**Manuscript of the Month**

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**King George’s Public Entry into London, 1714**

Three hundred years ago, the last of the Stuart monarchs, Queen Anne, died after a long and lingering illness. Her successor, George, Elector of Hanover, and his descendants, went on to rule Britain for over a century and give their name to an era. An era which saw both Britain and Hoare’s Bank change immeasurably.

The death of Queen Anne without a direct heir, despite some 18 pregnancies, might have sparked a constitutional crisis. But the Act of Settlement (1701), passed while memories of the Glorious Revolution were still raw, had settled the throne on James I’s Protestant granddaughter, Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and her heirs. Thus it was Sophia’s son who succeeded his second cousin Anne in 1714, despite the existence of several dozen Catholic relatives with far stronger claims.

One of the key ingredients for a peaceful transition to the House of Hanover was money. Cash was required both to maintain the Royal Household and fund the £100,000 (c.£12M today) bounty offered for the Pretender’s capture. A Royal Lottery launched earlier in 1714 had aimed to raise £1.4M (c.£166M today) for the public coffers. But by the time of Queen Anne’s death on 1st August less than half this sum had been secured, partly because the interest rate (4% p.a. for 32 years) was regarded as unattractively low. Nor did the uncertainty created by Anne’s death do much to boost public confidence. In a bid to drum up support, therefore, and reassure investors, the Privy Council and the Lord Justices made a show of going to the Bank of England on 9th August and committing large sums of their own money to the scheme. At the same time, parliament agreed to extend the closing date for the sale of Lottery tickets and raise the interest rate to 5%. A month later, an additional £885,703-14-6 was raised by the issue of additional South Sea Company capital stock. Records show that Hoare’s Bank duly invested in both ventures, purchasing 400 Lottery tickets in August 1714 and 5,000 South Sea Stocks a few weeks later.

After lengthy negotiations, it was decided that the new King would land at Greenwich in mid September and proceed to St James’s Palace by coach a day or so later. His arrival, and the very public procession that would inevitably follow, afforded those blessed with a money-making turn of mind with boundless opportunities, opportunities they were quick to seize upon. Tailors busied themselves taking orders for new, richly decorated robes, while publishers hurriedly re-issued updated versions of their works. ‘Meditations upon our Blessed Saviour’s Royal Entrance into Jerusalem, occasion’d by the joyful Expectation of our only Rightful and Lawful Sovereign King George’ and ‘An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover, in which the Character of his Most Excellent Majesty King George is given, and also that of his Royal Highness the Prince’ were typical of those on offer. Most conspicuous of all, though, were the advertisements for seats along the procession route. Balconies could be hired at the Turkey Cock, over against the Sun Tavern on the Strand; at Seneca’s Head, a bookseller near Somerset House; or at the Cabinet and Looking Glass beside St Paul’s. And for those willing to splash out, there were more luxurious options. At the Bell near Stocks Market in Cornhill: *an entire House will be fitted up with Seats and other Conveniences, for the Entertainment of Persons who are desirous of seeing the King’s Publick Entry…Note there will be cold Eatables, with Wine and other Liquors provided…* (BL Burney, Daily Courant, 7th Sept 1714) Not to be outdone, the occupier of a corner house opposite Rochford’s Chocolate House in Charing Cross erected: *a very long substantial Gallery, with a Balcony round the Front, even with the first Floor…supported with large Timber, and hung with Tapestry, fit for Gentlemen and Ladies…The Fronts of the Balcony and Gallery are made broad, to set Bottles and Plates on; and a Cover over the Seats to preserve the Spectators from Rain*. (Ibid, 16th Sept 1714)

Preparations for the new King’s arrival continued throughout August and September. Local officials were instructed to mend their roads and ensure they were *well cleansed from Soil, Filth and Dirt*. (Ibid, 20th Sept 1714) And parish Beadles visited every house along the route reminding inhabitants to: *charge their Children, Servants, and Lodgers, neither to make… fire, fling, or throw [fireworks] out of their Houses, Shops, or Warehouses, or in the Streets*, although within days the Lord Mayor was complaining: *that several Rude and Disorderly Persons have already begun to Throw, Cast, or Fire Squibs, Rockets, Serpents, or other Fireworks in the Streets and other Publick Passages of this City, in manifest Contempt of…His Lordship’s Authority* and warning of his resolve *to suppress so great a Nusance [sic], and Exemplarily to Punish such Persons, (of what Age, Sex, Degree or Quality soever) who shall dare to Offend against the said Law*. (Flying Post or The Post Master, 14th-16th Sept 1714) The orders shown here were aimed specifically at London’s Charity School children, 4,000 of whom were to be assembled outside St Paul’s Cathedral on a 600 foot long, ten row high platform or ‘Machine’, ready to sing a Hymn upon the King’s arrival. Above all, the orders stressed: *That no Charity-Child shall undertake to make any Speech to His Majesty, and if any presume to act contrary hereto, they shall not only be stopp’d, pull’d down, and turned out the Machine, but be proceeded against in the utmost Manner*. Further orders reminded participants and spectators to refrain from wearing mourning on the day of the procession and forbade hackneys, carts and drays from venturing out until the cavalcade had passed by.

