

TUDOR AND STUART ROYAL VISITS IN AND AROUND HOUNSLOW HEATH

Andrea Cameron

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In both the Tudor and Stuart periods South West Middlesex was an area where courtiers in Royal Households often had a small estate. Here they were well placed to serve the Monarch be they in London or at Richmond Palace, Windsor Castle or from Henry VIII's time at Hampton Court Palace.

The River Thames, the southern boundary of

the County, provided direct access from London to Richmond, Hampton Court and Windsor. The road that transverses Hounslow today, east to west, is based on the Roman road from London to Silchester, later known as the Great Western Road (now the A30 to Land's End). At the western end of the town of Hounslow the road split and one arm went off, slightly to the

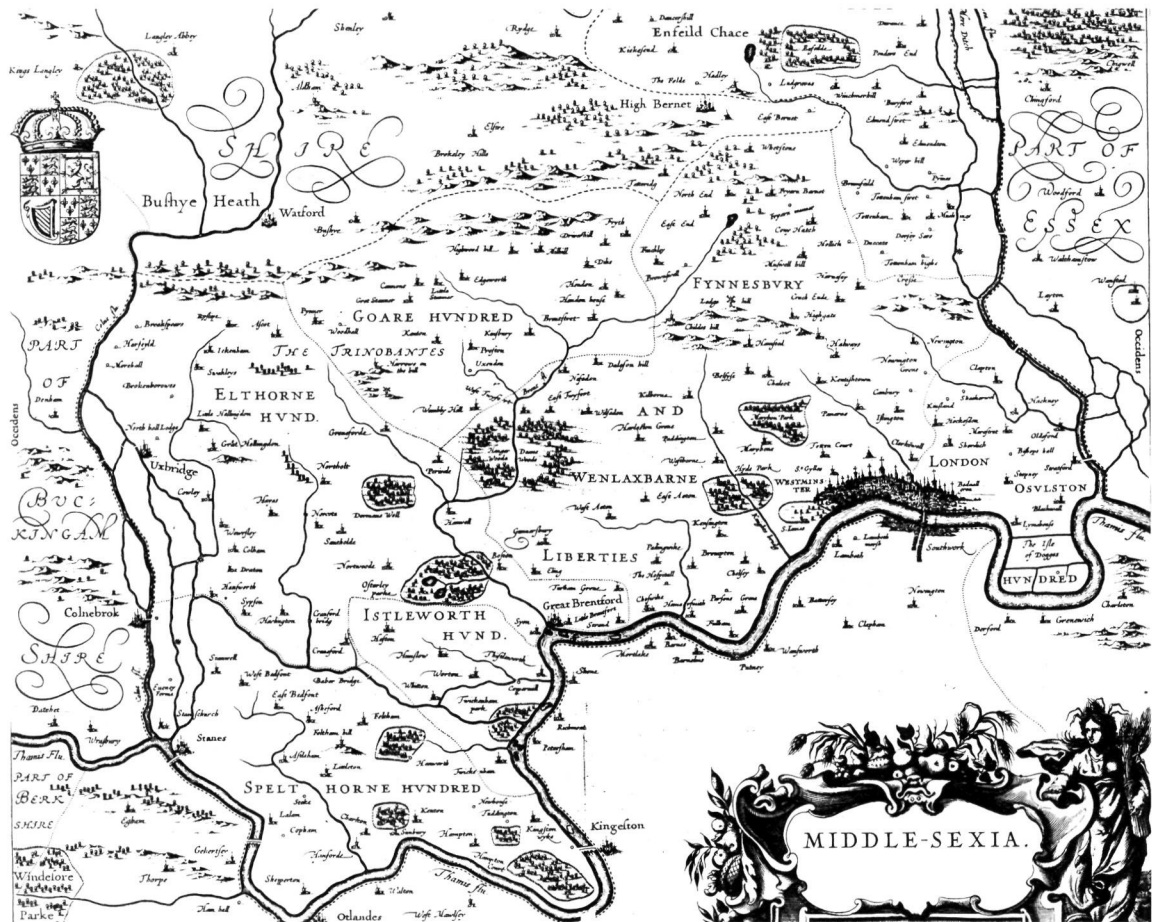


Fig 1. Morden's map of Middlesex 1600

north west. This road was known as the Bath Road, going to Bath and on to Bristol. Both roads were used by travellers and monarchs going to Windsor Castle.

