activities at Windsor among a substantial network of aristocratic courtiers, many of whom lived nearby. Far from the image of a simple country gentleman, the court in the countryside uniquely integrated concepts of royal magnificence and ceremony into a stylized approach of Christian knighthood rooted in the re-Gothicized surrounds of Windsor Castle.

The fourth chapter continues on the subject of the honors system, especially the chivalric orders of knighthood, but will expand upon the theme of wider cultures of European princehood in which George III participated. Working to dispel the lingering notions of British exceptionalism, this section frames a more conceptual discussion on the evolving nature of monarchical practice throughout Europe, with questions surrounding the adoption of Enlightenment interests alongside the vestiges

of *ancien régime* practice and more conservative principles, including representations of piety and of soldier-kingship. George remained very attentive to his electoral dominions in Hanover, and further comparisons of kingship between Europe and Britain better informs an understanding of his approach to electoral power with the resources at court employed to facilitate such connections.

The fifth and final chapter encompasses a case study of the 1789 royal tour into the West Country, which George undertook following his first serious episode of illness and the subsequent Regency Crisis. A close analysis of the tour will probe the nature of royal travel beyond the king's public reception and incorporate the varied themes of kingship and court culture that were examined in the preceding chapters. These include the relationship between the monarch and his courtiers outside of St. James's Palace, the particular presence of Queen Charlotte and her household among the royal entourage, the insertion of court ceremonial in alternative venues and the highly militarized settings of grand naval reviews, as well as the assembly of the Privy Council and the reception of diplomats in the countryside, with a careful attention to the evolving situation in Europe, especially France at this time. The well-publicized concept of a recuperative seaside journey was transformed by the necessities of George's court and its reassembly following his illness, further underscoring the king's tireless approach to what he considered inescapable responsibilities as sovereign.

Ultimately, a better understanding of late Georgian monarchy involves a re-evaluation of court culture and the style of kingship that was prioritized and supported by the ruling class, especially those loyal to the king. George III was not necessarily interested in impressing the middle classes or even in maintaining his popularity with any particular appeals to the wider public. His energies were instead focused on the

maintenance of a well-ordered court in view of those employed within his and his consort's household-families and the aristocratic officers who were able to facilitate the activities and ceremony to which he felt the crown was entitled. The relationships that George thus either cultivated or suppressed among the aristocracy reveal a unique approach to kingship, wherein a distinctive court culture was formed across several royal residences and alternative courtly venues that engaged directly with the state of George's health, his personal interests, and most importantly his own conceptions of the crown's status and dignity. This thesis advances a powerful intervention for court studies in the eighteenth century and seeks to inspire others to reconsider court audiences and their relationship to the monarch in question. Looking past the dominant narratives concerning extra-parliamentary activity in the period, as well as the isolating emphasis placed on the king and his health, a closer consideration of court culture and its membership under George III offers an effective approach to the study of Hanoverian kingship.

Chapter 1: The Royal Household and the Dignity of the Crown

Two decades following his accession in 1760, George III was compelled to negotiate the organization of the royal household amid ministerial turbulence and reform. Though his reign by this time was well-established, the political conflicts of the early 1780s had produced many challenges to the composition of his court, which was already a complex social body made up of institutional and interpersonal relationships between prince and peers. As the sovereign head of this institution, George possessed rather fixed ideas about the *dignity* of his crown that often came into conflict with the policies of ministers who wished to regulate the royal household. In the wake of the decade's volatile succession of ministries, alongside Edmund Burke's economical reform, there emerged the important distinction between the offices at court appropriated to the political realm and those kept exclusively under royal jurisdiction which were, according to George, fundamental to his kingship.

This chapter gives a comprehensive portrait of the court under George III from the 1780s, including the king's relationships with members of the aristocracy and how the latter were incorporated into the structure of the royal household. This representation also acknowledges the political and social elements of late Georgian kingship, and the negotiation required as certain court offices became increasingly under the control of the ministers in power. By the early 1780s, major challenges to the court were imposed by the Rockingham Whigs and their campaign to reform the royal household. At the same time, George garnered the support of loyal aristocratic

courtiers appointed to offices that were retained under royal jurisdiction in order to support the operation of his court. The interplay between these two opposing factions gives greater clarity to the development of the royal household in the latter half of George's active reign. An introductory discussion of the court's structure can thus progress to wider questions of kingship as it was supported by the formation of a particular court circle, including the politics of sovereignty and George's appeal to *dignity*. A study of the king's relationship with the ruling class is an important, but never fully integrated, element of court studies in Britain at this time, and it ultimately provides a distinctive approach to the argument for a continued significance of the court as a venue for social arbitration and political display.

The study of Georgian kingship benefits from a rich tradition of scholarship, but the integration of the ruling class into analysis has not been consistent. Research on Britain's aristocracy in the eighteenth century has chiefly encompassed a shift away from Sir Lewis Namier's original representation of an elite clique at the center of power, in addition to J.C.D. Clark's emphasis on Anglican-aristocratic hegemony.¹ Alongside this scholarship, though never fully in conversation with it, is a discussion more exclusively focused on the court, which was also introduced in the opening arguments of this thesis. Norbert Elias's understanding of court as a theatrical venue for political performance endures, but his equally absolutist interpretation of *ancien régime* has prompted others, including John Adamson, to argue for a "more diversified series of power relations" between prince and nobles.² These discussions, however, have often surrendered to conclusions of the Enlightened rejection of "old

¹ Namier, *The Structure of Politics*; Clark, *English Society*.

² Adamson, "Introduction: The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court," 17; Elias, *The Court Society*.

courtly values” and a courtly “decline”³ in Britain by the reign of George III. A better integration of the historiography on the aristocracy into the study of late-eighteenth century court culture demonstrates the continued significance of court office and demarcates the motivations of those peers who closely aligned themselves with either the king or his ministers.

Alongside a general aristocratic commitment to political leadership there were divided loyalties between the peers of the Opposition and those devoted to the more conservative principles that upheld the crown’s authority. Michael McCahill designates the latter group “the king’s friends” – among them a network of “court careerists” – and is hesitant to recognize their political leverage in accordance with the king’s wishes, preferring instead to underscore their social and ceremonial roles as court officers.⁴ The political turbulence of the early 1780s, however, and its effects on the royal household prompt further study of the king’s negotiation between the two groups. As will be discussed, the demands of Lord Rockingham and his supporters at the resignation of Lord North transformed ministerial control over court appointments.

The following discussion frames the court as a social body encompassing relationships between royalty and nobility, and it will first briefly examine how this materialized in formal, fashionable displays at the court’s ceremonial center, St. James’s Palace. Underpinning these large court gatherings, however, was the operation of the royal household and the appointment of court officers in its

³ Adamson, “Introduction: The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court,” 41; Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*.

⁴ Michael W. McCahill, *Order and Equipose: The Peerage and the House of Lords, 1783-1806*, Studies in History 11 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), 158; idem, *The House of Lords in the Age of George III, 1760-1811* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell for the Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2009), 27.

administration, an examination which forms the heart of this chapter. An overview of the principal household offices and their corresponding departments reveals the more complex levels of attendance and system of honors that the king oversaw. Further study of the ministerial disruptions which marked the 1780s, coupled with the reform of the royal household, lends insight into the negotiations forged between George III and his ministers. Royal correspondence with both ministers and courtiers at this time demonstrates how the king ultimately sought to redirect the political challenges away from the operation of his household in order to maintain sovereignty over the court. George frequently appealed to retain the material concerns of his establishment in order to support the intangible elements of his kingship, especially what he defined to be the crown's dignity.

If the relationship between prince and peers is a primary focus, what may first come to mind in a study of the early modern court is the monarch's prerogative to *hold* a court in a grand display of wealth and rank. In the eighteenth century, there were two principal ways in which the monarch would publicly receive the nobility and other important guests at St. James's Palace. First was the *levée*, which was restricted only to men. Throughout his reign, George normally held *levées* on Wednesday and Friday mornings during the winter parliamentary season. The second, much larger gathering was the court drawing room, at which the king presided in conjunction with his queen consort, and which normally took place on Thursday and Sunday afternoons.⁵ As George and Charlotte's many children came of age, both princes and princesses were expected to attend drawing rooms and receive courtiers alongside their parents. All of these formal gatherings took place in the state

⁵ *Levés* were also held on Monday mornings in the parliamentary season until George's illness in 1788. Roberts, ed., *George III and Queen Charlotte*, 113.

apartments at St. James's Palace, chiefly in the Great Drawing Room and Council Chamber, and were especially grand on occasions such as royal birthdays and the anniversaries of the monarch's coronation and accession.⁶

Hannah Greig, in her work *The Beau Monde* (2013), discusses the court in the particular context of eighteenth-century fashionable society and highlights the opportunity at drawing rooms specifically for elite fashionable display.⁷ Greig argues that the destruction of Whitehall in 1698 prompted a greater assimilation of the royal household into London society through the adoption of several smaller residences in and around the metropolis.⁸ Though the scope of Greig's study is focused more specifically on the material luxury seen at court, it provides a very helpful picture of Hanoverian court gatherings as an opportunity for those with wealth and rank to align themselves to "a prestige system rooted in lineage, heritage, crown, and constitution."⁹ Drawing rooms in particular remained an important venue for these public associations and were held with regularity during the parliamentary season as dictated by the court calendar, including royal birthdays, as well as occasional thanksgiving celebrations and the observance of church feast days. Presentations to the king and queen had long been a traditional element of the court, but by the late eighteenth century, drawing rooms also became the primary social legitimator for anyone, especially young women, preparing to enter elite society and, by extension, the marriage market. Court presentation was also a prerequisite for those of a certain rank upon their employment in the royal household,¹⁰ which was also enforced for

⁶ Beattie, *The English Court*, 9–10, 13.

⁷ Greig, *The Beau Monde*.

⁸ *Ibid*, 106.

⁹ *Ibid*, 103.

¹⁰ Charles Lamb, *A Book Explaining the Ranks and Dignities of British Society: Intended Chiefly for the Instruction of Young Persons* (England: Printed for Tabart and Co. at the Juvenile and School Library, New Bond-Street, 1809), 115.

those appointed to the queen's household.¹¹ Though she maintained a separate household from that of her husband, the queen upheld equally strict rules of rank and propriety among its aristocratic members.

There were several other significant, more politically weighted elements of a drawing room that were indicative of the relationship between royalty and the ruling class. Most importantly, the nobility from a range of political backgrounds would participate together in these gatherings despite whatever disagreements raged in parliament. Clarissa Campbell Orr describes the concept of "loyal opposition" emerging in the eighteenth century, wherein the court became a polite stage and "counterpart" to the political debates at Westminster.¹² An aristocrat's attendance, or absence, at St. James's Palace was publicly noted, and printed media, particularly newspapers from the period, give a glimpse of the nature of these gatherings when the court was convened in London. A cursory study of the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* in the early 1780s provides several examples of a reported who's-who in the assembly.¹³ The principal nobility as well as other dignitaries present at drawing rooms were regularly named each week in this publication. Describing the drawing room that took place on Thursday 15 May 1783, the *Gazetteer* listed the individual names of over 130 people in attendance, including those of rank, officers of state, and foreign ambassadors.¹⁴

¹¹ An extant letter written by Queen Charlotte explicitly stated that a prospective member of the queen's household, the countess of Macclesfield, "can not be looked upon as my Lady of the Bedchamber until she has been presented, and therefore can not be called upon to take any waiting." Queen Charlotte to the countess of Pembroke, 28 November 1801, 2057/F7/3/2, WSHC.

¹² Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Partners in Power," in *Enlightened Princesses*, 67.

¹³ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, accessed January 2023, <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/17th-and-18th-century-burney-newspapers-collection>.

¹⁴ "Advertisements and Notices," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 16 May 1783, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

A peer's deliberate absence at such a public gathering was likely an indication of strong political opposition or social estrangement, while regular attendance signaled loyalty and the hope for the preferment of certain honors and appointments. George Simon Harcourt, second Earl Harcourt, for example, was said to have absented himself from court for six years because of a perceived insult to his family. According to family papers, Harcourt felt that his late father, the first earl, had not been appropriately recognized or rewarded for his long and dedicated career in service to the crown.¹⁵ Harcourt was at this time also in political opposition to the king and harbored fairly radical Republican attitudes alongside his admiration for the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In 1783, however, he returned to court by voting in the House of Lords to reject Fox's East India Bill according to the king's wishes. Lord and Lady Harcourt then became regular attendees at court, and both were soon after granted offices in the queen's household.

Just as a peer could openly indicate his views by means of attendance or absence, George would likewise communicate either his approval or displeasure when he received those in attendance. On some occasions he was known to have continued the practice of his predecessor, George II, of "rumping" – turning his back to someone in front of the assembly – to show his disapproval.¹⁶ The perspective of a contemporary newspaper also highlights the display of Queen Charlotte's authority at these gatherings. Those listed in attendance to express their thanks for a court

¹⁵ Before his accidental death in 1777, Simon Harcourt, first Earl Harcourt, served as Queen Charlotte's first Master of the Horse and afterwards her Lord Chamberlain. In 1768, he was appointed Ambassador to France and then made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1772. A note in the family's published correspondence and papers alludes to the second earl's anger that his father's dedicated service to the king had not been duly acknowledged with an appointment to the Order of the Garter: "Lord Nuneham at this time thought his father ill-used at not having the garter given him in reward for his services." Edward William Harcourt, ed., *The Harcourt Papers*, vol. 7 (Oxford: printed for private circulation by J. Parker and Co., 1880), 235.

¹⁶ Campbell Orr, "Partners in Power," 67.

appointment were there to kiss the queen's hand or to simply be introduced to "Her Majesty."¹⁷ The practice of "kissing hands" was inherited from "the ancient feudal practice of paying homage and swearing fealty," and involved kissing the king or queen's right hand on a bended right knee.¹⁸ If the queen could not attend a drawing room, one of her appointed ladies-in-waiting was responsible for receiving the nobility. This happened on at least two occasions in the early 1780s, according to the *Gazetteer*: Thursday 12 December 1782 and Thursday 6 March 1783. On the latter date, the lady-in-waiting was named as Mary D'Arcy, the countess of Holderness, who served as a Lady of the Bedchamber to the queen from 1770 until her death in 1801.¹⁹

It was Queen Charlotte herself who likewise required all female attendees at drawing rooms to wear hooped skirts, at first in keeping with European court fashion, though the style had become increasingly outdated by the 1770s. The queen's reasons for retaining the hoop skirt in women's court dress are unclear but were generally consistent with her husband's conservatism and, as Nigel Arch and Joanna Marschner argue, a result of relative political stability in Britain compared to the fate of the court in France.²⁰ There were a couple of equally "fossilized" elements of men's court dress, too: the two-cornered hat and sword, both usually carried.²¹ While Charlotte consistently avoided any open political statements, it was arguably her prerogative as

¹⁷ Several examples of dignitaries travelling to St. James's Palace to kiss hands or otherwise be presented to the queen are noted in an issue of the *Gazetteer* dating from 1783. "Advertisements and Notices," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 16 May 1783, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

¹⁸ R. O. Bucholz, "Going to Court in 1700: A Visitor's Guide," *The Court Historian* 5, no. 3 (2000): 204–5.

¹⁹ "Advertisements and Notices," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 13 December 1782; "Advertisements and Notices," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 7 March 1783, *Burney Newspapers Collection*; Bucholz, "Household of Queen Charlotte (1761-1818)," *The Database of Court Officers*.

²⁰ Arch and Marschner, *Splendour at Court*, 37.

²¹ *Ibid*, 43.

consort to participate in “dress politics” in support of the monarch and to set a standard of style and polite behavior at court. As Philip Mansel has noted, the large size of the court hoop skirts reinforced a sense of self-importance and dominance of physical space that was unavailable to women in the political sphere, which might have contributed to their continued use.²² The queen’s inclinations for court dress were normally followed, but in terms of political signaling at a drawing room, elite women could subversively undermine these demands with certain accessories. Fashionable women in support of the Whig opposition, for example, would sometimes wear towering headdresses decorated with long ostrich feathers despite the queen’s known dislike.²³

Studies of the etiquette and fashionable display within court drawing rooms, however, often obscure the reasons for the persistent aristocratic interest in court office, as well as the underlying operations of the royal household in both formal and alternative court settings. Many royal office-holders were present at levées and drawing rooms, but the responsibilities of those attending the king and queen at these gatherings are not always made clear in the source material, particularly in newspapers or other forms of public reporting. The antiquarian Charles Lamb wrote an account of British high society at this time and dedicated his publication to one of the daughters of George III, Princess Elizabeth. In it, he wrote briefly on the protocol for drawing rooms as it was required in 1809, which featured a host of attendants who accompanied both king and queen, including their respective Lord Chamberlains, as well as the Master and Mistress of the Robes and the Ladies and Gentlemen of the

²² Philip Mansel, *Dressed to Rule: Royal and Court Costume from Louis XIV to Elizabeth II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 59.

²³ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, 125.

Bedchamber.²⁴ Depending on the court appointment, certain officers held positions that required their attendance only at formal court venues while others were given more intimate access to the private apartments. As will be discussed, the offices that were primarily concerned with the public rooms at St. James's Palace became increasingly divorced from the royal household due to political interference. This short review of grand court assemblies thus generates further inquiry into the levels of proximity offered to specific attendants and the nature of particular court circles convened in alternative venues. Appointments to the royal household significantly informed the organization of the court and the employment of reliable attendants, but the political conflict of the 1780s greatly complicated this process.

The following brief overview of the principal offices of the royal household provides a framework to compare the specific changes made in the 1780s. Robert Bucholz has already compiled a definitive list of office-holders alongside valuable information pertaining to their responsibilities, salaries, and the overall administrative structure of the court.²⁵ Much of the following has been sourced from his research in order to supply a firm foundation for the continued study of particular offices and people that will appear in later discussion.

The early modern royal household was predominantly led by three departments. The first, under the Lord Chamberlain, was responsible for the ceremonial and social life of the court, and it included all servants “above stairs” in the “public rooms” – with the exception of the bedchamber staff, who were supervised by the Groom of the Stole and had access to the king's private apartments.

²⁴ Lamb, *The Ranks and Dignities of British Society*, 116–19.

²⁵ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*.

The Lord Chamberlain and Groom of the Stole thus had an “ambiguous” relationship, wherein the former’s authority would often be challenged by the latter, whose department replaced what used to be the privy chamber staff.²⁶ A question of proximity to the king, in addition to the ceremonial differences between public and private apartments, together account for the proposed ambiguity. It will become clearer how these two offices diverged during the period of political turmoil in the 1780s.

The second main department was headed by the Lord Steward, who oversaw all culinary and domestic needs of the household and the corresponding servants “below stairs.” The Lord Steward normally left day-to-day responsibilities to the Board of the Green Cloth, which consisted of other members of his department, including the Treasurer of the Household, the Comptroller of the Household, Masters of the Household, and the Clerks of the Green Cloth.

The final principal department in the royal household was one led by the Master of the Horse, who was responsible for the household’s transportation and associated expenses. Out of the three, the Master of the Horse was personally in attendance on the monarch more often due to the nature of the role in accompanying royal persons. His position was not confined to the walls of St. James’s Palace, where the Lord Steward’s department offices were situated and other formal gatherings took place.

The heads of each of these main departments, as well as the Groom of the Stole, were all required by custom to hold the rank of earl or higher. Many department subheads – such as the Vice Chamberlain, who was responsible for much more of the

²⁶ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, sec. “Introduction: Administrative Structure and Work.”

household's logistics than his "absentee" superior – were also normally titled or from elite families. Such distinctions were a characteristic of the court and necessary elements of the established hierarchy to safeguard the monarch. It was particularly important for royal women to maintain standards of birth and rank in their choice of companions, and this was duly reflected in the composition of the queen's bedchamber. As will be discussed, however, the appointment of certain offices in the royal household was challenged by the Rockingham Whigs and thereafter increasingly under the control of successive administrations in power. The importance of rank was upheld, but the peers in question represent a range of relationships that George would choose to either cultivate or suppress depending upon the ministers involved in the appointments.

On their appointment by warrant, high-ranking officers of the royal household were typically sworn into their new positions by a department head or clerk at a ceremony wherein they kissed hands, recited the appropriate oaths, and (depending on the position) received symbolic tokens of office. The king's Groom of the Stole, for example, received a gold key, and his Lord Chamberlain a white staff.²⁷ These tokens occasionally appear in portraiture, as in the case of the earl (later marquess) of Salisbury, who served as Lord Chamberlain to George III from 1783 to 1804 and proudly wielded his white staff of office with a key affixed to his coat pocket in a portrait by Henry Edridge.²⁸

The principal office-holders described above were of course salaried, though in detailing remuneration for each of the individual offices, Bucholz explains that the

²⁷ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, sec. "Chamber Administration: Lord Chamberlain, 1660-1837," n. 2.

²⁸ Anthony Cardon, after Henry Edridge, *James Cecil, 1st Marquess of Salisbury*, February 1809, stipple engraving, 414 mm x 294 mm, February 1809, NPG D14513, National Portrait Gallery, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw68127/James-Cecil-1st-Marquess-of-Salisbury>.

established wages tended to be small. For some peers, however, the money and related perquisites were highly necessary to supplement their finances, as was the case with the fourth duke of Manchester. Though a Rockinghamite, Manchester's finances would not allow him to resign the office of Lord Chamberlain like other supporters when the earl of Shelburne replaced Rockingham as Prime Minister.²⁹ In the eighteenth century, both Lord Chamberlain and Master of the Horse received around £1,200 per year while the Lord Steward earned roughly £1,400 – including wages and board wages. These officers were also entitled to lodgings and around £400 worth of “plate” for dining.³⁰ The salary and associated benefits were apparently enough to be employed as political rewards and rendered the appointments vulnerable to parliamentary interference.

A turbulent succession of ministries beginning with the fall of Lord North's administration in April 1782 provides an important context for reviewing the politics of appointment in the royal household. Ultimately, the events between March 1782 and December 1783 – prior to the start of William Pitt the Younger's long premiership – would transform the way in which George III approached the structure of his household. Aristocrats were still very interested in holding court office, but their motivations varied according to party politics, and as a result, significantly challenged the process of appointment. The political conflict that defined the early 1780s greatly disturbed royal precedent and indeed the king's own peace of mind and security as monarch. George was compelled to defend appointments never before under threat

²⁹ John Cannon, “Montagu, George, Fourth Duke of Manchester (1737–1788), Politician,” in *ODNB*, 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19016.

³⁰ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, sec. “Introduction: Remuneration and Value of Office.”

from changing administrations, and such negotiation involved the politicization of major court offices.

Both Michael McCahill and David Large have discussed the period's increased ministerial control over household appointments, attributing party factions to a reduced number of the "king's friends" in the House of Lords, and in turn, a set number of offices more frequently used to reward political supporters.³¹ At the start of George's reign, political interference had already affected appointments to the office of Lord Chamberlain, and by 1782, other offices began to follow a similar pattern on each change of administration. The fourth duke of Marlborough's appointment as Lord Chamberlain, for example, lasted only as long as Lord Bute was Prime Minister between 1762 and 1763, and after him Earl Gower³² held the office during Grenville's administration from 1763 to 1765. During the marquess of Rockingham's first appointment as Prime Minister, the Lord Chamberlain's position was used to reward the third duke of Portland for his loyalty to the Whig opposition,³³ until William Pitt the Elder assumed power and gave it to the first earl of Hertford,³⁴ who remained in the office until 1782.³⁵ Though ministers could not necessarily guarantee the continued loyalty of their appointees to court office, their growing interference in the royal household was arguably the result of the century's developing party politics. While some peers believed that they naturally had a right to such offices as a "just reward" for their service to the king and nation, others who more closely aligned themselves to ministerial politics "were prepared to surrender their posts if rival

³¹ McCahill, *Order and Equipose*; D. Large, "The Decline of 'the Party of the Crown' and the Rise of Parties in the House of Lords, 1783-1837," *The English Historical Review* 78, no. 307 (October 1963): 685-86.

³² Later elevated as first marquess of Stafford.

³³ David Wilkinson, "Bentinck, William Henry Cavendish Cavendish-, Third Duke of Portland (1738-1809), Prime Minister," in *ODNB*, 3 January 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2162.

³⁴ Later elevated as the marquess of Hertford.

³⁵ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, sec. "Chamber Administration: Lord Chamberlain, 1660-1837."

politicians took power.”³⁶ What has not been more thoroughly questioned are the additional positions brought under ministerial control in the 1780s, nor the king’s response to these significant changes in his authority over the court.

The marquess of Rockingham’s second appointment as Prime Minister in March 1782 is said to have “represented a landmark in constitutional history”³⁷ that saw a dramatic overturn of court office-holders.³⁸ The Lord Chamberlain’s position, as described above, was already under ministerial control and passed from the earl of Hertford to the fourth duke of Manchester, but the Vice Chamberlain’s office was also transferred, as Viscount Hinchinbrooke³⁹ made way for Viscount Chewton.⁴⁰ The Treasurer of the Household, the earl of Salisbury,⁴¹ was replaced by the third earl of Effingham. Moreover, Lord North’s supporter Sir Richard Worsley, the Comptroller of the Household, was substituted by the duke of Manchester’s protégé and Rockingham Whig the earl of Ludlow. By this time, both the Treasurer and Comptroller of the Household had become sinecures but remained significant positions within the Lord Steward’s department. As described earlier, the Lord Chamberlain and Vice Chamberlain oversaw much of the ceremonial and social activities held in the public rooms at St. James’s Palace. Rockingham rewarded his supporters with these offices and in the same breath removed men loyal to North from sinecures and key positions of influence at court, which suggests the perceived importance of these appointments.

³⁶ McCahill, *Order and Equipose*, 163.

³⁷ Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, 557–58.

³⁸ G. M. Ditchfield, “Thurlow, Edward, First Baron Thurlow (1731–1806), Lord Chancellor,” in *ODNB*, 5 January 2012, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27406; Fortescue, ed., *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783: Printed from the Original Papers in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle*, vol. 5 (London: Macmillan, 1928), 113–14.

³⁹ Later succeeded as the fifth earl of Sandwich.

⁴⁰ Later succeeded as fourth Earl Waldegrave.

⁴¹ Later elevated to the first marquess of Salisbury.

George himself commented on such extensive replacements and the consequent disruption to the royal household. There were two office-holders in particular he fought to retain amid the upheaval: his Master of the Horse the duke of Montagu, and Groom of the Stole the earl of Ashburnham. George Montagu (né Brudenell), first duke of Montagu, had previously served as governor to the king's two eldest sons, the prince of Wales and duke of York. In 1780, around the time the princes reached maturity, George then transferred Montagu to his own household as Master of the Horse, a post he held until his death in 1790.⁴² John Ashburnham, the second earl of Ashburnham, had served as a Gentleman of the Bedchamber under George II, and under George III, was appointed Master of the Great Wardrobe in 1765 before becoming Groom of the Stole in 1775.⁴³ In a letter to Lord North, who had just resigned the premiership, the king wrote:

At last the fatal day is come which the misfortunes of the times and sudden change of sentiments of the House of Commons have drove me to, of Changing the Ministry, and a more general removal of other persons than, I believe, ever was known before: I have to the last fought for Individuals, but the number I have saved except My Bedchamber is incredibly few. You would hardly believe that even the D. of Montagu was strongly run at, but I declared I would sooner let confusion follow than part with the late Governor of my Sons, and so unexceptionable a Man; at last I succeeded, so that He and Lord Ashburnham remain.⁴⁴

Both Ashburnham and Montagu, by virtue of their offices, were more closely associated with the king's private apartments – the Groom of the Stole was responsible for the bedchamber staff, while the Master of the Horse oversaw the appointed equeries, pages, footmen, and grooms alongside his duties of organizing

⁴² H.M. Chichester, "Montagu, George Brudenell, Duke of Montagu (1712–1790), Courtier," in *ODNB*, 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19019.

⁴³ Bucholz, "Master Index of Court Officers," *The Database of Court Officers*.

⁴⁴ George III to Frederick, Lord North, 27 March 1782, in Fortescue, 5:421.

transportation. They were more often in attendance on the king outside of St. James's Palace and thereby possessed much closer proximity to him and his wider family.

This intimacy is evident in the king's correspondence. At the same time that George wrote the above to Lord North, he directly addressed the duke of Montagu and expressed his great perturbation concerning Rockingham's interference. The king was keenly aware of the political offense against his royal person and the resulting injury to his loyal courtiers:

Your heart which is ever affectionate must I am certain, feel for my situation at an hour when not only all my Ministers except the Chancellor, and most of my Court except yourself, Lord Ashburnham and my Bedchamber in its different branches are also swopped [sic]; the agitation of my mind You may discover by the badness of my writing.⁴⁵

The king continued to resist and strongly resent the pressure to politicize household posts according to ministry, and this he further expressed when, at the resignation of Lord North in 1782, he was made to restore the tenth earl of Pembroke to the Lord Lieutenancy of Wiltshire and thereby injure his loyal courtier the first earl of Ailesbury, a brother to the duke of Montagu whom he had appointed just two years previously. Pembroke's fierce opposition to the North administration was what originally deprived him of the office that he had held since 1753. His restoration was a result of Rockingham's political maneuvering, which left the king little choice.⁴⁶ There is an extant letter recorded in the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscript's *Fifteenth Report* from one of the earl's brothers, either the duke of Montagu or possibly the fifth earl of Cardigan, who wrote to assure Ailesbury that the situation

⁴⁵ George III to the duke of Montagu, 27 March 1782, in Fortescue, 5:422.

⁴⁶ J.E.O. Screen, "Herbert, Henry, Tenth Earl of Pembroke and Seventh Earl of Montgomery (1734–1794), Army Officer," in *ODNB*, 21 May 2009, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13034.

would not taint his reputation: “everybody of common sense must know, that the *King* is forced to do it much against his inclination.”⁴⁷

Further examples of political interference reveal continued injury to George’s favored courtiers for other types of office (associated with the military) and even high honors. The king had appointed the fifth earl of Carlisle to the Lord Lieutenancy of East Riding, only for that to be taken and restored to the duke of Leeds⁴⁸ by the Rockingham administration.⁴⁹ At Rockingham’s insistence, the third duke of Richmond and Lennox was also made Master-General of the Ordnance with a seat in the cabinet and appointed a Knight of the Garter in April 1782.⁵⁰ The king was then forced to pass over his preferred candidate, Lord Ashburnham, for the honor. Expressing the “severe disappointment and mortification” of these circumstances, Ashburnham stepped down after almost seven years as Groom of the Stole – and over thirty years total of service in the royal household.⁵¹ The appointment to the office of Groom of the Stole, however, was one of the few positions that did not appear to become vulnerable to Rockingham’s interference, even following its incumbent’s resignation. When Ashburnham resigned, George soon after wrote directly to the Viscount Weymouth⁵² – who had held the post briefly in 1775, until he was restored as Secretary of the Southern Department under North – to reappoint him. The king admitted to his trusted courtier, whom he would later raise to the marquisate, that, “the feelings of my heart certainly dictated You as the properest [sic] Person again to

⁴⁷ The earl of Cardigan [?] to the earl of Ailesbury, 27 March 1782, in RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 238.

⁴⁸ At that time styled the marquess of Carmarthen.

⁴⁹ Joan Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*, second edition, revised (London: Cassell, 1954).

⁵⁰ William C. Lowe, “Lennox, Charles, Third Duke of Richmond, Third Duke of Lennox, and Duke of Aubigny in the French Nobility (1735–1806), Politician,” in *ODNB*, 3 October 2018, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16451.

⁵¹ The earl of Ashburnham to George III, 19 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:475–76.

⁵² Thomas Thynne, third Viscount Weymouth from 1751, and elevated as the first marquess of Bath in 1789, was appointed Lord of the Bedchamber from 1760 until 1763, when he became Master of the Horse to the queen until 1765.

have the Gold Key.”⁵³ After a long career in British politics, Weymouth used the opportunity of changing ministries to transition to a court office that he held until his death in 1796.

As the king attempted to negotiate the overwhelming turnover within the royal household, he would be confronted subsequently by Edmund Burke’s economical reform passed in June 1782, thanks to Rockingham’s support. Though it coincided with rather climactic political events under the new Prime Minister, the reform was part of many decades of conflict over the Civil List, particularly in light of decisions made by George’s father Frederick, prince of Wales. When George III had to negotiate this reform in the early 1780s, his correspondence reveals the way in which he conceptualized his household in relation to the court, as well as wider concepts of eighteenth-century masculinity and the associated duties of a householder. Treasury control over the Civil List and parliament’s intrusion subverted the impression that the king held full authority over his private affairs, though his writings still asserted some aspirations of control in the form of maintaining the *dignity of the crown*.

The Civil List and Secret Service Money Act passed in 1782 was a shadow of Edmund Burke’s original plan for reform outlined in his *Speech on Economical Reformation* presented two years previously as part of an Opposition campaign to overthrow Lord North’s administration and abolish the sinecures that had allegedly assisted the government in obtaining a majority.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the act abolished a number of offices and entire departments within the royal household, including the

⁵³ George III to Viscount Weymouth, 28 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:496.

⁵⁴ Henry Herbert Pembroke, *The Pembroke Papers (1734-1780): Letters and Diaries of Henry, Tenth Earl of Pembroke and His Circle* (London: J. Cape, 1942), 404; F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke*, vol. 1: 1730-1784 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 449–55.

Office of Works, the Great Wardrobe, the Removing Wardrobe, the Jewel Office, and the Board of the Green Cloth, as well as the offices of the Master of the Staghounds and Master of the Harriers. Many of the remaining offices and their associated responsibilities were condensed into sub-departments and reassigned under the Lord Chamberlain's direction.⁵⁵

Though the abolition of entire departments was a drastic measure, both the Great Wardrobe and Jewel Office had had a long history of corruption and were subject to several different attempts by parliament, dating all the way back to the Stuart monarchs, to impose Treasury control. In 1683, under Charles II, the Treasury attempted to issue regulations, and again in 1699 under his nephew William III. In 1718, the Treasury presented an arbitrary limit on the department's expenditure and installed both a comptroller and surveyor, but their demands were still ignored.⁵⁶

For the 1782 act, the Treasury appointed the lawyer and MP Thomas Gilbert to examine the financial accounts of the royal household and formulate a plan to reduce its expenses. Gilbert consulted with each of the principal officers, including the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord Steward, the Master of the Horse, and the Comptroller of the King's Works. He recommended policies in line with previous attempts to strengthen Treasury control, outlining in his plan:

To have one Principal Officer, to be the General Paymaster of all the King's Civil List Expences. To have in every Department, a Trusty & Experienc'd Officer, to Inspect the Work, & also the Charges in the Bills, to be call'd the Inspecting Clerk. ... The Inspecting Clerk, & Resident Clerk, to prepare & sign the Quarterly Estimates, and also (in Offices, where it has been usual, & is necessary to make monthly or other occasional Payments), to prepare & make out of the Money which will be wanted for those purposes.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Such was the fate of the Removing Wardrobe and the Great Wardrobe. Similarly, the Comptroller of the King's Works, Sir William Chambers, was given the newly combined position of Surveyor-General and Comptroller of the King's Works, which was extracted from the Office of Works.

⁵⁶ Beattie, *The English Court*, 124–25.

⁵⁷ "General Outlines of Mr. Gilbert's Plan," in *Shelburne Papers*, vol. 125, fol. 349, WLC.

Gilbert's report even extended to subordinate offices, such as housekeepers and physicians,⁵⁸ and his plan not only encompassed a reduction in expenses and the number of staff but also suggested the sale of particular houses and buildings occupied by the abolished departments, such as those of the Office of Works at Whitehall.⁵⁹ Many of his recommendations concerning the "suppression"⁶⁰ of departments were followed, though not without some backlash from the Lord Chamberlain himself. The duke of Manchester first intimated to the earl of Shelburne the "inconvenience" that would arise if departments like the Removing Wardrobe should be totally abolished,⁶¹ and at the suggestion of a General Paymaster, he wrote to Gilbert directly to insist that his office as Lord Chamberlain was "by Law, the Superintendant [sic] of all the King's Household; the appointing another Superintendant, would be infringing the rights of his office, letting down his authority and saying in other words, that that Officer is not fit to be trusted with the Power hitherto lodg'd in his Hands."⁶²

Ultimately, the act named six household paymasters who were to regularly submit their accounts to the Treasury: the Lord Chamberlain, the new Paymaster of the Household under the Lord Steward's department, the Master of the Horse, the Master of the Robes, the Paymaster of the Gentlemen Pensioners, and the Master of

⁵⁸ Among the former group, Gilbert compiled a list of all royal residences under the Office of the King's works and suggested dismissing the housekeeper at Newmarket, as it was no longer an active royal residence. In a letter to Shelburne, he also related the concerns of the physicians in the royal household, who "had always been considered as Retainers to engage their attendance whenever call'd upon." Thomas Gilbert to the earl of Shelburne, 31 October 1782, in *Shelburne Papers*, vol. 125, fols. 247–48, WLC.

⁵⁹ *Shelburne Papers*, vol. 125, fols. 341–43, WLC.

⁶⁰ Gilbert's report and its corresponding papers in the earl of Shelburne's collection favor using the word "suppress" rather than "abolish."

⁶¹ The duke of Manchester to the earl of Shelburne, in *Shelburne Papers*, vol. 125, fol. 223, WLC.

⁶² The duke of Manchester to Thomas Gilbert, 30 December 1782, in *Shelburne Papers*, vol. 125, fol. 381, WLC.

the Hawks.⁶³ In fairness, increased Treasury control in 1782 was matched with some responsibility. A significant clause of Burke's reform act dictated the division of civil expenditure into eight separate classes, beginning with pensions and allowances to the royal family (to be paid first) and ending with the salaries of the Treasury officers themselves, to ensure the payment of expenses before their own compensation.

Changes to the crown's use of the Civil List, however, had been brought about much earlier than 1782. Both Bucholz and E.A. Reitan have identified the king's early wish to follow the principles of his father Frederick in accepting the disastrous terms of the 1760 Civil List Act, a "ruinously bad bargain" that traded the Civil List revenues of the crown for a fixed annual income of £800,000 – an amount already insufficient for the royal household. Bucholz attributes this to the young king's "fit of public spiritedness and overconfidence in his own domestic probity,"⁶⁴ which was very likely, but the circumstances of this particular act are more deeply rooted in the nature of politics at Leicester House when his father Frederick was alive. In a study of the earl of Egmont's papers, including Frederick's anticipated succession arrangements drawn up in the spring of 1750, A.N. Newman has highlighted a close resemblance to the policies that George III would eventually adopt in the following decade, as well as a standard program at Leicester House that could be traced back all the way to George's time as prince of Wales. Notably, George's surrender of hereditary revenues in return for a fixed annual sum was "a direct echo of Frederick's earlier promises."⁶⁵ When Frederick had originally pledged to transition to a "rent

⁶³ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, sec. "Chronological Survey 1660-1837: The Later Hanoverian Household, 1760-1837."

⁶⁴ E. A. Reitan, "The Civil List in Eighteenth-Century British Politics: Parliamentary Supremacy versus the Independence of the Crown," *The Historical Journal* 9, no. 3 (1966): 323–24.

⁶⁵ A. N. Newman, "Leicester House Politics, 1748–1751," *The English Historical Review* LXXVI, no. CCCI (1961): 589.

charge” in 1747 as part of the Leicester House declaration, there were associated political aims that he and Egmont, his closest political advisor, had anticipated.⁶⁶ Aside from increased economy, they wished to lessen the power of the Pelham brothers and make the future king “more master in the election of his ministers.”⁶⁷ When George later agreed to this same income scheme, it was without the accompanying efforts to build a coalition and gain parliamentary control, as his father and Egmont once planned.

The very different circumstances under which George agreed to the Civil List Act of 1760 were to his disadvantage, and this piece of legislation became the first in a series of reforms during his reign to establish greater Treasury control of the royal household. Debates about the Civil List continued into the later 1760s and 1770s and “prepared the way” for Burke's economical reforms introduced in the early 1780s, especially because the king consistently exceeded his annual income, even after it was raised to £900,000 per annum in 1777 and its arrears – amounting to more than £600,000 – were paid for by parliament.⁶⁸ The 1782 act’s long title reveals the extent of the planned interference that focused specifically on the issue of overspending: “An Act for enabling his Majesty to discharge the Debt contracted upon his Civil List Revenues; and for preventing the same from being in Arrear for the future, by regulating the Mode of Payments out of the said Revenues, and by suppressing or regulating certain Offices therein mentioned, which are now paid out of the Revenues of the Civil List.”

⁶⁶ Matthew Kilburn, “Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales (1707–1751),” in *ODNB*, 21 May 2009, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10140.

⁶⁷ Newman quotes the second earl of Egmont’s correspondence, which is held in the British Library: Egmont Papers, Add MS 47012, vol. XCIII, fol. 209, BL. Newman, “Leicester House Politics,” 585; Robin Eagles, “Loyal Opposition? Prince Frederick and Parliament (1729–51),” *Parliamentary History* 33, no. 1 (February 2014): 233.

⁶⁸ Reitan, “The Civil List,” 326.

The ongoing debate over the Civil List reflected the parallel development of contemporary understanding of the court and royal household. It was a tug-of-war between the king and Rockingham (and between reformers like Burke and other members of parliament) to determine which aspects of the Civil List should be considered public and under parliamentary control as opposed to those under the king's exclusive authority. Gregory Collins has described how Burke underscored the importance of the state, not the crown's patronage, to reward public service by means of a disciplined government payment system.⁶⁹ Burke seems to have understood the royal household as an outdated establishment, wherein reform would help to eliminate expenses towards unnecessary "feudal principles" that were "forfeiting its dignity." Much of the "public reverence" that George associated with the crown, Burke conferred to the state instead, underscoring ministers' responsibility for good governance, well-supported by a system that would eliminate the need to "[cajole] the Crown for sinecures."⁷⁰

In his negotiations concerning Burke's proposed economical reform, George predominantly corresponded with the Home Secretary, the earl of Shelburne, because he refused outright to work directly with Rockingham himself. The king wrote in a letter to Shelburne, dated April 1782, about the clear distinction between "Public Oeconomy," which was the concern of Parliament, and his own private "interior regulations," which were restricted to the attentions of his cabinet. He prefaced this by stating:

I declared a willingness to introduce the most rigid oeconomy, but that I trusted it could not be meant under that word either to affect the Dignity of the Crown by reducing such Offices as had any Peculiar Attendance on the Person

⁶⁹ Gregory M. Collins, "The British Constitution: Burke's Program of Economical Reform and the Role of the State," in *Commerce and Manners in Edmund Burke's Political Economy*, Cambridge Core (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 173–74.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 174, 204.

of the King, or to diminish its comforts by disabling it from those acts of Benevolence which alone make the Station bearable.⁷¹

It was perhaps a shrewd political gesture not to fully deny the need for *æconomy* in his household but at the same time keep it separate from public business, so as not to impede the crown's *dignity* – a term which had appeared in the full title of every preceding Civil List act passed by parliament in the eighteenth century until 1782. The long titles of the Civil List acts dating from 1776, 1760, 1727, and 1714 all included some version of “An act for the better support of his Majesty's household, and of the honour and dignity of the crown of Great Britain.” In these terms, *dignity* referred to one's position in society, and as the monarch held the highest possible rank, it had been legally defined in terms of the privileges supplied by parliament. Appealing to the importance of his health, George further asserted the need for the matters of his household to remain private and free from the over-reach of parliament: “it will add to my disquietude at having been forced to yield to the times.”⁷²

George was even more insistent in a (rare) communication to the marquess of Rockingham later in April 1782 that the Treasury should not impede on his authority, nor his leisure, implying that ministers knew very little of the operations of his household and therefore did not know how to properly regulate it:

I certainly wish, where the Dignity of the Crown, or my own convenience or amusement is not concerned to be as oeconomical as possible, and shall not object to the Treasury being the Judges of the propriety of the Estimates, whilst I am to be the Sole of the necessity of the business being done if regards my own amusement or convenience.⁷³

This same language concerning *dignity* was repeated by the office-holders closest to the king, most notably his Master of the Horse, the duke of Montagu. When it came

⁷¹ George III to the earl of Shelburne, 12 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:452–55.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ George III to the marquess of Rockingham, 28 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:501.

time to submit his departmental accounts to Thomas Gilbert later in 1782 for the Treasury report on the royal household, Montagu wrote in an accompanying memo affirming his compliance under particular terms, “in order to retrench every unnecessary & superfluous Expence, if such should be found; and to make such other Savings in his [the Master of the Horse’s] Department as shall appear consistent with His Majesty’s Service & the Dignity of the Crown.”⁷⁴ Similar to the duke of Manchester, Montagu openly disapproved of the encroachment, but his words more closely reflected his loyalty to the king, in addition to the justification for his own department and its expenses.

Shelburne had attempted to reassure the king that the “Publick Regulations” would remain separate from the reform of the royal household, though they both fell under the same bill spearheaded by Burke.⁷⁵ The reform principally aimed to restrict executive influence in the Commons, claiming the need to reduce the number of placemen in parliament and sinecures funded by the Civil List.⁷⁶ This appears to have been distinguished from the changes made to the royal household, first with the king’s attempt to control such “private” matters, and then with Shelburne’s wording: “the Reduction of Ministerial Influence in the two Houses ... may go their course, independent of these Interior arrangements.”⁷⁷ Though it is tempting to employ both “crown” and “ministerial” interchangeably to describe the executive influence in parliament, this causes some initial confusion – and conflation – between the king’s government and his household.

⁷⁴ “Observations on the Fourth Section of the ‘Act for enabling His Majesty to discharge the Debt contracted upon his Civil List Revenues &ca. &ca.,’ signed by the duke of Montagu, 3 August 1782, in *Shelburne Papers*, vol. 125, fols. 313–315, WLC.

⁷⁵ The earl of Shelburne to George III, 17 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:463–64.

⁷⁶ Ian R. Christie, “Economical Reform and ‘The Influence of the Crown’, 1780,” *The Cambridge Historical Journal* 12, no. 2 (1956): 144–54.

⁷⁷ The earl of Shelburne to George III, 17 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:463–64.

Moreover, perhaps fueling the king's indignation, the reformers' reasoning against executive influence was comparatively weak. Ian Christie has shown that the number of placemen had been considerably reduced between 1761 and 1780, and that a large reason for its peak in 1761 was a natural consequence of the new king's accession and the handover between old and new courts. Reformers "equate[d] patronage in the country as a whole with political influence" and thus "stirred up a great deal of fuss about nothing."⁷⁸ The call for reform instead likely stemmed from diminished public confidence in the North ministry following the loss of the American colonies, as well as a general belief in political reform in order to correct government oversight.⁷⁹ Though this may be an apologetic stance in favor of George III, it also meaningfully highlights the king's "concern for economy, virtue, and aristocracy in the making of household appointments,"⁸⁰ rather than an exaggerated greed or corruption. When the king evoked the "dignity of his Crown" in a 1782 address to parliament, for the "honourable provision for his Person and Family," he was referring to the respect inherently owed to his majesty in addition to the corresponding need for those court offices and ceremonies under the protection of his household to reinforce it.⁸¹

Though he considered the economy of his household a private matter outside of parliament's jurisdiction, George was still sensitive to wider public opinion and calls for reform. He yielded to almost all of the proposed changes in 1782, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which his actions were prompted by a wider appeal to his subjects or perhaps motivated by other, aristocratic considerations in terms of

⁷⁸ Christie, "Economical Reform and 'The Influence of the Crown,'" 147, 154.

⁷⁹ Collins, "The British Constitution," 153.

⁸⁰ Christie, "Economical Reform and 'The Influence of the Crown,'" 146.

⁸¹ "News," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 16 April 1782, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

the paternalistic responsibilities of rank. Concerning the former, the concept of the crown's dignity may have additionally incorporated the importance of the general affection and love a monarch could inspire among his people. However unwilling George may have been to accept the changes of Burke's economical reform, in a written address to both Houses he underscored his relationship with the British people. The *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* – a publication earlier referred to on the attendance of court drawing rooms – likewise reported the king's words on this occasion. To the House of Commons, George wrote: “as an example to his people, he himself has determined upon a reformation in his Civil Establishment: he is determined to use no reserve with his people; for, considering them as the best resource for the Crown on every pressing occasion, so he relies upon them as the best security for its dignity.”⁸²

Neither was George impervious to the discourse on economy among householders in this period. The contemporary definition of an “œconomist” referred to a general administrator, particularly a man who closely oversaw his household's management.⁸³ Relatedly, Karen Harvey has written of the compelling association between a man's practice of good *œconomy* within his household and masculine authority on a national scale. The domestic was not exclusive to women but in fact had significant implications for a man's “right to govern” in society.⁸⁴ Though Harvey is primarily concerned with the development of the middling sort in her argument on eighteenth-century masculinity, her ideas equally resonate with the king's situation in 1782. George's authority over the royal household reflected his authority on a much

⁸² “News,” *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 16 April 1782, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

⁸³ Collins, “The British Constitution,” 159.

⁸⁴ Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 23; idem, “œconomy and the Eighteenth-Century House.”

larger scale over his subjects. Parliamentary interference thus posed an especial threat to his authority and to the very foundations of his kingship.

In his efforts to maintain the crown's dignity, George also upheld very formal and ceremonial elements at his court. In the face of reform, he lobbied to retain other positions he thought necessary to the crown's dignity, particularly in the context of court etiquette, in addition to those offices that had already been renewed under the Rockingham administration. Some of these offices held seemingly superfluous responsibilities but carried a certain ceremonial weight and included the demands of attendance. The king wrote to Lord Shelburne in April 1782, requesting:

Now, what I wish is ... That those offices which have any particular attendance on the Crown may be continued by the present arrangement ... The Treasurer of the Household and Comptroller of the Household have been virtually continued by being put into new hands, as also the Master of the Stag Hounds; The Master of the Robes must also be continued; he has the peculiar employment of carrying my train at the House of Peers as well as on all Ceremonies of the Garter.⁸⁵

Both the Treasurer and Comptroller of the Household were more or less sinecures and at risk of being abolished at this time. Though he did not have the ability to retain the previous officers or appoint new ones himself, George made the argument to keep these positions since the new administration had already appointed their supporters to the roles. The earl of Effingham replaced Viscount Cranborne as Treasurer of the Household. The new Comptroller of the Household, the first earl of Ludlow, was considered the duke of Manchester's protégé and a Rockingham Whig;⁸⁶ he replaced one of Lord North's supporters, Sir Richard Worsley, in this role. It is unclear why the

⁸⁵ George III to the earl of Shelburne, 12 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:452–55.

⁸⁶ R.G. Thorne, "LUDLOW, Peter, 1st Earl Ludlow [I] (1730-1803), of Ardsallagh, Co. Meath and Great Stoughton, Hunts.," HPO, accessed 12 January 2023, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/ludlow-peter-1730-1803>.

king wished to retain these particular offices, as they do not appear to carry the same ceremonial weight he attributes to the Master of the Robes.

By contrast, George's Master of the Robes from the time of his accession was the Hon. James Brudenell, another younger brother to his Master of the Horse, the duke of Montagu. Brudenell had been an active courtier early in his life, first serving as Deputy Cofferer under George II from 1756 to 1761, then Keeper of the Privy Purse and Master of the Robes to George III when he was prince of Wales, from 1756 to 1760. When George III assumed the throne, Brudenell was again made Keeper of the Privy Purse from 1773, another sinecure and "usually a favourite," who was responsible for the monarch's private income from the duchy of Lancaster, which remained outside of Treasury control.⁸⁷ It was very rare for a person to hold two different offices in the royal household, but it appears that there were concurrent responsibilities, both ceremonial and especially personal, that the king wished to entrust to Brudenell.

The Privy Purse remained an important source of funding for the king; this private income reportedly rose to £60,000 per annum in 1777, and George was known to generously give much of this wealth toward charitable distributions and pensions.⁸⁸ In a letter to the earl of Shelburne, the king expressly forbade any "diminution of the Privy Purse which in reality is the only fund from whence I pay every act of private benevolence, every improvement in my Gardens and many articles of convenience for the Queen as well as myself."⁸⁹ Meanwhile, Brudenell also oversaw the king's official and ceremonial apparel as his Master of the Robes and accompanied the king to the

⁸⁷ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, sec. "Chamber Administration: Keeper of the Privy Purse 1660-1837."