After placing his German dominions in the hands of a Council headed by his brother, George set out for Britain accompanied by his eldest son and a small retinue. At The Hague they were met by a delegation of British noblemen, who escorted them to Greenwich on 18th September. Two days later, the King and Prince formally entered London, attended by hundreds of noblemen, several detachments of troops and a swirling mass of banner-carrying, brightly liveried servants, trumpeters and drummers. At Southwark, the procession halted to greet the Lord Mayor, who presented the City Sword to the new King before falling in with his officials, resplendent in scarlet gowns and gold chains, among them Sir Richard Hoare, Alderman for Bread Street Ward and himself a former Lord Mayor. After a brief pause at St Paul’s to hear the Charity School children’s Hymn and a Latin speech from a Blue Coat boy, the procession passed along Fleet Street to Temple Bar, where the King was welcomed by City of Westminster officials, and on to St James’s. Merchant Ralph Thoresby recorded that he: *Wrote till eleven…then walked to see the several trades and companies with their banners, the charity children in particular stands in St Paul’s church-yard; the streets crowded with innumerable spectators, the balconies hung with tapestry, and filled with ladies etc; then by my friend Mr Toll’s help, got a pure stand among the Grocers’ Company, where had a fair view of the cavalcade…which was most splendid and magnificent above expression, the nobility even burdened with gold and silver embroidery. We counted above two hundred and six coaches, though there were frequently two lords in one coach, besides the Bishops and Judges, etc…at last came the most blessed sight of a Protestant King and Prince (whom I had full view of) attended with the loud acclamations of the people…It was above three hours from the beginning to the end of the procession; the conduit ran wine. I afterwards walked with cousin Wilson to their feast at Cook’s-hall; their own (the Grocers’) being let to the Bank of England: after supper saw the fire-works, drank one pint of canary, and returned: heard of no damage, blessed be God!* (The Diary of Ralph Thoresby 1674-1724, pub 1830, pgs 260-261)

Of course, celebrations marking the King’s safe arrival were not confined to London. Bonfires, services, feasts and processions were held all over the country, from Aberdeenshire to Devon. In Bristol, Divine Service at the Cathedral was followed by a procession through streets festooned with banners and tapestries. Afterwards: *a mast hung with Tarr Barrels erected in the Midst, was lighted…[on Brandon Hill] and then several in each Street took fire, attended with the usual Diversions of shouting, huzzaing and Barrels of Ale…Illuminations were made from top to bottom in every House…the Ranges of Candles in Figures of Crowns, Circles and Half-Moons, all contributed to make it a glorious Appearance; but if any thing is more worth Notice, ‘twas the beautiful Contrivance of adorning the Round-tops and Gunnels of the Ships at the Key with Lights, which indeed added a fresh Beauty to the View.* (Flying Post, 23rd-25th Sept 1714) Other celebrations were more overtly political, however. Portsmouth’s principal inhabitants carried effigies of the Pope and Pretender through the streets alongside banners proclaiming “God Preserve King George & the Church of England” and “No Pope, No Pretender” before fixing them atop a large bonfire: *and several Squibs and Rockets being very artificially put in the inside of the Figures, as soon as the Fire catch’d hold of them they went off, to the great Diversion of the Company…* (Ibid)

Over the next century, Georgian Britain would undergo a transformation. The population nearly doubled, reaching 9M by 1800. And the landscape became increasingly urban as towns and cities flourished. It was an era too marked by great advances in technology and infrastructure, culture and science: crop rotation, steam power, canals, turnpike roads, picture galleries, museums and novels all emerged or evolved during this time. This in turn helped fuel a new phenomenon: mass consumerism. For the first time, large quantities of affordable goods came within the grasp of millions. Shopping became a popular pastime and some familiar sounding brands began to appear, among them Chippendale (furniture), Wedgwood (china) and Colman’s (mustard). Finance too acquired new levels of sophistication. Banks sprang up all over the country, credit became more widely available and institutions such as The Society of Lloyds and the London Stock Exchange began assuming forms familiar to us today.

For Hoare’s Bank too, the Georgian period was one of change. In 1714, the bank’s founder, Sir Richard Hoare, and his son Henry were operating as goldsmith/bankers in a small, dark building, selling plate and jewellery in their shop to the front and using the back room as a counting house. But by 1830, Messrs Hoare’s goldsmithing days were a distant memory and the cramped shop cum counting house had been swept aside by a handsome Regency banking house staffed by fifteen clerks and four messengers. The Hoares themselves, meanwhile, had acquired the archetypal trappings of Georgian wealth: elegant London townhouses, custom built carriages and Chippendale stuffed country mansions set in landscaped gardens. Yet they never forgot their roots. For as Sir Richard’s grandson, Henry (Magnificent), who dominated the bank for much of the Georgian era while simultaneously creating one of the most enduring of all landscape gardens, was at pains to remind his nephew, any achievements regarding the latter were: *trifling in Comparison to that great one [the Bank]* *from where all that We possess is derived*.