The three premier estates within the present Hounslow borough are Syon House on the banks of the River Thames at Isleworth, close to the boundary with Brentford. This was built for the first Duke of Somerset in the reign of Edward VI, using the foundations of the monastic building of Syon Abbey, dissolved by orders of Henry VIII in 1539. About a mile and a half north of Syon is Osterley Park House, built for Sir Thomas Gresham, c.1575 and at Chiswick the Jacobean, Chiswick House, predated the present Palladian Villa. Besides these three estates there were a number of smaller estates such as Gunnersbury Park, whose previous house in the Palladian style was built in 1661; Boston Manor, a Jacobean manor house of 1623 and Hanworth Manor, a feudal manor, whose house in parts dated back to the start of the Tudor dynasty.

For the purpose of this paper Royal Visits have been interpreted in their widest sense. It can mean a visit by the Monarch to property in their ownership, as we know that they frequently moved around. This is true of Henry VII and VIII, who owned Hanworth Manor and used it as a hunting lodge. It can mean a visit in the form of a Royal Progress, much favoured by Queen Elizabeth. Her visit to Osterley Park House falls into this category. It can mean an enforced stay, by being under house arrest. This applies to several royal visits to Syon House. Finally it can mean a visit after death, as when Henry VIII's body rested overnight within the chapel in the ruins of Syon Abbey, when enroute from Westminster to Windsor for burial. Hanworth Manor, Osterley Park House and Syon House are the three properties included in this article.

HANWORTH MANOR

Hanworth Manor was surrounded by Hounslow Heath, which evolved out of the clearing of the Warren of Staines during the Norman period. A vast tract of heathland stretched between the town of Hounslow and the town of Staines. Hounslow Heath came south to the banks of the River Thames and north towards the line of the Uxbridge Road, travelling west from London. In

Henry VIII's reign Hounslow Heath was estimated to cover over 4,000 acres. Hanworth Manor is sometimes referred to as Hanworth Palace. This name comes from its Tudor royal ownership.

At the end of the 15th century Hanworth Manor was in the ownership of Sir John Crosby, Alderman of the City of London, who was responsible for having Crosby Hall built in Bishopsgate in 1466. The great hall of this building is now on the Chelsea embankment being embellished and extended to provide a home for Christopher Moran.

On Crosby's death Hanworth went to his son and then a cousin, but in 1501 it passed into the hands of The Grocer's Company, where Sir John Crosby had been a Freeman. They were instructed to sell it, but Henry VII expressed a wish to own the Manor and gave the Grocer's Company other lands in exchange for the Manor of Hanworth. Henry VII used the manor house as a hunting lodge, whilst hunting on Hounslow Heath. On his death in 1509 it passed to his son, Henry VIII, who is said to: 'have been delighted with Hanworth above any other of his houses'.

In November 1527, Henry was entertaining the French Ambassador at Hampton Court and despatched him and his retinue for a day's hunting at Hanworth. In 1528 Henry invited Cardinal Wolsey to make use of the manor house on account of the prevalence of the plague.

Camden, the Elizabethan historian described Hanworth as:

A place where the Royal but small house was much admired by Henry VIII as his chief seat of pleasure and that the park has been much enlarged by Henry VII by the purchase of land at Feltham. There were 200 acres of Deer Park forming part of Hounslow Heath then some 4000 acres in extent.

Accounts for 1529 show Henry VIII spending £100 for one month's upkeep of buildings at Hanworth and Beaulieu. Then a few months later a further £100 on Hanworth, Greenwich, Beaulieu, the Jewell House and King's records at the Tower of London. In 1532 Henry granted the manor to Anne Boleyn for 99 years, on the occasion of their marriage. Almost immediately this was altered and granted to her for life.

There are accounts for the period 1529–1538 detailing work and furnishings for Hanworth showing that it was being used as more than a hunting lodge. Paynting and guylding are listed. Antique beds being brought from Grenewyche to Hanworth. The building contained a chappell

and long gallery, both of which had extensive work carried out in 1532. In 1535 work was undertaken for a banquet held there with Henry and Anne Boleyn present.