⁸⁸ Ibid; F. K. Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 12.

⁸⁹ George III to the earl of Shelburne, 12 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:452–55.

House of Lords as well as to the ceremonies and investitures relating to the Order of the Garter, normally held at Windsor Castle. The Robes was one of the only subdepartments, aside from the Office of Ceremonies, to survive Burke's reform by virtue of its ceremonial importance – and perhaps the person and position of the Master himself.⁹⁰ With his combined duties, Brudenell was a highly distinguished courtier. In 1790 he would eventually succeed one of his elder brother's titles as the earl of Cardigan and exchange his place as Master of the Robes to occupy the duke of Montagu's former office as Governor of Windsor Castle.

The offices of Master of the Harriers and also that of the Stag Hounds were both abolished under the reform, but George insisted to Rockingham that he retain the Master of the Buckhounds for the reason that “every private Person keeps Hounds.”⁹¹ This might again correlate to the king's sense of dignity, though more as a privilege of rank and a sustained interest in hunting than a particular notion of the ceremonial. The noble sport, however, was deeply rooted in royal tradition and dated from as early as the fourteenth century at Windsor.⁹² Hunting became embedded within George's approach to a dignified kingship; the “Windsor uniform,” which the king had adopted around 1776, is said to have been inspired by a hunting coat designed by his father, Frederick, and the sport itself demanded a host of courtiers and attendants to participate. This will be further explored in the third chapter, concerning the royal residence at Windsor. The office of the Master of the Buckhounds, however, could not

⁹⁰ Akin to the Jewel Office and Great Wardrobe, the office of the Master of the Robes was considered an independent subdepartment because it accounted to the Treasury separately from the major departments under the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord Steward, and the Master of the Horse. The Robes office was comparatively smaller, employing a Yeoman and Grooms, while managing an assortment of tradespeople who supplied material items for use by the sovereign. For further information on the officers and tradesmen active in this office in the early 1780s, see the *Shelburne Papers*, vol. 125, fols. 231–33, WLC.

⁹¹ George III to the marquess of Rockingham, 28 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:501.

⁹² Roberts, *Royal Landscape*, 112–13.

escape political interference and it was a lucrative post with which Rockingham rewarded his supporter (a former Vice Chamberlain appointed during his first administration) the fourth earl of Jersey.

Aside from its impact on particular offices held by aristocratic courtiers, the reform also affected lower-ranking, often unseen, spheres of the royal household where questions of rank and social mobility were perhaps even more keenly felt. One memoirist, Charlotte Papendiek – appointed in 1794 as Assistant Keeper of the Robes to the queen, and whose father and husband both were German pages in the royal household – recalled and indeed blamed Burke for what she considered to be a dangerous precedent. In her memoirs, Papendiek wrote,

No doubt it is right to check any growing evil or extravagance, but as the head of state is to be a king, a proper magnificence should be kept up, and the royal children properly provided for. It is a dangerous expedient to call the attention of the public to economies practised in the royal household. It degrades every regulation and – as the inferior classes always look with a jealous eye upon the great – any changes that may be deemed absolutely necessary should be accomplished as quietly and privately as possible. It is not improbable that the wonderful change in our royal household was brought on by Edmund Burke's reform in the civil list; and that this led through many trifling channels to the destruction of the French king, for in his country also the cry for economy was raised, and soon spread far and wide.⁹³

Papendiek's father, Frederick Albert, had traveled from Mecklenburg Strelitz as one of only three servants that the newly married queen was permitted to bring in 1761. From his daughter's account, it was apparent that Albert aspired to a level of gentility afforded by his position and loyalty to Queen Charlotte. When promotions and additional perquisites (items such as candles, as well as wine and additional foodstuffs)⁹⁴ were not forthcoming, however, he had expressed a wish to return to

⁹³ Michael Kassler, ed., *The Memoirs of Charlotte Papendiek (1765–1840): Court, Musical and Artistic Life in the Time of King George III*, vol. 1, *Memoirs of the Court of George III* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 69.

⁹⁴ Papendiek described certain perquisites afforded to her and her husband while he worked as a page and a member of the royal chamber band: “two and a half dozen of pitcher wine *per annum*, two tallow

Germany, but the queen refused. Papendiek complained that the reforms obliged the king and queen to begin appointing less experienced – and far less loyal – servants, while conferring fewer “favours” to those such as her father, who had devoted his life to the royal family. Servants and interested parties like Charlotte Papendiek were thus equally as interested as the king himself in upholding the dignity of the crown out of a sense of both loyalty and propriety. At one point in her account of the reform, Papendiek refers to “our royal household,” displaying a sense of commitment and duty towards a community that in many ways embodied an eighteenth-century household-family.⁹⁵ While it is not the particular focus of this chapter, the servants of the royal household likewise felt the effects of the economical reform and criticized parliamentary interference in the king’s household affairs. It is important to note the continued emphasis on the crown’s dignity; Papendiek ultimately blamed Burke, but the responsibility to uphold a “proper magnificence” was more delicately directed toward her royal employers.⁹⁶

Rockingham’s sudden death in July 1782 prolonged what was to be a year of unprecedented change for the royal household following its reform. The Home Secretary, Lord Shelburne, who had since this point acted as mediator between George III and Lord Rockingham, became Prime Minister. The Lord Steward’s office was consequently implicated in politics as it never had been before. Earl Talbot was incumbent from 1761 until his death in April 1782. The office was then offered to the fifth earl of Carlisle as a “conciliatory gesture” from the crown after Rockingham had

candles a night in winter and one in summer, besides a few chance perquisites from the Princesses' room [e.g., wax candles, and the remains of any meal served to the princesses separately].” Kassler, 1:112, 238.

⁹⁵ Tadmor, “The Concept of the Household-Family.”

⁹⁶ Kassler, 1:68–69.

stripped him of the Lord Lieutenancy of East Riding. By February 1783, Carlisle decided to resign rather than enact the economical reform within his department and also because, politically, he was firmly against Shelburne's peace treaty with the former American colonies.⁹⁷ George III wrote to Lord Shelburne, urging him to appoint the duke of Marlborough as the next Lord Steward, but Shelburne instead offered the appointment to the duke of Rutland.⁹⁸ The king responded dryly, writing, "I cannot say that I am edified at the D. of Rutland's accepting with some difficulty the Ld. Steward's Staff which has ever been anxiously wished for by Men of equal Rank and Property."⁹⁹ Clearly Shelburne's choice displeased the king but was not – or could not – be overruled; this has since been described as an "unprecedented concession" to a household office by Rutland's biographer.¹⁰⁰ One of the few reasons that the Lord Chamberlain's office was not similarly reallocated as it had been before was because its incumbent, the duke of Manchester, did not have the finances to resign in the same "handsome gesture" his fellow Rockinghamites could perform.¹⁰¹ He depended upon the remuneration, and his politics were apparently still amenable to Shelburne's administration, so he remained in the post.

Shelburne's ministry, however, lasted only eight months before he was replaced by the Fox-North coalition with the duke of Portland as Prime Minister in March 1783. The primary household offices were once again forced to change hands.

⁹⁷ P.M. Geoghegan, "Howard, Frederick, Fifth Earl of Carlisle (1748–1825), Politician and Diplomat," in *ODNB*, 8 December 2022, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13899; Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, sec. "The Later Hanoverian Royal Household 1760-1837."

⁹⁸ George III to the earl of Shelburne, 4 February 1783, in J. W. Fortescue, ed., *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783: Printed from the Original Papers in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle*, vol. 6 (London: Macmillan, 1928), 233; the earl of Shelburne to George III, 13 February 1783, in Fortescue, 6:237–38.

⁹⁹ George III to the earl of Shelburne, 13 February 1783, in Fortescue, 6:238–39.

¹⁰⁰ Roland Thorne, "Manners, Charles, Fourth Duke of Rutland (1754–1787), Politician," in *ODNB*, 3 January 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17950.

¹⁰¹ Cannon, "Montagu, George, Fourth Duke of Manchester," in *ODNB*.

The duke of Manchester ultimately resigned as Lord Chamberlain to make way for the reinstatement of the earl of Hertford, who had served under North. The duke of Rutland resigned the office of Lord Steward to follow Shelburne into Opposition and was replaced by the earl of Dartmouth. Other positions were affected, too, such as the Treasurer of the Household, when Lord North directed Charles F. Greville, younger son of the earl of Warwick, to take the place of the earl of Effingham¹⁰² The office of Master of the Buckhounds was given by the coalition to Viscount Hinchinbrooke,¹⁰³ whose early intentions to withdraw his political support from them helped him to retain the position when William Pitt the Younger was eventually made Prime Minister in December 1783.¹⁰⁴

In addition to the frustration of yet another round of turnover in the royal household, the king was further challenged at the establishment of the coalition's ministry by the deprivation of his trusted Lord Chancellor, Baron Edward Thurlow. This was a change to political office, not a position in the royal household, but demonstrated the sweeping effects of increased ministerial control over appointments and the difficult position in which it placed a king who depended on a close set of office-holders both in his household and his government to support the crown. Thurlow's well-established career had seemingly transcended the factional divide in parliament, and he was frequently referred to as the "keeper of the king's conscience."¹⁰⁵ He was a prominent voice against parts of Burke's economical reform proposed a year previously and employed language not unlike that used by George

¹⁰² Frederick, Lord North, to George III, 4 April 1783, in Fortescue, 6:333.

¹⁰³ Later succeeded as the fifth earl of Sandwich.

¹⁰⁴ W.R. Meyer, "Montagu, John, Fifth Earl of Sandwich (1744–1814), Politician and Landowner," in *ODNB*, 3 January 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64125.

¹⁰⁵ The shrouded figure of Lord Thurlow has only recently received proper scholarly attention. Ben Gilding argues that Thurlow's non-partisan niche has for the last two centuries been "on the wrong side of historical trends" and therefore largely ignored. Ben Gilding, *The Great Pillar: The Political Career of Lord Thurlow 1731-1806* (Oxford: New College Library & Archives, 2023), 1, 5.

himself, stating he had “no objection ... to such oeconomical arrangements in the Household, as might be consistent with the King’s dignity.”¹⁰⁶ Rockinghamites like Charles James Fox set themselves against Thurlow and, when forming a coalition government with North, sought to place the office of the Lord Chancellorship into commission under one of his great rivals, Alexander Wedderburn, Baron Loughborough.¹⁰⁷ In a matter of months, however, Thurlow assisted George in forming a plan to quash Fox’s East India Bill in the House of Lords and thereby create a pretext to dismiss the coalition in favor of a ministry better aligned with the king.¹⁰⁸

The political ascendancy of William Pitt the Younger in December 1783 finally helped George to restore some stability to both his favored ministers and courtiers. Thurlow was reinstated as Lord Chancellor, while in the royal household the earl of Hertford followed Lord North into Opposition, so the office of Lord Chamberlain was given to the earl of Salisbury, who had previously lost his position as Treasurer of the Household in 1782. The position of Lord Steward was then handed to the duke of Chandos, who replaced North’s nominee the earl of Dartmouth, and who held this position until his death in 1789.

By the 1790s, a united aristocratic political identity arose to support the Pitt administration as the country faced war with revolutionary France. Equally, however, this might have negatively impacted the nobility’s political relationship with the crown itself. H.T. Dickinson has argued that it partially weakened the king’s influence over the group, since ministerial majorities (and a divided and discredited Whig party) lessened the need for crown patronage, especially once George no longer felt

¹⁰⁶ Referenced in Gilding, *The Great Pillar*, 97.

¹⁰⁷ Gilding discusses the tensions between Lord North and Charles James Fox over the treatment of Thurlow, who was on better terms with the former. *Ibid*, 122.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 132.

compelled to exercise royal prerogative in order to gain support for his chosen ministry. Pitt's eventual security in the premiership, by the time of the general election in March 1784, reduced the need for direct royal intervention.¹⁰⁹ The elevation of what John Beckett terms the "public service" and "political" peers also served to strengthen peerage control of the executive government, wherein nobles disproportionately held the most senior positions throughout the Cabinet, armed forces, judiciary, and civil service.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, the king himself was gradually dissociated in public discourse with the ministers considered responsible for the loss of the American war and the subsequent political instability. Linda Colley has established that a developing national identity in Britain during this period placed the king's public image of "undoubted domestic probity and obstinate patriotism" as a fixed and stable representation of the state amidst unreliable political leadership.¹¹¹ It is important, however, not to immediately associate this development in the royal image with a correlated shift in monarchical practice. George III was not a leading agent in political change; with respect to reform and conflict, he was instead very resistant to any other power outside of the constitution attempting to define his position. The decade's turbulent succession of ministries also speaks to a rigidity that pervaded his approach to working with ministers, as well as the resulting and deep disturbance to him when men like Charles James Fox refused to follow constitutional practice.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ H.T. Dickinson, "The Impact of the French Revolution and the French Wars, 1789-1815," in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1989), 2, 5.

¹¹⁰ McCahill and Wasson refer to them as "service peerages." J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1660-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 406-8; Michael W. McCahill and Ellis Archer Wasson, "The New Peerage: Recruitment to the House of Lords, 1704-1847," *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 1 (2003): 23.

¹¹¹ Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III" 104.

¹¹² Following Lord Rockingham's death, when Lord Shelburne was made Prime Minister instead of the favored duke of Portland, Fox resigned his post as Secretary of State and led a mass "exodus" among

George was, in a small way, soon vindicated in his struggle against major economical reform and the restriction of his household income. Edmund Burke, after having been the leading voice in the financial cuts to the Civil List, retired from the House of Commons in 1794 and (with some irony) required a pension to ward off his creditors and allow him to settle the substantial amount of debt he had accumulated. Burke was consequently accused of “sacrificing his convictions to his comfort,”¹¹³ by the duke of Bedford and others in parliament, but it was the king who readily gave him an “immediate grant” from the Civil List worth £1200, “being the largest sum which His Majesty is enabled to fix.”¹¹⁴ Writing from Weymouth in 1794, George confided to Pitt the sympathy he felt for Burke following the loss of his son, as well as his approval of the appropriate gratitude Burke had expressed, “[which] I think covers many failings; & makes me therefore happy at being able to relieve him.”¹¹⁵ The arrangements in parliament were not finalized until the following year, so George’s benevolence was admittedly necessary in order to pacify Burke’s creditors, as his retirement from the Commons left him vulnerable to legal action.

George III ultimately sought to redirect the political challenges to his court away from the operation of his household in order to maintain the dignity of the crown and thereby assert his overarching sovereignty over a factional ruling class. The question of his success is a muddled one. The king was certainly tactical in his

Rockinghamites from government, which went against both constitutional practice and the wishes of the king. Martyn J. Powell, “Rockingham Whigs (Act. 1765–1782),” in *ODNB*, 27 May 2007, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/95198.

¹¹³ Paul Langford, “Burke, Edmund (1729/30–1797), Politician and Author,” in *ODNB*, 11 March 2021, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4019.

¹¹⁴ Many thanks to Dr Ben Gilding for directing me to the circumstances of Burke’s pension and the associated correspondence held in Cambridge. William Pitt to Edmund Burke, 30 August 1794, GBR/0012/MS Add.6958, box 8, no. 1480, CUL, Cambridge.

¹¹⁵ George III to William Pitt, 3 September 1794, GBR/0012/MS Add.6958, box 8, no. 1485, CUL.

approach to framing the *œconomy* of his household, aiming to segregate offices under ministerial control from those pertinent to his own comfort and status as monarch. The political landscape in Britain during the latter half of his reign ultimately disrupted George's royal prerogative in the appointment of court officers, as growing party politics affected the way in which some aristocrats approached court office, regarding it as a tool of faction further divorced from the king's patronage. George's relationship with the ruling class was heavily affected by Rockingham's interference; he fought to retain certain aristocratic courtiers whom he could trust to support him in the expression of his kingship, particularly in upholding the proper *dignity* to which he frequently referred. During this time, George was especially reliant upon members of the Brudenell family – the duke of Montagu and his brothers the earls of Cardigan and Ailesbury. Their presence was deemed essential as the king faced an increased pressure to assert his headship over the royal household, because it held greater implications for his governance over the wider court and even his right to rule.

The king's negotiations suggest an appeal to the ideals of eighteenth-century masculinity, but royal reality also involved the position and consequence of his queen consort. The following chapter will expand upon the separate household of Queen Charlotte with its corresponding offices of Lord Chamberlain, Vice Chamberlain, and Treasurer, in addition to her Mistress of the Robes and other bedchamber ladies. These high-ranking office-holders often comprised the majority of the king and queen's appointed company and formed a valuable network of loyal friends whose positions were not affected by the economical reform or ministerial disruption of the 1780s. Arguably, they became even more involved and devoted in their roles when, following the Regency Crisis in 1789, there was increased royal travel and time spent away from the center of London.

A preliminary examination of the structure of the royal household has introduced discussion of the nature of George's relationship with the ruling class, which will continue to be explored in the context of his court and the particular attendants invited to it. The political dynamics of the 1780s greatly affected the way in which appointments to the royal household informed the court's composition. They also reveal how the king coupled the intangible elements of dignity and appropriate reverence strongly with more material concerns – foremost the Treasury's monetary provision for the upkeep of the royal household, as well as the attendance of particular officers and the ceremonial practices they could facilitate. While his leadership over the ruling class was challenged and his household reformed, George's notions of *dignity* as a foundational element of kingship remained firm and underscored the complex interaction of the institutional and interpersonal relationships that defined his court.

Chapter 2: The Queen Consort and Her Household

Queen Charlotte was a significant influence on the kingship of George III, and her role as consort helped to define his leadership in the unique context of an eighteenth-century court and his relationship to the ruling class. George's place as head of the royal household was rendered much more complex with the corresponding existence of his consort's household, which was a separate, though highly connected, establishment. The group of aristocratic attendants that Charlotte cultivated by the 1780s formed an exclusive court circle that demonstrated the primacy of her station as it affected the wider royal family. George's early control over Charlotte helped to instill values of apolitical and moral propriety, but by the latter part of his reign, the queen had realized a significant form of social authority through the appointments of both men and women to her household and the resulting development of networks among courtier-families.

This chapter will first review the structure of Charlotte's household, from its conception and the king's early interference to its ensuing development in appointments. By the 1780s, there was less of an emphasis on political connections to the royal household and a growing importance of the familial networks among aristocratic courtiers. In this same period, when Charlotte gave birth to the last of the royal children, she assumed a more proactive role in the management of the appointments to her household, perpetuating related values of propriety among her attendants that her husband had required early on. The events of the Regency Crisis at the end of 1788 reveal the significance of this court circle in supporting the queen during the king's first serious illness. Charlotte had refrained from any involvement in politics, but her position and the regular presence of her attendants were both

politicized in the absence of a healthy monarch. The principal courtiers under the queen, with their family networks, remained her chief advisors and helped to form the royal “household-family” that would dictate sociability at court.

Legally and financially, the queen was not merely a wife to the king but a householder in her own right. Moreover, George III had no mistresses, and with his mother the Princess Dowager’s relative seclusion in the 1760s, Charlotte for the majority of her time as queen consort stood foremost among the women at court. Appointments to her household thus held considerable prestige, allowing aristocratic men and women to participate in an important form of social and moral leadership. There were many elements both in his ceremonial and domestic life for which George depended heavily on Charlotte, and this becomes evident in the 1780s, when a growing presence of aristocratic courtier-families populated the royal circle, particularly through the officers employed in the queen’s household.

Another significant development in this decade was the queen’s own transition at the end of a long period of childbearing, with some further freedom gained in royal travel. Birthing fifteen children in the span of twenty-one years had curbed Charlotte’s ability to venture far from the royal residences in or near London. With a passing reference in a letter to Simon Harcourt, first Earl Harcourt, dated 1770, she once revealed her apparent lack of travel since arriving in England and subsequently described her envy for the visiting king of Denmark, who “does amuse himself... seeing the Beauty of the Contry [sic] of England.”¹

¹ Queen Charlotte to first Earl Harcourt, 16 October 1770, in Edward William Harcourt, ed., *The Harcourt Papers*, vol. 6 (Oxford: printed for private circulation by J. Parker and Co., 1880), 4.

Despite her lack of opportunities to travel after arriving in England, Charlotte largely followed the example of her predecessors, Queen Caroline of Ansbach and Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, in welcoming a variety of European and indeed global influences to the “polycentric court” in Britain. These “Enlightened Princesses” all feature in a 2017 exhibition and catalogue edited by Joanna Marschner, as well as Clarissa Campbell Orr’s 2002 volume *Queenship in Britain*, both of which have explored the numerous cultural and intellectual circles fostered by female royal patronage. These “circles of sociability,”² as Campbell Orr describes them, benefit from a closer analysis of the royal structures that supported the scientific, philosophical, and artistic interests that prevailed at court throughout the eighteenth century.

The term “royal family” in the period’s public discourse often refers to its primary members but in private correspondence, especially that of Queen Charlotte, “family” also referred to unrelated members of her household. With growing confidence in her role as consort, Charlotte cultivated a circle of courtiers who participated in an Enlightened “rational domesticity,” in the words of Irene Brown, both in London and in royal residences outside the metropolis.³ Her efforts, however, went beyond the pursuit of “private moments of respite” from the bustle of court ceremony at St. James’s Palace.⁴ The curation of the queen’s household from the 1780s became a reflection of her duties as consort, with an emphasis on the standards of propriety and court etiquette that she shared with her husband, in addition to the appropriate companionship of the courtiers who upheld those standards.

² Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Britain*, 25.

³ Irene Q. Brown, “Domesticity, Feminism, and Friendship: Female Aristocratic Culture and Marriage in England, 1660-1760,” *Journal of Family History* 7, no. 4 (1982): 406–24.

⁴ Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte: Scientific Queen,” 240–41.

A study of the correspondence between king, queen, and courtiers, as well as surviving accounts of the Regency Crisis from members of the royal household, lends insight into the nature of courtly relationships, especially among the aristocratic families who devoted much of their time in attendance. Campbell Orr has identified “a certain nostalgia for the small-scale court life of the princely courts in Germany where she was born,” in addition to the intellectual pursuits that complemented an educational program for her daughters.⁵ The following study seeks to build upon Campbell Orr’s observations with a further analysis of aristocratic courtiers in particular. The estate and family papers of aristocratic courtier-families in this period, including the Harcourts and the Brudenells, reflect a shared sense of proprietorship in their assembly as archival collections. The preservation of private correspondence with royalty suggests a form of commemoration and shaped a noble family’s dynastic legacy to highlight their proximity and access to the monarch.

The Harcourts, for example, have a separate volume devoted to royal correspondence, to which several generations contributed. Beginning in 1751 with the first earl, his sons (the second and third earls) and their wives, as well as his nephew (the archbishop of York) who would eventually inherit the estate in 1831, the papers themselves were collated and published later in the nineteenth century by the archbishop’s grandson. Likewise, the first earl of Ailesbury’s private papers similarly enclose royal correspondence from the period, though he had specified that they “should be sealed up and inspected by nobody but my dear son.”⁶ Both demonstrate a dynastic inheritance shared among immediate family members with ties to the court.

⁵ Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte and Her Circle,” 165.

⁶ Note [by Thomas Earl of Ailesbury]: “It is my most earnest desire that packets of letters from the Royal Family should be sealed up and inspected by nobody but my dear son,” 1794, 1300/4036, WSHC.

The eventual, private publication of the Harcourt papers by a descendent and the preservation of the earl of Ailesbury's royal correspondence (despite his original intentions) points to a later process, usually well into the nineteenth century, of the preservation and celebration of past royal connections within the family.

Queen Charlotte's own accounts – though very little survives – testify to her relationship with these courtier-families. Extant fragments of her diary give a much less personal description than private correspondence, but they provide a minute record of her duties, a majority social in nature, detailing the people and activities most appropriate for her station as queen consort. In this light, the purpose of her diary was perhaps a testament to the fulfilment of her royal responsibilities, particularly in the avoidance of political intrigue and the presence of companions with the distinction of rank and proper conduct. Apparent in these accounts are the social and gendered complexities at court that emphasize the queen's influence in the expression of her husband's kingship, especially during his ill health in the late 1780s.

The following will first outline the structure of Charlotte's household before giving a fuller account of its early composition at the time of her marriage to George III. The composition of the queen's household mirrored that of the royal household, though not nearly as complex, and significantly, it did not have a Lord Steward. All of the culinary and domestic needs of the family and servants were overseen by the Lord Steward of the royal household. Charlotte's household also largely employed bedchamber staff, and most importantly, the Ladies and Women of the Bedchamber, who supplied a rotational attendance on the queen, as well as the princesses when they grew older. The aristocratic Ladies of the Bedchamber were chosen specially to

uphold standards of birth and rank at court and to supply appropriate companionship. Among these ladies there was selected a senior Mistress of the Robes, a counterpart to the king's Master of the Robes, responsible for overseeing royal clothing and jewelry on formal occasions. The Mistress of the Robes seemed to have taken on additional responsibilities of organizing attendance and appointments among the other ladies, so her position was also akin to the king's Groom of Stole, who had similar duties within the king's bedchamber.

The queen's household additionally employed its own Lord Chamberlain, Vice Chamberlain, and Master of the Horse, who were all men of rank, as well as a Treasurer and Secretary. The salaries between the two households were roughly comparable, but payment was ultimately gendered. The Master of the Horse to the queen made £800 per annum in 1761, slightly less than his counterpart in the royal household. Her Lord Chamberlain received £1,200 per annum that same year and Vice Chamberlain £500 – about the same amount as their respective counterparts. The Ladies of the Bedchamber, however, were paid significantly less, just £500 per annum, which was half the sum given to Gentleman of the Bedchamber under the king.⁷ Remuneration was not the principal attraction to an office in Charlotte's household, particularly among the aristocracy, and the following discussion will highlight the alternative factors at play, in addition to the king's own preferences, especially the entrenched political and family connections within the royal household which advanced certain courtiers under the queen.

On her marriage to George III, Charlotte assumed position over a household already chosen for her. When the young king had selected his bride, he wrote to his

⁷ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*; idem, "Household of Queen Charlotte (1761-1818)," The Database of Court Officers.

“Dearest Friend” and former tutor, the earl of Bute, concerning the arrangements that were being made to transport the Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz to England:

As to who she may bring, that is a clear point, this country very wisely not admitting foreigners to hold employments; the utmost she can bring is one or two Feme’s de Chambres, which I own I hope will be quiet people, for by my own experience I have seen these women meddle much more than they ought to do.⁸

It is unclear what in his own experience he was referencing, but George might have been alluding to the example of his own mother Princess Augusta, who was once in a very similar situation to Charlotte: she was brought to England in 1736 from her family’s German duchy of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg at a young age, knowing no English, to marry his father Frederick, prince of Wales. George II had forbidden the new princess of Wales to bring any servants with her, and her modest request for the company of an old governess was expressly refused. Against his father’s orders, Frederick retrieved the governess, but she was soon after sent back to Germany after allegedly encouraging Augusta to refuse to take part in the Anglican communion in favor of the Lutheran tradition.⁹

In addition to the two German women – Juliane von Schwellenberg and Johana Hagedorn – whom Charlotte was permitted to bring with her to England, she had also requested to have her hairdresser, a trusted male servant by the name of Frederick Albert, accompany her. The king expressed his displeasure to Bute, “when the orders were so very positive that only two women were to come,” but he relented, unlike his grandfather had done, and was perhaps placated by a lock of his betrothed’s hair that had arrived in the same letter.¹⁰ In fact, Albert remained in service to the

⁸ George III to the earl of Bute, July 1761, in Romney Sedgwick, ed., *Letters from George III to Lord Bute, 1756-1766*, Manchester Studies in Modern History (London: Macmillan, 1939), 58.

⁹ Bullion, ““To Play What Game She Pleased,”” 216.

¹⁰ George III to the earl of Bute, August 1761, in Sedgwick, 61.

royal family for the rest of his life and was appointed as page to the princesses while his own daughter, named Charlotte Papendiek (b. 1765), grew up at court and eventually served the queen as her Assistant Keeper of the Robes. In her memoirs, Papendiek later described the conflict surrounding her father's coworker and compatriot, Mrs. Schwellenberg, whom the king particularly wished to see dismissed and returned to Germany on a pension. Schwellenberg had reportedly "assumed to herself a new character – that of female mentor to the Queen," allegedly policing those who entered Charlotte's apartments, tyrannizing the other women who worked in the queen's wardrobe, and even controlling their expenses.¹¹ Unlike his father on this occasion, however, George again relented,

... upon these conditions: that she [Schwellenberg] should not resist his commands, nor influence the Queen's mind upon any subject; that she should share the labours of her place equally with her companion and infringe upon no regulations unconnected with her immediate appointment. This remonstrance, given by the King in the presence of his mother, hurt the Queen very sensibly.¹²

George's control over his wife's household, though challenged, was reinforced at an early period in his marriage, and it is clear that he was anxious to avoid the same issues that his parents had experienced in their own households.

Bute's continued influence over George and Charlotte's early marriage and households is not to be underestimated. His position as the king's Keeper of the Privy Purse continued his access to the young king in 1760 before he was made Prime Minister. Under his direction, a friend and compatriot David Graeme, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Scots Brigade in Holland, was appointed to undertake a secret mission to northern Germany to first observe and report on Princess Charlotte of

¹¹ Kassler, 1:7–8.

¹² Schwellenberg would continue to cause conflict among the queen's attendants, especially for Frances Burney, who nicknamed her "Cerbera." Ibid, 1:9.

Mecklenburg-Strelitz and soon after relay the new king's intentions of matrimony before an official embassy was ordered there. Graeme was then rewarded with the position of Secretary to the new queen and in 1765 became her Secretary and Comptroller for the following nine years until political opposition prompted his resignation.¹³

All other major offices in the new queen's household held ties to the royal household or the king's former establishment when he was prince of Wales. The queen's first Treasurer, for example, was Andrew Stone, a former Sub-Governor and Secretary to a young George III when he was a prince.¹⁴ The office of the queen's Lord Chamberlain was given to the third duke of Manchester, a Lord of the Bedchamber to the king, while the office of her Vice Chamberlain was bestowed on Viscount Cantelupe (later second Earl De La Warr), who had served as George's *aide-de-camp*. Earl Harcourt was sent as the leader of the official embassy to negotiate the marriage treaty and retrieve Charlotte in August of 1761. Harcourt had been a former Treasurer and Governor to the prince of Wales, and following the royal marriage, was appointed the new queen's Master of the Horse. He would later continue to serve as Charlotte's Lord Chamberlain until he was made the British Ambassador to France in 1768. A similar promotion occurred for Viscount Cantelupe, who in 1766 was appointed Master of the Horse and in 1768 replaced Harcourt as the queen's Lord Chamberlain, an office he held until his death in 1777.

¹³ Lady Edith Haden-Guest, "GRAEME, David (1716-97), of Braco and Gorthy, Perth.," HPO, accessed 18 May 2023, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/graeme-david-1716-97>.

¹⁴ Dates and titles of the following offices – both in the royal household and the queen's household – were sourced from Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, and "Household of Queen Charlotte (1761-1818)," The Database of Court Officers.

George's authority over his wife's nascent household was made explicit in a letter he wrote to Bute in May 1762. The duke of Manchester had died after serving only eight months as the queen's Lord Chamberlain, and the king wrote:

... another Chamberlain's office is vacant by the death of the poor D of Manchester, the Queen hears Ld Canteloupe means to ask; I told her if he should come, that she ought to say that she imagined I should tell her when I thought it proper who could be most agreeable to me in that office, that my wishes would ever be a law with her, but that as to what regards him, she has ever heard that no one lower than Earls ever held that employment.¹⁵

While there was a custom that a certain rank was often required for a particular court office, the king also made it clear that his wife would defer to his judgement, even if the appointments had no significant political impact. When the office of Lord Chamberlain to the queen was given to the duke of Northumberland in November 1762 (while Viscount Canteloupe remained her Vice Chamberlain), the king then admitted to Bute, who had arranged the appointment, that, "I think him quite cut out of the nothingness of the employment."¹⁶ Many years later, in 1788, the queen continued to enforce the custom of rank, specifically citing the king's early wishes. Having rejected the appointment of a Mrs. Hesse to her household, Charlotte wrote to explain to her eldest son, the prince of Wales, that "the King from the beginning of my coming to England ... desired me to keep every Place in my Family, as near to the Rank in which I found it."¹⁷

Political connection continued to be an important factor in the appointment of the queen's household into the following decade. The Hon. Charles Fitzroy, brother to the Prime Minister the duke of Grafton, was made Vice Chamberlain to the queen in 1768. The first earl of Guildford, father of the following Prime Minister Frederick,

¹⁵ George III to the earl of Bute, May 1762, in Sedgwick, 102.

¹⁶ George III to the earl of Bute, c. 20 November 1762, in Sedgwick, 164.

¹⁷ Queen Charlotte to George, prince of Wales, 20 June 1788, GEO/MAIN/36372, Royal Archives, Windsor.

Lord North, was appointed her Treasurer in 1774. That same year James Harris, an MP for Christchurch and one of North's supporters during this period, was appointed her Secretary and Comptroller.¹⁸ Following the 1770s, however, familial connections became an even more common occurrence. Lord North's eldest son, the Hon. George North, was made the queen's Secretary and Comptroller by 1781. The second son of the countess of Effingham (a Lady of the Bedchamber to Charlotte), the Hon. Richard Howard, was the queen's Secretary and Comptroller from 1784 to 1814.¹⁹ Earl Harcourt's two sons each in turn were appointed the queen's Master of the Horse. Earl Waldegrave had also later followed his own father, the third earl, as Master of the Horse. In 1780, the first earl of Ailesbury was made Lord Chamberlain to the queen, the same year his eldest brother the duke of Montagu was made Master of the Horse to the king. Their other brother, the Hon. Robert Brudenell, had served as the queen's Vice Chamberlain from 1766 until his early death in 1768.

The politics of appointment as well as the familial connections already embedded within the royal household heavily affected both men and women recruited to the queen's bedchamber, particularly the aristocratic ladies there. The duchess of Ancaster was appointed Mistress of the Robes. Her husband the third duke had a longstanding connection to the court as Lord Great Chamberlain, a hereditary role involved in royal coronations.²⁰ Lady Ancaster, together with the duchess of Hamilton and Earl Harcourt (a former tutor to George III and the new queen's Master of the

¹⁸ The position of Secretary was one of the few that did not appear to require a title, but the Harris family did have aristocratic connections, and James Harris himself was a lord of the admiralty and a lord of the treasury before serving in Charlotte's household. John Brooke, "HARRIS, James (1709-80), of Salisbury, Wilts.," HPO, accessed 18 May 2023, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/harris-james-1709-80>.

¹⁹ His father, the third earl, was Treasurer of the royal household under Lord Rockingham and later became Master of the Mint from 1784 to 1789.

²⁰ Alastair Bruce, Julian Calder, and Mark Cator, *Keepers of the Kingdom: Jubilee Edition* (London: Cassell Illustrated, 2002), 162.

Horse) were sent to accompany Charlotte to England in 1761. The new queen's Ladies of the Bedchamber were all selected before she reached England and thereafter numbered a group of six: Viscountess Bolingbroke, the countess of Effingham, the duchess of Hamilton, the duchess of Northumberland, Viscountess Weymouth, and the countess of Egremont.

Successive appointments to the queen's bedchamber were presumably under the direction of the queen herself, but the first few still held strong ties to the royal household, namely through marriage. At the first opening for a Lady of the Bedchamber in 1768 – on the resignation of Viscountess Bolingbroke, who was undergoing a divorce – the appointment was given to the countess of Hertford, whose husband the earl was a longstanding courtier, “friend and confidant to George III,” and Lord Chamberlain of the royal household at that time.²¹ The following appointment was made in 1770 for the countess of Holderness, whose husband was a former governor to the king when he was prince of Wales. This opening was to replace the countess of Northumberland, whose husband had joined the Opposition in 1770. As the earl of Northumberland was no longer part of the king's ministry, it was custom for the countess to resign her position. A similar circumstance occurred early in Charlotte's time as queen, which may have set a precedent for later occasions, when wives were bound to follow their husbands into Opposition, while the queen was equally expected to be loyal to her own husband. In October 1762, the king recounted to Bute:

Ly Egremont came to the Queen this morning in tears to notify that in a few days she should be obliged to ask her permission to resign her employment; the Queen ask'd her the reason of this, she said Lord Egremont was resolv'd to give up the seals on account of yesterday's Council; the Queen replied she

²¹ William C. Lowe, “Conway, Francis Seymour-, First Marquess of Hertford (1718–1794), Courtier and Politician,” in *ODNB*, 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6121.

never did nor ever would presume to meddle in state affairs, but that his conduct was very improper, but more so at an hour like this when every true lover of his King and Country ought to prepare for battle against those who would fetter their King.²²

George clearly wrote for Bute's approval in boasting of Charlotte's dutiful and firm judgements against those disloyal to him. Though he did not wish her to interfere in politics, Charlotte's political engagement here remained appropriately within the context of her household and appropriately expressed her unwavering allegiance. This incident occurred a little over a year into their marriage, so it is likely a representation of what the king had wanted to showcase and celebrate in his consort than an exact account.

It is difficult to otherwise glean Charlotte's own perspective on her relationship with George, though a continued analysis of the later appointments to her bedchamber reveals a developing circle that aligned closely with the king's early expectations. A careful assessment of the queen's household, particularly the aristocratic ladies chosen for attendance, reveals the importance of virtuous conduct at court, as well as Charlotte's growing confidence in upholding such values. Moreover, the queen's authority grew with respect to her position as a patron and householder, which were responsibilities that she, along with her husband, took very seriously.

Another opening among the ladies of the queen's bedchamber was not available until 1782 when, at the death of the countess of Hertford, the countess of Pembroke (sister to the divorced Viscountess Bolingbroke) was selected. A letter written by the countess of Holderness to the countess of Pembroke has been preserved in the Pembroke family papers and reads: "It is with great pleasure that I have

²² George III to the earl of Bute, 22 October 1762, in Sedgwick, 149–50.

Received Her Majesty's Commands to inform your Ladyship, that Her Majesty has appointed your Ladyship one of the Ladys of Her Bedchamber[,] Lord Pembroke having made application for your Ladyship to succeed the Late Lady Hertford.”²³

Despite a scandalous affair that he undertook in 1762, the tenth earl of Pembroke was reconciled to his wife and restored to the favor of the crown from 1769. In 1780, however, Pembroke would lose his position as a Lord of the Bedchamber and Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire when he began to openly support the Opposition. By this time, he also lived separately from the countess.

Pembroke was eventually restored to the Lord Lieutenancy in 1782, when Rockingham became Prime Minister in April that year, but the king had not supported this change. Though the earl enjoyed “Entrée at Court,” he was never welcomed back to the king’s bedchamber.²⁴ Instead, it appears that Pembroke helped to secure his wife a position at court, perhaps in the interest of his own reputation and of their son, George Augustus Herbert, who would later become the eleventh earl and Vice Chamberlain to the king. The countess of Pembroke was welcomed into the queen’s household likely because she had been living apart from her husband and was thereby not as closely associated with his political opposition as the countess of Northumberland had been on her resignation in 1770. The politics of her birth family, the Spencers, were unexceptional during this period,²⁵ and it was possibly this political dissociation alongside her reputation as an upright lady of fashion and dutiful mother that protected her place at court and within its inner circle. The same year that the countess’s husband resigned from the bedchamber in 1780, the king and queen

²³ The countess of Holderness to the countess of Pembroke, 23 November 1782, 2057/F4/36, WSHC.

²⁴ *Pembroke Papers*, 404–6.

²⁵ G. le G. Norgate, “Spencer, George, Fourth Duke of Marlborough (1739–1817), Politician,” in *ODNB*, 8 January 2009, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26123.

allowed her to rent rooms at a keeper's lodge in Richmond Park, which placed her in the direct vicinity of the royal family at Kew, as well as many other loyal courtiers, including the duke of Montagu at Montagu Villa²⁶ and the dowager duchess of Ancaster at Ancaster House.²⁷

One event that further informs an understanding of the queen's household as it relates to the king's authority was the death of the dowager princess of Wales in February 1772. George III took no mistresses, so his mother Princess Augusta had been a significant female presence at court, though her seclusion at Kew in the last years of her life never made her a serious rival to the new queen. She might have instead offered some reassurance for the newly orphaned Charlotte on her arrival in England by providing a large German-speaking family circle among the king's younger siblings. Newspaper accounts point to her occasional, ceremonial involvement at court after her son's accession, including the celebration of her birthday at drawing rooms.²⁸ The dowager princess even held her own drawing rooms at Carlton House.²⁹ Largely, however, she was vilified by the public, and the king preferred to keep her (like his wife) out of the political sphere.³⁰ Her death, in turn, seems to suggest the king's continued control over Charlotte's affairs. Papendiek related an instance in her court memoirs involving George's re-appointment of one of his late mother's hairdressers to his wife's household: "The King had a great respect

²⁶ "Montagu Villa, (Later Buccleuch House) Nightingale Lane, Richmond: Unexecuted Designs for a Garden Seat for the Duke of Montagu, 1772 (2)," Sir John Soane's Museum Collection Online, accessed 18 May 2023, <http://collections.soane.org/SCHEME1214>.

²⁷ "Ancaster House, Queen's Road, Richmond: Designs for the House for the 3rd Duke of Ancaster, 1773, Executed with Alterations (8)," Sir John Soane's Museum Collection Online, accessed 18 May 2023, http://collections.soane.org/drawings?ci_search_type=ARCI&mi_search_type=adv&sort=7&tn=Drawings&t=SCHEME1133.

²⁸ "News," *London Evening Post*, 23–26 November 1771, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

²⁹ "News," *Middlesex Journal*, 10–12 April 1770, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

³⁰ John L. Bullion, "Augusta [Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha], Princess of Wales (1719–1772), Consort of Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales," in *ODNB*, 21 May 2009, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/46829.

and regard for her [Miss Paschal] on account of her having been most dutifully and affectionately attached to his mother, but probably from her having held this situation the Queen never liked her, though she was well qualified for it.”³¹ Although George might have continued to oversee the composition of Charlotte’s household, Papendiek’s portrayal is a rare suggestion that the queen might not have received such interference well after a decade as his consort.

By the 1780s, the queen had gained some confidence in the management of her bedchamber by employing similar attitudes of moral and social propriety that her husband had upheld in the first two decades of their marriage. In a letter she wrote to the king, Charlotte was able to formally suggest exiling the duchess of Argyll and her daughter the countess of Derby from court due to the latter’s scandalous affair with the duke of Dorset. It appears that the duchess of Argyll – one of the queen’s original ladies of the bedchamber appointed in 1761 – had attempted to write to the queen and defend the behavior of the countess, which she was known to do publicly.³² Charlotte framed her words carefully to the king:

I am of opinion with my humble advice that your Majesty would now do better to let the Duke of Manchester [Lord Chamberlain to the king] acquaint Her [the duchess of Argyll] that Her Daughter should not come to Court, or be ill received, ... I shall neither speak to mother or daughter, and if she leaves my family I shall but get rid of an impertinent person who has always behaved disrespectful to me.³³

Charlotte still expressed a deference towards the king’s judgement, but this decision was made confidently and appealed to a shared standard of moral behavior expected of the office-holders in both households. This situation was comparable (though not

³¹ Kassler, 1:127.

³² The duchess of Argyll reportedly accompanied her daughter to the opera after gossip began to spread of the affair, “showing the world the family had nothing to hide.” Greig, *The Beau Monde*, 91.

³³ The letter is undated, but Charlotte’s reference to the duke of Manchester, who served briefly as Lord Chamberlain to the king, situates it between 1782 and 1783. Queen Charlotte to George III, n.d., GEO/MAIN/36357, RA.

necessarily equal) to a circumstance in the king's household concerning the tenth earl of Pembroke, who had lost his place as a Lord of the Bedchamber in 1780, when he decided to openly support the Opposition in Lord Shelburne's pursuit of economical reform. Pembroke's extramarital scandals did discredit him in the king's eyes, but his political opposition was a worse offense. There was a double standard for women in the queen's household, wherein a moral transgression or political opposition (even indirectly) would prompt a lady's resignation, or in some cases, exile from court, while high-ranking men experienced some social lenience. Ultimately, however, such offenses were not taken lightly, and the resulting exclusions from court office originated from a mutual dedication between the king and queen to maintain control over these elite groups.

A dignified and principled court ethos was a significant element of the bond that both George and Charlotte shared with their respective "families," which is a word they used frequently in reference to their households. They were in fact participating in a larger, contemporary understanding of what Naomi Tadmor describes as "household-families," wherein the term *family* implied "a household unit, which could comprise related and non-related dependents living together under the authority of a householder."³⁴ The king and queen's respective families – as cohesive and heavily structured household units – reflected significantly on their authority as householders. This explains the weight of Charlotte's decision to cut ties with the duchess of Argyll and her daughter on the grounds of their (mis)behavior, which was considered personally insulting.

³⁴ Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, 272.

There are several examples in courtiers' correspondence of references to the queen's *family* in this context that uphold the importance of proper conduct around a royal person. When Countess Harcourt replaced the duchess of Argyll as a Lady of the Bedchamber in 1784, she received a congratulatory note from the duchess of Gloucester, wife to Prince William Henry, the duke of Gloucester and younger brother of George III. The duchess wrote:

... the Queen will soon find the comfort of having a woman of real fashion in her Family; a woman, who is so different from any she has about her now that I hope, for the Queen's sake, they will all take lessons of behaviour from you: she must particularly feel the difference between you, & the fancy Duchess [of Argyll] whose place you supply.³⁵

Similarly, during Lord Pembroke's fall from royal favor, a close friend had written to the earl's son on this occasion to report that, in the earl's defense, Pembroke had "felt the impropriety of one of his [the king's] Family Servant's going in direct opposition to his measure."³⁶ Proper behavior as an officer of the king or queen's household was paramount, and neither householder was very forgiving of disloyalty, especially public displays which challenged their authority within their own households.

The king and queen likewise felt a responsibility toward dependents in their respective households, particularly in rewarding those who remained committed and loyal over many years, even decades. When the marquess of Rockingham stripped the Lord Lieutenancy of Wiltshire from the earl of Ailesbury, the queen's Lord Chamberlain, in order to restore it to the earl of Pembroke in March 1782, George wrote to Ailesbury's brother, the duke of Montagu, about a situation in which he was powerless to correct, and he described how much he regretted the injury to a loyal courtier. "You know how I love Lord Aylesbury; I trust he will feel that this goes to

³⁵ The duchess of Gloucester and Edinburgh to Countess Harcourt, 18 July 1784, MS. Eng. d. 3830 fols. 147-49, BodL.

³⁶ *Pembroke Papers*, 404-6.

my Soul: I have wrote him my distress, but I trust it will not make him quit the Queen's family, as he must see how I am used."³⁷ Ailesbury's continued commitment was rewarded with the queen's absolute confidence and trust. He continued as her Lord Chamberlain until 1792, when he decided to become her Treasurer, a position that had remained vacant for over a year following the death of its incumbent, the first earl of Guilford. It seems that the circumstances of this changeover were orchestrated by Ailesbury himself; a letter from the queen reveals that he had introduced the sixteenth earl of Morton to take his place as Lord Chamberlain. The queen admitted, "I never could have brought myself to this change, if in some way or other you had not stayed in my family. ... you would be so obliging as to signify to Lord Morton that I accept his offer and leave to you to settle the rest."³⁸

Though Charlotte depended heavily on the earl of Ailesbury's guidance, the extant papers from his time as Treasurer to the queen reveal her growing autonomy as consort and the concurrent, rather uncertain state of her household's finances. As an independent establishment, the queen's household retained a separate provision under the Civil List that did not appear to be affected by the 1782 reform of the royal household. In 1761, Queen Charlotte was allowed £50,000 for household expenses, and this rose to £58,000 per annum by 1788.³⁹ It was given a considerably smaller amount than the royal household's fixed annual income of £800,000 under the Civil List Act of 1760, but the queen's household accounted for a much smaller group of attendants and did not have to cover the expenses of a Lord Steward's department

³⁷ George III to the duke of Montagu, 27 March 1782?, in Fortescue, 5:422.

³⁸ Queen Charlotte to the earl of Ailesbury, 16 December 1791, in RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 245.

³⁹ Bucholz, "Household of Queen Charlotte (1761-1818)," *The Database of Court Officers*.

(which oversaw most culinary and domestic needs), nor was it responsible for the maintenance of the royal residences.

The queen's expenses, however, did begin to accumulate with the births of her six daughters, most of whom would not gain their own establishments until they were much older. Charlotte was responsible for their education, as well as their additional expenses, such as new clothes and wages for their servants, teachers, and higher-ranking attendants. Charlotte likewise gave each of her daughters pin money to spend as they pleased.⁴⁰ To add to her expenses, in 1789, the queen acquired the Frogmore estate near Windsor. The subsequent additions, decorations, and landscaping there, as an exclusive and private domain separate from the royal residences, meant that she often overspent her income.

Charlotte was also known to be very generous to members of her wider household. Frances Burney, for example, had worked for just under five years as the queen's Assistant Keeper of the Robes, and on her resignation in 1790, Charlotte granted her a pension of £100 per annum, which was half her annual salary.⁴¹ As one of Burney's biographers explains, the author would not have been able to marry the French émigré General Alexandre d'Arbly without this income, which was continued even after the queen's death, to the end of Burney's life – nearly fifty years following her relatively brief period of royal employment.⁴²

Charlotte once wrote to her brother Charles that early in her marriage she had “made a firm resolve *to borrow no money*,” though this did not necessarily include the

⁴⁰ In 1793, the queen wrote to Ailesbury, describing how she paid above £100 per quarter to the younger princesses for their “pocket money, *pour leur meme plaisir*.” RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 257–58.

⁴¹ Hester Davenport, *Faithful Handmaid: Fanny Burney at the Court of King George III* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), 162.

⁴² *Ibid*, 207.

occasional supplement from the king himself.⁴³ By the 1790s, Charlotte was overspending a considerable amount but was adamant that the king should not become involved or know the extent of her debts. Whenever her account was overdrawn, the balance sheet stated that the remains, or balance, is “due to the Treasurer,” indicating that the earl of Ailesbury personally oversaw the payments being made. At the end of 1793, in preparation for the new balance to be presented later in April 1794, there seems to have been major miscalculations when the initial balance overspent the Exchequer’s allowance by over £6,000 and additional bills amounted to £11,732.⁴⁴ When Ailesbury wrote to the queen concerning this, Charlotte was willing to allow more gradual renovation at Frogmore in order to cut costs but otherwise felt incapable of any other retrenchment. She expressly forbade consultation with the king, writing,

... how very ready I should be to help my treasury if I had the means, but not having that I have at least spirit enough to do anything you can advise or think right for me to do upon that subject (*excepting one thing namely that of asking the King*).⁴⁵

She repeats the sentiment more forcefully – and with more frustration – the following month and rejected Ailesbury’s offered proposals for economy while suggesting a reduction in the amount of “pocket money” she gave to the younger princesses.⁴⁶

One reason Charlotte was so unwilling to involve her husband in 1793 might have been that her overspending was a recurrent issue and occasioned considerable embarrassment every time it was more openly addressed. In 1786, the earl of

⁴³ Olwen Hedley relates a letter written by Charlotte to her brother, dated 17 January 1777, in which the queen admits to borrowing £200 from the king to pay some of her pensioners. Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, 118.

⁴⁴ “State of Her Majesty’s Treasure,” 1 April 1794, 9/34/38, WSHC.

⁴⁵ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 257–58.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 259–60.

Ailesbury, who at this time was serving as her Lord Chamberlain, had recorded in his diary on 6 September:

Queen gave me [a] paper Lord Guildford [then Treasurer to the queen] had left with her at end of July, and she wanted an opportunity to give it me and to desire me to give it [the] King, and to represent how much she was obliged to King for what he had given her before to pay her debts, and that on present occasion she only wished him to advance or lend her the money wanted, which was upwards of 11,000*li*.⁴⁷

Ailesbury acted as her intercessor, and the next day he approached the king, advising him that the state of the queen's finances was only likely to grow worse as the princesses came of age and required more attendants of their own.⁴⁸ Almost immediately following their conference, George wrote to appeal to his Prime Minister, William Pitt, to help make the necessary provisions.⁴⁹ About a month later, Pitt did end up advancing the funds to the queen by means of the Civil List, but despite her gratitude, Charlotte told the earl of Ailesbury (who then recorded in his diary) that it "was only temperary [sic] relief and that she hoped something would be done by Parliament (especially as Princess Royal was coming of age)."⁵⁰ Curiously, sometime shortly before this episode, in August 1786, letters patent granted the queen an additional £8,000 per annum, though this might not have taken effect until the following year and, ultimately, Charlotte's financial troubles only continued.⁵¹

Charlotte did finally approach the king again concerning her financial situation in 1796, several years after her disagreement with Ailesbury in 1793, and in another extant letter she wrote to her husband:

⁴⁷ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 269.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 270.

