

MRS. DELANY'S WINDSOR HOME

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Of all King George III's subjects, none claimed a greater share of royal regard than Mrs. Delany. She was equally loved at other levels of social life. Margaret Bentinck, Dowager Duchess of Portland, opened both heart and home to her, and yearly carried her to Bulstrode Park for the summer. Fanny Burney was a devoted friend; and the companion of her last years, Anne Astley, revered her memory as tenderly as she had cherished her person.

Although born a Granville, and twice married,¹ she was not rich, and when the Duchess died in July 1785, leaving no provision for her lifelong friend, the King himself wondered at her apparent neglect. The explanation which Mrs. Delany gave him did honour to both ladies. She had entreated the Duchess *never* to think of leaving her any money, declaring that she *could never receive* from her "anything more than a bequest of any objects which might testify her regard by being mementos of herself." The Duchess had accordingly left her some pictures and "my fine enamelled snuff-box, the small blew and black enamelled snuff-box."² A portrait of Mrs. Delany in the royal collection shows her holding this precious relic. Behind her a curtain is drawn back to reveal Windsor Castle and Queen's Lodge, the mansion opposite the South Terrace which served as the summer residence of the King and Queen.

The background commemorates an association established as a sequel to the Duchess's death. The King did more than condole with the bereaved old lady. He provided her with a country home at Windsor, and knowing that her means were unequal to the upkeep both of this and her home in St. James's Place in London, added £300 a year for expenses. Between them, he and Queen Charlotte furnished it, and found every requisite, "not only plate, china, glass, and linen"—the list is Fanny Burney's—"but even all sorts of stores, wines, sweetmeats, pickles, etc., etc." When Mrs. Delany drove up on the evening of September 20 1785 to take possession, the King was waiting at the house to welcome her.³ Next afternoon, Queen Charlotte called with the first quarter's allowance. Then the Princesses made their way there, and at 85 Mrs. Delany found herself the darling of the royal family.

¹Mrs. Mary Delany was born on May 14 1700, and was the daughter of Bernard Granville, younger brother of George Granville, Lord Lansdown.

At the age of seventeen she was compelled by Lord Lansdown to marry Alexander Pendarves, of Roscrow, near Falmouth, Cornwall. The bridegroom was nearly 60, "fat, snuffy, sulky," and addicted to drink, but he does not seem to have treated his wife unkindly. He died in 1724. In 1743 she married Dr. Patrick Delany, Dean of Down in Ireland (a friend of Dean Swift), and after his death in 1768 settled in London.

²*The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, edited by Lady Llanover, 6 vols., 1861-2, Vol. VI, p. 272.

³During the first two or three weeks of September 1785 workmen were busy preparing the house for her occupation. Their activities are recorded in an "Account of the Work done for the King" between 1776 and 1800 (Royal Archives, Georgian Addl. 17/72, Accession 342). The first payment shown is one of 19s. 11d. for "12 lb of Sope—a Piece of flannel, & Linnen Cloth—a long Scrubbing brush—a hand do.—a Mop—2 hair brushes—fullers Earth—Sand—Emory Paper—Sweet Oil, & Candles, &c.—for Scowering Wainscot, & Cleaning all ye Apartments, in Mrs. Delanys House St. Albans Street." A Mr. Moore supplied "6 load of Water Cart, for Cleaning Do. House," and also "3 Waggon Load of fine Gravel for ye Garden."

The famous "Flora" of paper mosaic, now in the British Museum—her own invention, begun in her second widowhood and at the age of 74—had been laid aside a year earlier, when her eyesight failed; and with it those other accomplishments at which she excelled—shell-work, painting and embroidery. The royal environment offered compensations. Every morning she went to early prayers in the private chapel in the Castle; and an elegant new chair arrived for her, the gift of the King, in which she travelled to and from her devotions, while the royal family, as she playfully recorded, *walked*.¹ This was the chapel of King Charles II at the west end of St. George's Hall. It was removed during King George IV's alterations, but to this day there remains the "narrow winding staircase," emerging near the altar, which Mrs. Delany used until the King, careful for her safety, ordered that she be admitted by the "great staircase". Fanny Burney's diary offers almost daily evidence of the royal family's delight in having her with them in their "sweet retreat," as Queen Charlotte described Windsor. They were always in and out of her house, or inviting her to the Lodge; and she, in return, made the designs for a set of furniture for the Queen, "of leaves in various shades of brown, cut out in satin, and shaded with embroidery on a dark-blue ground." During the last three summers of her life she ranked as one of the personalities of that homely but cultivated Court. Concerts, banquets, the popular promenades on the Terrace—none was complete, in the kindly view of the King and Queen, without their "dear Mrs. Delany."