Anne Boleyn was beheaded in 1536 and Hanworth Manor returned to Henry's ownership. In 1544 Henry granted Hanworth to his last wife Katherine Parr. Letters sent by her from Hanworth in 1544 show that she stayed there. After Henry's death in January 1547, Katherine became responsible for the young Princess Elizabeth and the two of them lived at Hanworth. The following summer Katherine married Sir Thomas Seymour. Katherine, Thomas and Elizabeth continued to live at Hanworth until May 1548. Katherine died in September 1548 leaving Hanworth to Sir Thomas Seymour but in 1549 Seymour was accused of tampering with the affections of the young Princess Elizabeth. Evidence was given to the Privy Council by Elizabeth's nurse of events at Hanworth. Part of this evidence was as follows:

And again another time at Hanworth in the garden, he wrathed with her and cut her gown in a hundred pieces, and when she came up this Examinat chid with her, and her Grace answered that she could not withall for the Queen held her while the Lord Admiral cut it.

This evidence with much else led to Sir Thomas Seymour being beheaded on Tower Green. Hanworth again reverted into Crown ownership.

Queen Elizabeth I in 1558 granted Hanworth to Anne, Duchess of Somerset, widow of the first Duke of Somerset and sister-in-law to the late Sir Thomas Seymour. Between 1558 and Anne's marriage to Sir Francis Newdegate in 1563, Queen Elizabeth was a constant visitor to Hanworth, spending time hunting on Hounslow Heath. After her marriage Anne moved to her husband's house, the adjoining manor of Kempton Park, but Queen Elizabeth continued to visit succeeding tenants of Hanworth Manor. There is a record of a further visit in 1578 and a final visit in the autumn of 1600, when she stayed with Sir William Killigrew, Groom of her Privy Chamber. She was then 68 years of age and stayed for nearly a fortnight, hunting on the Heath and dining in the manor house. It is also stated that whilst there she sat for one of the last portraits painted of her, but which painting this was has not been established.

The Killigrews were at Hanworth until 1620, with Robert Killigrew's children being baptised at Hanworth Church. Son Thomas, who was a

page to King Charles I, became a well known dramatist and married a lady-in-waiting to Queen Henrietta Maria. He supported the Royalists and escaped to the Continent in 1649 returning with Charles II in 1660 to become his 'Master of the Revels' and being known as 'the King's Jester'. His older sister Anne, became a Maid of Honour to Queen Henrietta and later her Dresser. In 1641 she drowned when the Queen's barge shot London Bridge, struck a piece of timber and capsized.

In 1627 the lease to Hanworth Manor was transferred to Sir Francis Cottington, who came from an obscure Somerset family, but worked his way up to a position of prominence in the Courts of James I and Charles I. Cottington spent his early adult life in Spain, first as an aide to the British Ambassador, then as agent and consul. He was involved in the negotiations with Spain over Charles I's proposed marriage to the Infanta which was unsuccessful. From 1629 to 1631 Cottington was Ambassador to Spain.

Cottington's third son, Charles was born at Hanworth and Christened in St George's Church on 21st July 1628 witnessed by King Charles I, the Duke of Buckingham and the Marchioness of Hamilton. In 1628 the Crown granted Cottington for life the office of the King's game and wildfowl in and about Hampton Court and Hounslow Heath. In 1631 Charles I created Cottington, Baron Cottington of Hanworth. The ceremony took place in the main hall of the Queen's House at Greenwich. In August 1635 Cottington entertained Queen Henrietta Maria and her entire Court to dinner at Hanworth.

Throughout the Civil War, Cottington supported the King and went with him to Oxford. At the end of the war he was refused permission to go abroad with money and servants, but went anyway. Settling first at Rouen and then Valadolid, where he died and was buried in the English College of the Jesuits. His estate at Hanworth was confiscated and given to President Bradshaw.

This ended Royal visits to Hanworth. By the Restoration, Cottington was dead and his nephew retrieved his estates but was not interested in Hanworth and put it up for sale. It was purchased by Sir Thomas Chambers, whose only child, Mary, married Lord Vere Beauclerk, third son of the first Duke of St Albans, the natural son of Charles II and Nell Gwyn, but that's another story.