⁴⁹ George III to William Pitt, 7 September 1786, in A. Aspinall, ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 246.

⁵⁰ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 276.

⁵¹ Hedley describes patent letters dated the 22 August 1786, while Bucholz describes the increased allowance to the queen's household in effect "by 1788." Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, 136; Bucholz, "Household of Queen Charlotte (1761-1818)," *The Database of Court Officers*.

I do almost feel Ashamed of again troubling Your Majesty with my affairs, & will own that it would make me even wretched if I was Sensible that the difficiency [sic] of my Finances arose from any particular Imprudence of mine, but as I really never have taken any Step without Lord Ailesbury's advice, I feel so easy in my mind that it alleviates greatly the reluctance I now feel in representing it to Your Majesty. ... I will only Add that Lord Ailesbury consulted Mr Grant [Solicitor General to the queen] upon the Subject a Year & a half ago when my accounts were passed & He gave it as His Opinion that with propriety no change could be made. I have myself made one with Your approbation in my wardrobe expences, & am even ready to do more if you think proper.⁵²

Any particular response from the king is unknown, but it seems that the queen's financial issues would only persist even when her income was eventually raised to £100,000 in 1812 at the installation of the regency. To help clear her debts, most of her books and personal belongings were sold by auction after her death.⁵³ Even in her financial independence and resulting difficulties, however, Charlotte continued to refer to a certain "propriety" when engaging the king in her decision-making. She used this sentiment to help justify her overspending and assert her obligations as a consort, which included the maintenance of a proper dignity that was required by her position as both queen and householder in her own right.

Another significant element in the growing significance of the queen's household from the late 1780s (which would only contribute to her financial woes) was increased royal travel. As a young queen who was often pregnant, Charlotte did not frequently travel until the birth of her last child, Princess Amelia, in 1783. Her Master of the Horse, second Earl Harcourt, reportedly lamented the resulting expenses

⁵² Queen Charlotte to George III, 15 April 1796, GEO/MAIN/36464–36466, RA.

⁵³ Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Charlotte [Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz] (1744–1818), Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and Queen of Hanover, Consort of George III," in *ODNB*, 21 May 2009, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5162.

for his department in the following period. Charlotte wrote to the earl of Ailesbury, defensively stating:

... if it was possible that we could travel less, the stable bills would not increase so much, but alas what can I do in that. You will be astonished when you see them[,] every method has been taken to avoid it but without success, and Lord Harcourt sings Philippics upon the subject every quarter, in these things we opened *par devoir* and not by inclination.⁵⁴

The queen's sense of propriety and her efforts to uphold royal decorum, however, were unwavering in the face of financial difficulties and pressures from her staff, even close confidants like Ailesbury and Harcourt.

When Britain was again at war with France in 1778, the king and other members of the royal family began travelling more often to review troops and visit encampments. In April of that year, the king undertook a trip alone and sailed from Greenwich to Portsmouth.⁵⁵ In May, George appeared with the queen and several royal children in Deptford to witness the launching of a ship.⁵⁶ Then in early October, Charlotte and the three eldest princesses accompanied him to Salisbury for an inspection of the troops stationed there, alongside a visit to Wilton House, the country residence of the tenth earl and countess of Pembroke. The Pembrokes organized a lavish royal reception, where several members of the queen's household were in attendance, including her Secretary and Comptroller, James Harris, one of her Keepers of the Robes, Johana Hagedorn, and two Ladies of the Bedchamber, the countess of Egremont and Viscountess Weymouth. The entourage was further supplemented by Colonel Henry St. John, described as an *aide-de-camp* to the king, the marquess of Lothian as Gold Stick, as well as numerous footmen and coachmen.

⁵⁴ Queen Charlotte to the earl of Ailesbury, 26 November 1793, in RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 258.

⁵⁵ "News," *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 24 April 1778, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

⁵⁶ "News," *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 29 May 1778, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

On this occasion the king and queen separately received the Mayor and Corporation of Wilton, and then dined more exclusively with their respective companions of rank at Wilton.⁵⁷

As the Treaty of Paris coincided with the last of the royal births in 1783, there was a corresponding shift in the nature of royal travel, when the queen's household became particularly involved. Without the necessity of wartime efforts, George and Charlotte adopted more leisurely countryside visits to the queen's favorite aristocratic attendants: Earl and Countess Harcourt at Nuneham House (Oxon.), and the earl and countess of Ailesbury at Tottenham Park (Wilts.). The Harcourts had only been recently welcomed back at court after the earl's long oppositional absence. Once he began voting in the House of Lords according to the king's wishes – most importantly, voting against Charles James Fox's East India Bill in December 1783 – the countess was quickly appointed a Lady of the Bedchamber the following year and corresponded privately with the queen, who would sign her letters as an "Affectionate Friend, Charlotte."

In September 1784, Lady Harcourt received a note announcing that the king, queen, and their children "propose Storming Your Castle at Newneham [sic] on Saturday the 18th of this Month if perfectly convenient to you & Lord Harcourt, & though we shall be a large party pray don't be alarmed for we are all good Friends & well wishers to the Owners of the Castle."⁵⁸ Less than a month later, the king and queen gave the earl of Ailesbury only a day's notice before they set out from Windsor "to see his Particular fine House; indeed it was first intended to have been a

⁵⁷ *Pembroke Papers*, 138–41; "News." *Morning Chronicle* [1770], 6 October 1778, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

⁵⁸ Queen Charlotte to Countess Harcourt, 15 September 1784, MS. Eng. d. 3881, fol. 26, BodL.

surprise.”⁵⁹ Ailesbury worried that he would not be able to receive them properly but responded enthusiastically with an enclosed book “which describes the several Houses of consequence on the Road between Reading and this Place.”⁶⁰ Such visits were a chance for both king and queen to indulge in some of period’s “polite tourism,”⁶¹ and members of the queen’s household were especially favored for these excursions. When the king and queen visited Tottenham Park a second time in 1789, the queen recorded in her diary a description of the house and grounds, along with some of the estate’s history. Like many country house tourists, she formed an opinion of her surroundings and wrote unfavorably of the house’s architecture. The poor taste, however, did not reflect poorly on its occupants; the queen praised the countess of Ailesbury in the next sentence for their reception at Tottenham.⁶²

The Harcourts, Ailesburys, and several other courtier-families would continue to host the royal family at their country houses and, following the Regency Crisis in 1789, regularly convene at Weymouth to attend the king and queen. Their presence at court and connections specifically to the queen’s household were increasingly significant by the 1780s. Cross-generational involvement at court is principally seen in the papers once belonging to members of the queen’s household, though there is some overlap with the royal household, and an even greater frequency of matchmaking between the noble families in question.

Earl Harcourt, for example, was the queen’s first Master of the Horse, and both of his sons (successively the second and third Earls Harcourt) would in turn hold

⁵⁹ George III to the earl of Ailesbury, 3 October 1784, 1300/3107A, WSHC.

⁶⁰ The earl of Ailesbury to George III, 3 October 1784, 1300/3107, WSHC.

⁶¹ Adrian Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist: A History of Country House Visiting* (London: National Trust, 1998).

⁶² Michael Kassler, ed., *The Diary of Queen Charlotte, 1789 and 1794*, vol. 4, *Memoirs of the Court of George III* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 26–27.

this same office. The earl of Ailesbury was a member of the larger Brudenell family, which formed a substantial kinship network anchored at court. His eldest brother, the duke of Montagu, was Master of the Horse to the king. Another elder brother, the Hon. James Brudenell (later the sixth earl of Cardigan), was appointed Master of the Robes and Keeper of the Privy Purse, and in 1791 he would marry Lady Elizabeth Waldegrave, a lady-in-waiting to the Princess Royal. The king and queen were delighted with this match between courtiers and even paid the “unprecedented compliment of appearing in brand new clothes at the wedding, which took place at the bride’s accommodation in St. James’s Palace.”⁶³

Another important marriage occurred much earlier but produced many pertinent connections within the court circle by the 1780s. In 1759, Lady Elizabeth Bentinck married Thomas Thynne, Viscount Weymouth. Her mother, the dowager duchess of Portland, often received visits from the king and queen at the family’s country residence, Bulstrode, which was situated only a few miles from Windsor Castle. Due to her upbringing in close proximity to the royal circle, Viscountess Weymouth was a lifelong courtier, beginning as one of Queen Charlotte’s first Ladies of the Bedchamber in 1761 and subsequently her Mistress of the Robes until the queen’s death in 1818.⁶⁴ She and her husband were elevated in 1789 to the marquise of Bath, and their daughter Louisa married the earl of Aylesford, who held the office of Lord Steward in the royal household from 1804 to 1812. Lady Bath was also good friends with the earl of Ailesbury’s younger daughter, Lady Frances Brudenell-Bruce, and often acted as her chaperone after the earl’s first wife had died in 1783.⁶⁵

⁶³ Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*, 331.

⁶⁴ Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte: Scientific Queen,” 251.

⁶⁵ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 280, 283.

Queen Charlotte is said to have personally chosen the woman to become Ailesbury's second wife: Lady Anne Rawdon, the daughter of the first earl of Moira.⁶⁶ The earl of Ailesbury also had an elder sister, Mary Powys (second married name Bowlby), whose two daughters would become prominent members of the court as Ladies of the Bedchamber to the queen. Elizabeth Powys married Thomas Townshend and became Viscountess Sydney. Her younger sister Mary was married to James Stopford, Viscount Stopford, a Treasurer of the royal household from 1784 to 1793. On the death of Stopford's father in 1770, he and his wife became the second earl and countess of Courtown. Their eldest son, James George Stopford, would continue the family's ties to court and follow his father's appointment as Treasurer in 1793. The numerous familial connections among aristocratic courtiers are a testament to the elaborate networks that the king and queen cultivated during this period. At the heart of these courtly circles were prominent members of the queen's household, whose correspondence reveals the nature of attendance both in and out of St. James's Palace, with increased royal travel and inclusion of the elder royal children.

By virtue of the communication among this court circle, the underlying and often disorganized operations of court attendance can be further examined. Depending on the office, attendance at court was normally cyclical – every three months for Equerries as well as for Ladies of the Bedchamber. This included accompanying the king or queen on official court occasions, such as drawing rooms at St. James's Palace and on visits to the theater or opera. Attendants were also recruited while the royal family was in residence at Kew or Windsor. When the king or queen wished for a

⁶⁶ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 241–42, 301.

certain courtier to attend them, this was often communicated via letter. Charlotte would write directly or else employ one of her elder daughters or another courtier to impart her summons.

No one officer in the queen's household, however, was given sole responsibility for the organization of attendance, which is reflected in the *ad hoc* nature of courtiers' correspondence. Extant entries of the queen's diary from 1789 also reveal how much of her household populated royal evenings, either in London, Kew, or Windsor. She meticulously recorded the presence of high-ranking courtiers accompanying her and the king for tea, cards, sometimes a private concert, and occasionally supper.⁶⁷ This exclusive circle would include her Ladies of the Bedchamber: the marchioness of Bath, the dowager countess of Effingham, the countess of Holderness, the countess of Courtown, and Countess Harcourt. Several others are often referenced in the queen's account, even though they did not hold court office at this time, namely Earl and Countess Howe, the earl and countess of Chesterfield,⁶⁸ as well as Viscount and Viscountess Sydney.⁶⁹

Attendance on the queen gained a further layer of complexity when in 1788, Charlotte recruited the countess of Courtown as a supplementary Lady of the Bedchamber, or "*Dame de Compaynon* [sic]," to attend her specifically at Windsor and Kew. The countess's salary was paid out of the queen's own Privy Purse, so her appointment does not appear in the official records.⁷⁰ Charlotte recruited the countess's uncle, the earl of Ailesbury (who was her Lord Chamberlain at this time),

⁶⁷ Kessler, vol. 4, *The Diary of Queen Charlotte*.

⁶⁸ The fifth earl of Chesterfield, Philip Stanhope, would later become Master of the Horse to the king in 1798. His second wife Lady Henrietta Thynne (daughter of the marquess and marchioness of Bath) was eventually appointed a Lady of the Bedchamber in 1807.

⁶⁹ Viscountess Sydney would later join her sister, the countess of Courtown, as a Lady of the Bedchamber in 1798.

⁷⁰ Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*, 236–37.

to first propose this arrangement, and according to the earl's account, the king was also consulted.⁷¹ The queen thereafter kept up to eight (possibly more) Ladies of the Bedchamber instead of the customary six.

It is likely that Charlotte made similar, private agreements with other aristocratic ladies who were closely connected to the court. In 1806, she wrote to Lady Harcourt concerning arrangements for attendance and alluded to the “waitings” for the countesses of Ailesbury and Ilchester, which were “understood to be from June to January always.”⁷² Bucholz's list of officers under the queen's household does not include the countess of Ailesbury, and it only lists the countess of Ilchester's official employment “by 1816,” though the former's involvement at court was clearly established at least a decade before, if not earlier.⁷³ An extant letter from Lady Sydney to her uncle, the earl of Ailesbury, dated around 1793, congratulates him on the countess's “being of the sisterhood” of bedchamber ladies at court.⁷⁴ By this point, the queen's household had thus transformed from the pre-selected group of courtiers presented at her wedding to a carefully curated circle of trusted attendants whose families formed a significant network suited to the king and queen's social needs and preferences.

The king of course remained an important presence despite the prominence of the queen's household, and the aristocratic men in her family had the advantage of proximity both to the monarch and his consort. The earl of Ailesbury, for example, maintained a close relationship with George and was a valuable informant, principally in societal gossip.⁷⁵ The earl was also a confidant when in attendance on the queen;

⁷¹ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 292–93.

⁷² Queen Charlotte to Countess Harcourt, 10 January 1806, MS. Eng. d. 3881 fol. 196, BodL.

⁷³ Bucholz, “Household of Queen Charlotte (1761-1818),” *The Database of Court Officers*.

⁷⁴ Viscountess Sydney to the earl of Ailesbury, n.d., 1300/3254, WSHC.

⁷⁵ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 274–75.

his diary mentions that the king once spoke to him about an application to repeal the Test Act in 1787. Ailesbury was able to report, almost boast, the limited circle of ministers and advisors present when he was being informed of the situation.⁷⁶ During his tenure as the queen's Lord Chamberlain, Ailesbury appears to have communicated royal wishes from both king and queen among the royal household and beyond. There are several letters in his collection of personal papers that confirm the receipt of "the King's commands" which he had distributed to people such as the duchess of Ancaster, the queen's Mistress of the Robes, and others who did not hold court office, such as the first earl of Clarendon, Lady Charlotte Villiers, and the first earl of Beverly (formerly styled Lord Lovaine).⁷⁷

Among male courtiers there was also considerable movement between the king and queen's families. Much of the queen's early household, as discussed, was sourced from the royal household, but courtiers were not permitted to hold offices in both at the same time. In the following decades, there continued to be some changeover for committed officers. The second duke of Ancaster, for instance, was Master of the Horse to the queen for a year before being appointed the same position in the royal household in 1766. Viscount Weymouth was originally Master of the Horse to the queen in the 1760s before becoming the king's Groom of the Stole in 1775. The first duke of Northumberland began as a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, then became Lord Chamberlain to the queen between 1762 and 1763, and afterwards (despite a few years among the political Opposition) returned to the king's household as Master of the Horse in 1778. The fourth earl of Waldegrave began as Vice Chamberlain to the king in 1782 and then Master of the Horse to the queen in 1784.

⁷⁶ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 277.

⁷⁷ One hundred and seventeen letters, statements of accounts and other papers concerning the Queen's Treasury, 1767–1806, 9/34/38, WSHC.

General William Harcourt began his career at court as Equerry to the queen, then Groom of the Bedchamber to the king for over forty years, his Master of the Robes in 1808, then again under the queen's household as Master of the Horse in 1809.

By the time of the Regency Crisis in the winter of 1788–9, courtier memoirs and correspondence reveal the extent to which the queen's household formed the chief part of the king's social circle. At this pivotal moment, Charlotte immediately turned to her aristocratic companions for support and guidance. Many of the names listed above – particularly members of the Harcourt and Brudenell families – will reappear in the following section of this chapter, which presents an in-depth case study and thoroughly explores the events of the crisis through the lens of the queen's inner court circle. The royal office-holders in question shared the anguish of those closest to the king and witnessed firsthand the general confusion it occasioned throughout the country. Charlotte attempted to continue upholding the values of royal dignity and propriety as they were first introduced to her at her arrival in England, but such an unprecedented situation deeply challenged her sense of independence, even authority, as a consort. The accompanying anguish made her a hesitant candidate for the anticipated leadership required in a regency. Underneath the surface of the national drama unfolding at the end of 1788 were a group of dedicated courtiers who became intercessors between the queen and government ministers. Their presence, however, also ignited conflict with her two eldest sons, who had wished a lesser role for Charlotte in the event of a regency, despite her longstanding position as consort. Extant correspondence among the court circle reveals an active network that ultimately formed to support the queen and guide her through the crisis.

When Elizabeth Harcourt, Countess Harcourt, had been appointed a Lady of the Bedchamber in 1784, she quickly became a royal favorite. Her account of the Regency Crisis, preserved and published among the Harcourt family papers, gives particular relevance to the activities of the queen's household during a period of enormous uncertainty. The following analysis will also incorporate the accounts of Frances Burney, the earl of Ailesbury, and Colonel Robert Fulke Greville in order to better supplement and compare the narratives among courtiers.

Harcourt's version of events was an opportunity for her to boast of the family's royal connections and unwavering support of both king and queen. To first demonstrate her authority on the subject of the king's illness, Lady Harcourt described how, as a lady-in-waiting, she was "living with him [the king] ... in the most unreserved intimacy from six in the morning till eleven at night."⁷⁸ By this time, the queen's household usually made up the majority of the attending courtiers, especially when the royal family were in residence outside of London, at Kew or Windsor. When George first began showing "nervous" symptoms, he had requested to visit another prominent couple from Charlotte's circle, the dowager countess of Effingham, a long-time Lady of the Bedchamber to the queen, and her second husband Sir George Howard, who lived together near Windsor at Stoke Place.⁷⁹

Lady Harcourt, however, was not actually in waiting at the beginning of George's illness, and when she arrived at Windsor in November 1788, she was not allowed entry into the castle. In his last moments of lucidity, the king had reportedly made the queen "promise him that she would admit no others until he was better," so the countess of Courtown remained in attendance alongside the royal governess Lady

⁷⁸ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 4:16–17.

Charlotte Finch, the princesses' sub-governess Martha Goldsworthy, and their ladies-in-waiting, the sisters Elizabeth and Caroline Waldegrave.⁸⁰ This lockdown, however, was no obstacle for the familial and social networks formed among the queen's household.

In the meantime, Lady Harcourt stayed with her brother-in-law General William Harcourt, a Groom of the Bedchamber to the king, and his wife at their nearby estate, St. Leonard's Hill. The queen's Vice Chamberlain at this time, Colonel Stephen Digby, maintained access to the royal circle and gave regular updates on the king's condition to the Harcourts.⁸¹ Lady Harcourt would later return the favor when she was summoned to attend the queen at Kew on Christmas Eve; she urged the queen to invite Digby's guidance when the king's physicians began quarreling among themselves.⁸² Harcourt's sister-in-law, her husband, and the earl of Ailesbury all submitted regular accounts of the parliamentary debates in London concerning the formation of a regency while Harcourt attended the queen at Kew.⁸³

Lady Harcourt's attendance, in consequence, became politicized. As Charlotte refused to leave the king, the Opposition accused her and her ladies of interference with the work of his physicians and the regular bulletins they had to submit to parliament on his condition. The physicians themselves were oriented politically; those associated with the "King's party" of course were optimistic about the possibility of the king's recovery, while those in support of the prince of Wales expressed greater doubt. Lady Harcourt was informed by her sister-in-law that it was

⁸⁰ Ladies Elizabeth and Caroline Waldegrave were daughters of the third Earl Waldegrave, who died in 1784. The queen usually referred to them as "the two Lady Waldegraves," and they often attended the elder princesses together until Elizabeth married the fifth earl of Cardigan in 1791 and soon after was appointed a Lady of Bedchamber to the queen. *Harcourt Papers*, 4:31.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 4:32.

⁸² *Ibid*, 4:88–89, 132–33.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 4:170.

rumored that the queen had “sent you and Lady Charlotte Finch down to dictate to the physicians, and make them alter the bulletins” in favor of the king’s improvement.⁸⁴ Queen Charlotte was indeed anxious to soften the language used to describe her husband’s illness to the wider public, so the rumor was not completely baseless, though any assumptions of calculated or malicious obstruction were unrepresentative of this situation in particular. One courtier present, an Equerry to the king, Colonel Robert Fulke Greville, recorded that on 2 January 1789 the queen had wished for the physicians to include the line, “the king continued mending,” in their report, which was met with some reluctance by Dr. Richard Warren, who was physician to the prince of Wales. Warren’s colleagues and relative newcomers to the royal household, Dr. Francis Willis and his son Dr. John Willis, tended to be much more optimistic about the king’s condition, which resulted in a scene of “animated conversation” and raised voices among the physicians, with Lady Harcourt and Lady Charlotte Finch also present.⁸⁵ The subsequent rumors were (perhaps justifiably) generated from a suspicion of those who possessed direct access to the queen during this time, with capabilities to either influence her opinions or else carry out questionable commands.

There was also a gendered bias in matters concerning the king’s health, which was an inherently political concern that, according to custom, should not have involved women, yet elicited strong reactions from political hostesses across high society. Elaine Chalus has argued that the Regency Crisis was “an intensely divisive socio-political event” that uniquely involved women in a “leading role.”⁸⁶ Harcourt

⁸⁴ Mary Harcourt to Countess Harcourt, 9 January 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 4:153.

⁸⁵ Journal of Robert Fulke Greville, vol. 2, Journal of His Majesty's Most Serious and Afflicting Illness, 1788–1789, RCIN 1047014, fols. 95–97, RL.

⁸⁶ Elaine Chalus, “Elite Women, Social Politics, and the Political World of Late Eighteenth-Century England,” *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 3 (2000): 692; Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

was not the only outspoken woman on the hotly debated topic of a regency, and she expressly criticized the duchess of Devonshire and Viscountess Melbourne for their political influence over the prince of Wales – “Their friends became his, and these were not well-wishers to his father's Government”⁸⁷ – though her own proximity to the queen made Harcourt a particular target, too. Nevertheless, in his diary Colonel Greville was more concerned with the physicians themselves rather than Charlotte’s female attendants or the prince’s high society friends. He did not seem as troubled over the queen’s wishes on this occasion as he was over the elder Dr. Willis’s views, and he expressed heavy skepticism concerning the latter’s sanguine expectations, especially when they were liable to create false hope for the queen.⁸⁸

Lady Harcourt vehemently denied the accusations of interference, but her proximity to Charlotte and her role as a mediator during this critical period undoubtedly gave her a position of considerable authority – so much so, that it was said she might be called before the House of Lords to be questioned by the committee appointed to arrange the regency.⁸⁹ On 5 January 1789, the Opposition did in fact call for a separate committee to examine the physicians, which “seemed to credit reports that Queen Charlotte had influenced information about the King's health by giving greater weight to the optimistic views of the Willises than to those of Dr. Richard Warren.”⁹⁰ This was a heavy blow to the queen, and Frances Burney recounted how, “my poor Royal Mistress now droops,—I grieve—grieve to see her!—but her *own name & conduct* called in question!—who can wonder she is shocked & shaken?”⁹¹

⁸⁷ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:41; Chalus, “Elite Women,” 686.

⁸⁸ Fulke Greville, vol. 2, fols. 129–31, RL.

⁸⁹ Anne Somerset, “The Later Hanoverian Court,” in *Ladies-in-Waiting* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 245.

⁹⁰ Geoffrey Sill, ed., *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online (2018), vol. 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), n. 38.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 5:11.

Charlotte's attendants, especially the women, continued to support and defend her in their respective narratives.

Though Lady Harcourt never had to defend herself publicly, the account she wrote to justify her actions, which was deposited in the collection of her family papers, reveals the significance of her influence on the queen. By her own admission, she was guilty of exacerbating the ill feeling between Charlotte and her two eldest sons. It was likely out of fierce loyalty that Harcourt wished to defend and protect the queen from them while she accused the Opposition of having labored to “spoil” and “pervert” the princes' minds and “misrepresented” the queen's conduct during the Regency Crisis.⁹²

In January 1789, parliament announced its plans for a limited regency, which would have divided responsibilities and given authority over the king's household to Charlotte instead of to her eldest son. The prince of Wales soon after wrote to his mother and attempted to dissuade her from accepting this proposed arrangement, arguing that it would impede on his rights as regent and “disjoin from the difficult & arduous office which I am call'd upon to fill, the accustom'd & necessary support & dignity wh. have hitherto belong'd to it.”⁹³ On one occasion following this dispute, Lady Harcourt had insisted on staying in the room while the queen received the prince of Wales and duke of York, who had clearly wished to speak to their mother alone.⁹⁴ The queen in turn stoutly defended her lady-in-waiting to her eldest son in a letter, writing to him in an affronted tone, “it was not owing to Lady Harcourt's presence that I said nothing particular to You & Your Brother, but that I had Nothing to Say. which

⁹² Countess Harcourt to Earl Harcourt, 28 January 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 4:206.

⁹³ George, prince of Wales, to Queen Charlotte, 30 January 1789, GEO/MAIN/38429–38433, RA.

⁹⁴ Countess Harcourt to Earl Harcourt, 28 January 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 4:205–6.

Confession must surprize You as it comes from a Woman.”⁹⁵ Harcourt was convinced that the Opposition was attempting to “deprive [the queen] of all her power,” by using Charlotte’s sons to dissuade her from accepting the responsibility of the king’s person and the patronage of the royal household in the event of a regency.⁹⁶ Frances Burney joined her in these sentiments and defended the queen’s ability to assume her powers as a consort, firmly scoffing at any accusations of avarice or egotism. She wrote in her journal, “O were those who envy her the Patronage of her own husband's Household, in other words, of her own rightful property during his life,—were they to see how she passes her time,—they would not think ambition made much part of her happiness.”⁹⁷

The factionalism resulting in the queen’s conflict with her elder sons during these months also occasioned her avoidance of certain court officers closely associated with them. The earl of Ailesbury, as her Lord Chamberlain, recorded in his diary that the queen “said she could not bring herself to see General Granville [Richard Grenville] and General Buda [Jacob de Budé], as they belonged to Duke of York, whom in private she thought the most blamable.”⁹⁸ Grenville and Budé both served in the households of the princes but were ultimately barred from Kew in favor of the attendants Charlotte felt she could trust. Ailesbury himself mediated access to the queen’s person, and his diary reveals how he often recruited his eldest brother, the duke of Montagu (the king’s Master of the Horse) to provide guidance. In December 1788, when parliament was forming committees to examine reports from the king’s physicians and the constitutional precedents for a regency, Ailesbury wrote that the

⁹⁵ Queen Charlotte to George, prince of Wales, 7 February 1789, GEO/MAIN/36379, RA.

⁹⁶ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:190–91.

⁹⁷ Sill, 5:47.

⁹⁸ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 299–300.

queen “consulted me about what she had best do with regard to seeing [the Lord] Chancellor and Mr. Pitt [the Younger], I wished her to consult Duke of Montagu, who was coming to Kew to-day upon those points, which she did.”⁹⁹

The queen’s household reigned at Kew; the earl of Ailesbury and Colonel Digby stood as the two principal advisors to Charlotte during this period. Frances Burney observed early in her employment in the royal household that there was

... nobody to stand higher, in personal esteem, with both King & Queen than Mr. Digby; & in confidential trust, with the *Queen*, no one so high. He & my Lord Aylesbury [sic] are the only men with whom she appears to have any consultations. Their office, inde<ed,> makes it necessary, every thing passing through their hands.¹⁰⁰

Between the two, however, much of the earl of Ailesbury’s correspondence and personal papers have been preserved, while very little immediate evidence of Digby’s life and employment under the queen survives, creating a natural bias in favor of the former’s influence at court. Digby also possessed fewer close familial connections who held court office, while Ailesbury had several, so his papers give compelling insight into the court circle.

Similar to Lady Harcourt’s account, Ailesbury’s correspondence dating from this time points to substantial networks of intelligence sharing among his own family and the wider household. Ailesbury was in regular contact with the Harcourts and several immediate family members, forming substantial channels of information. His elder brother the Hon. James Brudenell, his sister Mary Bowlby, his nieces the countess of Courtown and Viscountess Sydney, and their husbands all frequently met to exchange news. Lady Courtown was in attendance the first several months of the

⁹⁹ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 298.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Sabor, ed., *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online (2014), vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 437.

king's illness and would write to her mother and uncles on the king's condition and the queen's situation. Ailesbury later described how, when the king was well again, he "run along the gallery in great joy to see Lady Courtown for first time in apartment of [the] Princesses."¹⁰¹ His position (and gender) allowed him much more freedom to travel between London and Kew, and as the queen's Lord Chamberlain, Ailesbury could request private audiences with her during the crisis.¹⁰² When George finally recovered in February 1789, the Brudenell brothers were some of the first courtiers to reunite with him in person; Ailesbury recorded that the "King was very cheerful and took me by arm saying how glad he was to see an old friend."¹⁰³

Before they were assured of the king's convalescence, however, the queen and her household assembled at Kew at the end of January 1789 to receive an address concerning preparations for a regency. Charlotte Papendick recounted the scene in her memoirs, describing how the queen in a formal sacque dress sat "with her little Court around her, which consisted of the Chamberlain, two ladies of the bedchamber, two maids of honour, the pages of presence, the three elder Princesses and their two ladies."¹⁰⁴ Lady Harcourt, as the principal lady-in-waiting, conducted the appointed parliamentary deputies to the queen. The representatives appointed from both houses all held court offices, half of whom were in the queen's household.¹⁰⁵ This included the earl of Ailesbury, her Lord Chamberlain; Earl Waldegrave, her Master of the Horse; the earl of Courtown, Treasurer of the royal household; the Hon. Richard Howard, Secretary and Comptroller to the queen; the Hon. John Charles Villiers, Comptroller of the royal household; and, General Robert Manners, an Equerry to the

¹⁰¹ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 304.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 299.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 302.

¹⁰⁴ Kassler, 1:161.

¹⁰⁵ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:209.

king.¹⁰⁶ As all of these men were well-known to the queen, their attendance might have put her more at ease, but significantly, this group indicated an uncommon union between parliament and the royal household at a moment when their shared head was incapacitated. The prince of Wales was to be made regent but with considerable restrictions on his power, while the queen was to oversee the king's person and household. The address was also the first time, as Papendiek notes, that Charlotte "had been addressed as Queen, in distinction to the title of Queen Consort, it being now proposed that she should have the care of the King's person ... and further, that she should have the care and regulation of the household."¹⁰⁷

This parliamentary address marked the apex of her power in the absence of the king, though Charlotte had not been a very eager participant. Ailesbury, Harcourt, and Greville all mention in their accounts the "timidity" with which she proceeded during the Regency Crisis and her initial unwillingness for the responsibility of the king's person.¹⁰⁸ Such "extreme caution"¹⁰⁹ was only amplified following the accusations of interference with the physicians' reports; having always boasted of remaining an apolitical figure, Charlotte perhaps feared that this new position of authority would thrust her again into an uncomfortably political spotlight which her husband, if he were well, would have disapproved. There was also a significant question concerning the *dignity* of a king in this position, which the queen was anxious and uncertain of establishing: "How the Kings Government is to be ... Administered, what provisions are to be made for replacing it in His hands, and what stile of dignity should attend

¹⁰⁶ Sill, vol. 5, n. 226; "News," *The World*, 30 January 1789, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

¹⁰⁷ Kassler, 1:161.

¹⁰⁸ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:80; RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 298; Fulke Greville, vol. 2, fol. 52, RL.

¹⁰⁹ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:61.

His Person in the mean Time are considerations, upon which I can form no adequate Judgement.”¹¹⁰

A concern for the crown’s dignity, as discussed in the first chapter, was at the forefront of royal identity during this period after it had been challenged by economical reform just six years previously. The queen’s attendants were also anxious to uphold the proper standards of dignity, though the unprecedented circumstances of George’s illness made it a matter of open debate in parliament. Lady Harcourt received a letter from her sister-in-law in January 1789, detailing a speech by Edmund Burke, who spoke of “our beloved Monarch as ‘A pageant dressed up with useless splendour and degrading dignity; a sick King, smitten by the hand of Omnipotence, hurled from his throne, and plunged into a condition below the meanest of his subjects.’”¹¹¹ There was a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the appropriate care of a royal person when the very nature of his illness contradicted the concept of dignity – a dilemma that seems to have immobilized Charlotte.

At the beginning of December 1788, the queen wrote to her eldest son, confessing that, “I am doubtful of my own Powers of acting in such distressing Circumstances, & still am of Opinion the Chancellor might do better than myself.”¹¹² When Charlotte was unable to defer to the king, she instead chose to rely on the advice of the Lord High Chancellor, Baron Thurlow, who was a close confidant of George III and often referred to as “keeper of the king’s conscience.”¹¹³ Thurlow himself was attempting to navigate the crisis and ultimately retain his office by speaking to members of the current administration under Pitt as well as the prince of

¹¹⁰ Queen Charlotte to George, prince of Wales, 1 February 1789, GEO/MAIN/36377–36378, RA.

¹¹¹ Mary Harcourt to Countess Harcourt, 16 January 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 4:179.

¹¹² Queen Charlotte to George, prince of Wales, 2 December 1788, GEO/MAIN/36374, RA.

¹¹³ Gilding, *The Great Pillar*, 1.

Wales and Opposition leaders like Charles James Fox. Despite accusations of having played both sides during the negotiations, Thurlow supported the plan for a limited regency and encouraged the queen, as did her courtiers, to embrace the responsibility which “falls naturally into the hands of Her Majesty.”¹¹⁴ Ultimately, the presence of the queen’s household during this parliamentary deputation provided the framework for an assumption of that power, if necessary, with its aristocratic officers employed as mediators between queen and government. Thanks to their support, the queen was eventually reconciled to the idea of her new role as granted by parliament.¹¹⁵

Preparations for a regency, however, were no longer required later in February 1789, when the king fully recovered and convinced the Lord Chancellor to table the proposed Regency Bill. Celebrations were widespread, and Lady Harcourt recounted the happy scenes:

... an official declaration was made to Parliament on the 10th of March of the complete restoration of his Majesty's health. In the morning of that day the bells of all the churches were rung; at noon, the Park and Tower guns were fired, and the standard hoisted on the White Tower; and nothing could exceed the joy that was felt and expressed by the generality of the people, who were eagerly desirous to see their beloved Monarch again. But quiet for some time had been strongly advised, and it was thought that change of air and scene would be beneficial and pleasing to the King. The going to Windsor was therefore proposed, and he was delighted with the plan. Their Majesties did me the honour of desiring me to be of the party, and it was settled that we should go as soon as the Lodge could be aired and prepared.¹¹⁶

Charlotte did not have to assume authority over the entire royal household, but she thereafter retained a circle of loyal attendants who had guided her through the Regency Crisis. Members of this court circle were an essential part of the queen’s own “household-family” following her husband’s recovery, and those officers

¹¹⁴ Baron Thurlow to George, prince of Wales, 3 December 1788, GEO/MAIN/38316–38317, RA.

¹¹⁵ Charlotte soon after the parliamentary address wrote firmly to her eldest son of her determination to take on the role entrusted to her. Queen Charlotte to George, prince of Wales, 1 February 1789, GEO/MAIN/36377–36378, RA.

¹¹⁶ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:260–61.

(including Lady Harcourt) would boast of their reunification with the king and the full restoration of his court, which will be examined in greater detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

The queen also gifted material tokens of her gratitude to those courtiers who had supported her throughout an arduous and uncertain winter. Before leaving Windsor to begin a royal tour in the summer of 1789, Frances Burney was given a “Medallion in Green & Gold, of [inscribed with] Long Live the King” directly from Charlotte.¹¹⁷ Burney likewise describes a conversation with Lord Harcourt, who was also presented with a medal by the queen, this one with a gold and crimson border, the initials “G” and “R” in gold, and a Latin inscription reading “To the Restored, Beloved King” (Figure 1). Harcourt’s medallion seems to have been one of a handful that were commissioned by Queen Charlotte herself and given to select courtiers in recognition of their loyal attendance and support.¹¹⁸

Other material remembrances of this period include a painting by the court artist, Benjamin West, who produced a symbolic depiction of the king’s restoration to health.¹¹⁹ A surviving preparatory drawing sits in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (Figure 2), and similar to the final piece, Queen Charlotte stands centrally in both compositions, escorting her healthy husband from his physicians to his crown and throne, which are flanked by his Prime Minister, William Pitt, and Lord High Chancellor, Baron Thurlow. Further details are included in the painting, such as the queen’s brightly illuminated dress of white silk. In the background stands the

¹¹⁷ Sill, 5:299.

¹¹⁸ One of its kind was acquired and stored in the Royal Collection. Ibid, 5:235, n. 593.

¹¹⁹ The only extant copy of this painting was sold at auction in December 2021. Benjamin West, *The Recovery of His Majesty in the Year 1789*, 1789, oil on canvas, 73 x 99.1 cm, Sotheby’s, <https://www.sothebys.com/buy/dca1940d-ba93-48df-b833-53cb0f538a03/lots/8feecdaf-8e3d-43cf-ab0a-0cc9c673054a>.

round tower of Windsor Castle, topped by a waving Royal Standard. The heavens are opened with bright light while the eye of Providence looks over the king and queen. Charlotte is justifiably as significant, even more radiant, as George in West's depiction, which gives an important reminder of her central role during the Regency Crisis and the rich material that the members of her household produced and preserved on such a momentous occasion.



Figure 1: Charles Swaine, *George III "recovery from Illness" Medallion*, 1789, gold, enamelled in red, white and blue, 3.5 cm (diameter of a coin/medal), RCIN 65800, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 2: Benjamin West, *George III Resuming Royal Power in 1789*, c. 1789, pen and brown ink with brown wash on laid paper, 15.9 x 21.9 cm, 1980.4.6, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., © John Davis Hatch Collection, Andrew W. Mellon Fund and Avalon Fund.

In the following decades, Queen Charlotte continued to uphold the same values of propriety that her husband had initially encouraged, but her household was not dictated in the same manner as when she first became queen. Over time, she obtained greater authority to direct both exclusions and appointments at court while continuing to involve her husband and appealing to his sense of appropriate behavior and loyalty in their attendants. Where it concerned matters of her household's finances, however, which were separate from those of the royal household, the queen insisted on her autonomy and instead relied heavily on the guidance of male aristocratic courtiers like the earl of Ailesbury.

The Harcourt and the Brudenell families were very involved in the queen's household and endeared themselves to both the monarch and his consort. The appeal of certain offices in the queen's household remained significant among elite society in the display of rank and political connection but was especially strong among established courtier-families for the proximity, even friendship and influence, that the associated attendance could offer. Their presence generated significant intelligence networks at court that proved especially active during the Regency Crisis and were inevitably politicized when the king was ill. In their own accounts, and in Charlotte's diaries, members from both families helped to dictate court sociability in 1789 and beyond.

When George's illness fully relapsed in 1811, Charlotte was ultimately given responsibility over the king's person, and after settling into a role she was initially hesitant to accept two decades previously, she reflected in a letter to Lady Harcourt:

I am most truly sensible of the dear King's great strictness, at my arrival in England, to prevent my making many acquaintances; for He always used to say that, in this Country, it was difficult to know how to draw a line, on account of the Politics of the Country; & that there never could be kept up a Society without party, which was always dangerous for any Woman to take part in, but particularly so for the Royal Family; ... The partys at the Q.H. [Queen's House, or Buckingham House] have of course been guided by the Ins & Outs of the moment, by the King's order, but He allowed & encouraged me to be Civil to all; by which means I hope to have done tolerably well in the World, & my intention is to continue in the same way: tho' I may be called *Hum Drum, n'importe*, my Conscience is free from accusation.¹²⁰

Charlotte's words have invited a closer look at the reality of a consort's household and attendants, which is a theme that will continue in the next chapter on the court at Windsor. By 1813, she had assumed the responsibility and power that she was initially reluctant to take in 1789 but continued to refer to her husband's initial instructions.

¹²⁰ Queen Charlotte to Countess Harcourt, 22 April 1813, in Edward William Harcourt, ed., *The Harcourt Papers*, vol. 6 (Oxford: printed for private circulation by J. Parker and Co., 1880), 99–100.

Charlotte's principal attendants, foremost Lady Harcourt, became trusted confidants during this gradual transformation of the queen's household and were witness to transfers of sovereignty during the king's illnesses. Harcourt and many of the other courtiers featured in this chapter will appear again in further study of the court circle, which remains a significant component in the following analysis of Windsor Castle as a courtly venue for the expression of kingship. The recruitment of aristocratic attendants there contributed to George's moral program and its developing associations with the chivalry of imagined medieval courts.

Chapter 3: Morality at Court and Chivalry at Windsor

George III held a clear preference for the satellite royal residences he established outside of St. James's Palace, most especially at Kew and Windsor. This made a particular impression on the development of his public image; contemporary satire referred to him as the affable "Farmer George,"¹ and scholars today continue to emphasize the highly domestic activities that he upheld in the countryside,² corresponding with his established role as father to the nation.³ While George's paternalism was a significant component in his understanding of kingship and wider public persona, his investment in morally upstanding leadership deserves more attention in its connections to chivalry rather than domesticity, particularly through his residence at Windsor. This chapter introduces an original approach to George's moral example in the specific context of his court, including its physical setting at Windsor Castle and corresponding sociability there. The royal campaign against aristocratic vice in the eighteenth century was transformed by the neo-Gothic ideals upheld at the castle and heavily depended on the participation of aristocratic court officers. Far from the image of a simple country gentleman, the court in the countryside uniquely integrated concepts of royal magnificence and morality into a stylized approach of Christian knighthood, rooted in the re-Gothicized surrounds of Windsor.

¹ See Figure 8, in the fourth chapter: James Gillray, *Affability*, 10 February 1795, hand-coloured etching and aquatint, 13 7/8 in. x 9 7/8 in., NPG D12518, National Portrait Gallery; *Farmer George & His Wife*, c. 1780s, etching with hand-colouring, 17.9 x 13.7 cm, c. 1780s, RCIN 630059, RCT; Richard Newton, *The Thieves Detected at Last; or, a Wonderful Discovery at the Windsor Farm!!*, 1792, hand-coloured etching, 1868,0808.6234, British Museum.

² Christopher Hibbert, *The Court at Windsor: A Domestic History*, revised edition (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 1977); Marschner et al., *Enlightened Princesses*.

³ Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III," 106.

The following discussion examines the king's approach to the moral standing of his court and its close association with a code of conduct inspired by chivalric values, including martial prowess, generosity, gallantry, and religion. These knightly virtues were further pronounced by his adoption and renovation of Windsor Castle. Initial arguments will address expectations of conduct in George's immediate family, as well as the court's wider moral program and its precedents, such as royal proclamations against vice. In later sections, attention will turn to the inculcation of the Gothic at Windsor, its architectural renovations and emphasis on religion, alongside applications of the chivalric code to the court circle in the late eighteenth century. George thoroughly shaped court activity at the castle and was joined by a select group of attendants who supported the integration of chivalry and its moral code throughout. This chapter restores this courtly venue to the kingship of George III, underscoring the material culture and sociability of his court at Windsor, which supported a particular approach to royal majesty through chivalrous moral conduct.

The political turbulence of the early 1780s, explored in the first chapter of this thesis, did much to solidify the king's dislike of the Whig party. Following the rise of William Pitt the Younger, elite Whig society not only resumed political opposition to the king and his ministers, but socially it continued to be a more lenient circle of aristocrats with relaxed attitudes towards "vices" such as gambling and adultery. While their general profligacy offended the king, there was also growing publicity (particularly in newspapers) that placed a reproving spotlight on the aristocratic vice fostered among the ruling class.⁴ Not even the court could avoid what Corrinna

⁴ Donna T. Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice: The Attack on Duelling, Suicide, Adultery, and Gambling in Eighteenth-Century England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

Wagner has described as the “censorious gaze of a moralizing public and its press.”⁵ It is easy to see how the king and queen, whose personal lives were arguably on greater display than any of the nobility, were likewise more acutely aware of the need to assuage public opinion.

Scholarship on George III has subsequently embraced this emphasis on the king’s popular appeal: Tim Blanning and John Brewer dismiss the later Hanoverian court due to an emphasis on middle-class moral rectitude over regal, representational splendor, placing the king’s frugal Farmer George persona at the forefront of royal imagery.⁶ To speak too much of the king’s public image, however, obscures the operation of his court, which continued to be a sphere that largely excluded the middle classes. With increasing praise for the “virtues of the middle orders,” Paul Langford’s connection between the royal family and a “bourgeois respectability and prudery”⁷ is readily assumed, though it divorces George too far from the exclusive royal circle he convened and ignores the values he upheld in reaction to oppositional Whig society. This chapter newly frames the court as a venue which championed morality through established courtly practice. With a further examination of the king’s moral program and its dependence on favored courtiers, there is a greater appreciation for the complexity of the royal household in this period as well as the nature of the kingship at its helm.

George III often blamed the troubles that he experienced during his reign – be it war or conflict with his eldest son – on the general profligacy of the age. Shortly after the loss of the American colonies, when he unwillingly conceded to the Fox-

⁵ Corinna Wagner, “Press Scandal, Class, and the Struggle for Cultural Authority in the 1790s,” *Nineteenth Century Studies* 22 (2008): 2.

⁶ Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture*, 27–28.

⁷ Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, 582.

North coalition in 1783, the king was on the brink of abdication and wrote in a drafted speech to parliament about the regrettable loss of “Religious and Moral Duties in this Kingdom to the want of which every Evil that has arisen owes its Source.”⁸ The resulting Treaty of Paris was, in George’s mind, the “Downfall of the lustre of this Empire,” as he attributed defeat directly to misconduct on a national scale: “when Religion and Public Spirit are quite absorbed by Vice and Dissipation, what has now occurred is but the natural consequence.”⁹

While such devastation for his country carried a providential weight, on a more immediate scale, George continued to uphold the expectation of virtue and piety foremost in royal persons, especially his wife, as evidenced in the previous chapter, as well as his siblings and children. Some early obstacles to the moral program at court included the well-publicized misconduct of the king’s siblings in particular. Among rumors of various extramarital affairs, illegitimate children, and the general entertainment of the vices of Whig society, some of the most grievous offenses, in George’s mind, were the secret marriages of his brothers. Prince Henry, the duke of Cumberland and Strathearn, had secretly wed a commoner named Anne Horton in 1771. When the king discovered this, he took drastic measures to retain control over his family circle, as many of its male members were expected to represent the crown on various public or ceremonial occasions, such as military reviews.¹⁰

The Royal Marriages Act was passed in 1772 and made it thereafter illegal for the descendants of George II under the age of twenty-five to marry without the

⁸ Draft of a message of abdication from George III to the Parliament, [28 March 1783], GEO/MAIN/5367, RA.

⁹ George III to Frederick, Lord North, 7 September 1783, in Fortescue, 6:443–44.

¹⁰ Matthew Kilburn discusses the dilemma that George faced when he refused to speak to his brothers following the royal marriages scandal and could not therefore delegate royal duties to them. Kilburn, “Royalty and Public in Britain,” 132.

monarch's consent. In terms of succession, royal marriage to a commoner was considered "unequal to imperial law" and disqualified any resulting children from inheriting the electorate of Hanover.¹¹ The king's insistence on such authority was widely criticized – chiefly by the then former Whig Prime Minister and one of the principal leaders of the opposition, the marquess of Rockingham – as an overreach of royal prerogative.¹² One scholar has suggested that George's intentions were oriented socially and morally against morganatic relationships, to "preserve the royal family from the stigma and embarrassment of unsuitable marriages" instead of any particular concern over succession.¹³ The Act prompted another of the king's brothers, Prince William Henry, the duke of Gloucester and Edinburgh, to reveal his own secret marriage to Maria Walpole, the dowager countess of Waldegrave. Severely displeased with both brothers, George barred them from court, and even after some reconciliation in the years following, he never allowed their wives to accompany them on court occasions.

In raising their children, the king and queen made sure to promote values which might dissuade the princes from following in the footsteps of their uncles, particularly in the promotion of obedience to their father throughout their lives and, by extension, a more obvious example of upright and honorable conduct for their peers and fellow countrymen. A surviving letter from George to his third son, Prince William, dated August 1780, best describes the king's hopes. He wrote:

Indeed I have no objects in life but to do my duty and to see my children turn out an ornament to their country and a comfort to their parents, which can alone be attained by assiduity and imbibing virtuous and honourable principles

¹¹ Kilburn, "Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales," in *ODNB*.

¹² Peter D.G. Thomas, "Parliament and the Royal Marriages Act of 1772," *Parliamentary History* 26, no. 2 (2007): 188.

¹³ *Ibid*, 187.

such as must render them useful members of society and examples to the youth of this country, that may tend to restore the manners of it.¹⁴

The royal children held a unique position, and George identified their chief duty as being an example to the nation through good conduct. Queen Charlotte followed suit in her own exhortations to their children. When it was time for her eldest son to transition from the royal nursery to the care of governors in 1770, she wrote to him, saying: “Abhor all vice, in private as well as in Publick, and look upon Yourself as obliged to set good examples. ... Try to imitate his [the king’s] virtues, and look upon every thing that is in Opposition to that Duty, as destructive to Yourself.”¹⁵

As much as the king and queen attempted to cultivate these virtues themselves, they depended heavily on their courtiers to befriend and educate the royal children and set their own good examples. George carefully oversaw the formation of a separate establishment for his two eldest sons when they were old enough to leave the nursery – this included a selection of governors, sub-governors, and attendants who would direct their education and, in essence, become their primary guardians. In writing to Lord North, the king included “an exact List of the Persons I have on mature and anxious deliberation thought fit to place about my Eldest Son.”¹⁶ One such governor, George Montagu (né Brudenell), duke of Montagu, became a royal favorite, and a short time before the prince of Wales reached his majority, Montagu was transferred to the royal household and appointed Master of the Horse to the king. Montagu and his three younger brothers, as well as several of his nieces and nephews, all held court office, and together created a formidable aristocratic kinship network at

¹⁴ George III to Prince William, 22 August 1780, in A. Aspinall, ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 668.

¹⁵ Queen Charlotte to George, prince of Wales, 12 August 1770, GEO/MAIN/36345–36347, RA; published in A. Aspinall, ed., *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales, 1770-1812*, vol. 1 (London: Cassell, 1963), 5–6.

¹⁶ George III to Frederick, Lord North, 27 December 1780, in Fortescue, 5:170.

court, as discussed in the previous chapter. As is also evident in their correspondence, the Brudenell family prided themselves on loyal adherence to the king and his directives for virtuous conduct among the wider royal household. Montagu and his family members will continue to feature in later discussions on the application of a moral program, particularly among aristocratic courtiers.

Despite all their efforts, the king and queen's hopes for their eldest son were soon dashed when the prince of Wales reached his majority in 1783 at the age of 21. Despite stationing loyal courtiers in his son's household, the king's heir stood in stark opposition to the moral program at court, not just in his conduct but through his politics and artistic patronage, too. He befriended leading Whig statesmen, such as Charles James Fox and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, as well as the popular Whig hostess, the duchess of Devonshire. One particularly loyal courtier to George and Charlotte, Countess Harcourt, accused these wealthy and powerful friends of further alienating the prince of Wales from his parents and encouraging his already extravagant lifestyle.¹⁷ Fox, in particular, was considered the prince's "tutor in debauchery."¹⁸ He used his position as Secretary of State and leader of the government's coalition in 1783 to lobby for an advantageous financial settlement for the newly emancipated prince. Parliament initially proposed to give him £100,000 per year, and such an arrangement horrified the king, as his own household had only recently undergone a period of reform and retrenchment spearheaded by the Rockingham Whigs. To aggrandize the prince of Wales to this extent was in complete disregard of the previous calls for *æconomy* and a waste of taxpayers' money. There was also a competing political dimension in which the Rockingham Whigs sought to

¹⁷ *Harcourt Papers*, 4: 41–42.