Austin Dobson, annotator of Fanny Burney's diary (1904-5), identified Mrs. Delany's house with one that still stands in Park Street, by the entrance to the Long Walk. He knew it as the home of his friend, Dr. A. C. Benson, who lived there while editing the first three volumes of Queen Victoria's letters with Viscount Esher, and it is illustrated in the *Diary*.²

Dobson was mistaken. Mrs. Delany's summer villa was in St. Alban's Street, which is opposite the main gate of the Castle and it occupied ground now within the Royal Mews.

Her own letters, which are sometimes headed "St. Albans Street," establish the environment. Other sources supply evidence of the site. The Hon. Mrs. Boscawen, writing to Hannah More on September 5 1785, tells her that the house is "next door to Dr. Heberden's";³ and Mrs. Papendiek says that it stood "between Mr. Montagu's and Dr. Heberden's." Montagu was the King's riding attendant. Mrs. Papendiek adds that he lived in the "corner house on the [Castle] hill," and had to share it with Robert Braun, the King's page, who eventually ousted him.⁴ This disputed residence adjoined the old gate across Castle Hill, which bore the inscription "Elizabethae

Ten chimneys were swept, a new large water tub installed, iron hooks renewed in laundry and pantry, and coarse canvas bought for "Plaistering Round ye Copper." A sympathetic entry records payment of 16s. 7d. to John Lamb for 25 yards of strong hemp rope "for ye Winlass & Well Bucket in Mrs. Delanys House, & to Beer & Gin for ye Men, Cleaning out Do. Well."

"New Iron Bath Stoves a large New Windsor Arm'd Chair, a pr. of Sugar Nippers, 1 pr. of Scissors for trimming ye Lamps, & 2 quarts of Oil for burning in Do.," were among various items supplied for her use.

¹The account book mentioned in Note 3 records payment of £5.11s.11d. to "Mr. Weight, Taylor, for Materials, & Makeing, two Chair Men's Great Livery Coats, for Mrs. Delany's Use."

²*Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, as edited by her niece, Charlotte Barrett, with Preface and Notes by Austin Dobson, 6 vols., 1904-5, Vol. II, p. 290.

³*Admiral's Widow, being the Life and Letters of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Boscawen from 1761 to 1805*, edited by Brig.-General Cecil Aspinall Oglander, 1942, p. 117.

⁴*Court and Private Life in the Time of Queen Charlotte, being the Journals of Mrs. Papendiek*, 2 vols., 1887, Vol. I, p. 92, and Vol. II, pp. 149 and 221-2.

Reginae xiii 1572," and its north side appears in Paul Sandby's drawing, "View through Queen Elizabeth's Gate looking West," in the royal collection at Windsor.

Braun remained the tenant for many years. He is so shown on a plan of the area made in 1810 by James Wyatt, the Surveyor-General, which is now in the Public Record Office. Between Braun's house and Dr. William Heberden's is a property marked "No. 14," and this was Mrs. Delany's. "As pleasant and commodious as I could wish it," was her description when she first saw it. It made part of the royal domain, for the pretty garden, as she also recorded, adjoined that of Queen's Lodge, to which Dr. Heberden as a royal physician actually had access. In front, across St. Albans Street, the houses looked towards Windsor Parish Church, and, more directly, the town gaol, where prisoners crowded to the windows whenever the King passed, crying, "God bless Your Majesty. We wish Your Majesty would let us out."

No. 14 is described as "Premises lately occupied by Mrs. Agnew formerly held under the College of Eton but enfranchised by His Majesty and laid unto the House and Garden late Dr. Heberden's." Mrs. Agnew was that same Anne Astley, portionless daughter of a clergyman, who had entered Mrs. Delany's service on July 11 1782, and thought of her as "little short of an angel on earth." She never emerges from the social background, but the reader of Mrs. Delany's correspondence is not unaware of her. She curled hair, dressed her mistress, acted as secretary, composed verses, and, while she knew no French, wrote English like a sensible, educated woman. In short, she was useful, active and kind. It saddened Mrs. Delany that she could not provide for poor Astley.

The King set her mind at ease. He promised that this excellent friend should not want, and after Mrs. Delany's death in London on April 15 1788, and her burial in St. James's Church, Piccadilly, installed Anne Astley as custodian of No. 14 and gave her a pension.¹ Fanny Burney found her still keeping the "once dear Mansion" in July 1791. Two months later, on September 15, she married Thomas Agnew at St. George's, Hanover Square. (A Mr. Agnew had been gardener at Bulstrode in the days when Mrs. Delany and her companion stayed there.) She returned to Windsor, where she died a widow, aged 88, at No. 21 Park Street, in December 1836, having seen Sir Jeffry Wyatville carry out his great gothic restoration of the Castle for King George IV—all but the erection of the Royal Mews, which was finished only after Wyatville's death in 1840.