OSTERLEY PARK HOUSE

Osterley Park House had been purchased by Sir Thomas Gresham before 1563, as there is a letter from him written in January 1563 referring to 'my powre dowffe house at Osterley'. This would have been an earlier house to the mansion he had built c.1576.

John Norden in *Speculum Britanniae*, published 1596, describes Osterley:

The house now of the ladie Gresham's, a faire and stately building of bricke, erected by Sir Thomas Gresham, Knight, Citizen and Merchant – Adventurer of London, and finished about 1577. It standeth in a parke by him also impaled, well wooded, and garnished with manie faire ponds which afford not only fish and fowle, as swanes and other water fowle, but also great use for milles, as paper milles, oyle milles, and corne milles, all of which are now decayed (a corne mill excepted). In the same park was a very faire heronric for the increase and preservation where of, sundrie allurements were devised and set up, fallen all to ruin.

Queen Elizabeth arrived on a visit in 1576. For her entertainment Gresham got his friend, the playwright Thomas Churchyard to write a play for the Queen, as well as a pageant. Churchyard mentions a play entitled 'The Devises of Warre and a play at Awsterley: her Highness being at Sir Thomas Greshams'.

Thomas Fuller in his *Worthies of England*, published in 1661 refers to Queen Elizabeth's visit stating:

Her majesty found fault with the court of this house as too great: affirming, 'that it would appear more handsome, if divided with a wall in the middle.' What doth Sir Thomas, but in the night-time sends for workmen to London (money commands all things), who so speedily and silently apply their business, that the next morning discovered that court double, which the night had left single before. It is questionable whether the Queen next day was more contented to her fancy, or more pleased with the surprise and sudden performance thereof; whilst her courtiers disported themselves with their several expressions, some avowing it was no wonder he could so soon *change* a building, who could build a *Change*; others (reflecting on some known differences in this knight's family) affirmed, that any house is easier divided than united.

During her visit the Queen complimented Gresham on the very good quality bread provided for her and was told it was made from wheat grown in the fields at Heston. Norden in his book describes Heston as:

a most fertile place of wheate, yet not so much to be commended for the quantity as the qualities, for the wheate is most pure, acompted the purest in manie shires. And therefore Queen Elizabeth hath the most part of her

provision from that place for manchet for her Highnesses own diet.

This is Queen Elizabeth's only recorded visit to Osterley. Lady Gresham died in 1596 and bequeathed the house to her son by her first marriage, Sir William Read. Throughout the 17th century the house had several owners and during the Civil War it was lived in by both Royalist and Parliamentary supporters but not both at the same time. Sir William Waller, the Parliamentary General died at Osterley in 1668. There are no records of Stuart monarchs visiting Osterley.

SYON HOUSE AND ABBEY

The third site is that of Syon House and Syon Abbey, which was the first building on the site. This was built in 1431 for the Bridgettine Order of Nuns and Monks from the Order of St Augustine. They resided there until the Dissolution of the Monasteries on the order of Henry VIII. Syon was one of the first of the larger monasteries to be dissolved in 1539.

In November 1541 the desecrated walls of Syon Abbey were chosen as the prison for Catherine Howard, Henry's fifth wife. Here she resided until the February of the following year, when she sailed from Syon to the Tower of London and was beheaded three days later. Hollinshed's Chronicles record that she was kept very strict, but served as Queen.

On 14th February 1547, the body of Henry VIII was removed from Westminster to Windsor for burial. It rested, the first night of this journey at Syon, where divine service was celebrated for the repose of the deceased. Here a prophecy was supposed to be fulfilled. A Franciscan friar, preaching before the King at Greenwich, in 1535, told him that dogs would lick his blood as they had Arab's. The King had died of dropsy and had been dead for a fortnight when he arrived at Syon, so it was bodily fluid which seeped from the coffin, but it was construed as a fulfilment of the prophecy and considered a divine judgement upon the King, for having forced the Bridgettines from their religious home.

The young Edward VI, in the first year of his reign, granted the monastery with its appurtenances to his uncle, Edward Seymour, first Duke of Somerset, the Lord Protector, who had Syon House built, using the foundations of the monastery. On completion of the house, the

Duke of Somerset entertained the young Edward VI to dinner. Somerset lived at Syon until 1552, when he was arrested and accused of treason. Found guilty, he was beheaded at Tower Hill and the Mansion was confiscated by the Crown.