¹⁸ Leslie Mitchell, "Fox, Charles James (1749–1806), Politician," in *ODNB*, 4 October 2007, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10024.

source the prince's allowance from the Civil List and thus give themselves "a greater share of the King's patronage by dividing it with the Prince of Wales, over whom they had a much greater influence."¹⁹

The king instead allowed his son to receive £50,000 per annum, plus the revenues from the duchy of Cornwall, which amounted to a further £12,000 a year, as well as an additional, one-time sum of £60,000 to pay off his existing debts.²⁰ George wrote to a mediating courtier, Colonel George Hotham – the prince's appointed Treasurer and Secretary, and former sub-governor – how he hoped that this still-generous arrangement would prompt his son to

take up a fresh line of conduct more worthy of his station, that he may regain the good opinion of men of religion, decency and worth, and that a continuation of levity may not shorten his days and make him too late repent at not having followed this advice of an affectionate though distressed parent.²¹

George continued to hope for better behavior from his eldest child and, despite his disappointment, he was not discouraged from applying those same moral standards to his wider court circle. The king employed royal prerogative to encourage virtue especially among the ruling class, and the following section will explore those initiatives in closer detail.

A special interest in moral conduct extended beyond the ban on dice at court by the early 1780s,²² and it was not unique to George III but enjoyed a lengthy history

¹⁹ Gilding, *The Great Pillar*, 125.

²⁰ Christopher Hibbert, "George IV (1762–1830), king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and king of Hanover," in *ODNB*, 8 December 2022, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10541.

²¹ George III to Colonel George Hotham, 21 June 1783, in Aspinall, *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, 1:113–14.

²² George III to Frederick, Lord North, 8 March 1781, in Fortescue, 5:201; referenced in Ditchfield, *George III*, 81.

at the British court. There had been an old and very close association made between the moral climate of a society and the health of its state in popular discourse. Martin Ingram has argued that a concern for manners can be identified as early as the fifteenth century, if not before, and whether good or bad, manners were by the sixteenth century “associated with the concept of the well-ordered commonwealth or public weal.”²³ The early Hanoverian courts under George I and George II were already fairly sober in character, but it is the Stuart example that strikes a greater comparison with the interests of George III. Charles I was known to be “obsessed with order and decorum and of a strong moral stance,” according to Kevin Sharpe.²⁴ This took to the form of a reformation of dress, behavior, and values at court during his Personal Rule which went beyond fashion – royal persons and courtiers alike were expected to “stand as an example of virtue for the realm.”²⁵

Following the decadence of the Restoration Court and afterwards the Glorious Revolution, moral reform again received meaningful support from William III and Mary II, “who were keen to make the royal court a fount of morality and piety.”²⁶ The Reformation of Manners movement emerged with particular strength at the end of the seventeenth century, and its societies relied heavily on royal support, which was so well-publicized that it “effectively became part of the Williamite propaganda machine.”²⁷ Mary, in particular, led by religious example; her piety induced a keen

²³ Martin Ingram, “Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England,” in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle, Themes in Focus (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 50–53.

²⁴ Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992), 209.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Hannah Smith, “Mary Astell, A Serious Proposal to the Ladies (1694), and the Anglican Reformation of Manners in Late-Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith*, ed. William Kolbrener and Michal Michelson (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 32.

²⁷ Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 118; see also Karen Sonnelitter, “The Reformation of Manners Societies, the Monarchy, and the English State, 1696–1714,” *The Historian* 72, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 517–42.

interest in moral reform.²⁸ Her husband's legal interventions, however, have been more closely examined in the scholarship. A significant expression of authority in the reform movement involved William's royal proclamations against vice, which were published and disseminated widely, as all ministers were required to read them from the pulpit four times every year.²⁹ Tony Claydon has argued that William and Mary's efforts toward reformation, particularly William's ideology, urged "the birth of a new parliamentary order," encouraging greater trust in the court and calming the fears of parliamentarians enough to secure necessary support in the legislature.³⁰

Proclamations were perhaps the most obvious policy at the intersection between the court and wider moral reform, and their implementation in the late eighteenth century demonstrates George III's participation in an enduring and politically successful royal practice. It was custom for British monarchs to issue proclamations against vice and immorality at the time of their accession, and in 1760, George maintained that tradition.³¹ In the twenty-seventh year of his reign, however, he was persuaded to publish another under the same title: "For the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for preventing and punishing of Vice, Profaneness, and Immorality" (1787).³² This second proclamation used much the same language as the first, but as Arthur Burns has indicated, explicitly linked George's providential understanding of history to the religious and moral state of his kingdom.³³ It was less

²⁸ Smith, "Mary Astell," 39.

²⁹ Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution*, 116–17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 235.

³¹ Joanna Innes, "Politics and Morals: The Reformation of Manners Movement in Later Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth, Studies of the German Historical Institute London (Oxford; London: Oxford University Press and the German Historical Institute, 1990), n. 49.

³² "By the King, a Proclamation, for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for Preventing and Punishing of Vice, Profaneness, and Immorality," (London: printed by Charles Eyre and Andrew Strahan, 1787), John Johnson Collection a.56 (67), BodL.

³³ Arthur Burns, "The Abdication Speech of George III," *Georgian Papers Programme Blog*, 22 January 2017, <https://georgianpapers.com/2017/01/22/abdication-speech-george-iii/>.

obviously political in motivation than the proclamations of William III and was also largely the product of the ambitions of William Wilberforce and Bishop Beilby Porteus, who encouraged its issue in order to establish the Proclamation Society. Joanna Innes has thoroughly examined this particular iteration of the Reformation of Manners movement in the late eighteenth century; she describes how the archbishop of Canterbury, on Porteus's advice, easily persuaded the king to allow for the statement, as it was in society's wider interest to enlist the elite themselves. Wilberforce's aim for the society, Innes argues, was "to encourage devotion to the cause of morality and virtue at levels of society too lofty for the manners of their inhabitants to be easily regulated by law."³⁴

The text of the 1787 proclamation closely followed wider currents of discourse on the responsibilities of the governing class and notes specifically the royal expectation of those "employed near Our Royal Person" and in positions of authority, who "will give good Example by their own Piety and Virtue."³⁵ Innes describes this as a "basic premise" of most late eighteenth-century discussions on morality,³⁶ and in light of the king's directive, his courtiers followed suit. Among the list of the earliest recruits to the Proclamation Society,³⁷ aristocrats who held court office were well represented. The king's Master of the Horse and royal favorite, the duke of Montagu, was asked to stand as the society's first president.³⁸ His two younger brothers were also enlisted: the Hon. James Brudenell, Master of the Robes to the king since 1760 and Keeper of the Privy Purse, and Thomas Brudenell-Bruce, the first earl of

³⁴ Innes, "Politics and Morals," 84.

³⁵ "By the King, a Proclamation," John Johnson Collection a.56 (67), BodL.

³⁶ Innes, "Politics and Morals," 108.

³⁷ This can be found in Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, eds., *The Life of William Wilberforce*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1838), 393–94.

³⁸ Innes, "Politics and Morals," 77–79; RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 286; Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*, 327.

Ailesbury, who was Lord Chamberlain to the queen at this time. The third duke of Chandos, Lord Steward of the royal household, was likewise recruited, as was Francis North, the first earl of Guilford and Treasurer to the queen. Several other noblemen who were first to join the Society were known courtiers, though they did not hold particular offices, including the dukes of Northumberland and Marlborough, the earl of Effingham, and Earl Harcourt. The enlistment of these courtiers not only validated the Proclamation Society but closely associated the court itself with the king's initiatives for moral reform. The participation of George's courtiers in the promotion of moral conduct among the ruling elite was then extended to his activities at Windsor, to establish a moral code using chivalric principles that were inspired by the ancient castle and further cultivated in its newly Gothicized setting.

The moral program at court stretched far and beyond the aims of the Proclamation Society and what follows is a discussion on its particularly strong associations with chivalry under George III. Developing notions of England's medieval past in the eighteenth century generated what Barbara Gribling has reasoned to be a "national code of conduct,"³⁹ which was then arguably promoted among George's aristocratic courtiers and inspired by the Gothic setting of Windsor Castle. Michèle Cohen has also noted that a particular impulse for antiquarian inquiry during the century was to seek "the origins of English liberties and the English constitution," with a significant movement away from Classical taste in favor of an approach "that took the ancient Briton as a model for a manly national character, in contrast to the

³⁹ Barbara Gribling, "Royal Associations: Heroic Character and Chivalric Ceremony at the Court of George III," in *The Image of Edward the Black Prince in Georgian and Victorian England: Negotiating the Late Medieval Past* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 32.

Frenchified effeminacy evinced by those who pursued the ideal of politeness.”⁴⁰

Further moral reform was thus embedded in the expression of kingship at Windsor; chivalry with its Gothic associations was an ideal conduit for the encouragement of upright conduct in a highly aristocratic court setting.

George’s adoption of chivalry also allowed for the coexistence of majesty with strict morality – quite unlike the trajectory of his public image, which emphasized especially modest, domestic qualities at the expense of royal authority. Chivalry provided justification for royal ceremonial and magnificence without any particular need for extravagance. The corresponding moral program at court comparably required a unique balance between the demand for proper *dignity* and a monarch’s instinct for restraint. Linda Colley considers the latter a defining quality in George III, particularly in the presentation of his first serious illness in 1788. During this time, the king talked incessantly about building new palaces, founding new orders of chivalry, and taking the countess of Pembroke to be his mistress. Colley has suggested this to be an admission to “all the indulgences he had so conscientiously denied himself.”⁴¹ In Colonel Robert Fulke Greville’s account of the Regency Crisis, the king did confess in a more “transient” moment that “in his Delirium He must have said many improper things, & that much must have Escaped Him then which ought not, & that He must try & find out what had slipped from Him.”⁴² Just as George was confined by his illness, so his expressions of kingly magnificence were equally constrained and could never achieve the full extent of lavish profusion that his royal forebearer,

⁴⁰ Michèle Cohen, “‘Manners’ Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750–1830,” *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2005): 317, 323.

⁴¹ Colley, *Britons*, 195.

⁴² Fulke Greville, vol. 2, fol. 85, RL.

Charles II, was able to display at Windsor,⁴³ nor what his son, George IV, would later enjoy. Nevertheless, chivalry arguably restored George's emphasis on the dignity of his crown, as described in the first chapter, without compromising his moral values. The chivalric activity of his court and residence at Windsor testified to a morally justified indulgence in royal grandeur, even pageantry, which helpfully circumvented his duty of restraint. Further discussion will first address the nature of chivalry within this specific court context and afterwards expand upon Windsor itself.

The chivalric principles that George cultivated within his court circle were underpinned by particular moral and religious reasoning dating several years before he acceded the throne. Themes of chivalry had appeared in writings on patriot kingship earlier in the eighteenth century, which were closely connected with the person of Frederick, prince of Wales, and eventually espoused by his eldest son. The English poet Gilbert West – not unlike his contemporaries David Mallet and James Thompson's imagined comparison between Frederick and the Anglo Saxon king *Alfred* (1740)⁴⁴ – crafted a work titled *The Institution of the Order of the Garter* (1742), which looked to the medieval past to explore “the chivalric code as a prescription for Patriot Kingship” and become a model for future monarchical practice.⁴⁵ As a young prince of Wales, George was prompted by his tutors to write essays on the significance of Edward III and the Black Prince, learning that a king's people “will never refuse any thing to a Sovereign who they know will be ye defender

⁴³ Anna Keay, *The Magnificent Monarch: Charles II and the Ceremonies of Power* (London; Continuum, 2008), 191.

⁴⁴ Cox, ““Rule, Britannia!””

⁴⁵ Jurriaan van Santvoort, “Chivalrous Models of Patriot Kingship: Gilbert West, Lord Lyttelton and The Idea of a Patriot King,” *History of European Ideas* 44, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 20.

of their liberties.”⁴⁶ Such was George’s early introduction to chivalry, which would later develop more fully in his kingship by the 1780s.

Among the mid-eighteenth-century tracts on chivalry, the writings of Richard Hurd, bishop of Lichfield and Coventry (1775–1781), and later bishop of Worcester (1781–1808), are of particular significance, not least because of his strong ties to the court. Hurd’s writings of literary and historical criticism – *Moral and Political Dialogues* (1759) and *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) – recall a “medieval” Elizabethan past wherein chivalry, as a set of manners, united monarch and nobility in an ideal system that checked both aristocratic power and royal prerogative for the benefit of society and a balanced constitution. His works suggested some contemporary application to the court and emphasized the importance of four particular characteristics: martial prowess, generosity, gallantry, and religion.⁴⁷ Each of these qualities were best embodied at Windsor Castle, a royal residence that George officially adopted in the latter half of the 1770s.

Towards the beginning of the American Revolutionary War, around the time that George began living at Windsor, Bishop Hurd was appointed preceptor to the prince of Wales in 1776.⁴⁸ The king was especially partial to Hurd, writing to his sons from Plymouth in 1778, that “Revelation, the greatest of all blessings, I am certain will be masterly explain[ed] by him to you, who possesses with not less superiority every qualification that deserve the epithets of religious, moral, and learned and good

⁴⁶ “A Short History of England from ye Earliest Times to ye accession of the present Royal Family, with remarks on ye Govern. [Government] Laws & Constitutions, with ye various alterations they have gone thro', during this long Period,” [1756-1780], GEO/ADD/32/69, RA.

⁴⁷ Edith J. Morley, ed., *Hurd’s Letters on Chivalry and Romance with the Third Elizabethan Dialogue* (London: Henry Frowde, 1911), 11; Jurriaan van Santvoort, “Chivalry, Nobility, and Romance: Richard Hurd and the Ideal Elizabethan Past,” in *Remembering Queens and Kings of Early Modern England and France: Reputation, Reinterpretation, and Reincarnation*, ed. Estelle Paranque, Queenship and Power (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 101.

⁴⁸ G. M. Ditchfield and Sarah Brewer, “Hurd, Richard (1720–1808), Bishop of Worcester,” in *ODNB*, 3 January 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14249.

man.”⁴⁹ At the time of his appointment as bishop of Worcester, Hurd was also retained in the royal household (specifically within the Chapel Royal) as George’s Clerk of the Closet, which included attendance on the king during divine service or in his private oratory, as well as to advise and “resolve such Doubts as may arise in spiritual Matters.”⁵⁰ George regularly corresponded with the bishop and, in addition to visiting both Hartlebury Castle and the Bishop’s Palace at Worcester in August 1788, he also planned to send the royal family to the latter residence when Britain was under threat of French invasion in 1803.⁵¹ Hurd’s presence at court likewise signaled an adherence to those chivalric principles he had promoted in his earlier writings as a Christian moral code, which the king hoped to inculcate in his sons, particularly through the example of his court circle at Windsor. The court he assembled there thus became a seat for the rehabilitation of moral virtue among the ruling class, employing the castle as a venue to enact the chivalric qualities that Hurd had described.

Before this discussion can expand upon court activity at Windsor, the principal quality that linked the castle to both George’s chivalric principles and underlying moral program was its Gothic origin. The Gothic evoked ideas of an unquestioned throne and an unquestionably old, dynastic, and most importantly Christian power. The medieval fabric of Windsor thus embodied an appropriate courtly venue and Gothic stage to enact those aforementioned chivalric values promoted by Bishop Hurd alongside the observance of the most senior order of chivalry in the British honors system, The Most Noble Order of the Garter. George also undertook substantial

⁴⁹ George III to George, prince of Wales, and Frederick, prince-bishop of Osnabrück, 3 May 1778, in Aspinall, *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, 1:27.

⁵⁰ Bucholz, *Office-Holders*, sec. “The Chapel Royal: Clerks of the Closet.”

⁵¹ George III to Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, 3 November 1783, in A. Aspinall, ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 143.

building projects in and around the castle, to “re-Gothicize” the structure and emphasize those values through material expression. This included a newly renovated chapel for Christian worship and Garter ceremonies, as well as lavishly decorated state rooms for formal receptions.

George’s efforts to implement a chivalrous moral program using the Gothic style at Windsor, however, have been largely overshadowed by his eldest son. As mentioned above, the prince of Wales adopted a lifestyle in direct opposition to the court’s moral program, and the king’s distinctive moral advantage in the public eye long obscured his activity in and around Windsor under the guise of a “bourgeois ideal of simplicity and domesticity.”⁵² Moreover, the prince’s later, more drastic renovations to Windsor (though in keeping with neo-Gothic design) minimized his father’s considerable residence there. Little survives of the extensive, late eighteenth-century redecoration of the private apartments of the Upper Ward, and due to George IV’s sweeping reconstruction – such as raising the height of the Round Tower and reclothing the exterior in masonry⁵³ – there are several underappreciated elements of George III’s kingship in the fabric of Windsor which can be restored in a material and spatial analysis of his residence.

The following will first consider George’s gradual transition to Windsor and into the castle itself. The analysis will then turn to the revival of the Order of the Garter and the king’s concurrent efforts to re-emphasize Windsor’s Gothic architecture and royal history. Among the chivalric qualities promoted by Bishop Hurd, religion was foremost throughout George’s residence there. This included his

⁵² George’s Enlightenment tastes, such as agricultural improvement, are normally underlined. John Adamson, “Introduction: The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court,” 41.

⁵³ “Who Built Windsor Castle?,” RCT, accessed 4 September 2024, <https://www.rct.uk/visit/windsor-castle/who-built-windsor-castle>.

advocacy for “revealed religion” through a chivalric order of knighthood and his further renovations to the castle and its sacred spaces. The amalgamation of George’s piety, the court’s moral program, and the Gothic style of Windsor were principally manifested in the material environment of the castle and the ceremonial, both Christian and chivalric, which took place at this courtly venue.

When George and Charlotte were initially interested in adopting Windsor as a new royal residence, the structure was deemed prohibitively expensive for complete renovation. In 1776, the architect and Comptroller of the King’s Works, Sir William Chambers, was instead asked to enlarge Queen Anne’s redbrick Garden House, which dated from around 1690 and sat just south of the castle.⁵⁴ This was then renamed the Queen’s Lodge: a large, seventy-room, castellated block faced in grey stucco with a stone-carved porch and battlements on the roofline to correspond with the castle.⁵⁵ Here, the king and queen first resided with their three eldest daughters while the two eldest princes were lodged in the castle with their governors. The state apartments were redecorated and used for formal receptions. In 1779, the queen personally acquired Burford House nearby and renamed it Lower Lodge in order to accommodate the three younger princesses and their attendants.⁵⁶ From 1794, George and Charlotte increasingly began to use the newly renovated private apartments along the east and south ranges in the Upper Ward of Windsor Castle, beginning with new

⁵⁴ Unfortunately, George IV demolished this residence in 1823 in order to bring the three-mile avenue of the Long Walk up to the south front of the castle.

⁵⁵ I am indebted to the extensive research of the late Jane Roberts, a Royal Librarian. She contributed to an edited volume for the RCT in 2018, detailing the various castle structures, as well as the countless renovations at Windsor introduced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Her work has greatly aided in mapping royal movements onto constantly shifting scenery, and thanks to her research, we can further seek to understand the ways in which courtly bodies once animated this castle. Watkin, *The Architect King*, 125; Jane Roberts, “George III and Queen Charlotte, 1776-1820,” in *Windsor Castle: A Thousand Years of a Royal Palace*, ed. Steven Brindle (London: RCT, 2018), 286.

⁵⁶ Roberts, “George III and Queen Charlotte,” 293.

drawing and music rooms for the queen.⁵⁷ By 1805, they and their daughters had fully transitioned from the Queen's Lodge, and George was particularly keen to use the space first for a grand "house-warming" party in February of that year,⁵⁸ and soon after, a formal Garter installation ceremony in April.

There is some connection between George's gravitation toward the medieval fortress and the start of a major war with the American colonies. Windsor was not his first country residence, but its situation and history better suited an assertion of ancient, princely power with a militarized presence. George and Charlotte had earlier inherited Richmond Lodge and used it as a residence until April 1772, and throughout the 1770s, often stayed at an expanded palace complex at Kew, which could best accommodate the growing royal family.⁵⁹ Both Richmond and Kew held strong associations with the gardening and collecting interests of their previous royal inhabitants, Queen Caroline and Princess Augusta, respectively.⁶⁰ The transition from Kew to Windsor was gradual, but significant, as George and Charlotte traded the established privacy of the former for a developing, stately residence at the castle. When the prince of Wales reached his majority, the king made it clear he did not want a competing royal residence in the countryside – and, by extension, an oppositional court – established elsewhere, nor did he allow his eldest son sufficient funds to do so. The prince was allowed to adopt and renovate Carlton House in London (formerly the townhouse of Princess Augusta), but George wrote, "as to a country house, I have

⁵⁷ Roberts, "George III and Queen Charlotte," 294.

⁵⁸ The *Gentleman's Magazine* detailed the former as a lavish fête at Windsor; its organization was reportedly overseen by the king himself, and given "in the grandeur of a King." Roberts, "George III and Queen Charlotte," 283–84; "Their Majesties Fete at Windsor Castle," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1805 (part 1), 262–63.

⁵⁹ Roberts, *George III and Queen Charlotte*, 129.

⁶⁰ Mark Laird, "An August Domain: Gardening and Collecting in the Princesses' Kew," in *Enlightened Princesses*.

none for him: the apartment he occupies at Windsor shall always be kept ready to receive him.”⁶¹

The completed move to Windsor was ultimately realized in the wake of the events of the king’s first illness in 1789.⁶² Having been forcibly removed from the Queen’s Lodge, which was positioned along a public road, to the damp, but private, confines of Kew in November 1788, George returned triumphantly to his “favourite habitation” the following March to celebrate his restoration to health.⁶³ Lady Harcourt recounted the celebrations of the king’s return, as well as the castle’s particular connections to Britain’s past: “At night there was a *feu-de-joi* from the Round Tower. The old embattled walls, lined with soldiers, had a striking effect, and carried our ideas back to the chivalrous days of Edward the Third.”⁶⁴ Windsor better accommodated a kingship girded by the chivalric past, especially in the face of another war with France but foremost in George’s victory over his illness and in his return to health and spirits.

The historic orders of chivalry, principally the Order of the Garter, founded in 1348 by Edward III, stand foremost in the analysis of chivalric principles at the court of George III, particularly at Windsor Castle. It is the most senior order of knighthood in the British honors system, and though George had made numerous elections from the start of his reign, his veneration of the Garter was not fully expressed until he reestablished Windsor as a royal residence. This was a homecoming in more than one

⁶¹ George III to Colonel George Hotham, 21 June 1783, in Aspinall, *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, 1:113–14.

⁶² The gardening and collecting interests once enjoyed at Kew were easily transferred to the queen’s nearby estate at Frogmore, which became the site of further country amusements and “botanising” activities after the royal family transitioned fully into the castle from the Queen’s Lodge. Colley, *Britons*, 214; Samantha Howard, “Frogmore,” in *Enlightened Princesses*.

⁶³ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:261.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:260–62.

sense; his great-grandfather, George I, had moved the Garter ceremony to Kensington Palace in the early eighteenth century, but George III decided to return the ceremonies of installation to Windsor, and once he had fully settled into the redecorated castle himself, hosted the first and only Garter feast there in 1805.⁶⁵ In 1786, he amended the statutes to make his sons and successors supernumerary to the twenty-five non-royal knights companion, thus expanding the group while maintaining its elite exclusivity. In 1805, this was again changed to include all male members of the Blood Royal, which indicated the Order's continued prominence in the highest circles.⁶⁶ Of all the awards in the British honors system, the Garter was the most desired among the ruling elite, and by restoring its ceremonial center to Windsor, George also sought to remind members of its chivalric associations, both morally and materially. This was a holy order of knighthood and, as such, represented those same chivalric principles expounded by Bishop Hurd and echoed the moral standards upheld by Charles I, who considered the Garter to symbolize values such as chastity, piety, order, and propriety.⁶⁷ These principles were heavily embedded in the material culture of Windsor Castle, and the following discussion will further expound its relationship to art, architecture, and other substances of ceremony.

Gothic decoration with specific references to the Order of the Garter was incorporated early on in the Queen's Lodge; the stonework for the entrance porch there was carved by Richard Lawrence and included stars and garters.⁶⁸ The Order also found significant artistic expression within the castle itself. In the late 1780s,

⁶⁵ Gribling, "Royal Associations," 24; Peter J. Begent and D. H. B. Chesshyre, *The Most Noble Order of the Garter 650 Years* (London: Spink, 1999), 48.

⁶⁶ Eleanor Hoare, "The College of St George, 1776-1840," in *Windsor Castle*, ed. Brindle, 306; Roberts, "George III and Queen Charlotte," 280; Begent and Chesshyre, *The Most Noble Order of the Garter*, 74.

⁶⁷ Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I*, 219–20.

⁶⁸ Roberts, "George III and Queen Charlotte," 286.

court artist Benjamin West completed a series of eight large paintings for the King's Audience Chamber in the renovated state apartments. George reportedly wanted this room to be known as the "Garter Throne Room," so as to emphasize the Order's foundation in 1348 by Edward III.⁶⁹ Five of the eight works depict the Black Prince, and the series itself seeks to represent the chivalric heroism of the past, culminating in a final piece illustrating the legendary St. George slaying a dragon.⁷⁰ Charles Wild's plate for William Henry Pyne's *History of the Royal Residences* (1816-1819) depicts a portion of king's audience chamber as it was decorated in 1818 (Figure 3) with one of West's chivalric paintings, *Edward III with the Black Prince after the Battle of Crécy* (1788) hanging to the left of the throne (Figure 4). George had decided to retain some of the seventeenth-century features of the room, such as Verrio's ceiling painting, which may have seemed to conflict slightly with his efforts to reintroduce the Gothic but ultimately sought to honor the contributions of his royal forbears. According to Jane Roberts, George revered Charles II's contributions to the Upper Ward, placed Queen Anne's state bed in the King's Dining Room there, and also named a room in the Lower Apartments "King George the First's Room."⁷¹ George also added lavish decoration of his own to complement West's new works in the Garter Throne Room, including Garter blue flower-bordered silk wallpaper, a marble chimneypiece, and a splendid new throne canopy.⁷²

⁶⁹ Roberts, "George III and Queen Charlotte," 289–91.

⁷⁰ Gribling, "Royal Associations," 33, 35.

⁷¹ Roberts, "George III and Queen Charlotte," 280.

⁷² Idem, *George III & Queen Charlotte*, 137–39.



Figure 3: Charles Wild, *Windsor Castle: The King's Audience Chamber*, c. 1818, pencil, watercolor and bodycolor, 20.6 x 25.2 cm, RCIN 922109, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 4: Benjamin West, *Edward III with the Black Prince after the Battle of Crécy*, 1788, oil on canvas, 290.0 x 448.0 cm, 1788, RCIN 407523, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.

The king's veneration for the Order, particular to his residence at Windsor, eventually culminated in the 1805 Ceremony of Installation, the first held in over thirty years. This installation was especially grand and observed the full ceremonial rites as dictated in the statutes. The date, 23 April, was chosen specifically to correspond with that of the institution of the order in 1348, on the Feast of St. George. Of the six knights-elect, three were closely associated with the court: the eleventh earl of Pembroke, former Vice Chamberlain of the royal household, whose mother the dowager countess was a Lady of the Bedchamber to the queen for over three decades; the fifth earl of Chesterfield, formerly Master of the Horse to the king until his elevation in 1804; and the fourth earl of Winchilsea, son of Lady Charlotte Finch, governess to the royal children. The *Annual Register* described "all the additional splendour which the improved state of society, in arts, in wealth, and luxury, could command," including the preparations and gathering of spectators and participants days in advance, and the formal procession beginning at 10 o'clock into St. George's Chapel, with details of the ceremony and divine service, which did not end until past 5 o'clock that afternoon.⁷³ The *Register* also specified that "it was his majesty's particular wish, that as many of the old customs should be kept up as possible,"⁷⁴ which adhered to some of the traditions outlined in Elias Ashmole's seventeenth-century account of *The institution, laws & ceremonies of the most noble Order of the Garter* (1672).⁷⁵ A lavish feast followed the 1805 installation ceremony and took place in St. George's Hall, with particular seating arrangements according to rank; the

⁷³ "Chronicle: April," in *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1805*, vol. 47 (London, 1805), 375–91.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 380.

⁷⁵ In this work, Ashmole reviewed the preparations for installation, as well as the organization of Garter feasts, normally held on St. George's Day. Elias Ashmole, *The Institution, Laws & Ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter: Work Furnished with Variety of Matter, Relating to Honor and Noblesse* (England: Printed by J. Macock, for Nathanael Brooke, 1672).

king and his immediately family sat at a table raised above the room on a dais, while several customary toasts of “largesse” were exclaimed during the meal.⁷⁶

George’s interest in the neo-Gothic style extended from Garter ritual into the architectural, and in the decades after adopting Windsor as an official residence, he commissioned a series of renovations that would re-Gothicize the castle while also underscoring a “religiously inspired moral aesthetic.”⁷⁷ The designs for the Queen’s Lodge and the earlier renovations to the castle’s state apartments incorporated references to a chivalric past in their Garter decoration, though they were broadly Classical in style. More significantly, the restoration of St. George’s Chapel in the 1780s and 1790s, undertaken by a local carpenter, Henry Emlyn, fully embraced the Perpendicular Gothic style and likewise helped to underline the king’s piety and commitment to his role as head of the church.⁷⁸ The “cathedral,” as George and Charlotte called it,⁷⁹ was intended as a chapter house for the Order of the Garter and decorated with some three hundred shields bearing the coats of arms of the knights companion,⁸⁰ further emphasizing the Garter’s religious foundations as a *most holy order*. While in residence at Windsor, the king also regularly attended a service of morning prayer each day with members of his family and courtiers in attendance, and such exercises of devotion became a regular feature of courtly routine at the castle.⁸¹ St. George’s Chapel is considered to have been George’s “principal focus of religious devotion,” and his practice of the Christian religion even in this stately, Gothic setting

⁷⁶ “Chronicle: April,” in *The Annual Register*, 387–88.

⁷⁷ Jerry D. Meyer, “Benjamin West’s Chapel of Revealed Religion: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Protestant Religious Art,” *The Art Bulletin* 57, no. 2 (1975): 248.

⁷⁸ Roberts, “George III and Queen Charlotte,” 295.

⁷⁹ Hoare, “The College of St George, 1776-1840,” 302.

⁸⁰ Begent and Chesshyre, *The Most Noble Order of the Garter*, 23.

⁸¹ Queen Charlotte regularly mentions her attendance at “early prayers” when she and George were in residence at Windsor. Kassler, vol. 4, *The Diary of Queen Charlotte*.

was arguably very intimate and socially exclusive.⁸² Emlyn, for example, had converted a chantry chapel built for Edward IV into a private pew for the royal family with an elaborate canopy and Gothic wainscoting.⁸³

St. George's Chapel was not the only major religious project that the king pioneered at Windsor. Early on in the castle's renovations, Benjamin West was first recruited to paint images for an oratory or private chapel to be built in the Upper Ward, in what used to be known as the Horn Court, to depict "The Progress of Revealed Religion." This series of paintings would have included a variety of scenes from both the Old and New Testaments in the hope that the chapel might "further Church patronage of the arts in England, providing at the same time a prime example of art in the service of religious and moral edification."⁸⁴ George consulted both Bishop Hurd and Bishop John Douglas (who became Dean of Windsor in 1788) to confirm the most appropriate subjects for illustration. West then produced several sketches and studies for a space that, unfortunately, evolved in a different direction to the development of his own artistic style over the last two decades of the eighteenth century. West gradually lost favor at court and many of his compositions for the chapel were deemed "unacceptable" to hang in the chapel.⁸⁵ By 1800, James Wyatt was invited to install architectural features in the neo-Gothic style throughout the Upper Ward – designs that were increasingly divorced from the immobilized,

⁸² In his chapter on the religion of George III, Ditchfield otherwise largely glosses over the ecclesiastical dimensions of the king's residence at Windsor and his related investment in the "fashionable Gothic" style there. Michael Schaich, in a chapter on royal funerals, emphasizes the parallel development between increasingly intimate interments and a growing preference for inner devotion rather than wider religious spectacle. Ditchfield, *George III*, 85; Michael Schaich, "The Funerals of the British Monarchy," in *Monarchy and Religion: The Transformation of Royal Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Michael Schaich, Studies of the German Historical Institute London (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁸³ Hoare, "The College of St George, 1776-1840," 305–6.

⁸⁴ Meyer, "Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion," 248.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 257.

Classical visions for the chapel (among the growing penchant for the Gothic) and ultimately signaled the project's dissolution.

Former Royal Librarian Jane Roberts extensively detailed Wyatt's Gothic renovations during this period, which coincided with the king and queen's departure from the Queen's Lodge and their establishment of a full-time residence within Windsor Castle. These included the relining of windows with perpendicular tracery, the conversion of the Horn Court into cloisters, the insertion of a new Grand Stair nearby at the state entrance with a splendid fan-vault ceiling, as well as a Gothic doorway at the top of this staircase, leading to the King's Drawing Room.⁸⁶ The more successful renovation projects at Windsor, however, were a type of redirection rather than a full break from George's original intentions for the Chapel of Revealed Religion, chiefly centered on the moral and religious example of his artistic patronage. True religious principles were arguably better expressed in the consistent use of the Gothic style with its allusions to ancient English authority and, as Mark Girouard notes, a time "when kingship was revered and the Church at its most powerful."⁸⁷ So, it was perhaps no great loss to relinquish plans for a private chapel in exchange for a newly renovated St. George's Chapel that incorporated an original medieval chapel, a chapter house for the Order of the Garter, and corresponding neo-Gothic decoration throughout the Upper Ward.

These building projects prioritized the king's chivalric, primarily religious associations, but they were by no means limited in scope or budget. Re-Gothicizing the castle and associated renovations amounted to more than £180,000 spent by the

⁸⁶ Roberts, "George III and Queen Charlotte," 296–99.

⁸⁷ Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 23.

Office of Works at Windsor alone.⁸⁸ Moreover, George’s aspirations of chivalric grandeur, though rooted at Windsor, eventually expanded beyond it. In 1802, the king ordered designs from Wyatt for a new, castellated, and very Gothic palace to be situated on the river at Kew.⁸⁹ Surviving depictions indicate that it was not unlike a small, transplanted piece of Windsor, but in a sheltered, more private garden space along the Thames (Figure 5). The king wrote to his eldest daughter, confessing that, “I never thought I should have adopted Gothic instead of Grecian architecture, but the bad taste of the last forty years has so entirely corrupted the professors of the latter, I have taken to the former from thinking Wyatt perfect in that style, of which my house will I trust be a good example.”⁹⁰ Over £100,00 had been spent on its construction by 1806.⁹¹ Progress, however, was extremely slow; the palace was under construction for a decade and work was eventually abandoned with the onset of the Regency in 1811.⁹² Windsor remained the principal royal residence, and when George fully succumbed to his illness that year, he was kept in his private apartments overlooking the North Terrace.⁹³



Figure 5: William Innes Pocock, *The Castellated Palace, Kew*, c. 1817, pencil and wash, 12.9 x 41.1 cm, RCIN 917948, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.

⁸⁸ Roberts, “George III and Queen Charlotte,” 296.

⁸⁹ Watkin, *The Architect King*, 26.

⁹⁰ George III to the duchess of Württemberg, 26 September 1803, in Aspinall, 4:135.

⁹¹ Watkin, *The Architect King*, 158.

⁹² The new castle at Kew was demolished by George IV in 1827. Watkin, *The Architect King*, 26;

Roberts, “George III and Queen Charlotte,” 296.

⁹³ Andrew Roberts, *George III*, 632.

The Gothic was ultimately George's preferred style to communicate his moral and religious values without neglecting a sense of royal grandeur. He continued to closely associate systems of power that echoed the feudalistic past with moral integrity, and in 1797, he wrote to Bishop Hurd: "Without true seeds of Religion, no People can be happy nor can be obedient to Legal Authority, nor will those in Command be moderate in the exercise of it, if not convinced that they are answerable to an Higher Power for their conduct."⁹⁴ The following discussion will further explore the material and ceremonial manifestations of moral leadership that were specific to Windsor with its re-Gothicized features and chivalric ceremonies.

Studies of the king's residence at Windsor have generally focused on wider notions of nationhood in Britain rather than an integrated analysis of George's kingship and court. Linda Colley's well-known research associates the king's gravitation towards the castle with a sweeping "counterblast to revolution" prompted by war with the American colonies and further intensified during Britain's conflict with revolutionary France.⁹⁵ Windsor certainly bolstered the king's wartime efforts, but the succeeding arguments of this chapter will address court practice in the context of the chivalric ideals promoted at the castle, particularly those of martial prowess and gallantry, which were developed through the use of an official uniform, as well as the practice of stag-hunting in the robust surrounding landscape.

One of the primary material inventions of the court at Windsor which encompassed significant elements of a chivalric national identity was the Windsor

⁹⁴ George III to Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, October 1797, Bishop Richard Hurd Letter Book 12, 12/20, HL.

⁹⁵ Colley, *Britons*, 215.

uniform. This was adopted by George III around 1776, to be worn by men in the immediate royal family and those belonging to the royal household, particularly the king's equerries. The look consisted of a dark blue coat with red collar and cuffs, the more formal version trimmed with gold lace and decorated with gilt buttons incorporating the royal monogram.⁹⁶

Blue and red were the primary colors of the royal liveries in this period, and it is suggested that the uniform was inspired by a hunting coat designed by George's father, Frederick,⁹⁷ who was depicted wearing this new fashion in a 1732 painting attributed to Charles Philips, titled *La Table Ronde* (Figure 6). In the image, Frederick sits centered as an Arthurian figure who has assembled his Knights of the Round Table at an imagined hunting lodge, all wearing the same uniform.⁹⁸ With George's later adoption of the Windsor Uniform, he reinforces a similar chivalric connection in the material's inextricable link to the style of Garter Robes, with similarities in their coloring and gold accents. One notable portrait of George III in Windsor Uniform, painted by Patrick Edward Stroehling in 1807, depicts the iconic Round Tower behind the equally stalwart king, with the garter fastened around his calf and garter star fixed to his coat (Figure 7).

⁹⁶ Sacha Llewellyn, "George III and the Windsor Uniform," *The Court Historian* 1, no. 2 (1996): 13.

⁹⁷ Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, 57–58.

⁹⁸ Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life* (London: Royal Collection Publications, 2009), 88–89.



Figure 6: Charles Philips, *Frederick, Prince of Wales, with the Members of the La Table Ronde*, 1732, oil on canvas, 127.6 x 102.3 cm, RCIN 406101, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 7: Patrick Edward Stroehling, *George III*, 1807, oil on copper, 60.7 x 48.2 cm, RCIN 404865, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.

The uniform also provided an additional layer of hierarchy to the royal residence at Windsor; nobles who did not directly hold office in the royal household had to apply for permission to wear it, and thus were invited into a select brotherhood, similar to the Order of the Garter. The earl of Ailesbury, for example, once noted in his diary a conversation with the queen about the Windsor Uniform in which she

stated that the “Duke of Northumberland had lately applied for it, as he hunted with King, which should be rule.”⁹⁹ In 1794, the earl of Dorchester had written to the king directly to request his “permission to wear Your Majesty’s uniform when he pays his duty to Your Majesty at Weymouth.”¹⁰⁰ Just as the Order was so closely tied to the ancient seat of Windsor, the uniform was also unique to the king’s residence there and was normally worn while the royal family dined together.¹⁰¹ It was, by contrast, never worn for court receptions in London.

George employed the “plainer” version of the Windsor Uniform, consisting of a dark blue frock with red cuffs, to wear while stag-hunting at Windsor, which might explain the connection to his father’s original design for a hunting coat. The hunt itself dated from as early as the fourteenth century¹⁰² at this venue and was a significant ritual that held further links to the castle’s chivalric past. George revived the practice on his return to Windsor in the 1770s, and his dedication to the sport was another, more active form of princely display in an elite setting, associated closely with his chosen dress and illustrative of the martial qualities of knighthood. Similar to the Order of the Garter, the sport convened an elite circle of courtiers at Windsor but has been largely overlooked in the context of late Georgian kingship. Under the direction of George III, hunting was an intensive and largely symbolic activity; its chief object was the chase rather than the kill. Stags were tamed and carted to the hunt, the best would be spared and sometimes live the rest of their lives in “honourable retirement,” with the most famous given names, such as High Flyer and

⁹⁹ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 276.

¹⁰⁰ The earl of Dorchester to George III, 6 August 1794, in A. Aspinall, ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 229.

¹⁰¹ Stewart J. Cooke, ed., *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online (2014), vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), n. 427.

¹⁰² Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 112–13.

Moonshine.¹⁰³ One later account mentions that “the horses were more in danger of death from being over-ridden” than the stags themselves.¹⁰⁴

The appeal of the hunt held significant implications for kingship, particularly in its associations with warfare. For example, hunting had been a cherished pastime of George’s grandfather, George II, whose militarism was an important component of early Hanoverian kingship and included efforts to reform the British army and standardize military clothing throughout.¹⁰⁵ Tim Blanning has noted an emphasis in the eighteenth century on these noble skills and, in a simulation of the battlefield, the need for kings to develop and display martial prowess in “a special form of magnificence which consequently lent itself to representational display.”¹⁰⁶ One of George’s equerries, Colonel Robert Fulke Greville, recorded several hunting anecdotes with the king, glorying in the long stag chases around Windsor and even including moments of danger. A particular effect of the growing fashion for chivalry and its reflection on masculinity in the period included a love “not just of arms but of hazardous enterprise and adventure.”¹⁰⁷ Greville related one instance when George fell from his horse in the heat of a chase but valiantly re-mounting to continue.¹⁰⁸

In the face of war itself, George appealed specifically to chivalric principles in order to bolster a sense of moral, not simply martial, authority and supplement the representational display that he had encouraged at Windsor. When final negotiations

¹⁰³ Roberts, *Royal Landscape*, 113; Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain since 1066* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 105; Fulke Greville, vol. 2, fol. 267, RL.

¹⁰⁴ Reference to Charles Knight’s *Berkshire: Including a Full Description of Windsor Castle* (1840), in Davenport, *Faithful Handmaid*, 21–22.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 109–12.

¹⁰⁶ T. C. W. Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe, 1648-1815*, *The Penguin History of Europe* 6 (London: Penguin, 2008), 183–84.

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, “‘Manners’ Make the Man,” 320.

¹⁰⁸ Fulke Greville, vol. 2, fol. 268, RL.

for the Treaty of Amiens began in late 1801, to end hostilities at the end of the War of the Second Coalition, the king confided in a letter to Bishop Hurd how,

... the being deserted by every European Power seems though it is certainly doubtful what reliance can be placed on the Assurance of those who set every Religion, Moral and Social Principle at nought; in my opinion therefore on the keeping a respectable Marine and Army that we can alone expect to meet with that respect which the honorable and gallant conduct we have held deserves.¹⁰⁹

His approach even at the resolution of extended warfare was firmly situated in the nation's moral superiority compared to its allies and enemies alike, particularly when there was no firm victory to celebrate.

George was arguably also keenly aware of the public associations between his health and reported physical activity, and by extension, his appearance in appropriate dress as a distinctive element in the representational display of chivalric qualities like martial prowess. The earl of Ailesbury once recounted how, on the king's recovery from illness in March 1789, George received officials from the City of London at Kew "dressed in plain (which he thought good enough) Windsor uniform for the occasion."¹¹⁰ Though seemingly underdressed, as Ailesbury insinuated, the uniform's principal feature of a riding coat was perhaps an indication of sufficient health to mount a horse if he wished and ultimately an anticipation to return to Windsor. Even for his regular commute between Windsor and London, George preferred horseback for the journey, normally accompanied by only a couple of Equerries and very often dressed in the Windsor uniform. During the following summer in Weymouth, George frequently rode around the West Country to supplement the sea-bathing that was prescribed by his physicians, and he generally held riding as a chief indication of

¹⁰⁹ George III to Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, 24 October 1801, Bishop Richard Hurd Letter Book 12, 12/26A, HL.

¹¹⁰ RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 304.

good health, as well as an exercise to preserve it.¹¹¹ By the end of that summer, the king was recovered and eager to return to Windsor to hunt, which he did almost once a week from October to December that year.¹¹²

The king's residence at Windsor was thus closely associated with his adherence to the chivalric principle of martial prowess. George could indulge in particular pastimes both in and around the castle that he could not necessarily adopt at St. James's Palace or the Queen's House in London, particularly the noble sport of hunting, as well as additional opportunities to be seen as a healthy monarch on horseback. His introduction of the Windsor uniform equally reflected an active readiness – if not for armed combat, then at least in support of it, accompanied by a staunch moral stance rooted in the chivalric.

What follows is an added analysis of the remaining chivalric values promoted by Bishop Hurd and the wider operation of the court in support of the king's religious and moral principles within the specific setting of Windsor. These included considerations of gallantry – in a social context, rather than purely martial – and generosity, both of which heavily depended on the aristocratic men and women who populated the court. In terms of sociability, Windsor accommodated a type of ceremony akin to what Jeroen Duindam terms the *cérémonial domestique* (not to be confused with domesticity), underscoring the structure of the royal household and court officers, whose rank determined proximity to the king, even in seemingly

¹¹¹ In a letter to Bishop Hurd, the king once wrote that he hoped his friend, like his daughter Princess Elizabeth, would be able to ride “as I am certain it will contribute to your health.” George III to Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, 2 September 1786, Bishop Richard Hurd Letter Book 12, 12/16, HL.

¹¹² Kassler, vol. 4, *The Diary of Queen Charlotte*.

informal environments outside of London.¹¹³ With the king's emphasis on royal and chivalric history at the castle, Windsor was ultimately an elite venue, not a pastoral one, and George heavily involved his queen and courtiers in an established moral program there. This concluding section will discuss court practice at Windsor supported by a wider neighborhood of high-ranking attendants. Despite the highly gendered dynamic in the expression of chivalry, there was a shared adherence throughout the court to hierarchy and routine, with a particular dedication to philanthropy.

Though the chivalric qualities that George championed were more clearly prescribed for men, they did rely on the circles of sociability generated by the queen and her ladies. Charlotte usually did not participate in royal hunts, while the Order of the Garter and greater matters of war fundamentally excluded women during this period. Her own pursuits at Windsor, however, did not dismiss the royal ritual that her husband so enthusiastically held for both the Garter and for hunting. The inculcation of chivalry was further dictated by the sociability fostered at Windsor, and the circle of attendants the queen hosted there became a significant component to the king's residence. Moreover, as one scholar argues, a chief element of the chivalry that Bishop Hurd had advanced "proceeded on a marvellous respect and veneration to the fairer sex."¹¹⁴ Charlotte's authority over royal sociability, especially at Windsor, arguably related to the importance placed on the company and conversation of women in the neo-Gothic tradition: to promote the virtuous manners of a knight, rather than challenge the masculinity of a "polite" gentleman.¹¹⁵ It was chiefly the queen's chosen

¹¹³ Duindam outlines three different categories of ceremony: state (coronation, funerals); *domestique*; and, diplomatic. He also explores the differences between ceremony, etiquette, and manners. Duindam, *Myths of Power*, 103.

¹¹⁴ Cohen, "Manners' Make the Man," 319.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 320.

bedchamber ladies and their families, for example, who supplied the company each evening, and her taste that furnished the various lodgings established for the royal family there.¹¹⁶

Among the noble courtier families – foremost, the Harcourts, Thynnes, and Howards – who helped to define royal circles of sociability outside of London, most members held offices in Charlotte’s household and possessed their own residences nearby. As discussed in the previous chapter on the queen, these relationships encouraged a generational integration of particular aristocratic families into the royal circle, but at Windsor they especially complemented the moral program established at the castle. The royal residence at Windsor not only convened an exclusive circle of noble courtiers but also supported the king’s initiatives introduced at the beginning of this chapter, which sought to challenge aristocratic vice and in turn promote upright behavior among the ruling class.

The following paragraphs make up a short list of the courtiers living near Windsor, particularly those connected to the queen’s household. Subsequent analysis will address their participation in the court’s moral program in the countryside, which acted as a counterpoint to the aristocratic vice normally associated with life in London. When George and Charlotte first adopted the castle in the 1770s, they enjoyed visiting the dowager duchess of Portland and her companion Mary Delany at Bulstrode Park (Bucks.), located just eleven kilometers north of the castle. Delany writes that in 1778, a royal cavalcade of “fifty-six personages,” descended on the park, the king, his sons, and attendants all dressed in Windsor uniform, to greet the duchess and bid them to visit Windsor the next day.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Fraser, *Princesses*, 44.

¹¹⁷ Referenced in Fraser, *Princesses*, 56.

The dowager duchess's daughter, Lady Elizabeth Thynne (née Bentinck), having grown up in the royal circle, married a fellow courtier, third Viscount Weymouth, who was later elevated to the marquissate of Bath. After serving as one of the queen's first Ladies of the Bedchamber, the marchioness of Bath was made Mistress of the Robes in 1793. Mary Delany was likewise honored after the death of the dowager duchess of Portland with a house at Windsor located on St. Alban's Street, just down the road from the Lower Lodge, as her own widow's income did not afford her a country home in addition to her apartments at St. James's Place (just north of the palace there). Moreover, she was considered an "honoured guest" of the royal family for her shared commitment to the court's moral program, alongside her keen interests in botany and the education of children, particularly among young women, including the princesses.¹¹⁸ Delany's proximity made it possible for the king, queen, and their children to visit her frequently and invite her to concerts held at both the Queen's Lodge and in the castle.¹¹⁹

Close to Bulstrode stood Stoke Place (Bucks.), near Slough, the country seat of Field Marshal Sir George Howard and his wife the dowager countess of Effingham, who was Lady of the Bedchamber from 1761 until her death in 1791.¹²⁰ They too were visited frequently by George and Charlotte and featured regularly in the queen's extant diaries dating from 1789. At the start of his first serious illness in October 1788, the king had specifically requested to go to Stoke Place, where "Sir George Howard shall give me an account of the campaigns he made in Germany," for some

¹¹⁸ Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Mrs. Delany and the Court," in *Mrs. Delany & Her Circle*, ed. Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts, A&AePortal (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art in association with Yale University Press, 2009); Olwen Hedley, "Mrs. Delany's Windsor Home," *The Berkshire Archaeological Journal* 59 (1961): 51–55.

¹¹⁹ Davenport, *Faithful Handmaid*, 21.

¹²⁰ "Stoke Place," DiCamillo, accessed 7 September 2023, <https://www.thedicamillo.com/house/stoke-place/>.

distraction.¹²¹ Lady Effingham's younger son by her first marriage, the Hon. Richard Howard, had been appointed Secretary and Comptroller to the queen's household in 1784, and he was later present during one of the royal visits to Stoke Place.¹²²

Queen Charlotte also made mention in her diary of several visits to the countess of Chesterfield at Baylis House (Berks.), another country residence just north of Windsor, leased in November 1789 by the earl of Chesterfield, who held office as Master of the Mint and later Master of the Horse to the king.¹²³ The earl and countess were both frequent guests for the tea and card parties that the queen hosted most evenings at the castle.¹²⁴ The earl was elected a Knight of the Garter in 1805, and his second wife, Henrietta, hailed from a significant courtier family as the daughter of the marquess and marchioness of Bath. She was later appointed as a Lady of the Bedchamber to the queen in 1807. Mary Bertie, the duchess of Ancaster, likewise held a residence at Salt Hill (Berks.), near Slough. She was a Lady of the Bedchamber from 1761 until her death in 1793, and her proximity to Windsor allowed her receptions with the queen, as well as at least one recorded visit recorded in Charlotte's diary, made in December 1789.¹²⁵

To the southwest of the castle, near Windsor Forest, General William Harcourt owned St. Leonard's Hill (Berks.). Younger brother to second Earl Harcourt and Master of the Horse to the queen from 1809, General Harcourt held an especially important place at Windsor, and Jane Roberts has already identified him as a "crucial figure" in the agricultural and gardening activities there. In 1789, he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Windsor Forest and later became Deputy Ranger of Windsor

¹²¹ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:16.