Charles Knight, son of a bookseller in business on Castle Hill, remembered No. 14 as deserted in 1801, when he was ten years old. In *Passages of a Working Life*, published in 1864-5, he recalled the "substantial houses, inhabited by good families," further up the hill; and, slipping back into his boyhood's consciousness, added: "In one of those near the [Queen's] Lodge once dwelt Mrs. Delany. This house is shut up in these my early schooldays. It is haunted, and the fact is proved by a broken window-pane, through which the sentry thrust his bayonet when he saw the apparition."

As seen on Wyatt's plan, No. 14 appears to have been originally the north wing of Dr. Heberden's, which is described in a manuscript history of Windsor compiled in 1811 as "the ancient seat of Sir Robert Rich [Bt.]." Dr. Heberden died at his home in Pall Mall on May 17 1801, and was buried on the south side of Windsor Parish

¹*Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*, Vol. VI, p. 498, and *D'Arblay*, Vol. III, p. 487.

Church. After his death his son and namesake, another royal physician, sold the house in St. Albans Street to the King, who enlarged No. 14 and reunited it with the main building, which he turned into "a Mansion, or Summer residence" for his granddaughter, Princess Charlotte of Wales.¹ Miss Lucy Kennedy, who lived for many years in Henry III Tower in the Castle, noted in her journal in February 1805 that the Princess of Wales had dined at Windsor, where the King had fitted up "an apartment, for her, in Princess Charlotte's House." The Princess had never been to Windsor, "but *once before*, a month after her Marriage." Neglected as she was "by ye Prince her Husband, Who, Never Even Speaks to her", she was something of a favourite with the King, who "Entends, She Shall be often With him at Windsor."²

The plan came to nothing, and the King presented the house to his second daughter, Princess Augusta, from whom it took the name "Augusta Lodge." The youngest daughter, Princess Amelia, died there in 1810.

Princess Charlotte stayed instead at Lower Lodge, originally the home of Nell Gwyn, at the other end of St. Albans Street. Here the King's younger daughters, her aunts, had spent their childhood, separated from their parents by the garden of Queen's Lodge, which Mrs. Papendiek described as little more than a passage-way, overlooked by all the neighbouring windows. The King and Queen lived comfortably at the Lodge from 1778 until 1804, when they moved into the Castle, and appear to have been not greatly incommoded by their lack of privacy, although the front of the house was still more at the command of interested spectators than the back. Only a narrow lawn and railings separated it from the public road which led up Castle Hill across the Little Park to Datchet Ferry, skirting the South Terrace on the opposite side to the Lodge.

Of these three royal homes—Queen's (or Upper) Lodge, Lower Lodge and Augusta Lodge—only Lower Lodge survived the dissolution of the domestic scene. Augusta Lodge was taken down in the spring of 1823, and Queen's Lodge in the autumn. Neither was considered to have architectural merit, and the removal of the latter opened up the three-mile vista of the Long Walk from the new Grand Entrance of the Castle.

Lower Lodge still stands within the gateway of the Royal Mews, though bearing little relation to the red-brick house settled by King Charles II on Nell Gwyn in trust for their son, Charles Beauclerk, Earl of Burford and later first Duke of St. Albans. It became Queen Charlotte's property, and was left by her to her youngest surviving daughter, Princess Sophia. For some years it housed the royal pages. Its development after the building of the Mews is described in the "Royal Companion to Her Majesty's Stables," published in about 1860: "The exterior has been cased, and stuccoed to resemble stone, and to render it in keeping with the general character of the new stables. It now contains fifty-four apartments, which are converted to the exclusive use of the married servants in the department of the Master of the Horse." These fifty-four apartments displaced the marble hall, the staircases painted by Verrio, and the paintings listed in 1758 in *Windsor and its Environs*: a noble collection

¹"The History and Antiquities of New Windsor," 1811, MS., Royal Library, pp. 45a-46.

²"Mrs. Kennedy's Diary, 1793-1816," MS., Royal Library, p. 78.

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which had caused the mansion to be "as much resorted to by Strangers as the Palace" (that is, the Castle). Under the name Burford House, it still accommodates Royal Household personnel.

Sir Jeffrey Wyatville, deputising for Queen Victoria, laid the foundation stone of the Mews on August 19 1839. He died on the Queen's wedding day, February 10 1840. On October 24 1842 the Earl of Jersey, Master of the Horse, formally took possession of the newly completed Mews, which represented the final stage in the modernisation of the Castle. Queen Elizabeth's Gate had been removed, the hill widened, and the road across the Little Park closed. A plan of the area today, superimposed on a copy of Wyatt's by the Ministry of Works for the Royal Library, interprets the Georgian layout so clearly that, standing on Castle Hill, one knows exactly where to look for the phantom houses of the past. Mrs. Delany's, in particular, is easy to find, for as the plan shows, the outer foundations lie buried beneath the Mews wall where it curves under a screen of trees into St. Albans Street.