In 1553 Syon was granted to John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, whose son Lord Guildford Dudley, married Lady Jane Grey and the young couple resided at Syon. On the death of Edward VI, the Dukes of Northumberland and Suffolk, accompanied by others of the nobility approached Lady Jane Grey and prevailed upon her to reluctantly accept the crown, having been encouraged by her husband. From Syon she was conveyed with great state to the Tower of London. Here she was proclaimed Queen of England, with the usual formalities and commenced her ill fated nine day reign, until the Princess Mary was brought to London and proclaimed Queen Mary I. Mary at first did not seek revenge on Lady Jane Grey or her husband. Lady Jane Grey was accommodated in a house within the Tower of London, but in November 1553 Jane and her husband stood trial and were found guilty of treason. The following February they were both beheaded. Lord Guildford on Tower Hill and Jane on Tower Green in private.

In 1557 Queen Mary re-established the Bridgettine nuns at Syon, but in 1558 with the accession of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I, the nuns were forced to leave again and Syon reverted once more to the Crown. The Queen leased Syon to Sir Francis Knowles and then to his son Robert.

In 1594 the Queen leased Syon to Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland. He was a courtier in her Court, who as she reached the end of her life, was in correspondence with James VI of Scotland over the succession to the English throne. When Elizabeth died in 1603 and James VI rode south, he entered London with the Earl of Northumberland on his right hand. For this support the King gave the Earl the freehold of Syon. The Earl was implicated in the 1605 Gunpowder plot and was imprisoned in the Tower of London for 16 years. His wife spent years working on his release by petitioning the King and his wife Anne of Denmark. Queen Anne did visit Syon and the Countess of Northumberland once during this time. Obtaining his freedom in 1621, the Earl died in 1632, but there is no record of a royal visit from James I to Syon House.

Algernon, tenth Earl of Northumberland

succeeded his father. He was loath to be a courtier in the courts of James I or Charles I. He was bitter over his father being imprisoned for 16 years. He had a personal liking for the Prince of Wales and had respected the late Anne of Denmark. When Charles I came to the throne old animosities were forgotten. Algernon accepted the office of Master of the Horse and took his seat in the House of Lords and when his father died he was persuaded to return to Court.

Even though Algernon supported a constitutional government, Charles was prepared to bestow sundry honours upon him. Algernon was nominated to the Privy Council as well as accompanying Charles to Scotland. In 1635 he was made a Knight of the Garter and in 1636 he became Admiral, Custos-Maris, Captain General and Governor of the Fleet and Sea Forces; appointed to command the new fleet raised by dint of 'ship money'. In 1637 he became the Lord Admiral, but became ill with fever soon afterwards. Queen Henrietta Maria visited him whilst he was ill to enquire how he was. Queen Henrietta was placed under Algernon's special protection in 1639.

By 1642 the Earl and the King had opposing views on how the country should be governed and Algernon resigned as Lord Admiral. When the Civil War commenced Algernon supported the Parliamentarian Army.

In 1645 the Earl of Northumberland became guardian of Charles I's younger children. He was paid £5,000 per year for keeping them in an honourable way and was given the use of Whitehall, St James's House, Somerset House or any other of the King's houses as he should require. When the Duke of York was captured in 1646 he joined his brother, the Duke of Gloucester and his sister. Charles was surrendered by the Scots in January 1647 and imprisoned at Richmond in June of that year. The plague having broken out in London, the Earl asked permission of Parliament to take the children to Syon House, where they might be free of infection. In August the King was taken to visit his children at Syon. The *Daily Post* records:

Syon House; 23 August. His Majesty came hither to see his Children, with one Troop of Horse, and the Commissioners; and dined here.

This visit was also recorded by Sir Thomas Herbert, the King's Groom of the Chambers:

The Earl welcomed the King with a very noble Treat; and his Followers had their Tables richly furnished: by his Behaviour expressing extraordinary Contentment to see

the King and his Children together after such various Chances, and so long a Separation.