¹²² Kassler, 4:52–53.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 4:35.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:42, 44–46.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:61.

Great Park. Harcourt oversaw the use of the parkland and introduced the agriculturalist Nathaniel Kent, who was then commissioned by the king to help maximize the yield of the Windsor farms in the 1790s.¹²⁶

Together, this elite circle of aristocratic courtiers stationed nearby helped to support the daily royal ritual established at the castle. Just as the king upheld formal ceremonies of the Garter, the queen likewise maintained a regular sociability that reflected the predetermined nature of the court calendar. Most activity was dictated by church feasts and holy days, but the court also celebrated the official birthdays of the king, queen, and their children, as well as a handful of memorial days, which often brought them to London. Windsor became a favorite residence even when formal gatherings, namely drawing rooms and levées, continued to take place at St. James's Palace. Charlotte Papendiek described the constant royal commute in this period: by the late 1780s, during the winter parliamentary season, concerts were hosted at the Queen's House (now Buckingham Palace) on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, drawing rooms were scheduled every Thursday afternoon, the king's levée on Friday mornings, then from Friday to Monday, the royal family were at Windsor, with a stag hunt on Saturdays if the weather permitted. Sunday mornings were reserved for divine service in St. George's Chapel, and during the season of Lent, George and Charlotte no longer attended the theater, which they otherwise did on occasion both in London and Windsor.¹²⁷

The castle was firmly embedded in a royal routine that took on a ritual of its own and required the participation of a select group of attendants, many of whom are mentioned above. By extension, these courtiers were participating in a wider program

¹²⁶ Roberts, *Royal Landscape*, 70.

¹²⁷ Kassler, 1:209.

of respectable and exemplary activities among the nobility which reflected well on the king himself. One notable, highly structured activity included evening concerts held at Windsor in the summers, when George and Charlotte regularly assembled their courtiers. A royal band performed in a room designed specifically for this purpose, situated between the anteroom and the queen's drawing room on the principal floor of the Queen's Lodge.¹²⁸ The king would return from London, or emerge from his library, and signal the band to play. His favorite composer, Handel, normally featured. At around eight p.m., the younger princesses would make their way over from the Lower Lodge and the Equerries would be summoned from Frances Burney's table. If any other distinguished guests were not already present for the concert, they would arrive to join this larger party for tea and cards until the king and queen would signal their dismissal at eleven p.m. for supper.¹²⁹

Another ritualized activity that further upheld an exclusive circle of courtiers at Windsor was the practice of terracing. Each Sunday during the summers, the king, queen, and their children walked along the southern terrace of the castle to the music of one of the royal bands. It became a way to see and be seen,¹³⁰ and scholarship has understandably emphasized its public-facing nature and the king's implied accessibility. The south terrace in particular looked out over a public road that separated the castle from the Queen's Lodge across and had a view of Charles II's Long Walk that stretched into the park. From the public road, the terrace was a raised platform with an impressive view of the Edward III Tower and the Round Tower

¹²⁸ Attributed to Sir William Chambers, *Ground Plan of the King's Garden House at Windsor*, c. 1776–79, pen and ink over pencil and wash, 52.0 x 71.3 cm, RCIN 930109, RCT.

¹²⁹ This routine was primarily adapted from the extant pieces of Queen Charlotte's 1789 diary, which records her residence at Windsor on return from their first trip to Weymouth and the West Country. Kassler, vol. 4, *The Diary of Queen Charlotte*.

¹³⁰ Cooke, vol. 2, n. 423.

beyond. Access, however, was still very restricted, wherein only those of appropriate social status could be presented to the royal couple while they paraded. Frances Burney recounted an occasion in June 1787, when a friend of Queen Marie-Antoinette and Governess to the French royal children, Yolande-Martine-Gabrielle de Polignac, was presented to the king and queen with her daughter on the terrace at Windsor. Burney wrote how “their rank entitled them to this distinction, & the Duchess of Ancaster [a Lady of the Bedchamber], to whom they had been extremely courteous abroad, came to Windsor, to introduce them.”¹³¹ Such exclusivity thus helped to preserve a level of respectability among royal persons and was in keeping with court practice under George III, who continued to enforce a close observance of rank.

George also paid close attention to his duties as a paternalistic patron, which held close connections to the aristocratic tradition of *noblesse oblige* during this period. The king and queen’s generosity was well known among the occupants of Windsor, who became the primary recipients of royal largesse, including patronage for local shops and schools, money for street paving, a new organ for the parish church, as well as a new theater and hospital for soldiers.¹³² The king even appealed to a particular element of patriot kingship that extended beyond Windsor in his “popular paternalism that showed itself sensitive to social needs.”¹³³

One scholar, Frank Prochaska, attributes this princely philanthropy to the Classical tradition, underlined by the belief that “privilege entailed responsibility,”¹³⁴ though it was equally adopted by those who championed Gothic chivalry in the eighteenth century and was essentially religious in nature. Bishop Hurd, in his

¹³¹ Cooke, vol. 2, p. 159.

¹³² Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 15; Brooke, *King George III*, 286.

¹³³ Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 8.

¹³⁴ F. K. Prochaska, “George III and the Rights of Man,” in *The Republic of Britain: 1760–2000* (London: Penguin, 2001), 8.

Dialogue on the Age of Queen Elizabeth, praised the “old nobility” for their benevolence, to “spread the interests of society, and knit mankind together by a generous communication in these advantages of wealth and fortune.”¹³⁵ Neither did royal philanthropy occur in princely isolation; just as Hurd described hospitality as a virtue for everyone of noble rank, there were several instances in which George and Charlotte participated alongside their aristocratic attendants in a shared sense of *noblesse oblige*. What was already practical in the management of his estate, the king made useful to local inhabitants; according to Jane Roberts, George “erected a mill on the stream to the south of Great Meadow Pond, specifically for the grinding of corn for the labourers in the park,” and in 1809, on the occasion of his Jubilee, he recruited General William Harcourt (newly styled third Earl Harcourt) to arrange for gifts of food to be distributed among park laborers.¹³⁶

The queen likewise involved her bedchamber ladies in her charitable interests. Charlotte noted in her diary, for example, a visit made in November 1789 to a local Windsor spinning school accompanied by the countesses of Holderness and Courtown.¹³⁷ The author and prominent educational reformer, Sarah Trimmer, was consulted specifically for the Windsor spinning school, as well as advising the queen and other aristocratic ladies more generally on the foundation of charity schools.¹³⁸ Charlotte’s ladies-in-waiting also acted as mediators in the multiple charitable petitions that Charlotte would receive.¹³⁹ One surviving letter that she wrote to Lady

¹³⁵ Morley, *Hurd’s Letters*, 49.

¹³⁶ Roberts, *Royal Landscape*, 75.

¹³⁷ Kassler, 4:50.

¹³⁸ Clarissa Campbell Orr, “Marriage in a Global Context: Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland,” in *Queens Consort, Cultural Transfer and European Politics, c. 1500-1800*, ed. Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly and Adam Morton, Taylor & Francis eBooks (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 117; Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, “Trimmer [Née Kirby], Sarah (1741–1810), Author and Educationist,” in *ODNB*, 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27740.

¹³⁹ Anne Somerset, “The Later Hanoverian Court,” in *Ladies-in-Waiting* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 305.

Harcourt in 1814 appealed her help in the preparation for a trip to Bath, asking her to “make inquiries what Charities there are to which I ought or ought not to Subscribe. ... Remember, I cannot give as the King, but will Stretch my Purse as far as it can go.”¹⁴⁰ George and Charlotte both depended on loyal courtiers to participate in a court program that ultimately challenged those currents of aristocratic vice among fashionable society in London and demonstrated significant ways in which royal and aristocratic patronage intersected.

With a return to the court’s moral standing, the chapter has come full circle in an exploration of the particular court moral program promoted by George III and its inextricable links to his chivalric residence at Windsor. This would affect the royal generations to follow; despite George IV’s own neo-Gothic residence at Windsor, the hopes of the nation – and of moral reformers and evangelicals in particular – were instead placed in his only legitimate child and heir, Princess Charlotte of Wales, who spent much of her childhood at Windsor Castle. A preoccupation with manners was thus regenerated in the nineteenth century, and this new iteration of moral reform evoked very similar discussions on female education and piety. The special civic and social responsibilities that Hannah More attributed to women (and especially to rulers) in the “Reform or Ruin” movement at this time were reminiscent of Mary Astell’s arguments from the 1690s.¹⁴¹ The interval between these two moral reformers was marked by George III’s continued efforts to situate the monarchy on firm moral footing, not unlike William III and Mary II, while a comparable expectation of piety

¹⁴⁰ Queen Charlotte to Countess Harcourt, 13 August 1814, in *Harcourt Papers*, 4:103.

¹⁴¹ Smith, “Mary Astell, A Serious Proposal to the Ladies (1694), and the Anglican Reformation of Manners in Late-Seventeenth-Century England”; M. Myers, “Reform or Ruin: ‘A Revolution in Female Manners,’” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 11 (1982): 199; S.J. Skedd, “More, Hannah (1745–1833), Writer and Philanthropist,” in *ODNB*, 25 September 2014, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19179.

and upright conduct was eventually transferred to his granddaughters, Charlotte and eventually Victoria. In the words of Bishop Hurd, there was a deep need for “infusing a better spirit into the rising generation,” for which the monarch must assume “the influence of the Royal countenance and example.”¹⁴²

The English poet William Mason (who was never an avid courtier) once wrote to Lord Harcourt, teasing him about his attendance at Windsor and playfully alluding to an exaggerated application of chivalry there:

Your Lordship’s account of the festivitys at Windsor in your last gave me wonderful, tho’ I will not say compleat, satisfaction. The tilts & tournaments were wanting, & these noblest & most rational of royal amusements I despair of ever seeing revived till, on the demise of the Duke of Montagu, you become Governor; then; & then only, & not till your Lordship has broken your first launce, or cloven some discourteous knight’s helmet, shall I agree with you, that these fêtes ‘were such as were proper for a King of England to make in Windsor Castle.’¹⁴³

Though prone to satirical interpretation, royal activity at Windsor was nevertheless well-supported by a group of court officers, including the Harcourt family, who resided nearby and enthusiastically participated in what they considered to be “proper” representational display – not unlike the magnificence that Charles II had once restored to the castle, but underpinned by a moral program that had inspired Charles I. By the late eighteenth century, George III harnessed Windsor’s resources to enhance royal dignity with castellated architecture and sacred spaces, chivalric ceremonies of the Garter, and a loyal court circle.

¹⁴² Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, to George III, 17 August 1782, in Fortescue, 6:1054–55.

¹⁴³ Harcourt’s initial letter to Mason does not appear to have survived. The festivities to which Mason alludes might have been part of the birthday celebrations for the princess royal on 1 October 1787, which included a lavish banquet in St. George’s Hall and the gentlemen in attendance dressed in the Windsor uniform. William Mason to Earl Harcourt, 13 November 1787, in *Harcourt Papers*, 7:137; “News,” *The World*, 6 October 1787, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

To conclude, the king held very firm moral and religious principles, which significantly impacted his court and residence at Windsor from the 1770s. Bishop Hurd's chivalric principles became a useful medium for the expression of royal power and even magnificence while retaining an emphasis on Christian virtue. This discussion has sought to correct what has often been attributed to the king's rustic persona of a country gentleman with a prevailing concern for upholding the values of a chivalric knight. George's growing popularity in the latter half of his reign as Farmer George should not be mistaken for an equally relaxed or democratic court culture in the countryside. Likewise, this analysis has explored further nuance to the king's residence at Windsor beyond a nationalistic "counterblast to revolution"¹⁴⁴ and highlighted the ways in which the principles laid out in Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) were integrated into royal ritual and respectable routine at the castle. The next chapter continues to extricate the king's image from its restrictive associations with the British nation through an assessment of both George and Charlotte's wider connections to Europe. Several themes from this discussion, most notably the Order of the Garter and concepts of martial and warrior kingship will be reintroduced in the context of developing, sometimes contrasting, Enlightenment ideas at court. Moreover, the operation of George's court circle held further importance in the support of his kingship, not simply in a Gothic setting contained at Windsor but on a wider European stage.

¹⁴⁴ Colley, *Britons*, 215.

Chapter 4: European Princehood, *Ancien Régime*, and Enlightened Rule

This chapter will explore George III's concomitant (often thought *competing*) duties both as king of Great Britain and Ireland and elector of Hanover. During the second half of his reign, George prioritized his status as a prince of the Holy Roman Empire and the following will explore the ways in which he fashioned himself as a European ruler compared to his contemporaries. Though his statement that he did "glory in the name of Britain"¹ has taken precedence in the characterization of both his image and kingship, George very seriously defended the integrity of his electoral dominions in Hanover, even if it seemed to conflict with the foreign policies of his British ministers. This significant "Hanoverian dimension"² to royal history has already received some attention, but questions remain of its further connections to George's court in the late eighteenth century. From the 1780s, following the events of the American Revolutionary War, there were several emerging elements within his court circle – including the interests and connections of its members, as well as the initiatives of the king himself – which reflected a political and performative court *ethos* that facilitated George's position of authority on a wider European stage.

This discussion will first address themes concerning princehood in the Holy Roman Empire during this period, including conflict, reform, and other products of

¹ This quotation, taken from a published version of George's first speech at the opening of parliament in 1760, features often in descriptions of the king's early patriotism and used to demonstrate his initial priorities as monarch. John Brooke has clarified that George added this particular insertion in a draft of the speech, clearly writing "Britain," not "Briton," which was published. "News," *London Gazette*, 23–27 November 1762, *Burney Newspapers Collection*; Brooke, *King George III*, 390–91.

² Brendan Simms and Torsten Riotte, eds., *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714–1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

the European Enlightenment specific to German courts. Many of these themes run parallel to George's own challenges in the transition of monarchical power throughout the century, a subject which will incorporate some debate on two opposing though not entirely dichotomous styles of governance: *ancien régime* and enlightened rule. Subsequent analysis will focus more explicitly on court life in London and Windsor, particularly George's expression of European princehood, which involved an attention to dynasty and Hanoverian interests among his younger sons, as well as demonstrations of soldier-kingship and a related emphasis on knighthood and the principal orders of chivalry.

The final section of this chapter will also survey courtier-family connections that facilitated the king's expression of monarchical authority in much less insulated circumstances than the scholarship on growing nationalism in the period would stress. George III and, by extension, his courtiers were very mindful of his princely status within Europe, further underlined by the Personal Union but also more widely employed throughout the operations of his court circle. The introduction of a courtly dimension to the study of George's connections to Europe invites an original perspective to his kingship, offering comparisons to fellow European rulers and ultimately broadening the spheres of court activity that he directed in his electoral dominions and beyond.

Britain had politically detached itself from the Holy Roman Empire following the conclusion of the Seven Years' War, pursuing a "neutral policy with Hanover," until Britain's defeat in the American Revolutionary War and subsequent Peace of

Paris treaties in 1783.³ Throughout, George III arguably pursued a policy of maintaining the “status quo” for his German dominions amid the ongoing, turbulent relationship between Austria and Prussia, with the latter developing as a major power in northern Germany after 1763.⁴ George was wary of Habsburg influence, and his fears were soon realized when Joseph II – Holy Roman Emperor and, from 1780, sole ruler of the Habsburg empire – sought to acquire Bavaria as a Habsburg territory. What followed was the formation of the *Fürstenbund*, or League of Princes, in 1785, which scholars have referred to as a major departure from Britain’s established policy of detachment.

Support for the *Fürstenbund* between Prussia, Hanover, and Saxony was a significant conflict of interest for George, whose ministers in Britain (particularly the Foreign Secretary, the marquess of Carmarthen) had been lobbying for an alliance with Austria in the meantime, unaware of the conflicting foreign policy that the king would uphold in Hanover.⁵ George had first been approached by his Hanoverian Privy Councilors, who relayed the appeals of Prussian ministers in 1784 through a confidential correspondence concerning their fears of Austrian encroachment.⁶ The situation intensified once Joseph II made a formal attempt in January 1785 to persuade the duke of Zweibrücken to consent to the exchange of Bavaria for the Austrian Netherlands. George was then swiftly and separately informed by the Prussian ambassador (representing an anxious Frederick II), as well as by his own Hanoverian ministers based at the German chancery in London. He also received a

³ Joachim Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, vol. 2, Oxford History of Early Modern Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 395.

⁴ Torsten Riotte, “George III and Hanover,” in *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History*, 65.

⁵ T. C. W. Blanning, “‘That Horrid Electorate’ or ‘Ma Patrie Germanique’? George III, Hanover, and the *Fürstenbund* of 1785,” *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 2 (1977): 320–21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 323.

letter, perhaps the most convincing among the different appeals, from his second eldest son the duke of York, then residing in Hanover, which included a memorandum of further appeal from the Prussian king.⁷

According to Tim Blanning, “British policy-makers floundered in a morass of ignorance and incomprehension... due quite simply to inadequate sources of information,” compared with the king’s unofficial contacts in Germany, who had long been aware of Vienna’s rapprochement with Versailles and subsequently futile attempts of British ministers to establish an alliance with Austria.⁸ Some of the German princes involved in the *Fürstenbund* even solicited George to lead the initiative in discussions occurring as early as 1782 and 1783, but his reluctance made way for the command of Frederick II, though “most opposed the idea of Prussian leadership.”⁹ George’s refusal could be interpreted as a resolve to keep his roles as king and elector separate; by doing so, he could participate in the league without creating a formal alliance between Hanover and Prussia, nor requiring Britain to follow the Hanoverian example – both of which, though still uncomfortable for his British ministers, never forced their hand. Lord Carmarthen, the British Foreign Secretary, was nevertheless mortified, even when the league was never called to act and George himself refused to become its figurehead. This episode ultimately demonstrated the king’s “semi-autonomous operation... [as] an independent European ruler in his own right,” at a moment when he was at the peak of his influence over foreign policy.¹⁰

⁷ Blanning, “That Horrid Electorate,” 325; Frederick, the duke of York and prince-bishop of Osnabrück, to George III, 28 February 1785, in Aspinall, 1:132–35.

⁸ Blanning, “That Horrid Electorate,” 327–28.

⁹ Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2:424, 396.

¹⁰ Ditchfield, *George III*, 43.

Following the loss of the American colonies, however, George had been experiencing a sense of deep insecurity and international embarrassment, writing to his Prime Minister Lord North in September 1783:

I have signed the Warrant for the Attendance of the Heralds for the Proclamation of Peace; I have no objection to that Ceremony being performed on Tuesday; indeed I am glad it is on a day I am not in Town, as I think this compleats the Downfall of the lustre of this Empire: but when Religion and Public Spirit are quite absorbed by Vice and Dissipation, what has now occurred is but the natural consequence; one comfort I have, that I alone tried to support the Dignity of my Crown and feel I am innocent of the Evils that have occurred, though deeply wounded that it should have happened during my Reign.¹¹

A few lines from this same letter were quoted in the previous chapter, highlighting George's lament for the kingdom's moral and religious decline, though a fuller reference here emphasizes the wider context of his disappointment. Moreover, as outlined in the first chapter of this thesis, the king adamantly defended his dignity, or birthright, as a ruler in the face of ministerial policies that he condemned, especially the surrender of his dominions in America. His proper conduct, rooted in royal authority, absolved him of the "evils" that subsequently plagued Britain. George repeated these sentiments when he was further troubled by the Rockingham administration, which began to usurp and politicize offices in the royal household. He continued to assert the importance of an appropriate royal dignity during Edmund Burke's economical reform, which entailed the abolition of royal offices and even entire departments within the royal household.

Confronted by the unfavorable Fox-North coalition in 1783, George had been on the brink of abdication and drafted a speech to parliament stating his intentions to "resign My Crown and all the Dominions appertaining to it to the Prince of Wales my

¹¹ George III to Frederick, Lord North, 7 September 1783, in Fortescue, 6:443–44.

Eldest Son and Lawful Successor and to retire to the care of My Electoral Dominions the Original Patrimony of my Ancestors.”¹² A return to “*sa patrie germanique*”¹³ was a sentiment that George echoed at the end of 1788, during his first major illness, when he reportedly claimed that, “He could never more shew his face again in this Country that He would leave it for Ever, & retire to Hanover.”¹⁴ The king’s disillusionment with Britain was likely one reason for his change of heart concerning Hanover after largely evading “that horrid Electorate” for the first two decades of his reign.¹⁵ Seeing as George sent many of his sons to study and train in Hanover and himself maintained virtual ties to the court and university there, it was never an alienated or defunct dominion and arguably would have held some appeal as a place of refuge despite his physical absence.

George’s queen consort, Charlotte, was equally aware of her own position as a German princess and attuned to the politics of the Holy Roman Empire and the interests of her native duchy, Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Though she claimed to avoid politics, it is not improbable that she possessed some influence with her husband the elector, rather than the king – for instance, through the direction of her brother the reigning duke’s lobbies on behalf of his duchy and the education of her children.¹⁶ Ultimately, George’s time spent as “one of the most acute observers of British foreign policy,”¹⁷ as well as the interests of his family in the wider politics of Europe, should not be underestimated. While his personal papers demonstrate his deep familiarity

¹² Draft of a message of abdication from George III to the Parliament, [28 March 1783?], GEO/MAIN/5367, RA.

¹³ Referenced in Blanning, “That Horrid Electorate,” 338.

¹⁴ Fulke Greville, vol. 2, fol. 57, RL.

¹⁵ George III (as prince of Wales) to John Stuart, third earl of Bute, 5 August 1759, referenced in Blanning, “That Horrid Electorate,” 338, 342.

¹⁶ Detailed at some length in Clarissa Campbell Orr, “Dynastic Perspectives,” in *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History*, 238, 242.

¹⁷ H. M. Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 16.

with the history and constitution of the Holy Roman Empire,¹⁸ George's conduct from the early 1780s, including his participation in the *Fürstenbund*, serves as a testament to the maturation of his authority in that regard.

With the enduring juxtaposition between George's roles as king and elector, there were marked similarities in the language that he first used to negotiate the reform of the royal household in the early 1780s and his later attempts to justify the interests of Hanover in Britain. In his correspondence with Lord Shelburne concerning Edmund Burke's economical reform, as well as in a 1782 address to parliament on this matter, George doggedly upheld the importance of the "Dignity of the Crown," to safeguard his own "interior regulations" and control over the royal household from parliamentary overreach.¹⁹ Later, in 1806, this same rhetorical appeal to the king's dignity was employed by the head of the German chancery in London Ernst Herbert, Count Münster, to justify Britain's declaration of war on Prussia over its occupation of Hanover.²⁰ George concluded his address to parliament on this occasion with the words:

I protest in the most solemn manner, for myself and my heirs, against every encroachment on my rights in the Electorate of Brunswick-Lunebourg and its dependencies; and I repeat, in quality of ELECTOR, the Declaration made by the Minister of my Crown at the Court of Berlin, that no advantage, arising from political arrangements, much less any offer whatever of an indemnity, or equivalent, shall ever engage me to forget what I owe to my dignity, the attachment, and exemplary fidelity of my Hanoverian subjects, so as to yield my consent to the alienation of my Electorate.²¹

¹⁸ Michael Rowe, "George III and the 'German Empire,'" *Georgian Papers Programme Blog*, 22 January 2017, <https://georgianpapers.com/2017/01/22/george-iii-german-empire/>.

¹⁹ George III to William Petty, second earl of Shelburne, 12 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:452–55; "News," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 16 April 1782, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

²⁰ Riotte, "George III and Hanover," 81.

²¹ George III, "Important State Paper," *The Times*, 24 April 1806, *The Times Digital Archive*, 3.

Just as in earlier decades, there was a strategic distinction made between the public interest of the British nation and George's "private interests,"²² including both his household and his duties as elector. The latter case was arguably more successful in defending the king's prerogative and allowed ministers to rationalize this politically weighted position, voting in favor of war against Prussia.

As George III was compelled to maintain such a delicate balance between his obligations to Britain and to his electorate, there are further parallels between his experiences with the shifting nature of monarchical power during this period, particularly the emerging theme of enlightened rule and the comparable approaches of other leaders throughout the Holy Roman Empire. The king of Britain and Ireland was not the only one facing the shifting sands of reform and the accompanying transformation of court culture. In a discussion on the state of the *Reich* in this period, Joachim Whaley considers the significant impact of the Enlightenment in generating "the rationalization of administration and the improvement of its personnel"²³ – not unlike the British parliament's attempts to improve the efficacy of the Civil List in the early 1780s. Whaley likewise challenges the interpretation of this period as one of courtly decline, which continues as a common theme in the scholarship on monarchical power in eighteenth-century Britain and the resulting "de-politicisation of George III."²⁴ A more detailed comparison between court activity in Europe and Britain, as well as an extraction of the British court out of its relative geopolitical

²² Riotte, "George III and Hanover," 64.

²³ Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2:495.

²⁴ Marilyn Morris, *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), as referenced in Riotte, "George III and Hanover," 82–83.

isolation, will facilitate further examination of George's approach to electoral power alongside the resources at court that he chose to employ to this end.

With the Personal Union came an inherited responsibility to uphold the Protestant faith against Catholic (particularly French in 1714 and Habsburg) tyranny, but the propaganda of the *Fürstenbund* arguably fused this with “new thinking about balance of power and the freedom of states according to the laws of nature and of nations.”²⁵ Whaley attributes this restored vigor in defense of the imperial constitution and the protection of German freedom to the *Aufklärung* and demonstrates an Enlightened “inflection” to many court programs from the middle of the eighteenth century.²⁶ One such style of court culture was the German “husbandman court,” first classified by Volker Bauer and closely associated with Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia, named for its ideals of economic efficiency and simplicity.²⁷ Connections can be easily made to Britain's Farmer George and the king's investments in agricultural improvements at Windsor, including his early essays on topics such as crop rotation and, most famously, the smuggling of Spanish merino sheep into Britain in order to breed them for their high-quality wool.²⁸ His queen consort, Charlotte, likewise indulged in related pursuits, particularly botany and gardening at Kew and her private Windsor residence at Frogmore, demonstrating a certain “nostalgia” for the small German court of her youth in Mecklenburg-Strelitz.²⁹

²⁵ Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2:426.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:426, 494.

²⁷ Marcus Köhler, “The Courts of Hanover and Strelitz,” in *The Wisdom of George the Third: Papers from a Symposium at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, June 2004*, ed. Jonathan Marsden (London: Royal Collection, 2005), 74.

²⁸ Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 71–75; H. B. Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish Flock: Sir Joseph Banks and the Merinos of George III of England* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1964).

²⁹ Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte and Her Circle,” 165; *idem*, “Queen Charlotte: Scientific Queen.”

Popular representations of George and Charlotte, however, are often as oversimplified as James Gillray's caricature, *Affability* (1795) (Figure 8); these tend to minimize the nature of Enlightenment thought, depicting "a friendly, homespun country gentleman rather than a progressive, experimenting improver."³⁰ There has been a comparable misapplication of the term *bürgerlich* in describing German courts, since the translated English, using words like "bourgeois" and "civil," lends too much weight to class-based divisions.³¹ This has likewise affected research on the court of George III, blanketing the royal circle in the notion of "bourgeois respectability and prudery"³² and a simplified, pan-European "royal aesthetic,"³³ which obscures the true complexity of this period of transition for British and European courts alike.



Figure 8: James Gillray, published by Hannah Humphrey, *Affability*, 10 February 1795, hand-colored etching and aquatint, 353 mm x 250 mm, NPG D12518, © National Portrait Gallery, London.

³⁰ James Fisher, "'Farmer George'? Notes on Agriculture," *Georgian Papers Programme Blog*, 19 January 2017, <https://georgianpapers.com/2017/01/19/farmer-georges-notes-agriculture/>.

³¹ Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2:527.

³² Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, 582.

³³ Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III," 108.

Until recently, there was very little overlap between court studies and the historiography of the Enlightenment. The latter encompasses various scholarly movements that have attempted to define the Enlightenment itself and the extent of its national contexts, the convergence of different traditions, or otherwise transnational (global) exchange. Moreover, a recent emphasis on the social dimensions of the Enlightenment, particularly in an English context, has shifted attention to the public sphere and the “everyday sociability” of the middling classes.³⁴ For the purposes of this chapter, the Enlightenment will refer to an intellectual and philosophical movement of the eighteenth century which, in line with the arguments of John Robertson, encompassed several different national contexts that often converged.³⁵ Aside from the widening social dimensions that were introduced by the movement, this holds important implications for the study of the court, especially in a comparison between eighteenth-century rulers in Europe, as well as George’s two separate roles as king of one nation and elector of another.

Clarissa Campbell Orr and Julie Ferguson have both emphasized that one of the early (and few) attempts to address the absence of scholarship on the English courtly Enlightenment – Joanna Marschner’s edited volume *Enlightened Princesses* (2017), a product of the Yale Center for British Art exhibition of the same name³⁶ – does well to review the many elements, both social and material, specific to the Georgian court and the interests of royal women but ultimately “failed to offer an

³⁴ In his historical overview of the Enlightenment, John Robertson refers to his own research when describing the interest in national dimensions and to Robert Darnton’s work on London’s Grub Street in terms of the expanding social dimensions. John Robertson, *The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11–12.

³⁵ John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760*, Ideas in Context 73 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³⁶ Marschner et al., *Enlightened Princesses*.

account of its [the English Enlightenment's] character or chronology."³⁷ Campbell Orr has since sought to redress the question more exclusively of Enlightenment patronage at the court of George III, alongside expansive scholarly efforts to deconstruct the "dichotomies" that have severed European courts from the supposed "anti-court" discourses of *philosophes* and the Enlightenment's associated "progressive policies."³⁸ In reality, the British court and its European counterparts were never so divorced from Enlightenment reforms and projects, and Campbell Orr's research prompts further study of the seeming clash between the traditional values of *ancien régime* and enlightened rule. Moreover, this was not an isolated process but one which linked courts across Europe, opening discussion to the social networks of court circles in England which invited further connections to Germany and elsewhere.

Though recent scholarship has already detailed the many Enlightenment connections at George's court, especially the significance of the king and queen's patronage, the aesthetics of royal representation and, more importantly, the nature of court culture were not so uniform – especially by the 1780s, when George centered his court at a re-Gothicized Windsor Castle. With these stylistic differences, there are also deeper, ideological contradictions to probe between notions of enlightened rule and vestiges of the *ancien régime*, between the cult of civic virtue and chivalric knighthood, the neoclassical and the neo-Gothic. David Watkin has drawn attention to this incongruity, but he offers no firm reconciliation in terms of George's kingship. Watkin instead favors the conclusion of a fixed "Enlightened king" with only some

³⁷ Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Celebrity, Status, and Gender at the Late Hanoverian Court: The Careers of Charles Burney (1726-1814) and Frances Burney (1752-1840)," in *Enlightenment at Court: Patrons, Philosophes, and Reformers in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas Biskup et al., Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2022), 75; Julie Farguson, "Enlightenment and Modernity? German Princesses in Georgian Britain," *The Court Historian* 23, no. 1 (2018): 62–65.

³⁸ Thomas Biskup, Benjamin Marschke, Andreas Pečar, and Damien Tricoire, "Introduction: Enlightenment and Court," in *Enlightenment at Court*, 3, 14, 21.

uncharacteristic deviations from that norm,³⁹ while the enmeshment of these styles points to a deeper engagement with the development of European courts and their cultural programs in the late eighteenth century. The editors of the recently published volume *Enlightenment at Court* (2022) critique in their introduction the previous studies which oversimplify this same juxtaposition found in both Frederick II and Joseph II with the term “enlightened absolutism.”⁴⁰ They argue against the notion that *ancien régime* was incompatible with the Enlightenment, though the extent to which the English court under George III diverged or otherwise intersected with other European Enlightenment monarchies requires further discussion.

Few scholars apart from Jonathan Clark would agree to fully apply the term *ancien régime* to eighteenth-century monarchy in Britain, as it is a model that rejects ideas of a secularizing English society during the period and reasserts the dominance of the confessional state.⁴¹ However, several have to some extent referred to previous arguments in favor of the conservative nature of society at this time.⁴² The king in Britain was nevertheless vulnerable to criticism if his conservatism was seen to appeal too closely to absolutist, *ancien régime* practices. Many of George’s early critics and political opponents, especially Whigs politicians, were indeed horrified at the thought of his rumored “uncomfortable admiration for his French cousins and their imperial disposition.”⁴³ The *Fürstenbund* affair in 1785 only fueled further anxiety over his alleged absolutist tendencies. Following the king’s speech in January 1786, Charles

³⁹ Watkin, *The Architect King*, 206–7.

⁴⁰ Biskup et al., “Introduction: Enlightenment and Court,” 19.

⁴¹ Clark, *English Society*.

⁴² Frank O’Gorman has given a detailed overview of the historiography on the Hanoverian monarchs, which as he notes, has emphasized the “intensely defensive and profoundly conservative” nature of Britain in the eighteenth century. Frank O’Gorman, “The Recent Historiography of the Hanoverian Regime,” *The Historical Journal* 29, no. 4 (1986): 1005–20.

⁴³ Ditchfield also expands on the accusations of Horace Walpole concerning George’s *ancien régime* sympathies. R. D. E. Eagles, *Francophilia in English Society, 1748-1815* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 148; Ditchfield, *George III*, 27.

James Fox insinuated publicly in a debate in the House of Commons that, seeing as the king operated so eagerly for the interests of Hanover without ministerial advice or restriction, he would not hesitate to subvert those restraints placed upon him in Britain.⁴⁴ Though the *ancien régime* model remains a controversial approach, it helpfully emphasizes the possible comparisons between Britain and the rest of Europe, acknowledging the equally ambiguous integration of progressive, Enlightenment thought into naturally conservative and hierarchical court structures.

To begin a closer process of comparison, it is important to first underscore the unique ability of George III to amalgamate different cultural practices into his court. The French philosophical inclinations of Frederick II in Prussia, by contrast, prompted his censure of the German language and German literature as “semi-barbaric,”⁴⁵ whereas George’s Enlightenment interests did not work to alienate him from either of his roles as king and elector. Although his proactive foreign policy in favor of his electoral dominions in the 1780s did briefly attract criticism from his British ministers, George’s court by this time encompassed a unique integration of his responsibilities to Britain and Hanover alike, which reflected his carefully balanced values as a ruler.

A significant point of intersection between his responsibilities to Britain and Hanover was George’s patronage of both Eton College and the University of Göttingen, and it appears most prominently in his correspondence in the 1780s with Richard Hurd, the bishop of Worcester. Most of the churchmen closest to the king were said to have had Eton connections, which in some cases secured their services as preceptors for the early education of George’s sons and later propelled them to

⁴⁴ Fox’s speech is referenced in Blanning, ““That Horrid Electorate,”” 341.

⁴⁵ Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2:530.

bishoprics.⁴⁶ The king often visited Eton when he was in residence at Windsor, and the school has retained many fond anecdotes of his patronage. One account of the school from 1889 affirmed that “no King since the days of Henry VI. has shown a warmer interest in all that concerned the College than George III., who could hardly have been more familiar with its traditions and customs, if he had himself been educated within its walls.”⁴⁷ Moreover, in an extant letter to Bishop Hurd, George once wrote: “I shall tomorrow attend the speeches at Eton as I wish from time to time shew [sic] a regard for the Education of Youth on which most essentially depends any hopes of any advantageous change in the Manners of the Nation.”⁴⁸ His interest in Eton was a wider reflection of his concerns for Britain, with the hope that better education would encourage good governance in future and ultimately improve the lives of all his subjects. More specifically, Eton would be training the future generations of churchmen and political leaders, so its proximity to Windsor was ideal for developing royal connections.

Education was a major priority for the court’s moral program and encompassed more progressive Enlightenment ideas in the growing fields of science and mathematics alongside very traditional, principally martial, training for princes throughout Europe. In the same letter that the king wrote to Hurd concerning Eton, he also described the state of his own sons’ education at the University of Göttingen, the youngest having expressed “a wish to be publickly [sic] examined by the two

⁴⁶ According to Michael McCahill, George insisted that the Eton masters “[Henry William] Majendie and [Dr John] Fisher, tutors, respectively, of the dukes of Clarence and Kent, receive suitable ecclesiastical promotions and was probably responsible for the elevation of Richard Beadon who supervised the university education of his nephew, the duke of Gloucester.” Ditchfield, *George III*, 95; McCahill, *The House of Lords in the Age of George III*, 79.

⁴⁷ Eton continues to celebrate the birthday of George III every year on 4 June. Henry Churchill-Maxwell Lyte, *A History of Eton College, 1440-1884* (England: Macmillan, 1889), 307.

⁴⁸ The speeches to which the king refers were held twice per year at Eton and performed by a prefectorial group, the Sixth Form Select. George III to Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, 29 July 1787, Bishop Richard Hurd Letter Book 12, 12/17, HL; Cooke, vol. 2, n. 554.

Curators of that University on the Commemoration in September,” in honor of the institution’s fiftieth anniversary in 1787.⁴⁹ George had also consulted Bishop Hurd concerning Göttingen’s prize dissertations, copies of which the king had delivered to his aging friend at Hartlebury Palace, and in another letter dated 1782, he confessed:

I own the reputation of the University of Gottingen I have much at heart from an idea that if ever Mankind reflect they must allow that those who encourage Religion, Virtue, and Litterature [sic] deserve as much solid praise as those who disturb the World, and commit all the horrors of War to gain the reputation of being Heroes.

Indeed my Good Lord we live in unprincipled days and no change can be expected but by an early attention to the Education of the rising generation where my opinion must be of weight. I mean in my Electoral Dominions it shall be the chief object of my care and should it be crowned with success it may incline others to follow the example.⁵⁰

George was not only interested in his sons’ education but also that of his German subjects in the wake of Britain’s defeat in America, and this commitment likely impacted the way in which the king would approach the Personal Union and soon afterwards enter into the *Fürstenbund* in 1785 with a renewed interest in the state of his electoral dominions. In addition to the many Eton connections among the court’s church officials, Clarissa Campbell Orr has likewise discussed the many Göttingen scholars who penetrated Queen Charlotte’s own intellectual circle,⁵¹ and thus the court in Britain was further permeated by a persistent awareness of the king’s responsibilities to Hanover and their intersections with his duties to British subjects, especially in the realm of education.

To further demonstrate the rather ambiguous infusion of Enlightenment kingship and wider European connections to the court, the following explores the

⁴⁹ Princes Ernest, Augustus, and Adolphus were all sent to study at Göttingen in 1786. Hurd acknowledged both items of news in his reply to the king on 1 August 1787, in Aspinall, 1:313.

⁵⁰ George III to Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, 23 July 1782, Bishop Richard Hurd Letter Book 12, 12/11, HL.

⁵¹ Clarissa Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte as Patron: Some Intellectual and Social Contexts,” *The Court Historian* 6, no. 3 (2001): 183–212.

particular links between George’s courtiers and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Though he was a successful courtier at Versailles, Rousseau had not endeared himself to George III, especially owing to differences in religious outlooks. Frances Burney recounted a time when the king condemned Voltaire but “next named Rousseau, whom he seemed to think of with more favour, though by no means with approbation.”⁵² The exiled French philosopher was welcomed into England in the 1760s by George Simon Harcourt, Viscount Nuneham (later succeeding as the second Earl Harcourt), who was said to have had Republican sympathies as a young man. Harcourt was originally estranged from the court following the death of his father, the first earl – the former viceroy of Ireland and ambassador to France, whose service, he believed, was never properly recognized by the king. In honor of Rousseau’s visit to his country villa, Nuneham House in Oxfordshire, Harcourt crowned his flower garden there (designed by the English poet, William Mason) with a bust of Rousseau, which oversaw a landscape inspired by his novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), and the Enlightenment cult of sensibility.⁵³

Moreover, what is described as Lord Harcourt’s “warm-hearted paternalism”⁵⁴ towards the estate village at Nuneham – including “annual merit awards to virtuous visitors,” very likely a product of Rousseau’s influence⁵⁵ – draws strong connections to the efforts of Queen Charlotte’s brother, the reigning Duke Charles II of Mecklenburg, who similarly “instigated a Rousseauesque festival for the local population in his picturesque English garden ... [situated] near Neustrelitz,”⁵⁶ which

⁵² Stewart J. Cooke and Elaine Bander, eds., *The Additional Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 351.

⁵³ Mavis Batey, “Nuneham Park, Oxfordshire -- II: Romantic Vision in a Flower-Garden,” *Country Life* 144 (September 12, 1968): 640.

⁵⁴ Idem, *Nuneham Courtenay, Oxfordshire: A Short History and Description of the House, Gardens, and Estate*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1979), 7.

⁵⁵ Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte: Scientific Queen,” 256.

⁵⁶ Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece*, 116.

involved a consecrated forest altar.⁵⁷ Both underscored the moral power of “natural” garden landscapes and the idyllic scenes they encouraged while still reinforcing the privileges to which the landowners themselves were entitled.

Very similar sentiments were expressed in Johan Zoffany’s portrait of Queen Charlotte with her two brothers, several of her children, and their governess – a conversation piece exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1773, which depicts a relaxed and happy extended family resting outside in a park landscape (Figure 9). Though the scene “breathes the spirit of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,” it is also a statement of dynastic influence and the close connections the queen in Britain retained with her family in Germany.⁵⁸ The court was further associated with what David Watkin identifies as a mass “importation of English gardening tastes” throughout the Holy Roman Empire, first involving Charlotte’s brothers in Mecklenburg-Strelitz and later reaching a climax through the influence of the Prussian landscape gardener, Peter Joseph Lenné (the Younger).⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte: Scientific Queen,” 257.

⁵⁸ Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece*, 116.

⁵⁹ Watkin, *The Architect King*, 180–82; idem, “The Influence of English Royal Gardens on the Continent in the 18th Century,” in *Landschaftsgärten des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts: Beispiele deutsch-britischen Kulturtransfers*, ed. Franz Bosbach (K. G. Saur, 2008), 33–48.



Figure 9: Johan Zoffany, *Queen Charlotte with Members of Her Family*, c. 1771, oil on canvas, 105.3 cm x 127.0 cm, RCIN 401004, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.

When Lord Harcourt was eventually reconciled to the British court in the 1780s, and his wife, the countess, was appointed Lady of the Bedchamber to the queen, George visited Nuneham himself and like many of his European contemporaries greatly admired the style of flower garden there. This country house was a unique site of intersection, wherein the king held court at an alternative venue and shared with his courtiers in various pursuits. This included Enlightenment philosophy and the Rousseauian values of rural simplicity, related fashionable pastimes in landscape gardening and botanical study,⁶⁰ and even antiquarian interests, such as Harcourt's acquisition of the Sheldon tapestry maps, purchased in 1781 and

⁶⁰ Queen Charlotte was a greater devotee to botany than her husband. Many of her surviving letters to Lady Harcourt include references to botanical study, wherein the Nuneham flower garden is often a point of comparison. See Queen Charlotte's letter to Countess Harcourt, 5 July 1786, MS Eng. d. 3881, fols. 46–47, BodL.

gifted to him by Horace Walpole for the purpose of genealogical research.⁶¹ On his journey to Cheltenham in July 1788, George and his royal entourage called on the Harcourts to breakfast at Nuneham, and in his letter announcing their intentions to visit, the king specifically mentioned his wish “to pay due Respect to the Venerable Tapestry and just cast an eye on the more beautiful Flower Garden.”⁶² Any philosophical or religious differences that the king held for the flower garden’s patron *philosophe* were neutralized by the court itself and coexisted with a variety of cultural interests. Owing to the support of other courtiers like the dowager duchess of Portland and the queen’s reader of French works, Jean André DeLuc, Rousseau became a royal pensioner in 1766. Despite the king’s general disapproval and Rousseau’s own reluctance, Campbell Orr argues that the latter’s arguments countering materialism were “entirely in accord with royal religious convictions.”⁶³ It was ultimately the mediation of his court and prominent courtiers that could accommodate seemingly dissonant interests and illustrate to the complexities of studying the Enlightenment in a dynamic court setting.

The more conservative features of the court and kingship of George III, including his religious beliefs, however, are often overlooked in an Enlightenment context. In some ways, they might have intersected, as in the case of Rousseau’s ideas of natural simplicity and the practicality of Protestant pietism, both of which influenced the education of George and Charlotte’s children and their upbringing at

⁶¹ Edward William Harcourt, ed., *The Harcourt Papers*, vol. 3 (Oxford: printed for private circulation by J. Parker and Co., 1880), 281–88.

⁶² George III to Earl Harcourt, 7 July 1788, MS. Eng. d. 3880, fol. 35, BodL.

⁶³ Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte and Her Circle,” 171; Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte: Scientific Queen,” 246–49.

Kew, featured in the Zoffany portrait described above.⁶⁴ The following section will explore further comparisons of more traditional monarchical practice across Europe during the eighteenth century, starting first with the material (and architectural) expression of religious and moral principles, then to a fuller discussion of their ceremonial expression, particularly in the chivalric.

In terms of religion, while other German rulers, such as Frederick II, preferred to follow more immediate French fashions in the style of *philosophes*,⁶⁵ it was George's dedication to the Protestant faith that arguably paralleled the preoccupations of an *ancien régime*,⁶⁶ while his commitment to the protection of English liberties better aligned with those of a patriot king, even a chivalric knight, than a ruler uniformly pledged to Enlightenment principles. Campbell Orr notes that this approach also differentiated him from his predecessors, since the "intellectual avant-garde" style that was characteristic of George II and Queen Caroline of Ansbach went a step beyond the combination of religion and rationality that George III maintained.⁶⁷

The circumstances of George's unique ability to combine Enlightenment values with royal ceremonial is perhaps most obvious in his material and architectural interests. With such an emphasis on the king's intellectual patronage, for example, some scholars have relegated his faith to an "informal religiosity,"⁶⁸ a term which discounts the religious undertones of the royal ceremony that George infused into court architecture at royal residences like Windsor Castle, including his neo-Gothic

⁶⁴ Köhler, "The Courts of Hanover and Strelitz," 66–67; for a further discussion of Halle pietism, see Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Queen of Great Britain and Electress of Hanover: Northern Dynasties and the Northern Republic of Letters," in *Queenship in Europe*.

⁶⁵ Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2:530.

⁶⁶ As noted in Watkin, *The Architect King*, 207–8.

⁶⁷ Clarissa Campbell Orr, "The Late Hanoverian Court and the Christian Enlightenment," in *Monarchy and Religion*, 341–42.

⁶⁸ Michael Schaich (ed.), "Introduction," in *Monarchy and Religion*, 21–22.

renovation of St. George's Chapel and his revival of the Order of the Garter (both discussed at length in the previous chapter). Moreover, in addition to the subsequent movement away from some of his own and his predecessors' Enlightenment projects at Kew, George also began to heavily invest in the construction of a new, castellated palace there, designed by James Wyatt in the neo-Gothic style.⁶⁹

George's transition to the neo-Gothic in the 1780s, though prompted by conflict both in Britain and abroad, was never a full divorce from earlier royal styles. When renovating the state apartments at Windsor, for instance, George retained several seventeenth-century features, such as Verrio's painting on the ceiling of the King's Audience Chamber, which was commissioned by Charles II.⁷⁰ Comparably, scholars who specialize in the literary traditions of this period have noted that the shift between the neoclassical and the neo-Gothic was no clean, ideological break: "... as the classical world ceded its position of centrality in eighteenth-century Britain, so it became amenable to Gothic representation. ... a tension with the classical was a vital constituent of the Gothic."⁷¹ The developing neo-Gothic elements (in architecture as well as court ceremonial), alongside existing baroque and neoclassical tastes, formed a style of kingship that could more comfortably reconcile the ceremonial and religious commitments of the *ancien régime* with progressive ideas of political freedom and patriotism.

In addition to architecture, George's taste in artwork brought together different (often mythic) histories that expressed similar moral values, particularly heroism and self-sacrifice. Mark Girouard describes a set of Benjamin West paintings

⁶⁹ See Figure 5 in the third chapter. Watkin, *The Architect King*, 26.

⁷⁰ Roberts, *George III and Queen Charlotte*, 137.

⁷¹ James Uden, *Spectres of Antiquity: Classical Literature and the Gothic, 1740-1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 3-4.

commissioned by George III for his private sitting room at Buckingham House which encapsulated this practice: *The Death of Wolfe* (1771), *The Death of the Chevalier Bayard* (1772), and *The Death of Epaminondas* (1773).⁷² Each painting depicts an “exemplary death” scene from three different traditions, comparing heroes from Ancient Greece, Renaissance France, and the modern day. Girouard frames this as only a “modest” first attempt to draw comparisons between the neoclassical and the chivalric, but later paintings by Benjamin West, commissioned to display Britain’s medieval and mythic history at Windsor, echo very similar values of noble behavior as his earlier works in London.⁷³ In terms of a corresponding moral program at court, Watkin has attributed such values as honor and upright conduct to the Enlightenment cult of civic virtue,⁷⁴ but through the examples of George’s own patronage, the complementary moral values of the different traditions suggests that there is unlikely to be a straightforward explanation for the king’s combination of Enlightenment thought and more conservative monarchical practice.

There is at least one point of intersection between the neoclassical aesthetics of enlightened rule and the general conservatism of George III that could be clearly demonstrated at court: the honors system, a well-established monarchical practice employed across Europe, involving symbols of favor, particularly the honor of a knighthood or other title, to reward loyal subjects. New as well as revived orders of knighthood were employed by monarchs for competing degrees of prestige within the

⁷² Benjamin West, *The Death of Wolfe*, 1771, oil on canvas, 153.5 x 245.9 cm, RCIN 407297, RCT; idem, *The Death of the Chevalier Bayard*, 1772, oil on canvas, 221.6 x 179.1 cm, RCIN 407525, RCT; idem, *The Death of Epaminondas*, 1773, oil on canvas, 222.2 x 179.4 cm, RCIN 407524, RCT.

⁷³ For a greater discussion on the paintings of Benjamin West at Windsor, please refer to the third chapter of this thesis. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 23.

⁷⁴ Watkin specifically references Nathaniel Dance Holland’s *Timon of Athens* (c. 1765-70), which was commissioned by George III and hung at Buckingham Palace. Ibid, 89–90.

ruling classes. Though it has always been associated with chivalric, medieval history, Antti Matikkala has noted the “classicizing and rhetorical ‘enshrinement’ of the honors system” in the eighteenth century, which was more closely aligned with a moral system involving classical ideas of virtue and honor among the aristocracy.⁷⁵ This “synthesis between the classical and the Christian” throughout early modern scholarship on chivalry⁷⁶ lends well to the study of the court under George III and its unique blend of styles that could retain elements of his conservative and religious views while likewise appealing to those courtiers like the Harcourts who more actively promoted Enlightenment philosophy.

In a further examination of those conservative, chivalric principles which shaped the king’s approach to wider European rule (with a slight movement away from the Enlightenment values of the court), the following is a discussion of George’s connections not just to the Order of the Garter but to other important British honors, such as the Order of the Bath and the Order of St. Patrick. Far from simply English phenomena, these orders also invite comparisons to the honors systems established throughout Europe. While the king’s commitment to the Garter was in many ways very personal, and the honor itself laden with nationalistic symbolism and medieval English history, the other chivalric orders in Britain provided additional avenues to bestow honors, especially on his younger sons and high-ranking officers in the military. The honors system also encouraged civic virtue among the ruling classes in service to the monarch and to Britain, but ultimately it unified a powerful group of Protestant, like-minded elite whose membership signaled a political (not simply moral or philosophical) alignment to the king and his ministers. It did, however, present

⁷⁵ Antti Matikkala, *The Orders of Knighthood and the Formation of the British Honours System, 1660-1760* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 25.

⁷⁶ Matikkala proposes a period of “Chivalric Enlightenment.” Ibid, 35.

several challenges, including the politics of appointment and the perceived competition between orders in Britain and elsewhere in Europe.

