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THEATRES OF REVOLUTION: THE STUART KINGS AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF DISRUPTION – JAMES I: THE COURT AT PLAY

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This year I will be speaking about the Stuart century, the period between 1603 when James VI of Scotland became king of England and 1714 when Queen Anne the last of the Stuart Monarchs died. It was a turbulent 111 years which reads, as history, like the most purple-prosed novel. To summarise:
James I is the Homosexual King whose favourite son dies and is succeeded by his second son, Charles, an aesthete incapable of ruling. Charles I goes to war against his own people – loses and is executed. His son, also Charles, gets crowned king in Scotland but, exiled, holds court in Europe. England under Oliver Cromwell, meanwhile, is still a monarchy in all but name. When Cromwell dies nobody knows what to do. Short on options Charles II is restored; but he has no legitimate children and, unlike Henry VIII, does not divorce his queen - the heir is his brother, a bigoted and narrow-minded Roman Catholic. When he comes to the throne he turns everyone against him and is driven out and replaced by his protestant daughter, Mary, and her Dutch husband William of Orange. Mary tragically dies and William leaves no heir, the throne going to James II's younger daughter Anne. She also fails to have issue and the Stuarts are extinguished as a royal line.

This breathless soap opera was played out in just a hundred years in array of buildings that span Europe from Scotland, via Denmark, Holland and Spain to England. Some of them the buildings were extremely unusual and my series this year will focus on the contradictions and complexities of housing the Stuart monarchs in a series of make-shift and often unexpected places.

Tonight, I'm starting with King James I whose attitude to architecture and his own accommodation was unusual to say the least.

Late sixteenth century Scotland was a turbulent place. Divided by a jagged topography, riven by religion, fractured by inter-clan blood-feuds and threatened by foreign military intervention, leading barons were stabbed, poisoned, shot and blown-up as factions jostled for power. As a result, baby James VI, born in June 1566, and crowned at the age of thirteen months, was placed under secure guardianship in Stirling Castle, impregnably sited on a volcanic crag, a safe distance from Edinburgh.

This building was, for twelve years, the young king James VI's home. It must have often seemed like imprisonment as his guardians fended off attempts to seize him from rooms which, although magnificent, retain to this day, their iron window bars. Here the king received a harsh, demanding and thorough education learning Latin, he claimed in later life, before he could speak Scots. He amassed in his schoolroom a substantial library which was not just a princely ornament; it was the foundation of the king's deep scholarship, of his love of debate and disputation.
In March 1578 the 12-year old king announced his intention accept the responsibility of government in his own person and, in September 1579, accompanied by many nobles and several thousand horse, he made his way to Edinburgh where he made a triumphal entry where, after a tour of his capital city, he made straight for Holyroodhouse.

It had been King James IV (1473-1513) who had added a royal 'palace' to the abbey of Holyrood just outside Edinburgh and, in 1528, James V embarked on a development of his father's palace with the construction of a

free-standing great tower of two stories raised up on a vaulted basement. The king had an inner and outer chamber on the first floor and the queen an identical suite above. This sort of compact, fortified tower lodging may have been appropriate for a teenage king fearful of kidnap but was not suitable for the 23-year-old monarch who was marrying a French Princess.

So in the 1530s a splendid new west range created a glittering entrance front with big glazed casements, three bay windows, turrets and a crenelated parapet. The façade owed a debt to the large brick palaces of the Tudors, such as Greenwich and Hampton Court, but unlike England the royal lodgings were entered by a broad external stair in the inner court. From this there was access to the large domestic chapel on the south and the king's outer or great chamber. There was then a second state room, which seems to have served as an audience chamber, and an ante room. The latter gave access to an inner chamber on the north and to the great tower in which there was an anteroom and the king's bedchamber.

Soon after James's adult court was established in 1580, discussions began in earnest about his marriage. Royal marriages were international dynastic alliances in which countries established preferential trade links, military alliances and acquired diplomatic leverage. While James could expect a substantial dowry from an international match there was concern about whether the Scots court could sustain a queen financially. An English observer wrote that the King had 'neither plate nor stuff to furnish one of his little half-built houses, which are in great decay and ruin. His plate is not worth £100, he has only two or three rich jewels, his saddles are of plain cloth', in fact he could not see 'how a queen can be here maintained, for there is not enough to maintain the king'.