The next day the King took up his residence at Hampton Court and at regular intervals visited Syon. The *Daily Post* for August 29th reported:

The Duke of York is at Syon; and the King hunted at Richmond Park, and afterwards dined with his Children at Syon.

The Earl assumed responsibility for these visits, which were strongly condemned by the Levellers and fanatics in the Commons. Parliament however supported the Earl and gave permission to allow Charles and his children free access to each other.

Clarendon, the historian, records:

The King enjoyed himself much more to his content at Hampton Court than he had of late; but that which pleased his Majesty most was that his Children were permitted to come to him, in whom he took great Delight. They were all at the Earl of Northumberland's House at Syon, from the time the King came to Hampton Court; and had Liberty to attend his Majesty when he pleased; so that sometimes he sent for them to come to Hampton Court; and sometimes he went to them at Syon; which gave him great Satisfaction.'

The King persuaded the Duke of York to attempt an escape from Syon, but Northumberland was informed before it could happen. The children were then moved to St James's Palace. The Earl was exonerated from being involved in any escape attempt.

After the trial of Charles I and his impending execution, the Earl wrote to both Houses of Parliament as a final protest against the execution, which he did not support. This upset Parliament and the Earl was practically a prisoner in his London home. After the King's execution the Earl left London without permission and went to Syon House. Here he wrote to the Rump Parliament stating that he intended taking no further part in government and asking to be relieved of the custody of the Duke of Gloucester and Princess Elizabeth. This he passed to the Lady Leicester at Penshurst Place and he went into retirement at Petworth.

At the restoration, Charles II recognised the Earl's support of his father and his brothers and sisters. In 1665 when the Great Plague raged, King Charles held a council at Syon, which Evelyn records in his diary. The tenth Earl of Northumberland died in October 1668 and was succeeded by his son Josceline, who died in 1670, leaving a young daughter, Lady Elizabeth Percy and no male heir. The Dowager, Countess of

Northumberland brought up the young Lady Elizabeth, marrying her off twice to young men; one of whom died and the other was murdered. Her third marriage was to Charles, fifth Duke of Somerset, descendent of the first Duke who had had Syon House built.

The sixth Duke of Somerset became Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Charles II in 1683 and in 1684 was installed as a Knight of the Garter. When James II came to the throne the Duke could not accept James's Catholicism and he was removed from his position in the Royal Household.

Neither did the Duke enjoy the support of William of Orange, but both the Duke and his wife enjoyed the support of the Princess Anne, later, Queen Anne. In 1692, when Anne was out of favour with William and Mary, over her friendship with Sarah Churchill and had been ejected from her lodgings, the Duke and Duchess invited the Princess to Syon, where she resided for sometime. Anne went into labour whilst at Syon and was visited by Queen Mary.

The *London Gazette* recorded it thus:

Her Royal Highness was taken ill last night at *Syon* House, and fell in Labor this Morning, near two months before her Time, and about Eleven of the Clock was delivered of a Son, who was immediately Christened by the name of *George*, and Dyed about an Hour after. The Queen went in the Afternoon to see her Royal Highness, who is as well as can be expected.

The Duchess of Somerset recorded the same visit:

She came attended by the Ladies Derby and Scarborough. The Queen never asked the Princess how she did, nor expressed the least concern for her condition, nor so much as took her by the hand. The Salutation was this: "I have made the first step by coming to you, and I now expect you should make the next by removing my Lady Marlborough." The Princess answered, "That she had never in all her life disobeyed her, except in that one particular, which she hoped would some time or other appear as unreasonable to her Majesty as it did to her." Upon which the Queen rose up and went away, repeating to the Prince, as he led her to the coach, the same thing she had said to the Princess.

When Queen Anne ascended the throne, the Duke and Duchess of Somerset were much favoured at court, but there is no record of Anne, when Queen, visiting Syon House. Later in her reign both the Duke and the Duchess fell out of favour and were dismissed from Court.

After descending for two generations down the female line, a petition to George II re-created the earldom of Northumberland in 1750. This was later elevated to a dukedom and the Dukes

of Northumberland are still the owners of Syon House.

Hanworth Manor, Osterley Park and Syon House provided a variety of Royal visits under many different circumstances. A look at the Tudor and Stuart history of other estates in West London and South West Middlesex would provide further examples of such visits.

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