George paid very close attention to the various orders of chivalry in Britain, and he placed a particular emphasis on the Order of the Garter, the most senior order of knighthood. His commitment to this order later culminated, as described in the preceding chapter, in a grand display of pseudo-medieval pageantry for the 1805 ceremony of installation and corresponding feast, held on 23 April, the feast day of St. George and the same day of the foundation of the order by Edward III in 1348. The king made plenty of Garter appointments before 1805, however, honoring men who served in a high political or court office, according to custom. The order's connections to the Gothic revival at Windsor have already been discussed in the previous chapter, but far from ceremonial insulated within an English castle, the Garter held significant European and dynastic associations as the Protestant counterpart, or indeed "rival," to the *Toison d'Or*, the Order of the Golden Fleece of the Holy Roman Empire, founded a little less than a century later than the Garter, in 1430.⁷⁷ Throughout his reign, George refrained from accepting any foreign orders of chivalry, maintaining a focus on the British system, though still holding Protestant superiority – and even ultimate seniority – in reference to other European orders.⁷⁸

While George considerably expanded the number of Garter knights from the original twenty-five, he retained an exclusivity to the order by restricting many of these new "supernumerary" appointments, first to his sons and the sons of his

⁷⁷ This order was split into two branches at the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), between the Bourbon and Habsburg dynasties. Watkin, *The Architect King*, 209.

⁷⁸ George's Protestant faith technically barred him from the Order of the Golden Fleece, which was an exclusively Catholic order until the nineteenth century, but in general, many systems (both Catholic and Protestant) did not begin admitting foreign knights until the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

successors in 1786, and then to all male members of the blood royal in 1805.⁷⁹ Stranger (foreign) Knights were also limited to German princes, all connected by marriage or blood, alluding to a “Protestant dynasticism” that Matikkala also confers to George II’s practice of the Garter.⁸⁰ This greatly contrasted with the later initiatives of George IV, who bestowed knighthoods on a large group of foreign monarchs in the wake of Napoleon’s defeat in 1814, and in return, accepted a variety of newly established or adapted foreign orders, such as the Golden Fleece (from Spain and Austria) and Prussia’s Order of the Black Eagle. George’s emphasis on exclusivity, by comparison, saw the enactment of another statute in 1786, which instituted a ranking system in the allocation of stalls in St. George’s Chapel and placed the English princes above foreign emperors and kings within the Order’s seniority,⁸¹ materially reinforcing the preeminence of the British state over others in Europe.

The exclusivity and prestige of the Order of the Garter was expressed in other material ways that were consistent with the royal splendor infused into the honors systems across Europe. In addition to George’s costly renovation of St. George’s Chapel – including Henry Emlyn’s masterful woodworking repairs and embellishments to the stalls there⁸² – the king also invested heavily in the associated regalia. The pendant badge that hangs from a Garter collar is known as a Great George and depicts St. George on his horse, slaying the dragon. Examples of these pendants crafted for the Hanoverians “show continuing enrichment,”⁸³ and the Great George belonging to George III was particularly impressive, ornamented with

⁷⁹ Eleanor Hoare, “The College of St George,” 306–7; Begent and Chesshyre, *The Most Noble Order of the Garter*, 74.

⁸⁰ Matikkala, *The Orders of Knighthood*, 204.

⁸¹ Begent and Chesshyre, *The Most Noble Order of the Garter*, 74.

⁸² Hoare, “The College of St George, 1776-1840,” 306–7.

⁸³ Begent and Chesshyre, *The Most Noble Order of the Garter*, 165.

diamonds, rubies, amethysts, and sapphires (Figure 10). This badge was also notably of continental manufacture and features a fleur-de-lis “suspension” at its top – an interesting reference to the design of an earlier Great George depicted in Elias Ashmole’s *History of the Order* (1693), which might have been alluding to Edward III’s claim to the French throne around the time he founded the Order.⁸⁴ George’s Garter insignia also included a diamond-encrusted garter (which was worn below the left knee), a diamond and ruby Garter star, as well as two “lesser George” badges worn from a blue sash, all highly ornamented compliments to the silk and velvet Garter robes.⁸⁵



Figure 10: Unknown artist, *Great George*, last quarter of the eighteenth century, diamonds, sapphires, rubies, amethysts, silver and gold, 15.0 x 6.7 x 3.5 cm, RCIN 441144, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.

⁸⁴ A similar depiction of a Great George with a fleur-de-lis suspension, dated 1666, is depicted in an etching after Wenceslaus Hollar in the RCT. Roberts, *George III & Queen Charlotte*, 361; after Wenceslaus Hollar, *Insignia of the Garter*, 1666, etching, RCIN 805015, RCT.

⁸⁵ Roberts, *George III & Queen Charlotte*, 360; Stephen Patterson, *Royal Insignia: British and Foreign Orders of Chivalry from the Royal Collection* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1996), 86–105.

Alongside the Order of the Garter, George was also responsible for appointments to several other chivalric orders in Britain with more “specific purposes,” principally the Order of the Thistle, established in 1687 by James II, the Order of the Bath, established in 1725 by George I, and the Order of St. Patrick, newly established by George III himself in 1783.⁸⁶ These first two orders allowed for the honors system to expand beyond the exclusivity of the Garter, but their initial purposes changed with time. The Thistle, for example, began as a fully Scottish order, but following the Hanoverian succession, membership did not necessarily require any Scottish connections.⁸⁷ Though George retained the Thistle largely as an honor for Scottish peers who were loyal to the crown, he did use his prerogative to appoint his third son Prince William in 1770, as well as the earl of Ailesbury in 1786. The latter knight had no known links to Scotland, so his appointment was likely owing to his loyalty to the queen and well-respected standing in her household. Ailesbury recorded the details of his investiture in his diary, noting the highly ceremonial nature still preserved for the Thistle and the evident pride and “giddiness” he felt, as did many noblemen, on receiving such an honor from the monarch.⁸⁸ His experience represents the continued importance that the honors system held for the British aristocracy – as a recognition of both status and service – and thereby its use as a powerful tool by the king.

The British honors system presented opportunities to address certain political demands, not unlike the attempts of other European monarchs to employ their own chivalric orders for diplomatic purposes. When tensions between Denmark and

⁸⁶ Matikkala, *The Orders of Knighthood*, 98.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 162.

⁸⁸ Ailesbury’s elder brother, the duke of Montagu, was already made a Knight of the Garter under George II, which might explain why another Garter was not forthcoming for the Brudenell family. RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 275.

Sweden, for example, began to lessen in the late eighteenth century, the first king of Sweden, Adolphus Frederick, was awarded the Danish Order of the Elephant on the betrothal of his son the future Gustavus III to Sophia Magdalena, a daughter of Frederick V, and in turn Gustavus was given the new Swedish Order of the Seraphim.⁸⁹

Similar political expression can be found in one of the most significant developments of the British honors system under George III, which has been painfully overlooked. The Order of St. Patrick was established in 1783 and held very particular political motivations. Its foundation was successfully occasioned by the serving Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (representative of the Crown and thereby Grand Master of the order), George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, third Earl Temple. Peter Galloway's research on the order has noted the need for political support among the Irish elite after a period of serious turbulence and the "curious parallel" between the Thistle and St. Patrick, as the creation of these chivalric orders shortly preceded the abolition of their corresponding parliaments.⁹⁰ It seems that the king's involvement beyond its establishment was largely motivated out of political necessity and encouraged an alignment to the crown among the Anglican peerage, not necessarily an Enlightenment program for civic virtue or particular service.

Despite his relative distance from the Order of St. Patrick, physical and otherwise, George was as exclusionary as he was with the Order of the Garter in terms

⁸⁹ Andersen, "The Orders of the Elephant and of the Dannebrog, and Their Role in Diplomacy," in *Perspectives on the Honours Systems: Proceedings of the Symposiums Swedish and Russian Orders 1700-2000 & the Honour of Diplomacy*, ed. Antti Matikkala and Staffan Rosén, KVHAA Handlingar Historiska Serien 29 (Stockholm, Sweden: Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, 2015), 146.

⁹⁰ The Thistle, established in 1687, preceded the abolition of the Scottish parliament under the Treaty of Union in 1707, while the Order of St. Patrick was established not long before the Act of Union in 1800. Peter Galloway, *The Most Illustrious Order: The Order of St Patrick and Its Knights* (London: Unicorn, 1999), 15.

of its structure and membership. He limited the number of knights to fifteen and required the rank of an earldom or above. George also barred his eldest son from an appointment when he learned that the prince of Wales intended to travel to Ireland for the installation.⁹¹ The king instead made his younger son, Prince Edward, the first royal knight, thus containing the political intrigue of his eldest to England, though exacerbating the ill feeling between them.⁹² In recognition of the king's foundation of the new order, Lord Temple also selected a loyal courtier, the second earl of Courtown, as one of only two non-resident Irish peers to be a Knight Founder.⁹³ Through this order and its membership, George employed a long-established monarchical practice to diplomatically extend his power over the viceregal court in Ireland.

George I had established the Order of the Bath in 1725 for fairly similar reasons of accommodating further tokens of recognition as the Thistle and, in the interests of Robert Walpole, garnering political support for the ministry, like the St. Patrick would later do, but its focus centered on awarding particular diplomatic and military skill.⁹⁴ George III continued in this practice and used the order – which was much larger, accommodating thirty-six knights companion, and did not exclude members on the basis of rank – to reward men notable for supporting Britain's interests abroad. This occasionally extended to alternative candidates with

⁹¹ Galloway, *The Most Illustrious Order*, 22.

⁹² Galloway references the papers of the first earl of Charlemont for the “anecdote” of the king's exclusionary practices against the prince of Wales, though it does not appear in George's published correspondence, nor that of his eldest son. RCHM, *The Manuscripts and Correspondence of James, First Earl of Charlemont*, vol. 1 (Burlington, Ontario: TannerRitchie Publishing in collaboration with the Library and Information Services of the University of St. Andrews, 2013), 156.

⁹³ Lord Courtown was also appointed Treasurer of the royal household shortly after his knighthood. Galloway, *The Most Illustrious Order*, 19.

⁹⁴ James Charles Risk, *The History of the Order of the Bath and Its Insignia* (London: Spink, 1972), 1; Samuel Clark, *Distributing Status: The Evolution of State Honours in Western Europe* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2017), 156.

contributions aligned closely to the Enlightenment and related scientific exploration, most notably Sir Joseph Banks, whose travels abroad helped to inform the king's botanical and agricultural interests back at Kew and Windsor.⁹⁵

Though the honors system was a useful tool for recognition, political interest was inevitably attendant on these appointments, even the orders of chivalry, and at times challenged George's prerogative as sovereign. It was custom, for example, for high-ranking office-holders in the royal household, particularly Grooms of the Stole, to receive the Garter,⁹⁶ but in April 1782, when the marquess of Rockingham became Prime Minister, the king was compelled to give the vacancies to men better aligned with the new administration.⁹⁷ As a result, George's long-serving Groom of the Stole, the second earl of Ashburnham, had been passed over for all four vacancies that year in favor of Rockingham's preferred candidates. Ashburnham took offense and promptly resigned after nearly twenty years in service to the royal household, writing to the king of his "severe disappointment and mortification."⁹⁸ George attempted to explain, replying,

I certainly meant to give You the Garter, and you would have had one of those otherwise disposed of this day had not the total change of Administration among other unpleasant things, obliged me to postpone my intentions in your favour. ... I meant that you should collect that I did not forget what had passed on the Garter, but could not fulfil it at the present extraordinary crisis.⁹⁹

Ashburnham was one of only a couple of courtiers that the king had fought to retain in his household less than a month before this incident, when the new ministry moved to replace many royal office-holders in order to reward its own supporters. The promise

⁹⁵ Aspinall, 1:45, n. 8.

⁹⁶ Matikkala, *The Orders of Knighthood*, 116.

⁹⁷ There were four vacancies after the first was given to the king's son, Prince William. The remaining were given to the duke of Richmond, the duke of Devonshire, earl of Shelburne, and the duke of Rutland.

⁹⁸ The earl of Ashburnham to George III, 19 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:475–76.

⁹⁹ George III to the earl of Ashburnham, 19 April 1782, in Fortescue, 5:476.

of a future Garter, however, was not sufficient consolation for Ashburnham, who on his resignation wrote that, “the loss of it carries an appearance that affects my mind extremely, and I am now arrived at a time of life that does not permit me to think any more of distant honours.”¹⁰⁰ In the following decade, George could finally assert his prerogative with the Garter in June 1797, when he conferred the vacancy on the esteemed naval officer and Admiral of the Fleet, Richard Howe, first Earl Howe, even though William Pitt had promised it elsewhere.¹⁰¹

The honors system in Britain remained an important and prestigious source of patronage for the king, both politically and personally, but it also involved a sense of participation, even competition, in an established European practice. The honors system was likewise a tool for political advantage, and George readily participated in its related material display. From a monarchical perspective, the semi-feudalist, chivalric tradition ultimately took precedence over the neoclassical Enlightenment ideals of virtue and honor among the ruling classes, though the latter remained a useful appeal to the nobility to take part in such practices. A continued discussion of George’s conservative principles, however, particularly on a European stage, will involve further assessment of the knightly ambitions that he held, including soldier-kingship, and require further integration of the court itself.

The following discussion moves beyond the blanketing classifications of both enlightened rule and orders of chivalry to illustrate the alternative approaches of George III that were in conversation with wider monarchical practice throughout

¹⁰⁰ The earl of Ashburnham to George III, 19 April 1782, in Fortescue 5:476–77.

¹⁰¹ Beyond the *ODNB* entry, there is no further reference to this incident in the published royal correspondence, though it might exist in the Chatham Papers. Roger Knight, “Howe, Richard, Earl Howe (1726–1799), Naval Officer,” in *ODNB*, 8 June 2023, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13963.

Europe, most notably through his martial and dynastic ambitions. The culture of George's court and its membership, moreover, proved essential in maintaining connections to Europe beyond official and diplomatic levels. When the honors system could not more fully incorporate royal favorites, George employed other methods to cultivate a court that could facilitate a style of kingship consistent with contemporary European monarchs, as well as his British and Hanoverian predecessors, particularly in strengthening his representation as a soldier-king, or even a royal knight. Before the king could bestow the Garter on Lord Howe, for instance, he presented him with a diamond-hilted sword on board the *HMS Queen Charlotte*, anchored at Spithead, in honor of the Vice-Admiral's success on the Glorious First of June in 1794.¹⁰² Howe had also closely attended the king on his first visit to Weymouth in 1789, and his presence gave a soldierly and authoritative tone to the court gatherings there, transforming the seaside retreat into an impressive display of Britain's naval prowess.¹⁰³

George paid very close attention to the status of his armed forces and fleet and had endeavored to attend numerous military and naval reviews throughout his reign, even at peacetime and during what was supposed to be a recuperative trip into the West Country in 1789. These royal visits understandably became more pronounced when Britain entered into war with France in 1792. Grayson Ditchfield has noted that, following the deaths of Joseph II (1790), Leopold II (1792) of Austria, and Louis XVI (by execution, 1793), George perhaps very consciously felt himself to be the "leading

¹⁰² This event was depicted several decades later, in 1828, by the artist Henry Briggs. Henry Briggs, *Visit of George III to Howe's Flagship, the "Queen Charlotte", on 26 June 1794*, 1828, oil on canvas, 162.5 x 255.5 cm, BHC0476, National Maritime Museum (Greenwich Hospital Collection); Knight, "Howe, Richard, Earl Howe," in *ODNB*.

¹⁰³ The circumstances of Howe's attendance at Weymouth are further analyzed in the fifth chapter.

protagonist among anti-revolutionary rulers.”¹⁰⁴ In this respect, his wider representation – including the courtiers attending him – was a significant component of this martial approach to kingship, which will be further probed in the next chapter.

George’s representation as a soldier-king was closely associated with emerging fashions and developing practices across Europe, particularly the growing popularity of military uniforms at court, which were also promoted by rulers such as Joseph II and Frederick the Great. The Holy Roman Emperor even implemented reforms that eschewed extravagant court ceremonial and dress in favor of the simpler, though arguably no less ornamental, uniforms.¹⁰⁵ Joseph II’s connections to simplicity in his style of representation, however, can be further contextualized as a necessary part of “image politics”¹⁰⁶ – most notably the famous 1769 example of the emperor plowing a field during his travels to visit Frederick the Great.¹⁰⁷ This approach incorporated martial styles, too. Under both Frederick and Joseph, military uniforms became the “norm” of court dress.¹⁰⁸ George likewise established the Windsor uniform for his family and royal office-holders, which included a standard dark blue coat with red collar and cuffs, worn while traveling and hunting, as well as a more formal, “full-dress,”¹⁰⁹ version with gold lace trim and gilt, monogrammed buttons.¹¹⁰

Evoking the style of a livery, uniforms were “a symbol of service and servitude”¹¹¹ as well as a measure of skill and valor pledged to a monarch. George and many of his continental counterparts, including the courts in Austria, Prussia, and

¹⁰⁴ Ditchfield, *George III*, 45.

¹⁰⁵ T. C. W. Blanning, *Joseph II, Profiles In Power* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 64; Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2:533.

¹⁰⁶ Biskup et al., “Introduction: Enlightenment and Court,” 20.

¹⁰⁷ Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2:497.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:533.

¹⁰⁹ Charlotte Papendiek describes the uniform in this way in her memoirs. Kassler, 1:173.

¹¹⁰ See Figure 8 in the third chapter. Llewellyn, “George III and the Windsor Uniform,” 13.

¹¹¹ Philip Mansel, “Monarchy, Uniform and the Rise of the Frac 1760-1830,” *Past & Present*, no. 96 (1982): 110.

throughout Germany, allowed uniforms at formal court functions, whereas the traditional and highly decorative *habit habillé* persisted in France and Spain.¹¹² The Windsor uniform was in some ways unique when compared to larger European practice, as it became a fashion that expanded beyond its original intent for the royal household and was adopted among the elite in Britain as a political symbol of loyalty to the king and his ministry. Philip Mansel has also described the adoption of this uniform by diplomats on the Continent, referencing an Englishman's travel diary, which described a British ambassador dressed in Windsor uniform at a ball held in Constantinople in 1806.¹¹³ George's affinity for soldier-kingship thus extended outside the realms of his army and navy and into the performative styles of his court and representatives throughout Europe.

In royal portraiture, the king was depicted regularly both in the Windsor uniform and in a General Officer's coat, the latter featuring in a state portrait by Benjamin West from 1779 (Figure 11). George wears the Garter sash and star in all of these paintings, and with the order's correspondence (especially in coloring) to the Windsor uniform, there seems to be a prevailing visual connection between soldier-kingship and chivalric knighthood, it could be argued. The court artist, Benjamin West, was likewise commissioned to paint several medieval "history" paintings that would decorate the royal residences, most famously his series on the foundation of the Order of the Garter, which hung in the King's Audience Chamber at Windsor Castle and included a particular depiction of Edward III and the Black Prince, reuniting victorious in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Crécy (see Figure 4).

¹¹² Mansel, "Monarchy, Uniform," 111–13.

¹¹³ Ibid, 116.



Figure 11: Benjamin West, *George III (1738-1820)*, 1779, oil on canvas, 255.3 x 182.9 cm, RCIN 405407, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.

West also completed a three-quarter length portrait in 1783 that depicts George III in a full suit of armor, with a cape trimmed in ermine, his crown sitting behind him on the left, and a view of British ships in the distance to the right (Figure 12), similar to the way in which his 1779 state portrait was configured. Though there is no evidence that this was a royal commission, West's specialism in painting the chivalric at court would suggest that there is at least some connection. One scholar has "tentatively equated" this portrait with one that West exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1783.¹¹⁴ Both George I and George II were likewise painted wearing armor (Figures 13 and 14), and while this stylistic form is rare in painting and more common in coinage, its presence demonstrates an enduring emphasis on soldier-kingship upheld by the Hanoverian dynasty and echoed over Europe in the eighteenth century. Both Frederick the Great and Joseph II, for example, were depicted in portraits sporting suits of armor,¹¹⁵ the former as early as 1747 by the French artist Antoine Pesne (Figure 15); a copy of this painting was then presented to the sitter's first cousin, George's father Frederick, prince of Wales, and hung at Carlton House.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Helmut von Erffa, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 466.

¹¹⁵ Heinrich Friedrich Füger, *Kaiser Joseph II. in Rüstung*, c. 1787–88, oil on canvas, 240×171×13 cm, 139700, Wien Museum.

¹¹⁶ This is noted in the painting's description on the Royal Collection Trust website: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/406797/frederick-ii-king-of-prussia-1712-86>.



Figure 12: Benjamin West, *George III*, 1783, oil on canvas, 152 x 127 x 9.5 cm, 1952.17, The Cleveland Museum of Art.



Figure 13: Studio of Sir Godfrey Kneller, Bt, *King George I*, c. 1714, oil on canvas, 756 mm x 635 mm, NPG 4223, © National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 14: Attributed to William Prewett, *George II (1683-1760)*, c. 1750, enamel, 5.1 x 4.5 cm, RCIN 421961, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 15: Antoine Pesne, *Frederick II, King of Prussia (1712-86)*, 1747–48, oil on canvas, 265.8 x 177.7 cm, RCIN 406797, © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2024 | Royal Collection Trust.

While it is clear that George took steps to cultivate a particular royal image of soldier-kingship in line with contemporary European practices, he also employed his court to further his martial ambitions, as did his Hanoverian and Stuart predecessors. Hannah Smith has thoroughly explored the political impact of the army from the late seventeenth century and its relationship with the court across seven monarchs,

highlighting the connections certain officers held to partisan, courtly, and parliamentary politics in a time of dual “threat or hope of the army’s intervention.”¹¹⁷ George III inherited a complex affiliation between the court and the military, wherein his grandfather had “increasingly entrusted military administration and command” not to his father Frederick, prince of Wales, but to his uncle the duke of Cumberland.¹¹⁸ Frederick would in turn prevent his heir from “becoming too enamoured with armies” by appointing George as Lord High Admiral to pacify his interest but otherwise demonstrating, by example, how a ruler might incorporate a “military aura” into the court through connections to serving army officers.¹¹⁹

Among royal office-holders, George was very frequently seen accompanied by his Equerries, who were charged with attending the king on all public occasions and whenever he was on horseback,¹²⁰ a mode of transport he notably preferred to carriages. George also employed personal *aides-de-camp*, some of whom served as Equerries or would later be recruited to higher positions in either the royal household or the queen’s household. Colonel Francis Edward Gwynn (also spelled Gwyn), for example, was a lieutenant-colonel of the 20th Light Dragoons who had served under Sir William Howe in the American War of Independence. In 1787, Gwynn was appointed an Equerry and later that same year promoted as *aide-de-camp* to the king, attending him both in 1788 and 1789 when the royal family traveled to Cheltenham, Worcester, Weymouth, and Plymouth.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Hannah Smith, *Armies and Political Change in Britain, 1660-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 289–90.

¹²⁰ Bucholz, *Office-Holders in Modern Britain*, sec. “The Stables.”

¹²¹ Lorna J. Clark, ed., *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online (2015), vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014), n. 139.

Similarly, General William Harcourt was an army officer who first served as an Equerry to Queen Charlotte from 1760 to 1767, then Groom of the Bedchamber to the king and eventually made his *aide-de-camp* from 1777 to 1780, owing to his achievements fighting in the war against the American colonies.¹²² Due to Harcourt's rank and family connections, he surpassed Gwynn at court and became an especially attentive office-holder at Windsor, where he purchased a house, St. Leonard's Hill, in 1783. Also based near Windsor was Field Marshal Sir George Howard, whose experience as an army officer extended back to the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War. Howard had purchased Stoke Place, near Slough, where he and his wife the dowager countess of Effingham, a long-serving Lady of the Bedchamber to the queen, regularly received royal visits. Sworn into the Privy Council in 1795, Howard was a trusted advisor and friend to the king. At the onset of George's first serious illness in late 1788, when he had difficulty controlling his chatter, the king expressly wished to visit Stoke Place; according to Lady Harcourt's memoir, "he proposed going to Lady Effingham's, and added, 'Sir George Howard shall give me an account of the campaigns he made in Germany, and that will keep me from talking.'"¹²³

George's aristocratic courtiers would accompany him to reviews, and on two notable occasions, even host a review while the king and queen were travelling. At the start of October 1778, the tenth earl and countess of Pembroke were honored with a royal visit at their country house, Wilton (Wilts.), after George and Charlotte had toured Salisbury Cathedral. The *Morning Chronicle* described the formal receptions at

¹²² R.N.W. Thomas, "Harcourt, William, Third Earl Harcourt (1743–1830), Army Officer and Courtier," *ODNB*, 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12248.

¹²³ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:16.

Wilton and the attendance of some 70,000 spectators for the royal review.¹²⁴ What was more significantly emphasized in a letter from the Pembroke family's chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Eyre, to their absent son, Lord Herbert, was the highly formal (and costly) nature of the royal visit with a particular emphasis on court-military connections. Eyre indicated that the king was accompanied by an *aide-de-camp* during his receptions at Wilton, and that no gentlemen under the rank of colonel were permitted to dine with him there.¹²⁵ George spent the majority of a rainy day on horseback, reviewing troops on a nearby plain called Tippet Down, accompanied by the earl of Pembroke, as well as several army generals. One scholar has also noted the importance of this visit for the earl's "rehabilitation" back into polite society after causing scandal. With this royal visit, Pembroke could enact a respectable demonstration of his roles as Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire and Colonel of the First (Royal) Regiment of Dragoons.¹²⁶

The second review of note which was hosted by George's courtiers took place in June 1800. The marquess and marchioness of Salisbury welcomed the king, queen, and six royal children to Hatfield House (Herts.) in order to review the Hertfordshire Volunteer Corps and Militia. James Cecil, the marquess of Salisbury, was at this time Lord Chamberlain to the king and Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, and his wife Emily Mary (née Hill), the marchioness, was one of the leading political hostesses of the eighteenth century, rivaling the Whig duchess of Devonshire and canvassing in favor of the king's ministers. Their reception of the king and queen at Hatfield has been described by Elaine Chalus as the marchioness's "most impressive socio-

¹²⁴ "News," *Morning Chronicle* [1770], 6 October 1778, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

¹²⁵ Rev. Dr. Thomas Eyre to George, Lord Herbert, 1 January 1779, 2057/F4/36, WSHC, published in *Pembroke Papers*, 138–41.

¹²⁶ John Martin Robinson, *Wilton House: The Art, Architecture and Interiors of One of Britain's Great Stately Homes* (New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2021), 170–71.

political coup,”¹²⁷ and demonstrated the efforts sourced among a curated group of courtiers to support George’s position as a committed and capable leader at the head of his armed forces – both professional and militia.

George was so invested in longstanding ideas of soldier-kingship that he trained his sons as military princes, and as a result, developed a valuable network for the exchange of information and diplomacy abroad. Knowledge and skill in war made up a large portion of the princely education that George prescribed for his younger sons, and Europe was the ultimate destination for their training. The education of his sons outside of Britain also presented certain opportunities for the expression of European princehood. The king’s combined dynastic and military intentions for his second eldest, Prince Frederick, were made clear at a very early period through the use of the honors system. Frederick, the duke of York and Albany, from a young age was made prince-bishop of Osnabrück, an ecclesiastical principality of the Holy Roman Empire, and Great Master (the senior knight) of the Order of the Bath. He was sent and later joined by many of his younger brothers to study at the University of Göttingen, in the southern region of the electorate of Hanover.

By virtue of his sons’ as well as his brothers’ travels throughout Europe, George also formed a court network that, beyond soldier-kingship, proved diplomatically and politically useful. Frederick, for example, “acted almost as an unofficial ambassador on his [father’s] behalf at the Prussian court” during the formation of the *Fürstenbund*.¹²⁸ The king’s brother Prince William Henry, the duke of Gloucester, likewise acted as “an informal diplomatic representative” when abroad

¹²⁷ Chalus, “Elite Women,” 685.

¹²⁸ Ditchfield, *George III*, 40; Blanning, “That Horrid Electorate,” 343.

and was welcomed in Rome in 1771 by Pope Clement XIV.¹²⁹ By the time George's son, Prince Augustus, visited Rome in 1792, his reports demonstrated Britain's easing tensions with the papacy.¹³⁰

Further ways in which George's aristocratic courtiers helped to promote soldier-kingship in a particular dynastic context was expressed in a kind of guardianship over his sons and their training outside of Britain. Prince Frederick had specialized in military matters on land, but George's third son, Prince William (later William IV), was sent to train in the British navy, and the king particularly relied on his network at court for the development of William's profession there. In the first instance, William was placed under the watchful eye of a preceptor, Henry Majendie, and an *aide-de-camp*, Geneva-born General Jacob de Budé.¹³¹ Additional courtiers became involved, including the earl and countess of Courtown, when their son Robert (Bob) Stopford also joined in the navy in 1780. In a letter to the earl of Ailesbury (the countess's maternal uncle) around this time, Lord Courtown was pleased to relate the good "character" given to his son during his travels aboard the *HMS Prince George* with Prince William, under the command of Admiral Robert Digby, a member of another large and devoted courtier-family. He continued his report:

Prince William is very well, and really seems to be very much lik'd and lov'd by all the Navy. We were honor'd with letters for him from the King and Queen, for the King was so good to propose it first to the boys [Lord Courtown's three other sons] and to take advantage of their holydays to make Bob a visit [in Portsmouth], and see a sight so new to them, and to remove any difficulty said they must carry letters for him.¹³²

¹²⁹ Matthew Kilburn, "William Henry, Prince, First Duke of Gloucester and Edinburgh (1743–1805)," in *ODNB*, 3 January 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29456.

¹³⁰ Ditchfield, *George III*, 35–36.

¹³¹ "De Budé Papers," Georgian Papers Programme, accessed 13 March 2024, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/georgian-papers-programme/de-bude-papers>.

¹³² The earl of Courtown to the earl of Ailesbury, 31 August 1780, 9/35/305, WSHC.

The Courtown children benefited professionally from their access to the royal family as their lives and military careers coincided with those of the royal princes. Moreover, the king was enabled to expand his intelligence networks further abroad. This, however, did not guarantee a very effective form of control over his sons' upbringing or behavior. When the earl of Ailesbury's own son, Charles, was on his Grand Tour in 1793, for example, he resided in Italy at the same time as Prince Augustus. In a letter to his father, he mistakenly dismisses the rumors of the prince's clandestine marriage to Lady Augusta Murray, which had indeed taken place in violation of the 1772 Royal Marriages Act.¹³³ When Prince William's behavior proved equally unsatisfactory, particularly "that unhappy disposition to resist controul," the king sent him to Hanover, hoping that his son's "manners and behaviour may be formed fit for shore." In this same letter, George references the trusted advice of Earl Howe, "who certainly is a scientific officer assures me that he thinks in our service the attention is carried so long alone to seamanship that few Officers are formed, and that a knowledge of the military is necessary to open the ideas to the directing [of] large Fleets."¹³⁴

Alongside the diplomatic connections and information gleaned from the training of his sons, certain courtiers – namely, the Harcourts – were also able to use their connections to Europe in order to exert considerable influence on the king and his court during times of conflict and war. The Harcourts were especially cognizant of the king's active approach to European princehood and employed their positions at court in Britain when tensions began to heighten in France in the 1790s. Aside from the pleasures of the aforementioned Nuneham flower garden (with its links to Rousseau), the earl and countess lobbied for the interests of the French branch of their

¹³³ Lord Bruce to the earl of Ailesbury, 17 June 1793, in RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 254–55.

¹³⁴ George III to Prince William, 16 April 1783, in Aspinall, 5:697–98.

family, several of whom became émigrés during the revolution. Leslie Mitchell has further detailed Earl Harcourt's particular connections: this network formed a "self-conscious cousinhood," members of whom did not hesitate to appeal to him and the countess for their assistance.¹³⁵ Considering the intimate relationships fostered at Nuneham, tales of the horrors across the Channel were then "poured into the ears of their English cousins, who thereby became a conduit between a certain section of French opinion and the English royal family."¹³⁶ Mitchell even suggests that when George and his Prime Minister, William Pitt, often disagreed over their approach to the revolution in France, it was likely because "they were listening to different voices," whereby both king and queen tended to favor the Harcourts and their relations.¹³⁷ Nuneham, similar to Hatfield and Wilton described above, embodied an alternative courtly venue for the exploration of eighteenth-century kingship in its varied forms, notably the diplomatic and intellectual components to ruling.

The Harcourts were likewise active in the dynastic ambitions specific to the royal family in Britain through their close relationships with George's daughters, and they continued to facilitate additional points of connection to the ruling classes in Europe. In recognition of the Harcourts' influence at court, in 1791, Prince Ferdinand Frederick Augustus of Württemberg, a younger son of the reigning duke Frederick II Eugene, approached Lady Harcourt and requested that she forward letters containing a proposal of marriage to the king and queen's second eldest daughter, Princess Augusta.¹³⁸ Though Ferdinand's application was unsuccessful, his elder brother,

¹³⁵ Leslie Mitchell, "The Harcourts: Anglo-French Relations in a Time of Revolution," in *Revisiting the Polite and Commercial People*, 208.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹³⁸ Prince Ferdinand of Württemberg to Countess Harcourt, 29 January 1791, in *Harcourt Papers*, 6:176.

Frederick I, married the Princess Royal (Charlotte) a few years later, in 1797, shortly before becoming the duke of Württemberg. The duke's proposal was reportedly liable to meet the same fate as that of his brother, but "counsels of true friends prevailed," according to Harcourt family memory.¹³⁹ The earl and countess facilitated the marriage arrangements and, besides the duke himself, they were in correspondence with the diplomat Sir John Hippisley to help combat any rumors that were circulating among other German states, allegedly resulting from "political prejudices," which would smear the duke's character and injure his chances.¹⁴⁰ Once the king gave his assent to the marriage, the Harcourts were again called on to mediate the question of a wedding present, which the duke expected from his new bride according to German custom.¹⁴¹

Two of George's daughters married into different German families within the Holy Roman Empire and also helped to export the king's own architectural interests in the Gothic. David Watkin has already reviewed the varying architectural tastes of the many children of George III, but the building projects of his daughters in Germany bear repeating in the context of the cultural exchange further propagated by his court throughout Europe. Even after she became the duchess of Württemberg, the Princess Royal encouraged her father's renovations at Windsor, which would "restore it to its ancient Gothic beauty,"¹⁴² and on another occasion expressed her satisfaction with the accounts of the castle's "improvements" from the queen and her sisters, declaring it to be "the finest palace in Europe."¹⁴³ At Ludwigsburg, she inhabited an

¹³⁹ *Harcourt Papers*, 6:135.

¹⁴⁰ Memorandum by Sir J. Hippesley, 6 May [1796], in *Harcourt Papers*, 6:143.

¹⁴¹ This request was rebuffed in Lady Harcourt's correspondence with Hippesley, as it was not a custom in England. *Harcourt Papers*, 6:145–47.

¹⁴² The duchess of Württemberg to George III, 22 November 1802, in Aspinall, 4:62.

¹⁴³ The duchess of Württemberg to George III, 5 July 1805, in Aspinall, 4:341.

informal residence abutting the palace, as her family once did at the Queen's Lodge next to Windsor Castle.¹⁴⁴ In addition to a number of innovative farming "machines" brought from England to Württemberg, the duchess attempted to import the "true Gothic taste" of her father and wrote to him boasting of the "Gothic furniture which I have had very well executed and I have almost made a convert of the Duke."¹⁴⁵ Comparably, the third eldest princess, Elizabeth, married the Landgrave Frederick VI Joseph of Hesse-Homburg in 1818, and some time following the death of her father, used her dowry to build a "castellated Gothic House" at Tannenwald, principally inspired by George's castellated palace at Kew, designed by James Wyatt.¹⁴⁶ Similar to the exportation of English gardens in the mid-eighteenth century, both sisters essentially became ambassadors for the developing English neo-Gothic style and brought with them to Germany a significant feature of British court culture under George III.

Through the education of his sons abroad and the cultivation of a court circle with further connections to Europe, George fostered an extra-diplomatic network, which bolstered his electoral status and facilitated a multi-faceted approach to kingship that was very much in tune with the interests and politics of the Continent, especially an association with military matters. In terms of dynastic ambition, however, Campbell Orr has argued that George was largely an ineffective dynast owing to the nature of Britain's parliamentary monarchy, the lack of resources and direction for both his brothers and younger children to marry with much advantage, and the general upheaval of war in Europe from 1793 to 1815, which rendered these

¹⁴⁴ Fraser, *Princesses*, 172.

¹⁴⁵ The duchess of Württemberg to George III, 29 March 1803, in Aspinall, 4:87.

¹⁴⁶ Watkin, *The Architect King*, 201.

connections difficult to achieve in the first place.¹⁴⁷ Campbell Orr's conclusion – in addition to the implications of the succession crisis after the death of Princess Charlotte of Wales – detracts from the varied ways in which George III participated in a larger European princehood, as outlined in this chapter, with a particular investment in the chivalric orders of knighthood and an emphasis on soldier-kingship and its representations in portraiture. The king's dynastic "legacy" was also expressed materially in significant ways; the neo-Gothic style that he established at Windsor was not only expanded by his eldest son in the nineteenth century, but it was also exported to Germany through the interventions of his married daughters there.

In the wake of Britain's defeat in the American War for Independence, George's attention to his electoral status was distinctive, and the myriad intellectual and political initiatives pertaining to the Continent became an important feature of his court. A discussion of George's position as a European ruler has introduced questions on the nature of monarchical power in the eighteenth century, as well as an interesting synthesis of *ancien régime* and enlightened rule within his kingship. The court circle in Britain became an invaluable source of mediation for the introduction of both Enlightenment philosophy, such as that of Rousseau, and the cultivation of more conservative principles associated with the honors system and soldier-kingship. George's particular affinity for the chivalric in his representation and in his relationship to the nobility was a significant point of comparison and revealed much of his alignment with and even leadership among rulers in Europe. With an emphasis on the continuing importance of the honors system, especially the chivalric orders of

¹⁴⁷ Campbell Orr, "Dynastic Perspectives."

knighthood, alongside the king's representation as a soldier and knight, the court of George III ultimately proved an invaluable network of devoted attendants who facilitated his connections to and throughout Europe. Many of these same themes – especially the king's military connections and the high-ranking officers invited to the royal circle – will resurface in the following (final) chapter, which encompasses a case study of the royal tour of 1789 and identifies the court-led initiatives that supported George's kingship during his rehabilitation following the Regency Crisis.

Chapter 5: The Royal Tour of 1789

In the summer of 1789, following his first serious illness and the subsequent Regency Crisis, George III was accompanied by his queen consort, their three eldest daughters, and a select group of courtiers and attendants into the West Country for what was reported to be a further period of recovery and restorative treatment. The tour lasted nearly three months, and, beyond the very positive reception the king met from the crowds that lined his route, it provided a unique opportunity for reconciliation within the royal circle after a grueling period of uncertainty and imprisonment at Kew. A close analysis of the 1789 royal tour offers insight into the structure and logistics of a travelling court, as well as the social and political dimensions of holding a court in alternative venues to London during this period. This final chapter seeks to incorporate the elements of kingship examined in preceding chapters that also feature during the tour, including George's relationship with the ruling class, especially local noblemen and those holding high military office, the strong presence of the queen's household among the royal entourage, participation in both leisured country pursuits and grand naval reviews, alongside meetings with the Privy Council and more formal gatherings, with an eye to news from London and further afield.

Accounts of this tour have principally centered on the public reception of the monarch. Tracing royal footsteps can be supported by a variety of sources, the most obvious being *A diary of the royal tour in June, July, August, and September, 1789* by

an observer of the times, published that same year in London.¹ However, the origins of this text and the identity of its author are unclear. It was perhaps compiled from various newspaper reports of the tour, since it details engagements that a member of the public would witness, not a member of the court circle. John Barrell suggests that the author was, or knew someone who had been, an onlooker in Weymouth that summer because the account gives “much more information than was available in the newspapers or even in the extended chronicle of the tour published in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*.”² The royal party in this narrative, however, remains an overlooked entourage of “many well dressed persons,”³ which minimizes the attendance of the court in favor of an emphasis on the king’s public reception and growing popularity.

In addition to *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, there were countless regional and London-based newspapers that closely followed royal movements – of the king, queen, and their children – and, collectively, these reports held significant implications for an evolving image of kingship that could be shaped by George himself, in his style of travel, or otherwise more widely incorporated into the expression of both the local and national identities of his subjects. In her recent doctoral research, Paige Emerick presents an expansive picture of the newspaper coverage of late Georgian monarchs on the move. Emerick further discusses how George’s approach to travel, which upheld elements both of privacy and accessibility, contrasted with that of his eldest son.⁴ While the following chapter will focus chiefly

¹ *A Diary of the Royal Tour in June, July, August, and September, 1789. Interspersed with Anecdotes, Poetry, and Descriptions, Historical, Typographical, &c. &c. To Which Is Added, That of Their Highnesses the Prince of Wales, and Duke of York, to York, &c. &c. ... By an Observer of the Times* (London: printed for and sold by J. Southern, and Scatcherd and Whitaker, 1789).

² Barrell, “Weymouth Amusements,” 106.

³ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 6.

⁴ I am indebted to the friendship and research of Dr Paige Emerick, whose doctoral thesis, “Monarchy on the Move,” prompted many interesting conversations on the nature of royal travel and has naturally shaped this chapter. Emerick, “Monarchy on the Move,” 96–99.

on just one royal tour, there will be an effort to situate the analysis in the context of George's travel throughout his reign, its social and material impacts, as well as the experiences of those who witnessed and facilitated royal visits.

It is equally important to recognize the broader scholarship on early modern royal progresses and determine where such precedents might intersect or diverge from the visiting habits of the later Hanoverians. As George I and George II were only interested in travelling to and from Hanover,⁵ the gulf between Tudor or Stuart practices and those adopted by George III only seems to widen. The need for royal progresses arguably lessened with the Act of Union in 1707 and the further "centralisation of the court" in London.⁶ Moreover, period-specific circumstances such as the burgeoning public sphere and growing print culture of eighteenth-century society have prompted, as mentioned above, a closer analysis of a relatively modern concept of royal publicity, whereas some early modern scholars would consider it a "risk in imagining this kind of interaction between sovereign and public in the deeper past."⁷ Several essential elements of an early modern royal progress, however, were echoed in the 1789 royal tour. As John Cooper and Keely Hayes-Davis have defined it, a royal progress at the time of Henry VIII was "a summer journey beyond the king's standing houses, mixing business with pleasure in varying proportions

⁵ In 1717, after some encouragement, George I "went on a short progress to Newmarket." There was a general expectation that he would take another, extended progress, but this never materialized. According to Hannah Smith, "the king preferred to travel home to Hanover than around his new kingdom. The rumor circulating in May 1724 that George I intended to visit the north proved idle, as indeed did the rumor that George II planned to travel northwards in 1731." This early Hanoverian tendency to neglect royal progresses coincided closely with the style of monarchy that Smith describes, which did not make the early Georgian kings "very visible or accessible." Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 116–17.

⁶ Paige Emerick, "The Hanoverian Consorts: Progresses, Pageants, and Performance," in *Hanoverian to Windsor Consorts: Power, Influence, and Dynasty*, ed. Aidan Norrie et al., Queenship and Power (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 136.

⁷ J. P. D. Cooper and Keely Hayes-Davies, "Progresses and Personal Monarchy in the Reign of Henry VIII," in *Royal Journeys in Early Modern Europe: Progresses, Palaces and Panache*, ed. Anthony Musson and J. P. D. Cooper, Routledge Research in Early Modern History (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023), 25.

according to circumstance ... and requiring the court to reorder itself into a form appropriate for extended travel.”⁸ While George III was not nearly as interested as his Tudor predecessor in recreating spectacle and “panache,”⁹ his travel incorporated a mixture of activities that mirrored earlier progresses, including opportunities for ceremony, philanthropy, leisure, as well as dialogue with the local nobility and the need for an adapted and still very active courtly retinue.

No matter the monarch, royal travel occasioned accessibility to a particular audience and could encompass a wide variety of objectives, whether diplomatic, soldierly, or generally social.¹⁰ For William III, during his royal progress of 1695, the aim was largely political; the king attempted to secure the goodwill of a newly-elected House of Commons in the hopes of a decent budget for continued war on the Continent.¹¹ Though it precedes the 1789 royal tour by almost a century, William’s progress is one of the nearest comparable examples to the travels of George III and involved many similar elements, especially his visits to a spread of country houses. Some hosts held court office, others were conveniently willing to receive the king *en route* to his next destination, still others were entirely absent from their homes when he arrived.¹² Despite his political aims, William also indulged in hunting through Sherwood Forest and took time to demonstrate royal philanthropy at Warwick, a town that had been lately devastated by fire.¹³ While recent research has anticipated future iterations of modern royal visiting in the travels of George III,¹⁴ comparisons to early

⁸ Cooper and Hayes-Davies, “Progresses and Personal Monarchy,” 24.

⁹ Musson and Cooper, eds., *Royal Journeys in Early Modern Europe*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2, 5.

¹¹ Stefan van Raaij, *The Royal Progress of William & Mary* (Amsterdam: D’Arts, 1988), 133.

¹² William III visited Boughton House, home of his Master of the Great Wardrobe; Belton House, home to Sir John Brownlow, which was admittedly only a stop on the way to Lincoln; and, when the king came to Burghley House, the earl of Exeter absented himself owing to his abstention from the oath of allegiance. van Raaij, 135–38.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 139–40.

¹⁴ Emerick, “Monarchy on the Move,” 148, 177.

modern progresses should not be neglected and will become increasingly evident in the following case study.

There is also evidence that George was indeed attentive to royal precedents for travel and was not unwilling to go as far as Germany, though this suggestion is mostly derived from the rather precarious circumstances of his fragile state of mind during the Regency Crisis. Towards the beginning of his illness in 1788, the king made several references to an intended trip (and at one point, a permanent retirement) to Hanover.¹⁵ George also reportedly mentioned a wish to visit Cambridge and bid his doctor to “get him an account of the procession when Charles II was there.”¹⁶ More compelling support for this suggestion is that many of the towns that George visited during his travels already held established royal connections, particularly Winchester, Salisbury, Worcester, and Lyndhurst.¹⁷ Royal travel in the late eighteenth century thus invites a variety of comparisons to early modern progresses, though George would also begin to develop his own precedents as he began to travel more frequently in England.

Before 1788, outside of his regular commute between Kew, Windsor, and his other London residences, George had traveled further afield very infrequently and often unaccompanied by members of his immediate family. In the first two decades of

¹⁵ Fulke Greville, vol. 2, fols. 57, 100, RL.

¹⁶ Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Charles II ever visited Cambridge, though he did undergo a progress through Norfolk, to Norwich, in September 1671. George II visited Cambridge in 1728. There were also rumors around 1784 and again in 1786, after George III had visited the Harcourt family in Oxford, that he also intended to visit Cambridge. The countess of Courtown, writing to her uncle the earl of Ailesbury in September 1786 mentioned that, “Major Price [an Equerry to the king] rather thinks after all that Cambridge is not thought of for this year.” R. W. Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk Portraits* (London: Faber and Faber, 1944), 10; RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 295; John Cornforth, “Fit for a King,” *Country Life* 186, no. 21 (1992): 54.

¹⁷ Emerick, “Monarchy on the Move,” 133.

his reign, royal visits were principally structured around military and naval reviews, which were introduced in the previous chapter on the subject of soldier-kingship. As early as 1773, the king visited Portsmouth to review the fleet at Spithead, which was a trip carefully organized by the earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty. George had already sent detailed instructions in his own hand, but Lord Sandwich still sought the king's approval on certain matters, such as attendants and other logistics.¹⁸

The year 1778 featured several more royal visits with martial interests, likely owing to the outbreak of war with France and increasing tensions with Spain concerning the North American colonies. On 24 April, George boarded his yacht at Greenwich and proceeded to Portsmouth for another naval review.¹⁹ Just one month later, the queen and a few royal children accompanied him for a ship launch at Deptford.²⁰ The summer of 1778 included visits to review troops at the encampments in Coxheath and Warley Common,²¹ while later in September and October, the king and queen embarked on a five-day progress to Winchester and Salisbury, which previewed many elements seen in later tours, including royal visits to cathedrals and country houses.²²

¹⁸ The earl of Sandwich to George III, 12 June 1772, in J. W. Fortescue, ed., *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783: Printed from the Original Papers in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1927), 501–3.

¹⁹ An extant letter from Queen Charlotte reveals that, though she did not travel with him on this occasion, she took an active interest in the preparations for the king's stay at Portsmouth, relating to the king a report from a royal page, William Ramus, on the state of his accommodations there. Queen Charlotte to George III, 24–25 April 1778, GEO/MAIN/36349–36351, RA; “News,” *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, Issue 461, 24 April 1778, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

²⁰ “News,” *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, Issue 489, 29 May 1778, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

²¹ Kassler, 1:42.

²² Baron Petre at Thorndon Hall in Essex welcomed the king when he reviewed troops at Warley Common. While at Winchester, George stayed with the Lord of the Admiralty, Henry Penton, at his home Eastgate. The earl and countess of Pembroke later hosted the king and queen overnight at Wilton House, near Salisbury. Emerick, “Monarchy on the Move,” 36; “News,” *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, Issue 2739, 1–3 October 1778, *Burney Newspapers Collection*; “News,” *Morning Chronicle* [1770], Issue 2922, 1 October 1778, and Issue 2926, 6 October 1778, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

George would continue reviewing both troops and fleets during wartime, but this practice would drop significantly following the Treaty of Paris.²³ After 1783, the king and queen more frequently began to visit the country seats of their courtiers who were located relatively near Windsor, particularly the Harcourts at Nuneham House (Oxon.) and the Brudenells at Tottenham House (Wilts.). Both families and their country seats were introduced in the second chapter owing to their close associations with the queen's household. As discussed, such visits were often spontaneous in nature; the noble hosts were usually given only a few days' notice of the king's intentions.

Nuneham was a Palladian villa envisioned by Earl Harcourt in the 1750s and designed by the architect Stiff Leadbetter. Harcourt's son, the second earl, employed Lancelot "Capability" Brown to undertake an elaborate renovation of the house and landscape garden between 1779 and 1782.²⁴ George and Charlotte became very fond of this fashionable country house, which was notable for its situation on the Thames and a famous flower garden designed by the English poet William Mason. Sarah Siddons, a well-known actress and friend of the Harcourts, was present for the 1784 royal visit to Nuneham and explained that the king and queen "were so delighted with their loyal and noble Hosts, and so charmd [sic] with all they saw," they spontaneously extended their stay three days.²⁵

Only a couple of weeks after their visit to Nuneham, on 4 October 1784, George and Charlotte again set out from Windsor to call on the queen's Lord

²³ In 1781, George attended naval reviews at the Nore in both April and August, and in June he reviewed troops at Ashford Common. Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, 126; Aspinall, 5:675, n. 1; "News," *Morning Chronicle* [1770], Issue 3767, 13 June 1781, *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

²⁴ Mavis Batey, *Nuneham Courtenay, Oxfordshire: A Short History and Description of the House, Gardens, and Estate*, second ed. (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1979).

²⁵ Sarah Siddons, *The Reminiscences of Sarah Kemble Siddons, 1773-1785*, ed. William Van Lennep (Cambridge: Printed at the Widener library, 1942), 22-23.

Chamberlain, the earl of Ailesbury, at Tottenham Park, situated within the vast Savernake Forest estate. Both the house and surrounding park that the king and queen would have seen were both designed about 1721 by Richard Boyle, the earl of Burlington, and also later improved by Capability Brown from 1764 to 1770.²⁶ As discussed in the second chapter, Ailesbury worried that he would not be able to properly receive the royal party with such little warning, but in his reply, he eagerly welcomed the visit and enclosed a book which detailed the surrounding area's houses and landscapes,²⁷ his recommendations suggesting a wider preference among the royal circle for "polite tourism" (to use Adrian Tinniswood's term) while travelling.²⁸ The queen was especially eager to see and assess according to proper taste the various aristocratic country seats, which will become evident later in this analysis.

The increasingly frequent royal visits to local country houses were soon after supplemented with more formal engagements. In August 1786, George had survived an assassination attempt by Margaret Nicholson, which then prompted an official royal visit to Oxford just a week later, likely encouraged by his established relationship with the Harcourts there. The visit included a formal reception of its mayor and corporation, a Thanksgiving address hosted by the University inside Sir Christopher Wren's Sheldonian Theatre, and an added excursion to Blenheim Palace. Frances Burney's account especially attests to the intimate though highly regulated nature of this and following royal visits, even within the relative privacy and comfort of Nuneham House.²⁹ Not unlike what was practiced at Windsor, as the third chapter has reviewed, many of the formalities and protocol implemented in London were

²⁶ "Tottenham House And Savernake Forest, Burbage," Historic England, accessed 13 June 2024, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000472>.