Although one of the options was a marriage to a French Princess that would have helped cement the Auld Alliance with France and brought a huge dowry, the alternative was a match with Princess Anna, the younger daughter of King Frederick II of Denmark. Although this does not seem much of a contest, in the early seventeenth century, Danish rule covered not only the territory that today bears its name but over Norway, much of Sweden and Schleswig and Holstein through which came membership of the electoral College for the Holy Roman Emperor and so the King of Denmark was also an Imperial Prince. Controlling access to the Baltic with a ring of mighty forts, and the finest navy in northern Europe, the Danes extracted tolls from merchant shipping making it an extremely powerful and wealthy monarchy.

In the expectation of relief from Danish tolls, it is no wonder that the merchant classes of Scotland wanted a marriage treaty with Denmark. It was ultimately also the match that James personally favoured. Anna, born in 1574, was fourteen, eight years younger than himself, tall, blonde, good-looking, and Protestant.

On 20th August 1589, in Copenhagen, James and Anna were married by proxy in a civil ceremony, and eight days later, James received the good news in Scotland. He immediately launched himself into preparations for the arrival of his bride and the church ceremonies that would see them man and wife in the eyes of God.

The 738 nautical miles from Copenhagen to Leith should have taken the sixteen Danish ships containing the princess and her trousseau some five days and so, believing them to have left on 1 September James anticipated seeing his wife within the week. On the 15th news arrived that, although the flotilla had sailed from Elsinore on 5th, its whereabouts was now unknown. James, in a frenzy of anxiety, imagining the worst, sent a ship of his own to try and find her. They found the Princess' ships sheltering off the southern tip of Norway. After some fraught discussion it was agreed to abandon the attempt to reach Scotland and to make the crossing the following Spring. The remaining sea-worthy ships then took the Princess north to Oslo.

James was frustrated, impatient and annoyed and made a secret plan to go himself and rescue his queen. Secrecy was difficult because equipping five ships for such a voyage could not be done behind closed doors; nevertheless he left Scotland and three weeks later arrived in Oslo finally meeting his fourteen-year-old bride. It was not long before Christian IV, and his council of regency (he was only twelve), issued an invitation to the Scots party to spend the winter in Denmark, this James accepted, and he and his sparkling retinue of fifty or so attendants made their way overland to Elsinore.

The situation of Kronborg Castle at Elsinore is unforgettable. It sits on a sea-bound peninsular completely dominating the Straits of Øresund, the slender navigable artery between the Kattegat and the Baltic Sea from which the Danish kings harvested a toll from passing ships. The castle had been built in the 1420s to enforce the dues and was an unusually regular square of ten-metre-high masonry, inside which was accommodation for a garrison and the king. Kronborg remained a severe military installation until 1574 when King Fredrick II, Queen Anna's father, resolved to transform it into a great palace.

Fredrick was fascinated by architecture and recruited designers and craftsmen from Germany and Flanders to realise his ambition. Entered through a series of Renaissance-style gates, the new palace was arranged round the inside of the medieval courtyard. To the south, on the first floor, was an enormous hall some 62 metres long, beneath, at its east end, was the palace chapel. On the opposite side of the court were the royal lodgings, the king in the west half, and the queen in the east. Each suite terminated in a tower, the kings of marble with a copper spire, contained his library, cabinet, workshop and a privy kitchen. On the floor above the royal suite were two guest suites with the best views over the sound. Linking north and south ranges was a service range on the west and a communication gallery to the east.

All this had been built virtually without financial constraint after Frederick changed the shipping toll from a charge per vessel to a percentage of cargo value. The craftsmanship everywhere was superb, undertaken by the best Flemings and Germans and the design drew from Netherlandish and Italian sources. To ice the cake Frederick had the whole of the outside of the castle covered in white sandstone and the roof tiles replaced with sheet copper. James spent a couple of months here enjoying his brother-in-law's hospitality and especially his cellar before sailing for Scotland with his bride. There is not enough evidence to create an accurate annual itinerary for James and Anna's life in Scotland apart for a few isolated years. Occasionally James went on formal progress through his realm but more often hunted through the season moving between his own houses and those of his courtiers with a small number of attendants. Hunting was his passion. A French visitor in 1584 remarked 'likes hunting above all the pleasures in the world, remaining there at least six hours together chasing all over the place with loosened reign'.