²⁷ The earl of Ailesbury to George III, 3 October 1784, 1300/3107, WSHC.

²⁸ Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist*.

²⁹ Sabor, 1:93–132.

adapted to satellite royal residences and country houses. Aristocratic hosts, for example, became the principal lord and lady of the respective state bedchambers for the length of the visit, which sometimes lasted several days. This rule of attendance sometimes extended to the surrounding area. During the ceremonial address held at the Sheldonian, for example, Lord Harcourt had the honor to stand directly behind the king, “officiating as his <Majesty's> Chamberlain” while the countess was his counterpart for the queen.³⁰ Burney describes these arrangements, as well as other “court scenery,” transplanted to Oxford in 1786.³¹

Royal travel thus did not prevent George from holding court outside of St. James’s Palace. With the dutiful attendance of his courtiers, the king was able to recreate settings akin to a London drawing room. Burney’s account, for instance, details the purposeful way in which, while visiting an Oxford college, the king and queen seated themselves at the head of a room:

nothing could exceed the celerity with which all confusion instantly was over, & the most solemn order succeeded to it,—chairs were instantly presented to the three Princesses, by the side of the Queen, & the Duchess of Ancaster & Lady Harcourt planted themselves at their backs; while Lady Charlotte [Bertie] instantly retreated back, close to the wall, & so did every creature else in the Room, all according to their Rank or Station, & the Royal Family remained conspicuous & alone, all crowd dispersed.³²

The courtiers present were highly familiar with royal protocol and enacted it immediately when the opportunity was presented in Oxford. This and other court scenes are present throughout successive royal tours and will reappear again later in this chapter.

³⁰ Sabor, 1:111–12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1:123.

³² *Ibid.*, 1:126.

Because of their privileged experience, Lord and Lady Harcourt were recognized and consulted as particular authorities in hosting royalty. Having received the royal family several times in such a unique capacity, they advised other potential hosts, such as Baron Howard de Walden, with the expected protocol. In response to a rumored royal visit to Cambridge in 1786, the latter sought guidance on the finer points of welcoming the king into his home at Audley End, including details of attendance, like the seating plans for a Sunday church service, as well as for dining. In his instructions, Lord Harcourt also specified the composition of the royal entourage brought to Oxford, which encompassed a group of livery servants, pages, and dressers, all of whom required hospitality, in addition to the arrangements needed for royal coaches and horses transported there, too. When the king and queen sat down to dine, Harcourt counseled, “Your [Lordship] must stand on the King’s right hand at Table, & Lady Howard on the Queen’s & you are to present them with what they call for, but not to go for any thing yourselves to the sideboard.”³³ Lady Harcourt was also in correspondence with Lady Howard, and another extant letter details her advice particularly on matters of dress: “first I receiv’d the Queen in a Negligée, with a dress’d cap, but without Lappets, nor Diamonds, I put in the latter when I attended her Majesty to Oxford but we wore Hats, & night gowns that Day, & did not new dress for Dinner.”³⁴

Though the royal visit to Cambridge never materialized, the Harcourts remained the key courtiers to consult, especially following George’s time in Oxford in 1786. Shortly after this royal visit, in September that year, the earl of Ailesbury sought

³³ Earl Harcourt to Baron Howard de Walden, n.d., D/Dy C10/2, ERO, Chelmsford.

³⁴ Countess Harcourt to Baroness Howard de Walden, n.d., D/Dy C10/3, ERO.

Lady Harcourt's advice (again in response to royal rumors), even though he had already hosted the king and queen two years previously. The countess wrote:

I am inclined to obey your commands, though at the same time you must allow me to say that it seems a sort of presumption in me to attempt giving you any information upon a subject which you certainly understand much better than I do. When their Majesties did us the honour of coming here, it was our wish to do everything that might mark our respect without being troublesome to them.³⁵

What may have seemed like a less formal environment, country houses – foremost Nuneham – were infused with court ceremony, and thanks to the Harcourts, such solicitous adherence to matters of protocol was widely recognized and adopted among the wider aristocratic court circle. However, despite the Harcourts' expertise, Ailesbury's appeal for their advice suggests that the expectations for such visits were still unclear, thus giving advantage to George and Charlotte in the display of royal authority among elite circles.

In the summer of 1788, George embarked on his first major tour to Cheltenham and Worcester, which lasted just over a month. The visit to Cheltenham was principally for the king's health; drinking the spa town waters was hoped to help relieve his suffering after a "bilious fever, attended with violent spasms in his stomach and bowels."³⁶ Nevertheless, many other sights and activities were added to the itinerary as the tour was long enough to support a variety of pursuits, including several calls to country houses, attendance at the Three Choirs Festival held at Worcester Cathedral, as well as visits to local manufacturing plants in the surrounding area and civic institutions, including Flight's porcelain shop and manufactory, the carpet manufactory of Messrs. Michael and Watkins, a local jail, and a hospital.³⁷

³⁵ Countess Harcourt to the earl of Ailesbury, 28 September 1786, in RCHM, *Fifteenth Report*, 243.

³⁶ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:2–7; Watkin, *The Architect King*, 138–39.

Lady Harcourt's memoirs of the years 1788 to 1789, though they culminate in an account of the Regency Crisis, indeed begin with the king's travel to Cheltenham and Worcester, not least because the royal party again visit Nuneham *en route* both to and from their final destinations. At Cheltenham, the earl of Fauconberg, a Gentleman of the Bedchamber since 1777, offered up his house at Bayshill (Gloucs.), which he vacated completely in order to accommodate the large royal retinue.³⁸ Other courtiers and prominent families from the area were also eager to welcome the king. In terms of country house visits, George and Charlotte made "long excursions" to call on the earl of Coventry, the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, at Croome Court (Worcs.), the earl of Bathurst, a Privy Council member and MP, at Cirencester Park (Gloucs.),³⁹ and Baron Ducie, a retired royal naval officer, at Spring House (Gloucs.).⁴⁰ While at Worcester, one of the king's most favored courtiers, Richard Hurd, the bishop of Worcester, hosted the royal party overnight, first at Hartlebury Castle to the north of the city and then at the Bishop's Palace, close to the cathedral. George wrote directly to Hurd concerning his plans: "I am certain you know the regard that both the Queen and I have for You, and that it will be peculiarly agreeable to us to see you at Hartlebury."⁴¹

Another appeal in Worcester was its musical activity, particularly the Three Choirs Festival (then also known as the Worcester Music Meeting), which was moved

³⁸ Burney complained that the house was still too small to accommodate the royal entourage. Sabor, 1:247–48.

³⁹ The earl of Bathurst's eldest son and heir, known as Lord Apsley, was also a prominent political figure and friend to William Pitt. At the time of the royal visit, Apsley was a serving Lord of the Admiralty. Thompson, "Bathurst, Henry, Third Earl Bathurst (1762–1834), Politician," in *ODNB*, 3 January 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1696.

⁴⁰ *Harcourt Papers*, 4:3–4.

⁴¹ George III to Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, 8 July 1788, Bishop Richard Hurd Letter Book 12, 12/18, HL.

several weeks earlier than planned in order to accommodate the royal tour.⁴² Included in the festival held at Worcester Cathedral was a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, and as a devotee of the German composer, George was determined to attend. His illness, "which by the Goodness of Divine Providence is quite removed,"⁴³ as he admitted to Hurd, was never a hurdle to his travel, and the king remained employed during his trip in a way unlike what he had practiced before in his reign. The royal tour to Cheltenham and Worcester amalgamated many components of his previous travel, especially a sociability among his courtiers, and set a unique precedent for the following year when illness would again prompt a retreat to the countryside.

In light of the royal travel in the summer of 1788, the 1789 royal tour was thus a longer, more developed version of George's retreats from London. The late 1780s saw the maturation of almost three decades' worth of rather isolated incidents of royal visiting that, combined, reflected the mix of activities that a king could infuse into his own eighteenth-century adaptation of a progress and likewise welcome the participation of his courtiers. Rather than taking a straightforward recuperative retreat to the seaside, George embraced travel reminiscent of early modern monarchs. He did not, for a starting example, take the road straight to Weymouth and back again – a journey that could have been achieved in less than a day if travelling from Windsor.⁴⁴ Instead, he used this opportunity to process through the West Country and indulge in the social, political, and martial connections of his court.

A critical question at this early stage of analysis involves the audience. Paige Emerick has skillfully demonstrated the significant impact, socially and materially, of

⁴² Lorna J. Clark, ed., *The Diary of Lucy Kennedy (1790-1816)*, vol. 3, *Memoirs of the Court of George III* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), n. 871.

⁴³ George III to Richard Hurd, bishop of Worcester, 8 July 1788, Bishop Richard Hurd Letter Book 12, 12/18, HL.

⁴⁴ Emerick, "Monarchy on the Move," 57–58.

the king's travel on the provincial population, but what of the court itself? The royal "family" on the 1789 tour included the queen, three princesses, and several high-ranking court office-holders and their families, not to mention the numerous additional attendants employed in both the royal household and the queen's household. Revisiting sources from within this mobile royal circle during a particular (and lengthy) tour can unearth the particular social and political dynamics between the monarch and the ruling class, which dictated much of the progress itself. The queen's Keeper of the Robes, Frances Burney, and Queen Charlotte herself wrote their own accounts of this tour that are still extant, and the surviving correspondence among aristocratic courtiers indicates the significant presence of attendants who rejoiced in the king's recovery and the opportunity to ingratiate themselves in a reassembled court. Stylistically, the entries in the queen's diary during this period are considered to be more immediate reflections on the events of each day, while Burney's communications contain a narrative element, similar to those of the heroines in her own novels.⁴⁵ The following case study will employ these and other source material more closely associated with the royal party, to better examine court culture at a number of alternative venues, as well as the elements of kingship that the travelling court helped to facilitate.

A theme that is distinctive to courtier accounts is the importance of rank and the structure of the royal household even as it was travelling. Burney's descriptions of the tour – which encompass a unique combination of memoirs and letters to her family and close friends – best demonstrate the strict (and for those of lower rank,

⁴⁵ Gillian Skinner, "'A Tatling Town like Windsor': Negotiating Proper Relations in Frances Burney's Early 'Court Journals and Letters' (1786-87)," *Eighteenth Century Life* 38, no. 1 (2014): 1–17; Lorna J. Clark, "Frances Burney's Methods of Narrating the Court Experience," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 2 (2017): 223–35.

often uncomfortable) adherence to the social hierarchy. Her critical eye gives a thorough report not simply on the royal party's activities but also the structure of the group and the subtleties of their relationships, especially in locations alternative to St. James's Palace and other royal residences. Much like Burney's adjustment to court culture, the wider social circle that appeared throughout the 1789 royal tour was obliged to adapt to this rural situation. The surviving portion of the queen's diary, dating from 23 August 1789, further confirms the royal preoccupation with the attendance of noble courtiers. In a similar vein, there is also a close observance of royal rituals that are highly comparable to the routines at Windsor, which have been detailed in an earlier chapter, and prompted an infusion of the ceremonial in unconventional settings.

It is unclear who first determined upon Weymouth as the ideal destination for the recovering king, nor how the trip logistically developed into a larger tour resembling a royal progress. One source claims that the decision was ultimately pressed by the king's physicians, "to restore the King's health and (by his ministers) to show his subjects that he was *already* restored."⁴⁶ One of his principal physicians, Dr. Willis, had recommended sea-bathing to aid in the king's protracted recovery from both mental and physical fatigue, which still plagued him in May 1789.⁴⁷ The *Diary* is effusive in its praise of the rural environment's healing powers in accordance with the period's enthusiasm for natural remedies: "Montesquieu is right in his supposed influence of climate – Fine air and serene skies not only generate health and spirits,

⁴⁶ Sill, 5:342.

⁴⁷ Ida Macalpine and Richard Alfred Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business*, Pimlico 20 (London: Pimlico, 1991), 95–97.

but wit, cheerfulness, and humour.”⁴⁸ Burney is also optimistic of the tour’s effects, reporting to her father in July that, “His Majesty is in delightful Health, & much improved Spirits. All agree he never looked better.”⁴⁹ Not just the scenery but the sea itself – both sea bathing and ingesting seawater – was considered an effective treatment unique to the location, compared to the spa waters at Cheltenham and the variety of medicines found in the metropolis.

Another explanation in the choice of Weymouth over the waters at Cheltenham (which George had visited the previous year following a “bilious” attack) was that the king’s brother, the duke of Gloucester, already frequented the sea town and was willing to lend him his house there in Melcombe Regis.⁵⁰ One scholar has suggested that, in addition to the attractive developments that Gloucester made to the area, the king chose Weymouth because it “had an added reputation for great loyalty to the constitution, perhaps a result of its being notoriously overrepresented in the House of Commons.”⁵¹ In terms of loyalty, there was likewise some political motivation in establishing his own seaside residence as a response to a challenge from his recalcitrant son, the prince of Wales, who had formed an oppositional court and, by 1787, began construction of the Royal Pavilion in fashionable Brighton. Comparatively, Weymouth was not as popular, but it was not entirely unknown.⁵² Additional court connections to Weymouth included the dowager duchess of Portland, who was reported to have visited Weymouth as early as 1777 according to her

⁴⁸ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 6.

⁴⁹ Sill, 5:342.

⁵⁰ Alan Chedzoy, *Seaside Sovereign* (Wimborne: Dovecote, 2003), 9–10; Barrell, “Weymouth Amusements,” 103.

⁵¹ Barrell, “Weymouth Amusements,” 104.

⁵² John Fripp has contended that, although George’s presence at Weymouth helped to contribute to the town’s later popularity, Weymouth already appealed to polite society prior to 1789. John Fripp, “Weymouth over the Long Eighteenth Century: Urban Renaissance, or New Leisure Town?,” *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 129 (for 2007 2008): 49–58.

companion and royal favorite, Mary Delany.⁵³ The poet William Mason also enjoyed “the sea calm and comfortable” at Weymouth in 1783 and 1784, when he wrote to his courtier friend, Lord Harcourt, about his retreats there.⁵⁴ It has been suggested that the queen’s German Keeper of the Robe, Juliane von Schwellenberg, likewise enjoyed visiting Weymouth before 1789 and may also have recommended it to her royal employers.⁵⁵

Whatever the true reason for Weymouth’s selection, little else was planned thoroughly in advance. Burney describes how members of the royal party, even when they had arrived in Weymouth, would seek out Colonel Digby to ask about the intended length of their stay in the resort town and where they would be travelling next – questions that did not seem to have firm answers.⁵⁶ Perhaps by virtue of his position as Vice Chamberlain to the queen – as well as the absence of Lord Herbert, Vice Chamberlain to the king, and other higher-ranking court officers in the royal household – Colonel Digby was “commonly the first informed” and communicated these arrangements to the rest of the party.⁵⁷ His leading presence was also an indication of the particular influence of the queen’s household throughout the royal circle following the Regency Crisis, as discussed in the second chapter. Burney recounted a conversation with Colonel Digby about the developing plans for a royal visit to Sherborne Castle in Dorset, the country house of his elder brother, seventh

⁵³ Mary Delany to the earl of Guilford, 24 September 1777, in Alain Kerhervé, ed., *Mary Delany (1700-1788) and the Court of King George III*, vol. 2, *Memoirs of the Court of George III* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 7–10.

⁵⁴ William Mason to Earl Harcourt, 9 August 1783 and 16 September 1784, in *Harcourt Papers*, 7:86, 95

⁵⁵ Davenport, *Faithful Handmaid*, 137.

⁵⁶ Sill, 5:325.

⁵⁷ As Master of the Horse to the king, the duke of Montagu might have had some part in planning the tour, but very few of his papers survive. An extant letter from Charlotte to her son Augustus notes that he arrived in Weymouth around 15 July. Montagu’s failing health would have been a principal reason for his general absence from the royal party that summer. Montagu died the following May. Sill, 5:335–36; Queen Charlotte to Prince Augustus, 15 July 1789, in Aspinall, 1:433.

Baron Digby. The royal party visited the house in August and again in September, but planning seems to have begun only after they had been in Weymouth for several weeks, around the end of July, and in the company of the owners themselves, Lord and Lady Digby.⁵⁸ The added excursions throughout the royal tour might have been more spontaneous than originally supposed and on the initiative of the king and those present in the Weymouth circle. Burney wrote to her father on 13 July 1789 and requested that any letters or packets he wished to send to her be directed to the Queen's House (Buckingham House) in London, and from there, they were "sure of being forwarded by the King's Mail Coach, where soever we may all be," admitting that there was no set agenda for the tour.⁵⁹

It was not unusual for the royal party to visit country houses with minimal preparation. Five years previously, in 1784, the earl of Ailesbury was given only one day's notice by letter of a visit to his home at Tottenham Park, as described above. Ailesbury was forewarned and better prepared for their second visit in 1789, and Burney describes how "He & his lady were both extremely desirous to make all their Guests comfortable. ... The good lord of the Mansion put up a new Bed for the King & Queen that cost him £900."⁶⁰ Tottenham was the final house that the royal party visited on their return to Windsor, but many of the country houses they saw during the 1789 royal tour George and Charlotte would visit again in future trips westward, including Lulworth Castle (1792), Milton Abbey (1794, 1804, and 1805),⁶¹ and Cuffnells (c. 1801–1802).⁶² For their first tour in 1789, however, many of the local

⁵⁸ Sill, 5:334–36.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 5:341.

⁶⁰ Perhaps owing to the planned royal visit to Tottenham Park, Ailesbury does not seem to have been in attendance very often at Weymouth that summer. Ibid, 421–22.

⁶¹ Arthur Oswald, "Milton Abbey, Dorset V" 140, no. 3621 (July 28, 1966): 212; Stephen Jones and J. P. Traskey, *Milton Abbey, Dorset: An Illustrated Guide* (Derby: English Life Publications, 1997), 22.

⁶² Joan Berkeley, *Lulworth and the Welds* (Gillingham: Blackmore, 1971), 176; "Domestic Occurrences," *The Athenaeum: A Magazine of Literary and Miscellaneous Information*, April 1808,

gentry and nobility were indeed eager to receive the king into their homes. The earl of Orford seems to have contacted the earl of Ailesbury directly in order to offer up his home at Puddletown Manor House. In the latter's extant correspondence, one of the queen's ladies acknowledged this suggestion: "Lady Weymouth has received [Her] Majesty's Commands to desire Ld Ailesbury will make their Majestys thanks to Lord Orford for his obliging offer of what his house can furnish near Weymouth & that they shall avail themselves of his attention to them."⁶³ The attendants who accompanied the king and queen throughout the tour – particularly those within the queen's household – continued to dictate the itinerary and other provisions thanks to the duties of their offices, which were adapted to royal needs and aristocratic interests in the countryside.

Owing to their many successive visits to Weymouth in following years, this tour is sometimes categorized as a simple seaside retreat, but the Dorset coast hosted them for less than nine weeks out of the twelve. The royal party spent nearly a month elsewhere; first in their progress from Windsor, departing 25 June 1789, they stayed several days at Lyndhurst in another house lent by the king's brother, the duke of Gloucester, who received them there and then slept at his steward's nearby.⁶⁴ While at Lyndhurst the royal party ventured into the surrounding area, traveling into Southampton on 26 June, and the following day they set out to see the estate at Cuffnells, the property of George Rose, MP and Ranger of the New Forest.

ProQuest; Roland Thorne, "Rose, George (1744–1818), Politician and Publicist," in *ODNB*, 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24088.

⁶³ Viscountess Weymouth to the earl of Ailesbury, 8 June 1789, 9/34/38, WSHC.

⁶⁴ Sill, 5:306, 314.

Afterwards, they went on to Bolderwood Lodge, the seat of Earl and Countess De La Warr (a courtier family), and after dinner, the port town of Lymington.⁶⁵

Every Sunday on the tour included prayers and a sermon, and 28 June was no exception, but after their religious engagements that morning in Lyndhurst, the royal party were again out to visit Newton Park in Hampshire, the seat of Sir John D'Oyly, sixth Baronet, a nabob who had received the king and queen at Lymington the previous day.⁶⁶ Though this visit was consistent with the spontaneous nature of royal visits to country houses, this particular host seems out of place at first glance. D'Oyly had joined the East India Company at a young age to provide for his widowed mother and repay the debts incurred by his late father. In 1785, he returned to England with a considerable fortune and purchased Newton Park from the Mitford family. His sudden appearance in Lymington is puzzling until it is explained that, in the early years of George's reign, D'Oyly was "intended to be a page of honour at Court where he and his sisters were 'much esteemed.'"⁶⁷ In this context, it is reasonable to speculate how D'Oyly, upon his return from India and at the recovery of the king, who was traveling conveniently near to his estate, sought some measure of readmittance into the court circle. Even for long-absent courtiers, the 1789 tour was a strategic opportunity in which to openly pledge loyalty to the monarch following the Regency Crisis. In return for hosting a royal visit, however brief, D'Oyly could also reclaim the distinction of his title and socially validate his newly acquired wealth. Just one year later, in 1790,

⁶⁵ Fourth Earl De la Warr was appointed an Equerry to the queen in 1778 and in 1789 became a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to George III. His father had served as Charlotte's Master of the Horse and Lord Chamberlain. *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 12; "Newton Park, Lymington," Notable Hampshire Country Houses, 8 October 2018, <http://hampshirecountryhouses.blogspot.com/2018/10/newton-park-lymington.html>.

⁶⁷ Winifred Stokes, "D'OYLY, Sir John Hadley, 6th Bt. (1754-1818), of D'Oyly Park, Hants.," *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1790-1820*, accessed 8 January 2022, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/d8217oyly-sir-john-hadley-1754-1818>.

he won the contested parliamentary seat at Ipswich and thereafter kept up his attendance at court in London, though he never held formal office in the royal household.⁶⁸ In light of his example, the king and queen's travel – before they had even fully entered the West Country – was quickly recognized by those connected to the court (however tenuously) as a valuable opportunity of royal recognition that was in their best interests, both politically and socially.

Following their visit to Lyndhurst, the royal party's journey to Weymouth on 30 June did not pass unnoticed; the group processed through Salisbury, Blandford, Puddletown, and Dorchester, meeting enthusiastic crowds and a couple of triumphal arches constructed for their reception.⁶⁹ The *Diary* noted that, "the *higher orders* of subjects well know the many amiable qualities and virtues of the family; and now, *the middle and lower orders* speak of them with rapture and a glow of heart-felt expression almost bordering idolatry."⁷⁰ While the king's popularity is clear, his residence in Weymouth gives an even stronger picture of the enveloping presence of the "higher orders" to which the *Diary* refers but never fully considers. Especially when the royal party settles and grows at Weymouth, in the presence of office-holders and courtiers more active than Sir John D'Oyly, the study of their relationships becomes increasingly significant. The court culture that had developed before the king's illness in 1788 could at last be reinstated among those who had remained loyal to him but in an environment widely different from what they were accustomed to in London or even at Windsor.

⁶⁸ Sir John D'Oyly was the one who presented Warren Hastings to George III following Hastings's famous impeachment trial and acquittal in 1795. There is a Thomas D'Oyley listed as a chaplain in the royal household by 1786, but no relationship could be found. Stokes, "D'OYLY, Sir John Hadley"; Bucholz, *Office-Holders*.

⁶⁹ Sill, 5:309–10; *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 13–14.

⁷⁰ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 35.

This tour included the first of many visits to Weymouth, but it was not an entirely new experience for members of the royal party, who had attended the king and queen at Cheltenham and Worcester the previous year. Gloucester Lodge at Weymouth, lent by the king's brother (who had also provided their lodging at Lyndhurst), was hardly better equipped to accommodate them, despite their former experiences travelling in a large suite. The royal party appointed for the tour included (with little variation in three months of travel): Ladies Elizabeth and Caroline Waldegrave, daughters of third Earl Waldegrave and ladies-in-waiting to the three eldest princesses; the countess of Courtown, Lady of the Bedchamber to the queen; the earl of Courtown, Treasurer of the Royal Household; Colonel Stephen Digby, Vice Chamberlain to the queen; Colonels Goldsworthy and Gwyn, Equerries to the king; Frances Burney, Keeper of the Robes to the queen; Colonel William Gordon, Groom of the Bedchamber to the king;⁷¹ General de Budé, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the duke of York;⁷² and Miss Margaret Planta, English Teacher to the princesses. The lodge itself at Weymouth, besides hosting the king, could only hold the women in this party, while the gentlemen, pages, and domestic servants were quartered in adjoining houses, and the footmen obliged to lodge still further away. Burney complained tongue-in-cheek how her bedroom was in the attic: "Nothing like living at a Court for exaltation! In any private party, who would so have indulged my *Soaring Genius*—as to have put me in a Garret?"⁷³

⁷¹ Colonel Gordon rarely appears in any of the available accounts, though Burney does briefly mention his attendance since she was friends with his wife, Mrs. Isobel Black Gordon, who arrived in Weymouth after the royal party. Sill, 5:346.

⁷² The papers of General Jacob de Budé are in the Royal Archives and have been digitized through the Georgian Papers Programme. There is a mysterious gap in the general's correspondence with members of the royal family between 1787 and 1793, so his attendance on the 1789 royal tour is not fully explained. Papers of General Jacob de Budé, c.1748–c.1819 and n.d., GEO/ADD/15/0457-0861, RA.

⁷³ Sill, 5:310–11.

What has rarely been considered, if at all, in scholarship regarding the king's sojourns to Weymouth are the residences that adjoined Gloucester Lodge to the north, which Burney referred to as Gloucester Row on their first trip there in 1789. Weymouth was still in its early stages of development as a seaside resort, and the royal party was able to transform the inhabited space to suit the needs and privacy of a defined and very exclusive group of courtiers. Many of the neighboring houses to Gloucester Lodge accommodated the courtiers who flocked to Weymouth, essentially the "principal people of the County" and others with close connections to the royal party. Burney names specific courtiers who occupied Gloucester Row, including the earl and countess of Courtown, Viscount and Viscountess Sydney, Earl and Countess Howe, the earl and countess of Chesterfield, Mrs. Mary Gwyn, and Lady Frances Quin.⁷⁴ The hostesses on Gloucester Row would invite members of the royal party for tea, so they were "all ... coming to & fro' continually."⁷⁵

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHM) describes nos. 1–4 on Gloucester Row as an annex to Gloucester Lodge, and the original buildings may have been the additional residences to which Burney referred, though little of the late eighteenth-century fabric of Weymouth remains. The closest depiction of the royal residence at Weymouth in this period comes in the form of a map dating from 1800, published in *Hervey's Improved Weymouth Guide* (Figure 16).⁷⁶ At least part of this annex was described as an "adjoining house" where the Equerries and other gentleman of the royal entourage kept a breakfast parlor.⁷⁷ Just next door to the north stood Stacie's Hotel and Assembly Rooms, later re-named the

⁷⁴ Sill, 5:336.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5:344.

⁷⁶ "Weymouth," in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Dorset*, vol. 2 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), 330–74.

⁷⁷ Sill, 5:316.

Royal Hotel owing to the king's patronage. Nos. 7–13 of Gloucester Row, on the other side of the hotel, made up a terrace that originally consisted of eight houses designed by James Hamilton. These, however, were reportedly completed after the king and queen's first visit, c. 1790, as were the houses developed further north along the Royal Crescent.

All of these developments were situated together as northern extensions to Melcombe Regis, facing eastward and overlooking the esplanade and bay. They were physically separated from the southern part of the isthmus, including the theater and church, by a plot called the "Shrubbery" and in the west by the "Back Water," which was an area of run-off from the River Wey and Radipole Lake. Among the various ships anchored in Weymouth Bay in Harvey's *Guide* map, two warships called the *Magnificent* and the *Southampton* were both anchored there during the king's residence in 1789 "for the security at once & pleasure of the King."⁷⁸ The harbor itself was a significant partition between Melcombe Regis and Weymouth proper to the south.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Sill, 5:319.

⁷⁹ Chedzoy, *Seaside Sovereign*, 14.

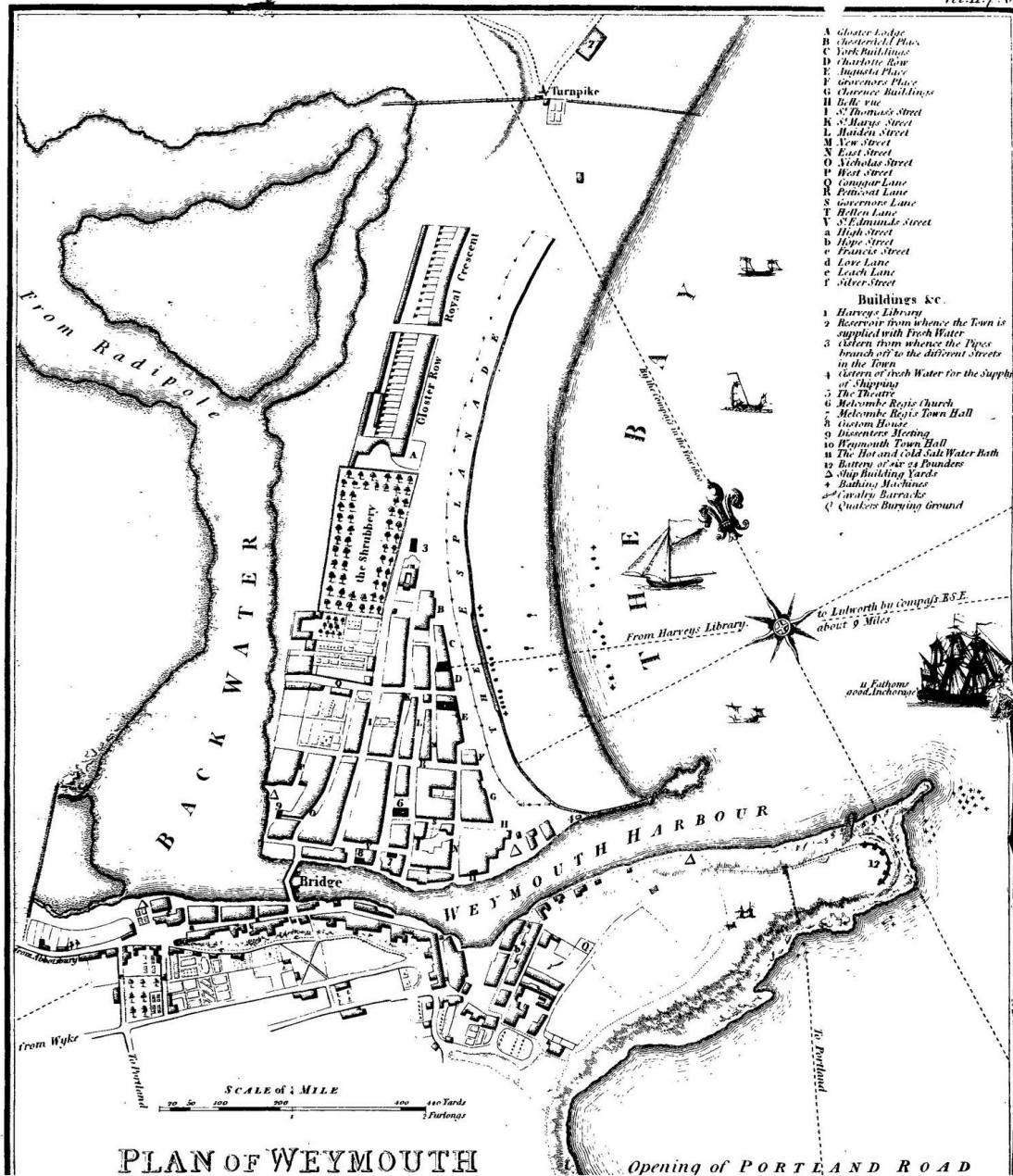


Figure 16: John Harvey, "Plan of Weymouth," in *Harvey's Improved Weymouth Guide: Containing a Description of Weymouth, Portland, Lutworth Castle, ... A List of Lodging Houses; and a New Map of Weymouth, ...* (Dorchester: printed by M. Virtue, 1800), from the British Library Collection: 10360ff.4(4), p.1, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.

Despite the *ad hoc* living arrangements in a developing resort town, the royal party appears to have enjoyed and indeed utilized this spatial insulation to form a type of royal compound where they could relax in the relative freedom of their teatime “& be summoned at a Moment” should the king or queen require them.⁸⁰ Though the

⁸⁰ Sill, 5:336.

assembly rooms next door were still technically “public” spaces, the royal presence was a socially commanding one in Weymouth, and their proximity conveniently dictated the space’s patrons and programs in accordance with proper decorum. Burney described how the royal party normally attended the assembly rooms on Sunday evenings: “after looking round them, & speaking where they chuse, they retire to Tea in an inner apartment, with their own party: but leave the door wide open, both to see & be seen.”⁸¹ It is easy to interpret this as an appeal to the wider public, including the writers of the *Diary* and other onlookers, and highlight the easy familiarity of the king and queen in such a socially-mediating venue like the local assembly rooms. Their presence, however, retained a socially insulating layer of surrounding attendants who accompanied them at Weymouth. In a similar manner, George and Charlotte frequently walked down the esplanade, which ran north-to-south alongside Gloucester Row and the northern development of Melcombe Regis, separating the houses and roads from the bay itself. This was highly reminiscent of the royal practice of “terracing” at Windsor as described in chapter three, and although the king’s person might have been an approachable one, he and his family were nevertheless well-guarded in social settings and constantly accompanied by the high-ranking attendants who largely populated this makeshift, seaside compound.

The style of daily diary entries so prevalent in the source material lends itself to a domestic reading of the king and queen’s activities, but the presence of such a large group of courtiers strongly challenges the notion that they led “a life of perfect rural retirement” while away from St. James’s Palace.⁸² Though the royal party

⁸¹ Sill, 5:359.

⁸² *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 23–24.

indulged in more sedentary, domestic activities within their gathered circle – most notably, the evening card and tea parties that regularly feature in Queen Charlotte’s diary – they could not avoid the ceremonial component associated with hosting so many courtiers and interested parties in one place. The king and queen even seemed to have embraced the ceremonial, particularly in their adherence to royal traditions, as well as an observance of rank throughout. The following section will highlight the frequent occasions in which royal ceremony was upheld, including official receptions, elevations, formal dress, and assemblies of the Privy Council.

On 1 July 1789, their first full day at Weymouth, the king and queen received the town’s mayor and corporation, who wished to present an address and “Kiss Hands” in honor of the royal visit. As these were more formal activities, Burney described how the king’s Equerry Colonel Gwyn was responsible for informing visitors the exact rules of etiquette. On this particular occasion in Weymouth, there was an embarrassing breach in protocol, and it is clear that ceremony still played a highly structural role in any social gathering that included royalty. The mayor was “advancing in a common way... as he might that of any Lady Mayoress” and did not kneel to kiss the queen’s hand as instructed. This could not be corrected in time, and the rest of the corporation followed his mistaken example. When chastised by Colonel Gwyn – “You should have knelt, Sir! ... Every body does, Sir!” – the poor mayor explained that he had a wooden leg and therefore could not have physically knelt.⁸³ Though the queen’s reaction is not documented, the breach seems to have chiefly upset her attendants; at the very least, it was enough to distress the Equerry policing the proceedings and a humorous *faux pas* worthy of Burney’s recollections.

⁸³ Sill, 5:343.

Several other examples of ceremonial pomp are scattered throughout the accounts of the tour, primarily those that revived royal tradition and distinguished rank. Upon their entrance into the New Forest, before the royal party's arrival at Lyndhurst on 25 June, there was a ceremony to present the king with two white greyhounds according to ancient custom. "All the keepers, in a green uniform, and round hats laced with gold, and ornamented with ribbands, inscribed *God save the King*, met Their Majesties at the cross roads."⁸⁴ Burney noted that the inhabitants of the New Forest also implemented a second tradition: "Bow Men & Archers & Bugle Horns" attended the king on all his rides throughout the area.⁸⁵

The distinction of rank was upheld at many other venues throughout the tour, even the small theater in Weymouth, where performances were "quite in the Barn style," according to Burney.⁸⁶ The relative social lowness of the venue did not deter the implementation of ceremonial. When the royal party attended the theater there, they sat in a makeshift royal box: three rows were "railed in front... over the centre was placed a beautiful canopy of crimson sattin, richly fringed with gold."⁸⁷ Though Burney and one of the princesses' attendants, Miss Planta, were permitted to attend the theater alongside the royal party, a lack of rank prevented their presence within the "public Suite" – they sat in a separate box to the side instead of standing in attendance behind the king and queen.⁸⁸ It was also reported that there was little remaining capacity in the theater after the entire royal party had assumed their places.⁸⁹ Burney additionally noted that, despite the first few disappointing performances there, the earl

⁸⁴ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 2–3; Sill, vol. 5, n. 739.

⁸⁵ Sill, 5:307.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 5:322.

⁸⁷ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 36.

⁸⁸ Burney was likewise denied joining the royal party on their day visits to nearby country houses. Sill, 5:321, 356.

⁸⁹ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 59.

of Chesterfield “who seems chief Director” made his presence known and “promises all will be better.”⁹⁰ Though Lord Chesterfield was a peer, he did not at this time hold court office and had no known links to theater;⁹¹ and this initiative seems to have allowed his adoption of some pastime in service to the king and queen at Weymouth and establish a position within the royal entourage.

Participation in public events and the infusion of ceremony continued to be heavily supported by the company of courtiers. The royal party, for example, also observed the birthday of Princess Amelia on 7 August, though she was not actually at Weymouth, being too young to travel with her family that year. It was customary to celebrate the births of each of the immediate royal family members, but the scale of celebration sometimes varied according to royal favor.⁹² The prince of Wales’s birthday fell on 12 August, for example, but since his relationship with his parents had deteriorated by the end of the Regency Crisis, the king and queen refused to hold any public celebrations at Weymouth to observe the day.

Throughout the summer, a large party was formed among the court and its wider connections to the local nobility and to the military: “the Queen invited almost all the Titled ladys now at Weymouth, the Sea Officers were sent for, & received in an adjoining room by the Equeries, Admiral Lord Howe at their Head.”⁹³ Earl Howe’s presence especially highlights the combination of naval interests and royal ceremonial; he was first introduced in the previous chapter as a notable advisor on the

⁹⁰ Sill, 5:322.

⁹¹ Philip Stanhope, fifth earl of Chesterfield, was appointed Master of the Mint in 1789 and later became the king’s Master of the Horse in 1798 and even given the Order of the Garter in 1805. His second wife, Lady Henrietta Thynne, was the daughter of courtiers, the marquess and marchioness of Bath, and she was made a Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte in 1807. John Cannon, “Stanhope, Philip Dormer, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773), Politician and Diplomatist,” in *ODNB*, 4 October 2012, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26255.

⁹² Sill, 5:362.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 5:356.

further naval training that George required of his son, Prince William (later William IV). Howe did not hold court office, but his position in the admiralty alongside his family's connections to George and Charlotte⁹⁴ allowed him the opportunity to mark the royal tour on the seaside with maritime flare and, like Lord Chesterfield, carve out a role for himself among the royal party. The *Diary* recounts that, soon after George and Charlotte's arrival in Weymouth, Lord Howe directed a large party of men to fish on the bay and draw their nets in coordinated celebration when the king returned from riding that afternoon.⁹⁵ Likewise, he and his family were almost always among the royal party when they went sailing aboard the HMS *Magnificent* and the *Southampton*.⁹⁶

Among their other public engagements, the king and queen were accompanied by courtiers when they often visited the local assembly rooms on Sunday evenings at Weymouth. On the rare occasion when Frances Burney was allowed to go, she describes a striking scene, comparing it to the formalities that were normally observed before balls at St. James's Palace:

The Rooms are convenient & spacious: we found them very full. As soon as the Royal party came, a circle was formed, & they moved round it, just as before the Ball at St. James's, the King one way, with his Chamberlain, the new made Marquis of Salisbury, & the Queen the other, with the Princesses, Lady Courtown, & Mr. Digby. The other attendants planted themselves round in the circle. ... Lord Chatham [John Pitt, second Earl of Chatham], the Duke of Richmond [Charles Lennox, third Duke of Richmond], Mr. Villiers [George Villiers, Groom of the Bedchamber], Lord Delawar [John Richard West, fourth

⁹⁴ His eldest daughter, Sophia, became baroness Howe (suo jure) and was appointed a Lady of the Bedchamber to the eldest princesses by 1791. Another daughter, Lady Mary Howe, was described by Frances Burney as a "great favourite of the Princess Royal." Howe's brother-in-law, Colonel James Heywood, was a Bowman of the New Forest and received the royal party on their arrival into Lyndhurst in June 1789. Heywood also attended the king and queen in Southampton the following day and hosted them at his home, Maristow, in August. Sill, 5:333, 382; *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 6; Kassler, 4:2.

⁹⁵ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 16–17.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 38, 92, 94–95; Sill, 5:359; Kassler, 4:19–20.

Earl De La Warr], & c, & c, were in the Circle, & spoken to a long time each.⁹⁷

Their attendants made up the bulk of the party present and led a ritualistic reception of the king, queen, and princesses, strongly reminiscent of a court drawing room. Burney was already hypersensitive to differences in rank, but in this particular circle, the social dynamics were meaningfully and strictly defined. Aside from the Equerries, who normally joined her for tea in the afternoons, the earl of Courtown seems to have been the only noble courtier to approach Burney, likely because he was also in the tour's designated travelling group that summer.⁹⁸ Though not directly involved, Burney also took careful note of those who were distinguished by the king and queen among the circle that evening.

The ceremony continued, and the distinction of rank was afterwards preserved when the royal party withdrew into a private room for tea, leaving Burney, Mrs. Gwyn and her husband Colonel Gwyn, the earl of Courtown and Colonel Goldsworthy to find their own separate tea table. When the royal "suite" (as Burney terms the particular group) retreated into a separate apartment, there was a meaningful demarcation of an inner royal circle among those gathered.⁹⁹ Moreover, the emphasis on rank is especially evident in the extant pieces of the queen's diary, though they do not commence until the latter half of the tour. The queen studiously named every person of rank among their company at Weymouth as they were attending her and the king at Gloucester Lodge, while walking along the esplanade, when sailing, going to the theater, or drinking tea in the assembly rooms. The list is immense, but names

⁹⁷ The *Diary* reports a similarly large reception on the previous Sunday, the 2 August. *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 51; Sill, 5:359.

⁹⁸ The earl of Courtown was Treasurer of the Royal Household during this period, but it is up for debate if this position did not grant him the same access as his wife, who was lady-in-waiting to the queen and attending the royal family more often.

⁹⁹ Sill, 5:359.

such as Frances Burney are conspicuously absent. Charlotte instead focused almost exclusively on the nobility, and the core of the aristocratic court circle recorded at the beginning of this analysis featured prominently in her accounts.

Just as in the previous instance, when royal ceremony was used to distinguish certain attendants, it was likewise a tool in which to reward and promote those courtiers who had long served the royal household. At Weymouth in August, Charlotte herself reported that Viscount Weymouth, the king's Groom of the Stole since 1782, arrived in order to personally thank the king for his recent elevation to the marquissate of Bath, "for which He Kissd Hands," and was soon after presented to her with his new title and joined the attending circle for cards.¹⁰⁰ The royal party would later visit the newly made marquess and marchioness of Bath at their country house, Longleat (Wilts.) on their return to Windsor in September. Likewise, the earl of Salisbury, who was Lord Chamberlain to the king, was elevated to the marquissate of Salisbury; he too traveled to Weymouth to kiss hands for the honor.¹⁰¹ Viscount Mount Edgcumbe, George Edgcumbe, was also elevated and became the first earl of Mount Edgcumbe while the royal family were in Weymouth that August, shortly following their visits to his country seats at Mount Edgcumbe (Corn.) and Cotehele House (Corn.).¹⁰² Later in September, the king knighted Captain Andrew Douglas, commander of the HMS *Southampton*, who had hosted them aboard on several

¹⁰⁰ Lord Bath was appointed Lord of the Bedchamber 1760 to 1763, became the queen's Master of the Horse from 1763 to 1765, then Groom of the Stole to the king briefly in 1775 and again in 1782. He held a variety of political offices, including Secretary of State, throughout the 1770s and in 1778 was made a Knight of the Garter. His application for the marquissate was mediated by William Pitt. Kassler, 4:8; H. M. Scott, "Thynne, Thomas, Third Viscount Weymouth and First Marquess of Bath (1734–1796), Courtier and Politician," in *ODNB*, 25 May 2005, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27425.

¹⁰¹ The marquess of Salisbury was Lord Chamberlain to the king from 1783 to 1804, but his career in the royal household began in 1780 as Treasurer. The king and queen visited his country seat, Hatfield House (Herts.), in 1800. Sill, vol. 5, n. 881.

¹⁰² Lord Mount Edgcumbe was Treasurer of the royal household from 1765–6 and later held court office as Captain of the Gentleman Pensioners from 1772–82. J.K. Laughton, revised by A.W.H. Pearsall, "Edgcumbe, George, First Earl of Mount Edgcumbe (1720–1795), Naval Officer," in *ODNB*, 3 January 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8468.

occasions during their stay.¹⁰³ It is important to note that most of the men elevated held court office as early as the 1760s. Owing to their enduring loyalty to the royal household, the king recognized and rewarded among the group of courtiers assembled at Weymouth.

Royal ceremony among devoted courtiers was also expressed materially, so formal elements like court attire were consequently transplanted to the West Country during this royal tour. Hannah Greig has engaged in discussion on court attire in the period, including the Windsor uniform and its explicit political messaging, in *The Beau Monde* (2013), but her analysis is chiefly confined to London. St. James's Palace was not the only venue in which courtiers could make a statement through fashionable display.¹⁰⁴ As introduced in the third chapter, the Windsor uniform was a particular sign of belonging among the royal circle, and in the summer of 1789, it was specifically employed among both men and women of the ruling elite to visually and materially express their loyalty. Though the king had initially issued the uniform for the men in his family and wider household for use almost exclusively at Windsor Castle, the women at court reportedly adopted their own version for the 1789 tour. The countess of Mount Edgcumbe wrote to Lady Harcourt in July 1789 to describe how the queen, princesses, and ladies of the royal party donned their new "riding coats of the Windsor uniform" for their journey west, and it can be assumed that these were worn again throughout the summer.¹⁰⁵ Several years later, when the king was again at Weymouth in 1794, a letter from Baron Dorchester explicitly requested the opportunity to wear the dark blue uniform while paying his respects on the Dorset

¹⁰³ Sir Andrew Douglas is listed as Deputy Treasurer of the Chamber starting in 1761, vacating the seat by 1771. Sill, vol. 5, n. 776.

¹⁰⁴ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, 126–27.

¹⁰⁵ The countess of Mount Edgcumbe to Countess Harcourt, 4 July 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 8:281.

coast, implying that the dress continued to prove popular among courtiers and could be worn outside of the traditional residence at Windsor.¹⁰⁶

In a persistence of royal ceremony, even certain political engagements would not wholly be left behind in London. While still at Weymouth, on 8 August, George convened his Privy Council for the prorogation of parliament, “which brought most of the Great Officers of state to Weymouth, & they all ended the Day by attending his Majesty at the play.”¹⁰⁷ The *Diary* reports that, in the course of this meeting, the marquess of Graham, who was Vice President of the Board of Trade, was sworn in as co-Paymaster General of the Forces alongside Lord Mulgrave. The earl of Chesterfield, Philip Stanhope, was given the office of Master of the Mint at this time, too. Perhaps by virtue of their places on the Privy Council, both Graham and Chesterfield would later hold office in the royal household, each of them becoming the king’s Master of the Horse for a period in the 1790s.¹⁰⁸ The surviving miscellaneous Privy Council papers in the National Archives list a number of petitions brought to the king’s attention on 8 August, several by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, which chiefly concerned pensions.¹⁰⁹

Another official meeting to occur at Weymouth took place on 1 September, when both George and Charlotte received Lieutenant-General Martin Ernst von Schlieffen, governor of Wesel, who was sent on a diplomatic mission to England by King Frederick William II of Prussia. Queen Charlotte’s diary divulges little detail

¹⁰⁶ Reference to a letter dated 6 August 1794, in Aspinall, 2:229; Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, 58, 62.

¹⁰⁷ Sill, 5:359; William Wyndham Grenville to George III, 3 August 1789, in Aspinall, 1:436.

¹⁰⁸ Appointment of Privy Councillors, etc., 1789, PC 1/18/19, The National Archives, Kew, accessed via “Anglo-American Legal Tradition,” <http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT.html>; *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 58; Cannon, “Stanhope, Philip Dormer, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield,” in *ODNB*; Philip Carter, “Graham, James, Third Duke of Montrose (1755–1836), Politician,” in *ODNB*, 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11200.

¹⁰⁹ The admiralty papers present a range of topics, such as establishments, pensions, quarantine, sea provisions, and court martials, 1789, PC 1/18/18, TNA, via “Anglo-American Legal Tradition.”

about this meeting except that she received the governor separately at Lady Courtown's lodgings on Gloucester Row, where she had presumably been visiting with her lady-in-waiting at the time of his arrival.¹¹⁰ Though George was technically still recovering from illness, he did not neglect the demand of his official duties as sovereign and saw that these offices would come to him in Weymouth if they could not wait in London. This attention to duty, alongside a close observance of royal ceremonial, transformed the nature of this tour beyond its initial representation as a recuperative retreat. The substantial royal party that assembled at Weymouth and the numerous royal visits to local country houses only add to the sense of an eventful and highly social itinerary developing that summer.

Throughout the 1789 tour, royal visits to country houses were significant occasions that combined George's emphasis on ceremony and his extensive engagement with the ruling elite. The following section will continue to expand upon these themes with reference to specific visits made in the summer of 1789, when particular families were selected to host the royal party at their homes and, as we have seen, were often given little advanced notice. There were a variety of elite families honored with a royal visit, many of whom held close connections to the court but also others who could offer alternative points of interest in terms of convenience or country house tourism. Wherever the king and queen travelled, they were warmly and lavishly received, though the extant family papers that describe the royal visits of 1789 often describe the stress and confusion they would occasion – a unique way in

¹¹⁰ Frederick William II had already sent two letters to George III, dating 12 August, concerning the fortification of Mainz (or "Majance") and positioning troops there in light of the early stages of the revolution in France and unrest in the Austrian Netherlands. Kassler, 4:11; Frederick William II to George III, 12 August 1789, in Aspinall, 1:437–39.

which George asserted royal authority over the members of the local nobility, who wished to ingratiate themselves in a reassembled court.

Only a week into their stay at Weymouth, on 7 July, the royal party spent a day at Came House in Dorset, home to George Damer, son and heir of Joseph Damer, first Baron Milton (later elevated as the first earl of Dorchester).¹¹¹ Lord Milton had been one of the first nobles from the area to pay his respects at Weymouth upon the royal party's arrival.¹¹² Though no one in his family held court office, George Damer reportedly became a "great favourite" with the king and queen.¹¹³ The proximity of his country house and his father's appearance at Weymouth were undoubtedly incentives for the royal visit. Lord Milton himself was honored later that same summer with a royal visit to his home at Milton Abbey in Dorset, and after George Damer inherited his father's titles and estates in 1798, the royal party made two further recorded visits to the Abbey in 1804 and 1805.¹¹⁴ The significance of family connections and attendance in Weymouth were determining factors in royal visits, and the trip to Came House in July 1789 precipitated ambitious excursions further into the West Country, to the seats of the area's principal families, many of whom had first gathered at the Dorset coast that summer.

Before the royal party set off from Weymouth to Exeter and Plymouth, they made a couple of day-long visits to country houses nearby. For these, Burney's account is limited since she and fellow attendant Miss Planta were not permitted to

¹¹¹ George Damer was styled Viscount Milton from 1792 and in 1798 inherited his father's titles and estates, becoming second Baron Milton and earl of Dorchester. Came House – which is located roughly eight miles north of Weymouth – was originally built in the mid-eighteenth century for the earl of Dorchester's eldest son, John Damer, but upon the latter's death in 1776, it was passed to his brother George.

¹¹² *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 25–26.

¹¹³ "Domestic Occurrences," *The Athenaeum*, 379.