Like Elizabeth I James's preference was to stay at the residences of the nobility, but in addition to the houses already described there were two more of his own that James like to visit.

Linlithgow was the oldest of James's regular residences having been started in the 1420s. It was a massive masonry quadrangle with an extremely large great hall on the east side. The king's lodgings were three rooms on the west, a hall, presence chamber and bedroom. The queen's lodgings were likely to have been on the north front.
Falkland, built on a ridge at the foot of the east Lomond Hill, and situated in a fenced hunting forest stocked with deer and boar, was James VI favoured hunting lodge where he regularly passed much of the summer. Although it formed part of Queen Anna's jointure, James continued to regularly use it.

Between them Stirling, Linlithgow, Holyroodhouse, Falkland and the queen's residence at Dunfermline comprised the architectural setting of the Scottish court. Before James's marriage this was an all-male institution in which almost anybody with an official position had access to the king. Because the architectural unit of his life was three rooms and a closet it made for an undisciplined and crowded environment. All 24 gentlemen had access to the king's bedchamber together with four varlets and three pages. In the more private closet two gentlemen kept the door and one or two more were in attendance. The king's Lord Great Chamberlain, as also first gentleman of the chamber, had the right to sleep in his bedroom, and dress him.

Anna of Denmark was appalled at the free-and-easy attitude to access at court and tried to persuade James to create a more private chamber, admitting fewer people by invitation only. In 1591 reforms were instituted to reduce the numbers of gentlemen and members of the Privy Council in an attempt at creating a more private and disciplined environment. But the regulations were flaunted and access to the king was still fluid; part of the problem being that the wages of the king's guards were always in arrears and they didn't police the rules of access.
Like Elizabeth I James lived in mid-sixteenth century royal houses constructed by his forebears. Unlike Elizabeth I several of these buildings have survived since they were abandoned after 1603. As a result, the physicality of

James I's world in Scotland is much more real for us today than for Elizabeth, barely any of whose many hundreds of chambers survive in its original state. Elizabeth certainly struggled to maintain the vast number of houses left to her by her father, but her principal residences were kept in good repair. In contrast, the state of Scottish royal residences in 1600 was extremely poor. Both financial records and travellers' observations paint a picture of neglect and decay. In 1583 it was thought that Linlithgow might fall down if money was not spent on propping it up. The prediction was not proved wrong; by 1600 a quarter of it was ruinous and, in 1607, the north part completely collapsed. A visitor in 1598 thought Falkland 'was of old building and almost ready to fall, having nothing in it remarkable'. Dunfermline was in such poor condition, before she rebuilt it in 1599, that Queen Anna was too ashamed to receive foreign ambassadors there. Stirling was also in bad order but, as the royal nursery house, the principal lodgings were kept in reasonable repair. Although Holyroodhouse was the best kept of all the residences an English observer in 1600 observed that it was 'altogether ruinous' an observation that must have been accurate given expenditure that year of some £1,300 on emergency repairs.

The parlous state of the royal houses was partly due to a chronic lack of money, but their repair was not one of James's priorities. His cultural interests were essentially intellectual, he was a poet, a theologian and a political theorist and it was here that his interests lay rather than in the visual arts. There is no real evidence that while king of Scots he was specifically interested in architecture other than it being a necessarily magnificent setting to key moments in his rule. I spent some time describing James's stay in Denmark and the magnificent architecture that he saw there; but the fact was that while he was there he visited theologians and philosophers rather than examining works of architecture. At home he was content for his teenage wife to commission the only significant new royal building of his Scottish reign at Dunfermline.