¹¹⁴ The king and queen would visit Milton Abbey again on 7 September and dine there, likely owing to the continued presence of the Baron Milton at Weymouth during their stay.

join the royal party. A deeper examination of these visits is further constrained because the queen's extant diary does not begin until they were stationed at Saltram House in Plymouth later in the month. More information about the nature of country house visits, however, can be recovered from the hosting families themselves, alongside references gleaned from public reporting. On 3 August, the royal party with their select attendants visited Lulworth Castle, home to Thomas and Mary Weld, and the next day they toured Sherborne Castle, the seat of Baron and Baroness Digby, as noted above.¹¹⁵

Of all the country houses featured on this royal tour, Lulworth is a noteworthy outlier considering the moral and religious exclusivity of the court circle. The court's moral program, as discussed in the third chapter, was underscored by the king's devout Protestantism. The Weld family, though of ancient lineage, were not titled – and more importantly, they were Catholic. Moreover, Thomas Weld's sister-in-law was none other than Maria Fitzherbert, who had secretly (and illicitly) married the prince of Wales in 1785, in direct violation of the Royal Marriages Act of 1772. The relationship between the royal family and the Welds is puzzling; even Burney notes this “singular circumstance,”¹¹⁶ but the royal visit in 1789 would not be the last.¹¹⁷

In terms of shared interests between these two families, David Watkin draws a connection to architectural taste between the king and Thomas Weld, particularly for the neo-Gothic style. Watkin describes Lulworth as a “crenellated essay in

¹¹⁵ A conversation with Colonel Digby that Burney detailed in her accounts revealed that she was denied (by the queen) a place on the royal party's tour of Sherborne Castle. Instead, she and Miss Planta were invited to see these country houses on separate days. Sill, 5:356.

¹¹⁶ Sill, 5:358.

¹¹⁷ George and Charlotte reportedly visited Lulworth four times between 1789 and 1792. The Weld family papers in the Dorset History Centre contain copies of short, formal letters written by various courtiers announcing royal visits in 1789, 1791, and 1792. There is another that is undated. Brief letters concerning visits of Royalty to LULWORTH, 1791, 1792, 1809, n.d., D-WLC/C/134, DHC, Dorchester; Berkeley, *Lulworth and the Welds*, 176.

nostalgia,”¹¹⁸ much like George’s attempts to re-Gothicize Windsor Castle in the 1780s in order to emphasize its medieval origins, both real and imagined, and connections to the Order of the Garter, as discussed in the third chapter. When the king commissioned James Wyatt to build a new, castellated palace at Kew in 1802, his eldest daughter Charlotte commented in a letter that it was anticipated to be “Lulworth improved.”¹¹⁹ It is possible that, even when a country house did not underscore a direct link to their court circle (like that of the nabob, Sir John D’Oyly, mentioned above), George and Charlotte might still have indulged in a visit simply as tourists, refining their architectural taste and cultivating ideas for their own application at Windsor Castle, where they often hosted their courtiers when outside of London.¹²⁰ Indeed, the announcement of the king’s first visit to Lulworth – which was sent only a day in advance via letter from the Equerry Colonel Gwyn to Thomas Weld – described how “their Majesties intend seeing Lulworth Castle,” not necessarily the Welds themselves.¹²¹

Lulworth was honored with several royal visits in the following years,¹²² but there were elements to the 1789 visit in particular that were not so easily transferrable to the royal circle and indeed held significant social, if not political, connotations unique to the venue. To start, Thomas Weld had reportedly received special permission from George to construct “the first free-standing Catholic church to be

¹¹⁸ Watkin, *The Architect King*, 142.

¹¹⁹ Milton Abbey had also been renovated in the neo-Gothic style by James Wyatt, as a complement to the medieval abbey next door, which must have also appealed to the king, just as Lulworth’s architecture did. Oswald, “Milton Abbey, Dorset V,” 212; Charlotte, duchess of Württemberg, to George III, 22 November 1802, in Aspinall, 4:62.

¹²⁰ Watkin, *The Architect King*, 142.

¹²¹ Colonel Francis Gwyn to Thomas Weld, ?1789, D-WLC/C/134, DHC.

¹²² George’s sons, the dukes of Cambridge and Gloucester both seemed to have been on friendly terms with the Weld family. The former authored an extant letter to them in 1809, requesting breakfast, and the latter (after the death of Thomas Weld, when his widowed son became a priest) leased Lulworth from 1824 to 1827. Adolphus, duke of Cambridge, to Thomas Weld, 17 ?August 1809, D-WLC/C/134, DHC; Berkeley, *Lulworth and the Welds*, 225; *The Weld Family & Lulworth* (Dorset: Lulworth Castle, 2000), 16.

built in England after the Reformation.”¹²³ This Palladian structure, dating from 1786, stands in stark contrast to the neo-Gothic castle next door and was also intended as a family mausoleum. When the king consented to see it for the first time in 1789, Weld wrote happily to a friend about what he regarded as the king’s public “sanction” of the building.¹²⁴

George’s tolerance toward this recusant family, however prominent, ultimately did not change his attitude toward any further relaxation of the penal laws, nor his inflexible adherence to the coronation oath, which precluded Catholic emancipation. Moreover, the manner in which the royal party arrived at Lulworth in 1789 – aboard the HSM *Southampton*, a 32-gun frigate that sailed eastward along the Dorset coast to Lulworth Cove – was an impressive, perhaps even intimidating, entrance to make.¹²⁵ Though Thomas Weld did not dwell on this particular detail in his surviving account of the visit, it should be noted that, due to his religion, he and his sons were largely discouraged from professions in the military. When Britain was anticipating a French invasion just five years after the first royal visit to the Dorset coast, a local volunteer regiment was formed under the direction of Viscount Milton, and the king would not make an exception for the Welds, refusing to sign their commissions and prohibiting the Lord Lieutenant to do so in his place.¹²⁶ Even if it was technically at the expense of his own safety, as the visits to Weymouth continued in the 1790s, George upheld a

¹²³ Berkeley, *Lulworth and the Welds*, 168.

¹²⁴ This chapel was a Palladian building constructed in 1786 as the “the first free-standing Catholic church to be built in England after the Reformation.” Thomas Weld to Henry Arundell, Baron Arundell of Wardour, 7 August 1789, transcribed in Berkeley, *Lulworth and the Welds*, 168–170.

¹²⁵ Many thanks to Gwen Yarker, curator of the Dorset County Museum’s major exhibition *Georgian Faces: Portrait of a County* (2011), for noting this interesting perspective during our discussion on George III in Dorset, June 2022.

¹²⁶ Thomas Weld had already volunteered as a captain for the Dorset Volunteer Rangers and sat for Thomas Beach c. 1795 in uniform. An unsigned commission forced Weld to resign and disband his troops, though he continued to give generously to the project and acted in an honorary capacity. Gwen Yarker, *Georgian Faces: Portrait of a County* (Dorchester: Dorset County Museum, 2011), 68; Berkeley, *Lulworth and the Welds*, 204–5.

firm, exclusionary stance as a military commander, unaffected by his experiences of friendly sociability as a country house tourist in 1789.

By contrast, the royal visit to Sherborne Castle on 4 August featured a local family much more closely connected to the king and queen's inner circle. Charlotte's Vice Chamberlain, Colonel Stephen Digby, facilitated a day-long trip to the country seat of his elder brother, Baron Digby, who would be elevated the following year as first Earl Digby. The house itself boasted of many features that would have appealed to the king and queen, including its former use as a hunting lodge, Gothic fittings throughout the library, a Capability Brown landscape, and other additions to the estate, including a dairy and orangery constructed in the 1770s.¹²⁷ Burney also briefly mentioned that the queen was delighted with a number of "regal curiosities, honorably acquired by the Digby family," likely pertaining to their Royalist ties during the Civil War and later connections to William III, who had reportedly visited Sherborne shortly after his invasion of England in 1688 and declared himself king on site.¹²⁸

The Digbys generated and preserved records of the 1789 visit, documenting the day in a "game book" that was converted to list significant family events rather than their sporting pursuits.¹²⁹ The entry for 4 August is believed to be written in the hand of Colonel Digby himself, who detailed the king and queen's arrival, the courtiers in attendance, their tour of the house and surrounding estate, and the dinner following. A seating plan for the royal dinner at Sherborne also survives and demonstrates the close attention to detail and etiquette, down to the types of chairs on

¹²⁷ Many thanks to Maria Wingfield Digby, who granted me access to Sherborne Castle and its archives in June 2022.

¹²⁸ Sill, 5:355; "A Quick Tour of the Castle," Sherborne Castle & Gardens, <https://www.sherbornecastle.com/castles-in-dorset/>.

¹²⁹ Entries for Tuesday 4 August 1789 and Monday 14 September 1789, Game Book, 1784–1793, Sherborne Castle Estates, Dorset.

which royal persons were seated, compared to the stools used (with royal permission) by their hosts, and a servant stationed behind each diner.¹³⁰

The Digbys were honored with a second royal visit later in September, though this would only include a brief breakfast as the royal party made its progress back to Windsor. While not as politically weighted as the Lulworth visit, royal attention to Sherborne was in large part a recognition and reward for the loyalty of Colonel Digby, who was a devoted courtier throughout the Regency Crisis. Not only was his guidance requested specifically by Queen Charlotte, Burney reported his particular influence with the king himself at this time – the queen’s page, Frederick Albert (father to Charlotte Papendick) had mentioned to her that “nobody dared represent to the King the danger of his present continual exertion, in this hot weather, ‘unless it is Mr. Digby, he added, who can say any thing, in *his genteel round about way*.”¹³¹

Midway through the 1789 tour, the royal party made an additional journey further west to Plymouth, to begin what Burney termed their supplementary “Western Tour.”¹³² A particular theme continues here: the king and queen visited many of the country seats belonging to the nobility who attended them at Weymouth, but there were a few that, despite their tenuous connections to the court, were featured due to the logistics of travelling with a sizeable entourage. Saltram House was made the headquarters for the royal party’s time in Plymouth, but George and Charlotte extended their progress there by first visiting the Privy Councilor Sir George Yonge at his seat, Escot House, in Devon on 13 August and thereafter spending two nights at the Exeter Deanery. Yonge was a seasoned politician, the Secretary at War from 1782,

¹³⁰ Photocopy of a seating plan for the dinner given by Lord and Lady Digby, 4 August 1789, for King George III, the Queen and Princesses at Sherborne Castle, n.d., SHR/MX2, Sherborne Castle Estates. Digital copies provided by Maria Wingfield Digby.

¹³¹ Sill, 5:373.

¹³² Ibid, 5:361.

and a knight of the Order of the Bath. He remained loyal to Pitt throughout the 1780s, so there is little surprise that he was able to procure the honor of a royal visit. The Dean of Exeter, William Buller, was also “in highest glee” for the opportunity to further ingratiate himself with the king after serving as Deputy Clerk of the Closet from 1764.¹³³ Even though the deanery could not accommodate the full entourage, Buller still attempted to monopolize royal attention by giving a private tour of the city after a service in the cathedral.¹³⁴ The dean’s efforts did not go unnoticed and the following year he was rewarded with the deanery at Canterbury and the bishopric of Exeter not long after that.¹³⁵

Saltram House proved to be much more commodious than the deanery and could provide lodging for everyone in the royal party, “even to every Footman, without by any means filling the whole,” Burney rejoiced.¹³⁶ The owner of Saltram at this time was John Parker, second Baron Boringdon, an orphaned young nobleman of about 17 years of age who was under the guardianship of his uncle, the Hon. Frederick “Fritz” Robinson.¹³⁷ Given his minority, Lord Boringdon was not present for the royal visit; the king and queen inhabited Saltram for almost two weeks while the Land Steward, Henry Ley, kept a watchful (if not anxious) eye and wrote reports to Parker.¹³⁸ Without a proper host, Saltram took on the qualities of a quasi-royal residence and was, in other words, a base from which to visit several other country houses nearby. With such a capacious house, George and Charlotte also invited several more attendants to join the royal entourage, including the earl of Chesterfield,

¹³³ Sill, 5:362.

¹³⁴ Nigel Aston, “Ross [Rosse], John (1719–1792), Bishop of Exeter,” in *ODNB*, 3 January 2008, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24124.

¹³⁵ Idem, “Buller, William (1735–1796), Bishop of Exeter,” in *ODNB*, 23 September 2004, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39561.

¹³⁶ Sill, 5:364.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, vol. 5, n. 897.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, n. 898.

Baron (later Admiral) Samuel Hood, Viscount Stopford (son of the earl of Courtown), and the earl of Chatham (older brother to William Pitt).¹³⁹

Much of the royal party's activity at Saltram mirrored that of Weymouth, with many instances of royal ceremony and maritime activity that occupied their time there. Frederick the duke of York's birthday, for example, was observed on 16 August, with an appearance of the prince himself.¹⁴⁰ The next day was spent at Plymouth dockyard, where the king and queen received the town's "Mayor and Corporation in their formalities" and afterwards set sail on the HMS *Impregnable*.¹⁴¹ Moreover, according to Queen Charlotte's diary, the king met several times "in private" with different members of his Privy Council at Saltram, including Sir George Yonge and the earl of Chatham.¹⁴²

Several country houses in the area also hosted the royal party for day-long visits and, similar to their counterparts on the road from Windsor and surrounding Weymouth, most held particular connections to the court circle. The Mount Edgcumbe family was especially distinguished following Viscount Mount Edgcumbe's elevation to the earldom, and they were able to welcome the king and queen at both of their country houses – Mount Edgcumbe House, which overlooked Plymouth Sound, on 21 August, and Cotehele, located further north along the River Tamar, on 25 August. Like the Digbys, the Mount Edgumbes sought to communicate (and by extension, preserve) even the smallest details of the honor, down to the seating arrangements. The newly-made countess of Mount Edgcumbe wrote enthusiastically to Lady Harcourt on this occasion, and she did not neglect the

¹³⁹ Kassler, vol. 4, n. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Sill, 5:366; *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 67; Frederick, duke of York, to George III, 4 September 1789, in Aspinall, 1:441.

¹⁴¹ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 71.

¹⁴² Kassler, 4:2, 6.

minutiae concerning all of what the king and queen condescended to see and do, though the stress of the occasion was almost too much for her husband to bear.¹⁴³ In anticipation of the royal visit, they had ordered a new bed, plateware, and other decorative items, but

Lord E's figget cannot be express'd; the bed is not come; the plate by sea is not arriv'd; the wind is contrary; the glasses are not come for the library; not a moment's peace will he have, nor sit still a minute, as if for him to keep in perpetual motion wou'd hasten the wagon or alter the wind. Nor shall any of us be much more at rest till the best we can pretend to do is done.¹⁴⁴

Such was the continued emphasis, even competition, among courtiers hosting the king and queen to provide a lavish welcome, though at a substantial cost, both financially and emotionally.

Country houses continued to assemble, even on short notice, large networks of high-ranking courtiers hoping for an intimate audience with the king and queen. On 24 August, the royal party visited Maristow House, the country seat of James Modyford Heywood – a Bowman of the New Forest who had greeted them on their arrival at Lyndhurst back in June – and his wife Catharine (née Hartopp), sister of Countess Howe, who was likewise present with Earl Howe. Among others, the Howes' daughter Lady Sophia (later elevated as Baroness Howe *suo jure*) and her husband,¹⁴⁵ as well as the Spanish Ambassador Bernardo del Campo y Perez de la Serna, supplemented the group of attendants during this royal visit. On 26 August, the king and queen visited Kitley House, which was reportedly arranged during a chance meeting, when the royal party had driven out into the countryside from Saltram.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ The countess of Mount Edgcumbe to Countess Harcourt, 27 August 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 8:281–7.

¹⁴⁴ The countess of Mount Edgcumbe to Countess Harcourt, 4 July 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 8:280–281.

¹⁴⁵ The Hon. Penn Assheton Curzon, son of Assheton Curzon, first Viscount Curzon.

¹⁴⁶ Kassler, 4:4.

They were joined at Kitley by another large party, namely the family of its owner, John Pollexfen Bastard, as well as a few familiar faces within the court circle, such as the wife of Vice-Admiral Hood, Lady Susannah Hood (later made a baroness *suo jure*), Mary Gwyn, wife of the king's Equerry Colonel Gwyn, and her brother Charles Horneck.

The royal party returned to Weymouth on 27 August, and with the extant entries of Queen Charlotte's diary emerging at this point in time, the presence of the nobility crowds the narrative of the tour even more forcefully, while the king's attention to the matters of state remained of particular importance.¹⁴⁷ After the royal party departed Saltram, they were again met with the opportunity to visit a country house, this time echoing the random encounter with Sir John D'Oyly earlier in July. As they were travelling, George and Charlotte met Sir Robert Palke, the former Governor of Madras, and his son-in-law Sir Bouchier Palk Wray. The queen recorded how Palke "presented the K[ing]. with some fruit & begd His Majesty to drive through His Grounds to Exeter. This we did & stopt at His House [Haldon House] for a moment to which He makes considerable additions & alterations, but it appears to be a very indifferent House."¹⁴⁸ After this brief indulgence, when Charlotte had exercised her taste in country houses, the royal party continued to Exeter to spend another evening at the deanery there. Instead of any additional tours of the city, however, the king received his Privy Councilor Sir George Yonge after dinner.

¹⁴⁷ Mascha Hansen has suggested that the queen's diary entries acted "more as aids to her own memory than public records," but their particular attention to the titled people who surrounded her each and every day points to a deeper sense of royal duty and social leadership among this carefully curated, aristocratic court circle. Mascha Hansen, "Women's Records of the Court of George III and Queen Charlotte," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 45, no. 2 (2021): 89.

¹⁴⁸ Kassler, 4:6.

Like their progress toward Weymouth earlier that summer, the royal party extended their route back to Windsor, from 14 to 18 of September, and courtier country houses were again the principal resting points along the way. Sherborne Castle was honored with a second visit, and the king and queen afterwards stopped at Redlynch to change horses, where they were hosted by the earl of Ilchester, Henry Thomas Fox-Strangways, first cousin to Baron Digby and the queen's Vice Chamberlain, Colonel Digby.¹⁴⁹ In order to break up the journey through Wiltshire, Longleat House and Tottenham House were selected to host the royal party overnight. Queen Charlotte devotes several pages in her diary to each of the two estates, their relative families, and histories. She preferred Longleat to Tottenham in appearance and comfort but associates more strongly her enjoyment of both visits with their respective hostesses, praising the newly elevated marchioness of Bath for her domestic handicrafts on display and likewise the countess of Ailesbury for her charming family circle.¹⁵⁰ Both houses belonged to very well-connected courtier families, the Thynnes and the Brudenells, who have been discussed in detail, particularly in the second chapter, as part of a circle of courtiers closely associated with the queen's household.¹⁵¹ George and Charlotte had already visited Tottenham Park at least once before, in 1784, so this additional visit extended beyond a taste for country houses and was employed as a specific way to honor the attentions and loyalty of their courtiers, especially throughout the Regency Crisis.

¹⁴⁹ Kassler, 4:22.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4:22–28.

¹⁵¹ To briefly reiterate, Lord Bath was a long-standing member of the Privy Council and, following his political career, was appointed Groom of the Stole in 1782. Lady Bath, who was the daughter of the duke and duchess of Portland, was one of the first appointments to the queen's household in 1761 as a Lady of the Bedchamber, afterwards promoted to Mistress of the Robes in 1793, and also reportedly "a great favourite of the King's." The earl of Ailesbury was, at the time of the 1789 royal tour, Lord Chamberlain to the queen, while several of his brothers and nieces also held court office, and his wife would later be enlisted to the queen's bedchamber, too. *Harcourt Papers*, 4:207.

Royal visits to country houses also encompassed their own material mark: royal ceremonial and the politics of the king's recovery, even at the seaside, generated a significant material culture that has largely passed unnoticed in scholarship. The following examples expand upon a subject introduced in the second chapter, involving Charlotte's commission of royal medallions to gift her attendants following the Regency Crisis. Courtiers themselves participated in a complementary vein of material celebration in honor of the king's restored health. Sherborne Castle was described to have been "decorated with ribbands, inscribed *God save the King*."¹⁵² The Weld family at Lulworth Castle reportedly served "a very sumptuous, profuse, and elegant collation, served in gilt plate, provided upon the occasion; it was new, richly embossed, and had '*God save the King!*' engraven upon each piece."¹⁵³ Particular mention of this plate in the *Diary* might have been included to offset the Catholic dimensions of the "sumptuous, profuse" ornaments that the recusant Weld family used to mark the occasion, but which were nevertheless consistent with the general courtier celebrations, especially among those who hosted the royal party at their country seats.

The phrase "god save the king" and its variations were increasingly used after the Regency Crisis and displayed upon clothing, accessories, even ceramics, as a sign of loyalty and political support. Despite the Catholic stereotype, the Welds arguably did not invest in the most lavish material sign of loyalty; the earl and countess Mount Edgcumbe, with their son, Viscount Valletort, constructed a granite triumphal arch to commemorate the royal visit to their home at Mount Edgcumbe in Plymouth, when the king and queen "left an immortal stamp of glory on this name & place which no

¹⁵² *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 52.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 55.

time can ever efface.”¹⁵⁴ Whatever the material scale of their commemorations in 1789, country house hosts were given the opportunity to participate in a reassembled court following the Regency Crisis, with all the elements of royal ceremonial and elite exclusivity that accompanied it. Country houses were a unique feature of the royal tour, and this analysis especially underscores their important function as venues to support George’s rapprochement with the ruling class in celebration of his recovery.

In terms of continued ceremony, as well as the courtiers chosen to support these processes, George was as formally received at sea as on dry land. On 9 July the royal party embarked upon its first of many excursions aboard the HMS *Magnificent*, a man-of-war of 74 guns commanded by Captain Richard Onslow, and the HMS *Southampton*, a fifth-rate frigate with 32 guns commanded by Captain Sir Andrew Snape Douglas.¹⁵⁵ They reportedly used a barge lent by Prince William to reach the ships at a natural anchorage to the south, called Portland Roads (now Portland Harbour), which could accommodate the sheer size of these ships. Frances Burney termed the first of the sailing parties a “Ceremony” and observed it from the shore. She described how the ships stationed at the entrance of the bay at Weymouth for the king’s protection.¹⁵⁶ George was accordingly greeted with a formal gun salute in his honor. To write that the royal party went “sailing” is one way to describe these outings, as the *Diary* does, but the presence of naval war ships stood in marked contrast to the “numerous pleasure boats, fancifully and beautifully decorated” that

¹⁵⁴ The countess of Mount Edgcumbe to Countess Harcourt, 27 August 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 8:287; referenced in Emerick, “Monarchy on the Move,” 166; “Triumphal Arch at Higher Lodge,” Historic England, accessed 15 January 2024, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1310227>.

¹⁵⁵ Sill, vol. 5, n. 773–76.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5:319–20.

surrounded them.¹⁵⁷ Even Burney notes the “strange” reception with a gun salute; this was arguably a royal requirement that helped to further distinguish the king and associated him more strongly with military interests.¹⁵⁸

Two official engagements that held particular significance for the royal visit to Plymouth included a review of the dockyard on 17 August and a grand naval review on the following day in Plymouth Sound, an account of which is described with great detail in the *Diary*.¹⁵⁹ These occasions were perhaps the most striking fulfilment of the king’s role as the nation’s commanding officer and the opportunity to cultivate an image of soldier-kingship. As a show of strength, the pomp and circumstance of the review clearly distracted from the original concern for George’s health. Descriptions feature a robust king quite literally at the helm of his naval forces for several hours of “thundering festivity”¹⁶⁰ and cannon salutes. The visual depictions that were subsequently produced also provided distinctive, stately images that did not necessarily include the crowds of onlookers but instead placed a particular emphasis on a bright Royal Standard, waving atop the vessels that carried the king for such a noble, even picturesque, occasion.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 29.

¹⁵⁸ One online source notes that gun salutes in Britain became mandatory for the royal family by the late eighteenth century. It would be interesting to learn if this development occurred under George III, as well as the particular implications of enforcing this formality. “Twenty-One Gun Salute,” Naval History and Heritage Command, 21 May 1996, <http://public1.nhhcaws.local/browse-by-topic/heritage/customs-and-traditions0/twenty-one-gun-salute.html>.

¹⁵⁹ The spectacle included a mock battle between British and “French” ships, and the *Diary* also describes the particular formations the squadron made. *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 73–78.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 76.

¹⁶¹ A group of four paintings by Lieutenant Thomas Yates (dated 1791 and sold at Christie’s in December 2020) depict the royal visit to Plymouth in 1789 as it pertained to the king’s presence in the dockyard and sound, visiting the fleet aboard the *HMS* Southampton and the royal barge. These paintings were possibly exhibited at the Royal Academy soon after their completion. “LIEUTENANT THOMAS YATES, R.N. (C.1760-1796 LONDON),” Christie’s, December 2020, <https://onlineonly.christies.com/s/old-master-paintings-sculpture-online/lieutenant-thomas-yates-r-n-c-1760-1796-london-260/110495>.

Moreover, the nobility who attended George at these engagements only enhanced their official and ceremonial nature. The king was accompanied by the following officers: the earl of Chatham, First Lord of the Admiralty and elder brother to the Prime Minister William Pitt; the earl of Mount Edgcumbe, who was Vice-Admiral and Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall; Baron Hood, the newly appointed First Naval Lord (the highest-ranking officer in the royal navy); Lord George Lennox, the Governor of Plymouth; and, Baron Digby, the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset. A former First Lord of the Admiralty, Richard Howe, who had recently been elevated to the earldom in 1788, was a regular attendant among the royal party throughout the tour, and the Master of the Ordnance, the duke of Richmond, was also frequently described in the accounts of the tour, usually with his band of musicians playing the tune *God Save the King*.¹⁶² The countess of Mount Edgcumbe noted the particular display of the highest-ranking members of the admiralty in attendance during George's time at Plymouth:

... as often as the King mov'd upon the water his boat was preceded by that of the Admiral with his blue flagg hoisted, the Admiralty with their red one, & then the Royal Standard on the King's boat; every time they appear'd they were saluted with twenty-one guns by every ship, every fort, and every battery; the sound was most tremendous, and the show sublime.¹⁶³

The presence of these officers was an important component of the royal tour, and the timing of the naval review at Plymouth was significant, even during a period of peace. A gathering of some of the highest commanding officers under the king was a meaningful demonstration of maritime strength and the ease of its mobilization when tensions with France and Spain would again escalate in the following months. The

¹⁶² The aging duke of Bolton, Vice-Admiral of Dorset, does not seem to have been present, though he did support the Pitt ministry. *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 76; the countess of Mount Edgcumbe to Countess Harcourt, 27 August 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 8:285.

¹⁶³ The countess of Mount Edgcumbe to Countess Harcourt, 27 August 1789, in *Harcourt Papers*, 8:282.

court warily regarded reports from France that summer, particularly news of the storming of the Bastille, which would have arrived while the king was in Weymouth.¹⁶⁴ In January 1790, the government would also learn of the Nootka Crisis, involving the Spanish seizure of British commercial ships off the coast of Vancouver Island in the Pacific.

George was apparently tireless in his commitment to the naval enforcements stationed at Plymouth. On 19 August, he and the queen returned to the Plymouth dockyard for a thorough inspection: “Nothing went unnoticed by the Sovereign; he minutely looked into every thing doing in in the yard, particularly to the process of coppering ships.”¹⁶⁵ The following day, unaccompanied by the queen and princesses, he set out for a further tour of the Citadel and victualling office, performing another “minute inspection.”¹⁶⁶ Far from the image of a sickly king in need of rest and recuperation, George was an energetic and committed ruler who employed much of the 1789 royal tour to reinforce his connections to Britain’s military might.

Celebrations of the king’s recovery did not conclude with his summer-long progress, though its “success” did entail a full return to his official duties. On their arrival back at Windsor 18 September, the queen described seeing the surrounding town illuminated by transparencies and, because “the King is come home much stronger & better for the sea bathing,” George began his levées again in London less

¹⁶⁴ Queen Charlotte wrote in a letter to her son Augustus of how “antient history can hardly produce anything more barbarous & cruel than our neighbours in France,” and surviving letters from Lady Harcourt to her husband, dated October 1789, related some of the disturbing news from France that the countess had overheard at court. Queen Charlotte to Prince Augustus, 17 August (or October) 1789, in Aspinall, 1:440; *Harcourt Papers*, 11:107–12.

¹⁶⁵ *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 78.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 79.

than a week later.¹⁶⁷ In review of the 1789 royal tour, it is important to consider more carefully its wider significance for the recovered king. His release from Kew and rejuvenating leisure interests in the West Country were both well-reported and well-received across the nation.

More personally, however, this period of travel was also an opportunity for reconciliation with his queen and wider household.¹⁶⁸ At the onset of his illness in November 1788, as detailed in the second chapter, he reportedly asked Charlotte to “promise him that she would admit no others until he was better,” thus confining herself and their eldest daughters with a small group of attendants for several months, exchanging only one lady-in-waiting for another, and otherwise restricting their circle to await either his recovery or parliament’s regency provision.¹⁶⁹ The courtiers closest to them but barred from Kew at this time anxiously exchanged whatever information they could glean from contacts who held better access within the royal household, but the loss of George’s headship was severe for this circle.¹⁷⁰

After his recovery, the king was horrified to fully comprehend the nature of his treatment and held it against all parties involved “that he had been maneuvered to Kew by stratagem.”¹⁷¹ Though the presence and corresponding influence of his chosen attendants throughout the 1789 tour is significant, it is likewise important to adjust for the king’s own leadership at this time, which was finally restored after his illness had severely disrupted the direction he normally provided this network of

¹⁶⁷ Kassler, 4:28; Queen Charlotte to Prince Augustus, 24 September 1789, in *Aspinall* 1:442–43.

¹⁶⁸ Geoffrey Sill argues that, at least in Burney’s account of that year, a major event was the king’s reconciliation with his queen consort. Sill, vol. 5, xv.

¹⁶⁹ On Christmas Eve, Lady Harcourt was called to Kew to relieve Lady Courtown as lady-in-waiting. *Harcourt Papers*, 4:30, 88–89.

¹⁷⁰ For several examples that describe various channels of communication among the Harcourt family and other courtiers during the King’s illness at Kew, refer to Lady Elizabeth Harcourt’s “Memoirs of the Years 1788–89,” in *Harcourt Papers*, vol. 4.

¹⁷¹ Macalpine and Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business*, 92.

courtiers. Even the *Diary* suggests that, in praise of the crowd that drew near that summer, “Kings make courts, and not courts, Kings.”¹⁷² George’s presence (and presence of mind) were essential to the proper operation of the court and often set the tone for the relationships it fostered. While his physical recovery was perhaps the impetus for the tour, it was not the only kind of recuperation needed. By the end of the crisis, relationships concerning both emotion and trust within both the royal household and the queen’s household required attention. Moreover, the king worked to more closely re-associate himself with the navy during subsequent travel, not just through access to his fleets but also to those highest ranking in the admiralty itself, which would have heavily distracted from the original needs of his health.

George’s recovery and related travel lends greater emphasis to his style of kingship, and the 1789 royal tour especially highlights a unique blend – what Matthew Kilburn in his 1997 thesis describes as a combination of his grandfather George II’s “armed and mounted” approach and his father Frederick’s vision of an “English gentleman prince.”¹⁷³ Such descriptions correspond well with the mix of activities, both martial and leisurely, and the structure of the travelling itself, which resembled an early modern royal progress. This blended image extends beyond Kilburn’s concern for the “public face of kingship” and into the realm of the court itself.¹⁷⁴

George arguably followed precedents set forward by the royal family for generations,¹⁷⁵ and his activity while travelling involved a wide group of courtiers who gave him a reception as compelling as the crowds that lined the streets of their

¹⁷² *A Diary of the Royal Tour*, 37.

¹⁷³ Kilburn, “Royalty and Public in Britain,” 132.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 132.

¹⁷⁵ Kilburn argues that public engagements, not necessarily royal ceremony, were carried further afield (outside of London) in this period. *Ibid*, 105–6, 132.

route. Lord Harcourt expressed loyalty particular to this royal circle when he wrote to his wife in 1788:

Remember your promise to endeavour to express (for it is impossible to express it fully) my gratitude to the K. and Q., for all their unmerited goodness to me. Kings can confer honour, but they have no power over the mind; and unless they are *really* amiable and agreeable, they cannot make any body think them so. Ours is the most angelic of the human race; and those who know him as you and I do, must have hearts of steel not to love him as we both do.¹⁷⁶

With the support of his attendants, and those of his consort, George could extend travel to the West Country beyond his recovery from illness into the realms of an early modern royal progress and, ultimately, restore his headship over the ruling class, as well as an intimate and loyal court circle. George's visits to the country seats of the local elite and his courtiers alike testify to the considerable authority of his kingship and its related emphasis on court ceremony and etiquette outside of London. His warm reception throughout the royal tour of 1789 indicated not only his wider popularity but also his particular command over a portion of the ruling class. George employed royal ceremonial, from elevations to naval reviews and other formal receptions, with which he could attract participation among the elite and assemble a powerful court circle.

¹⁷⁶ Earl Harcourt to Countess Harcourt, 11 August 1788, in *Harcourt Papers*, 3:295.

Conclusion

This thesis advances a revisionist argument for the active presence – never the decline – of the court under George III. The close working relationship between the king and his aristocratic courtiers held significant implications for the style of late Georgian kingship, and the court itself held strong associations to aristocratic culture in late eighteenth-century Britain. The analysis presented here employs a renewed focus on the structure and corresponding sociability of the court, an approach that better informs our understanding of kingship independent of the persistent interest in wider public opinion. A closer examination of the relevant court audiences to the expression of kingship also restores monarchical agency to George III, particularly in his efforts to maintain the *dignity* of the crown, in addition to the direction of a moral program at his court. There was, in essence, a highly reciprocal relationship between king and court that determined the socially exclusive, conservative, and ceremonial nature of Georgian kingship amid evolving monarchical practice throughout Europe.

Throughout the 1780s, George III oversaw what became a critical period of transition for both his crown and his court. In the face of economical reform of the royal household and increasing political interference in the appointment of office-holders and matters of patronage at the early part of this decade, the king turned to an insulating group of loyal, aristocratic courtiers who could still be relied upon to represent his interests in the House of Lords and wider polite society. There was indeed a greater shift in the nature of monarchical power in Britain, and although he could not prevent the increasing competition that lessened the court's direct political influence, George skillfully leveraged this elite court circle, including the connections which his consort helped to forge, in the wider social expression of royal authority.

The monarch continued to be a figure *to behold*. The presence of his attendants accommodated representations of the king's moral and martial interests alike, which were on display to aristocratic and ever-growing public audiences. The courtly venues that George cultivated in addition to the ceremonial center at St. James's Palace employed a structured group of office-holders – sourced from both the royal household and the queen's household – who maintained such spaces of etiquette, rank, and spectacle in the fulfillment of his duties and corresponding royal dignity. By the end of the decade, George emerged triumphantly from his first troubling period of illness and the Regency Crisis to a dedicated court circle that followed him into the West Country, not only to witness his growing popularity but also to uphold those ceremonies which reinforced his kingship. George's approach to the many obstacles that he faced in the 1780s ultimately helped to secure the survival of the monarchy throughout his continued illness and a prolonged period of war, and he arguably buttressed the crown for the many transitions that would follow in succeeding decades, including social and political reform, the development of the British Empire, and a succession crisis within the Hanoverian dynasty itself.

The structure of the royal household and the corresponding population of loyal courtiers are introduced in the first chapter of this thesis, emphasizing the impact of the political upheaval in the early 1780s on the monarchy in Britain and its existing systems of appointments and royal favor. Throughout, George sought to maintain the *dignity* of his crown, a term that often appeared both in his correspondence and formal addresses. His particular status, though conferred by parliament, entitled the king to certain prerogatives and an establishment that he fiercely defended from interference during the second Rockingham administration and Edmund Burke's economical reform. The royal household was a significant component in the formation of a court

circle through varying degrees of proximity to the monarch and his consort.

Entrenched in these court offices were large family networks that have benefited from a quasi-prosopographical approach, which has challenged the pervasive dialogue on courtly decline and instead underscores the constant and active presence of courtiers in the late eighteenth century.

By virtue of examining the integration of certain families at court, the second chapter illustrates the predominance of the queen consort's household by the time of the Regency Crisis. In the operation of an establishment that was separate from the royal household – and largely uninterrupted by political upheaval and economical reform – Queen Charlotte exercised a significant form of social authority over the court circle. This was, however, a slowly developing process, and it was not until the 1780s that the queen could more actively direct the appointments and finances of her household after her husband's early control, though she continued to appeal to George's strong sense of propriety and overarching moral program. By the time of the king's first serious illness in the winter of 1788–1789, members of Charlotte's household became important mediators between the crown and parliament in spite of the highly politicized and gendered circumstances. After the king's recovery, these same courtiers continued to support the queen and the expression of George's kingship, as the extant collections of correspondence among aristocratic courtier-families testify to the substantial circles of sociability and intelligence-sharing at court by this time.

Following discussion on the important presence of a high-ranking court circle, the material and spatial dynamics of attendance are equally highlighted in the third chapter. By convening the court at Windsor Castle from the late 1770s, George reintroduced traditional monarchical practices and rituals to the court, most

importantly the ceremonies of the Order of the Garter, as well as related concepts of soldier-kingship through the establishment of the Windsor uniform and the practice of stag-hunting. Alongside his extensive neo-Gothic renovations to the castle, George promoted chivalric values at this venue, such as religion and martial prowess, to further the court's moral program. The participation of aristocratic courtiers, with the moral undertones of the chivalric at Windsor, helped to legitimize a form of royal magnificence specific to the kingship of George III.

The king's adoption of chivalry, however, was implemented during a period of prevailing Enlightenment values, though these varied widely across Europe. George's status as a prince-elector of the Holy Roman Empire is thus advanced in the fourth chapter, in addition to related questions of the transition between *ancien régime* and enlightened rule. Many of George's contemporaries, such as Frederick II of Prussia, embraced the French fashions of *philosophes*, while members of the court in Britain, foremost Queen Caroline of Ansbach, introduced many new ideas through the patronage of certain artists, architects, scientists, and philosophers. Though George III employed a similar approach to his patronage, particularly his investment in agricultural experimentation, on an intellectual level he maintained strongly held religious beliefs and championed more conservative, even chivalric, Enlightenment values. The result was a unique combination of both classical and medieval styles which ultimately underscored their corresponding moral values of civic virtue and *noblesse oblige*. This approach to kingship provides several points of comparison between George III and other European rulers in the late eighteenth century, pertaining chiefly to the former's engagement with aspects of Enlightenment philosophy in a court setting, as well as his embrace of older monarchical practices, especially soldier-kingship and the honors system. Despite his strong associations

with the growing patriotism of the period, George never disassociated himself from a wider European princehood, and this was most notably apparent in his close attention to the Personal Union and coinciding duties as the Elector of Hanover. The circumstances of the *Fürstenbund*, or League of Princes, in 1785 signaled George's renewed commitment to his electoral dominions and demonstrated the ways in which he employed his court circle to facilitate this expression of monarchical authority on a wider European stage.

Though George never travelled abroad to Hanover, his trips westward into England from the late 1780s were very meaningful gatherings for his court, and several of his aristocratic courtiers were given the honor of a royal visit. Such travel was akin to early modern royal progresses, and despite the primary objective of recuperation, George infused considerable royal ceremonial into his trips, particularly the royal tour of 1789, which features in the fifth and final chapter. The concluding case study of this thesis outlines the unique integration of "court scenery"¹ in the countryside. Far from a seaside holiday, the king and queen were accompanied by a large circle of attendants and military officers. They held formal receptions, oversaw naval reviews, and frequently sailed Weymouth Bay on board a powerful warship. George also received his Privy Councilors and attended to matters of state; his assembled court thus maintained priority outside the walls of St. James's Palace. George depended heavily on his aristocratic attendants to facilitate these gatherings, and in turn, he maintained royal authority within this elite circle by virtue of a style of kingship that emphasized both his accessibility to the ruling class and the ceremonial weight of his position.

¹ A term that Frances Burney notably used in her writings. Sabor, 1:123.

The aristocratic courtier-families identified and studied throughout this thesis continued to leave their mark at court well into the nineteenth century. Their lingering presence as royal office-holders prompts further discussion on the nature of court culture and its links to the ruling classes under George IV, William IV, and Victoria. In the reassessment of George's "bourgeois" associations, it was argued early in the introduction to this analysis that the scholarship on late Georgian monarchy often prematurely anticipates more modern forms of monarchy. Alternatively, this thesis reinstates aristocratic perspectives in the late eighteenth century, which invites new approaches to the study of successive courts in reference to the authority of George III and the precedent he set for the end of the Hanoverian dynasty and beyond.

The Harcourt family provides one example of continued application of the themes presented in this thesis. Following the installation of the Regency in 1811, the Harcourts remained a significant presence at court and were witness to the subsequent transformation (and conclusion) of the Hanoverian dynasty. Though the second and third earls had no children, the extensive family estates were eventually passed to a first cousin, Edward Venables-Vernon, who was also brother to Elizabeth, Countess Harcourt, wife of the second earl. When George Simon Harcourt died in 1809, dowager Countess Harcourt continued her service as a Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte, arranging philanthropic initiatives on the queen's behalf and communicating her directives to fellow ladies-in-waiting.² Lady Harcourt's brother Edward increasingly featured in their correspondence and soon became a respected member of the court circle himself.³ He was first granted the see of Carlisle in 1791

² In one extant letter, for example, the queen requested Lady Harcourt's assistance in a scheme to introduce rice flour to poor families as an alternative to wheat, which was in shortage. Queen Charlotte to dowager Countess Harcourt, 10 July 1812, MS. Eng. d. 3881, fols. 252–253, 256, BodL.

³ Following the death of third Earl Harcourt (who was also a first cousin) in 1830, Venables-Vernon inherited the Harcourt estates. As recently as 2023, the archbishop's life was given further attention by

thanks to his connections to both the Pitt government and to the court, and in 1809 was made the archbishop of York. Venables-Vernon was later appointed to the Queen's Council in February 1811, joined by several others with strong court connections, including the ninth earl of Winchilsea, son of the royal governess Lady Charlotte Finch, as well as the long-serving diplomat Baron Henley.⁴ Together, they advised Charlotte on her duties of care for the ill king, who remained at Windsor Castle until his death in 1820. Another of the dowager Lady Harcourt's brothers, the Hon. Henry Venables-Vernon (later the third Baron Vernon) was also appointed to the king's Windsor establishment as his Master of the Robes in 1812.

As archbishop of York, Venables-Vernon worked to preserve the memory of his family ties to the court and generated a certain nostalgia for the moral program that George had promoted among the ruling class, which his sister and cousins had enthusiastically supported. Still displayed at Bishopthorpe Palace is a painting by the court artist Benjamin West that the archbishop commissioned in 1813, depicting George III enthroned at the center, wearing his robes of state and collar of the Order of Garter. To his left stands a Yeoman of the Guard at attention, and to his right the late second Earl Harcourt bearing the Cap of Maintenance, a ceremonial insignia that is emblematic of a high place of honor and royal favor. The king's head is turned toward Harcourt and in his hand is an opened scroll with the words, "I have called you together."⁵ The image is very clear in its message of righteous majesty, as well as

a modern descendent, who classified him as the "last aristocratic archbishop of York." Tony Vernon-Harcourt, *Edward Vernon-Harcourt: The Last Aristocratic Archbishop of York, 1757-1847* (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2023).

⁴ Bucholz, "King's Establishment at Windsor, 1812-1820," The Database of Court Officers.

⁵ Benjamin West, *George III*, 1813, oil on canvas, 62 in x 57 in, Bishopthorpe Palace, York, as referenced in Helmut von Erffa, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 467-68.

loyalty, and serves as a testament to the Harcourt family's long commitment to a noble and moral reign.

Venables-Vernon enthusiastically venerated both the court and reign of George III during his sermon for the coronation of George IV in 1820 – notably at the expense of the new king. One scholar has commented that this sermon was “almost open reproof of that monarch's immorality by its ironic comparisons with the virtues of his royal father.”⁶ One of the principal passages from the archbishop's sermon read:

No nation can ever be happy at home, or respected abroad, unless its councils and laws are administered by the prudent and the honest, by the moral and the religious: and though virtue and piety have higher rewards than it is in the power of man to bestow, yet it is the most essential service which a Sovereign can render to a State, to encourage morality and religion by a marked and uniform preference in the distribution of dignity and power. If, indeed, those who surround the Throne, and ought to reflect its lustre, if those whose station makes them at once objects of envy and imitation, if such men are worthless or wicked, the influence of their example will extend itself in every direction, and profligacy, originating in this source, will be rapidly diffused through all the gradations of Society.⁷

This scriptural warning was a marked reference to the moral disparity between the courts of George III and George IV, as well as the widespread consequences if a monarch was not himself just and thus did not inspire justice in his courtiers and ministers alike. Venables-Vernon framed this as a very active duty of kingship that was heavily reliant on those closest to the king, who could reflect the “lustre” of a moral and religious throne and thereby uphold the crown's *dignity*.

Another major family included in this thesis, the Brudenells, similarly demonstrated a commitment to court office that spanned several ensuing generations. George Brudenell-Bruce, the second marquess of Ailesbury, and his brother Ernest,

⁶ Clark, *English Society*, 425.

⁷ Edward Harcourt, *A Sermon [on 2 Sam. XXIII, 3, 4] Preached at the Coronation of King George IV*. (London: 1821), 11.

the third marquess – two grandsons of the first earl of Ailesbury – both served under Queen Victoria in prominent positions, as Master of the Horse and Vice-Chamberlain, respectively. The earl of Ailesbury's nieces, Viscountess Sydney and the countess of Courtown, also cultivated courtiers in their own immediate families. The grandson of Lord and Lady Sydney, the Hon. John Townshend (who would succeed as third Viscount Sydney and later become first Earl Sydney) was a long-serving courtier for three monarchs – first a Groom of the Bedchamber to George IV and eventually the Lord Chamberlain and Lord Steward under Victoria. The earl and countess of Courtown had four sons, the eldest followed his parents to court and held several positions throughout his life, including Treasurer of the royal household until the Regency, afterwards serving as a Captain of the Honourable Band of Gentlemen Pensioners under George IV and then Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard under William IV. The middle two sons both held distinguished military careers, while their youngest son, the Hon. Richard Bruce Stopford, was a royal chaplain in 1800 and later made a Canon of Windsor during the Regency.

A couple of additional courtier-family connections are worth noting in order to highlight the continued exclusivity of this elite circle and its shared commitment to the monarch. Richard Howe, first Earl Howe and Lord of the Admiralty, had just one surviving daughter, Sophia, *suo jure* Baroness Howe, whose son Richard Curzon Howe was made Earl Howe (of the second creation) in 1821 and Lord Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide in 1830. Curzon Howe further strengthened his ties to the court of William IV through his marriage to Lady Harriet Brudenell, daughter of Robert Brudenell, sixth earl of Cardigan and brother to the earl of Ailesbury and the duke of Montagu. Lady Howe joined her husband in the queen's household as a Lady of the

Bedchamber by 1834.⁸ A study of the court from 1830, despite the relative brevity of William's reign, would especially benefit from a close analysis of those courtiers inherited from his brother and father – and likely reveal more about the nature of the relationship between the monarch and ruling class in a nation on the brink of large-scale reform.

With the extended aristocratic connections already deeply entrenched at court during the eighteenth century, the interests of this thesis can be productively expanded to succeeding reigns and thus encourage further discussion on the nature of court culture and its relationship to British monarchs well into the nineteenth century. Such an approach has yet to be more thoroughly applied, as recent scholarship continues to focus on royal image and popular opinion. Even in larger surveys, such as the edited volume *Hanoverian to Windsor Consorts* (2023), which compares eighteenth- and nineteenth-century consorts in Britain, little attention is paid to the pluralistic efforts of a court system in support of royal activity, nor how this system might have evolved over time, like the royal legacies in question.⁹

There is at least one promising turn lately developing in the studies of Queen Victoria. As Miles Taylor has noted, at the bicentenary of her birth in 2019 Victoria “found her voice” in recent scholarship.¹⁰ There is now less pressure to unify the Victorian period, and scholars are more at liberty to be selective in the study of a long reign rather than evaluating it as a whole – not unlike the choice for this thesis to concentrate almost exclusively on the decade of the 1780s. Just as with George III, biographies of his granddaughter are exhaustive, while new research can specify and

⁸ Bucholz, “Household of Princess Adelaide, Duchess of Clarence (1818-1830), Queen (1830-1837), and Queen Dowager (1837-1849),” The Database of Court Officers.

⁹ Norrie et al., *Hanoverian to Windsor Consorts*.

¹⁰ Miles Taylor, “The Bicentenary of Queen Victoria,” *Journal of British Studies* 59, no. 1 (January 2020): 122.

further diversify the contexts in which modern monarchy might be studied despite the length of the reign. The recent doctoral thesis of Rajpreet Atwal, titled “Between the Courts of Lahore and Windsor,” employs exciting new language to frame royal perspectives and agency as they relate to the expression of queenship in the age of empire.¹¹ Atwal’s study of the connections between elite and royal personages in many ways mirrors the objects of this analysis and promises new approaches to monarchy in the nineteenth century that more frequently reference precedents in the eighteenth.

A few additional subjects which have fallen outside the scope of this thesis would benefit from further research. An integrated examination of the establishments formed for George’s brothers and sons would, to start, provide a useful comparison to the royal household and reveal the full extent to which the appointment of office-holders was an indication of association or opposition between members of the king’s immediate family. Expanding the period in question to include the 1790s and 1800s would also provide greater opportunity for comparison and sense of development, or change, over time. Moreover, on the topic of kingship, many of the initiatives under George III, most notably chivalry at Windsor and soldier-kingship, were adopted and subsequently transformed by his sons. A future study might assess the divergence in these “visions” of kingship throughout successive generations, particularly the emphasis on style over any moral or chivalric substance in George IV’s major renovations to Windsor Castle and the subsequent return to a morally upright, though

¹¹ Rajpreet Atwal, “Between the Courts of Lahore and Windsor: Anglo-Indian Relations and the Re-Making of Royalty in the Nineteenth Century” (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2017).

not altogether chivalrous or ceremonially grand, court under William IV and Queen Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen.¹²

Likewise, a fuller assessment of the “lower” ranks of the royal household – particularly those featured in the account of Charlotte Papendiek, the Assistant Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte from 1794 – would contribute to a better understanding of the social hierarchies and identities at play. In the particular case of Papendiek (who was the daughter of the queen’s German page, Frederick Albert), there are also unique questions of national identity and immigration in the court circle that might better inform an understanding of the integration of European and specifically German customs, from music to dining, into the royal household.¹³

With such a rich expanse of material, the court of George III will long continue to garner scholarly attention that, with reference to the study offered here, can further explore the implications of very active and interested office-holders for the culture at court, alongside the various royal and aristocratic relationships that powerfully influenced kingship within those exclusive and evolving circles of sociability. This thesis has redressed the established arguments concerning public opinion and a widely disseminated image of royalty, which have since largely obscured those all-important relationships at court. The presented analysis instead highlights the weight of the crown and its *dignity* for the elite audiences who were

¹² A.W. Purdue has described Adelaide’s taming effect on her sailor husband, as well as her restoration of a moral and philanthropic ethos to the court, though lacking in the ceremonial grandeur often upheld by George III and George IV. A.W. Purdue, “Queen Adelaide: malign influence or consort maligned?” in *Queenship in Britain*, 267–87.

¹³ Sarah Fox and others have since used datasets produced from palace kitchen ledgers to demonstrate both French and German influences on royal dining habits under George III and the prince regent. Adam Crymble et al., “Three Thousand Dishes on a Georgian Table: The Data of Royal Eating in England, 1788-1813,” *Food and History*, 31 January 2023.

witness to George's conceptions, or "visions," of kingship in highly ceremonial settings and adapted courtly venues.

Activity at court during this period thus frequently intersected with aristocratic culture, both in Britain and in Europe, from Enlightenment interests to orders of chivalry, with a considerable number of military reviews and country house visits in between. George III believed that a well-ordered court would promise an equally well-ordered kingdom – a concise explanation for the title of this thesis, emphasizing kingship *at court*, not in the public eye. Rather than any direct appeal to popular sentiment, George administered moral imperatives to a select group of his peers and recruited them to participate in traditional monarchical practice which, ultimately, supported his status and the prerogatives to which he felt the crown entitled.

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