Typical of his attitude are the events surrounding the baptism of his first son Prince Henry Frederick in August 1594. James wanted his first born to enter the world at Stirling, where he had spent his childhood, and been crowned. On arriving for her confinement, Anne found the royal rooms in such a poor state that she had to stay in Lady Mar's lodgings. As the baby prince was the nephew of the King of Denmark and potentially heir to the English throne, his christening was an international diplomatic occasion. Almost too late James realised that the chapel at Stirling was humiliatingly dilapidated and ordered it be rebuilt at great speed for the baptism. William Schaw, James's Master of Works, was in charge and must have been the designer. The king's interest was intense, but principally because it had to be finished in time for the event rather than in the details of its architecture.
What Schaw built, in just under seven months, was a stage set lined, on the day, with tapestry – even on the floor; canopies of state, rich textile traverses and a pulpit draped with cloth of gold completed the effect. Externally the noble classical entrance portal is inspired by the great Tuscan entrance portal at Kronborg which Schaw had seen a few years before, such portals are a defining feature of the Danish castle leading into all its main parts and would have made Anna feel much at home.

Just before midnight on 26 March 1603 Sir Thomas Carey brought James the news that he was now King of England. Two days later, the official papers in his hand, he was proclaimed king of Great Britain and Ireland at the cross in Edinburgh. There were few preparations that needed to be made and, on the 5th April, James rode out of the gates of Holyroodhouse to make his way to his new kingdom. On 1 June he was followed by the queen and three of her children in a cavalcade of coaches.

The King finally arrived in London on 11th May. The city, swollen with visitors anticipating James's arrival, was gripped by plague and James was advised to move out west to the late queen's plague refuge, Windsor Castle. On the 22nd June it was reported that he had inspected the castle and so liked it that it would be the place where his family would first assemble in England. On 27th he met Queen Anna at Towcester and escorted her, and his eldest son, Henry, to the castle where their daughter, Elizabeth, already was. Windsor was thus the royal family's first proper experience of an English royal palace and, as a massive fortification, may have been more what the Scots king was expecting than the low, rambling and unfortified domesticity of Whitehall.

It was also at Windsor where the two courts, Scots and English first began to mingle. On July 4 Dudley Carleton described the arrival of the queen and the princess and their first days at Windsor to his correspondent John Chamberlain. 'We were much troubled here' he wrote 'with certain wrangling Scots who, wheresoever they came,

would have meat, drink, and lodging by strong hand'. It was not only the courtiers who were trying to prove themselves for James and Anna immediately set out to hunt in the park and 'In the afternoon she killed a buck out of a standing, at which the king was so angry and discontented that she returned home without his company'. James's pride was only temporally dented by his wife's steady hand and soon he was hunting in the Windsor parks every day.

In the autumn of 1604, only just over a year into his reign, King James I decided to found one of the most unlikely and unusual royal residences in the long history of the monarchy. This was a building that posterity has sometimes called Royston Palace, but it looked nothing like a palace of popular imagination; indeed, it was little more than a cluster of houses in the middle of a market town. This unpalatial palace became one of King James's most favoured residences, the scene of many important events in his reign. Although, during the Commonwealth, the royal residence was abolished and sold, the streets of Royston still contain many of the former royal buildings, enough indeed, to reconstruct this most unusual of royal palaces.

As James I made his way south from Scotland, he eventually arrived at Royston, sited on the Great North Road some 60 miles from his new capital. In the middle ages the town was half in Cambridgeshire, and half in Hertfordshire, clustered round a marketplace and a modest, but wealthy, priory. The priory had been dissolved in 1536: the priory church transformed into the parish church; and the residential buildings converted into a house by Robert Chester, one of Henry VIII's Gentlemen Ushers. It was in this large courtyard house, that the new king stayed in April 1604 with his boisterous retinue.

At Royston the king entered Hertfordshire and was met by its high sheriff who presented James with a fine horse with a rich saddle before escorting him to Chester's mansion in the old priory. He only stayed one night, but the countryside round about, and its potential for hunting, pleased him. Chester, who followed the king to London, and was soon knighted, agreed to rent the king the priory for a year, and immediately a 14-mile wide cordon was thrown around the town reserving all types of game solely for the king's pleasure. Soon a gamekeeper was appointed to kill 'noisome vermin and ravenous fowl' and a pack of hounds established in new kennels.

This sudden attention was unwanted by the people of Royston, who numbered about 1,000 in 1604. Although, compared to Elizabeth I, King James travelled light, it still took over 200 carts to move the court, and the town was flooded with people on the arrival of their sovereign. The king was legally empowered to purchase cut-price food from the market and requisition carts from farmers at a reduced price. Feeding the king's swollen retinue was bleeding the town dry. In December 1604 the townsmen took desperate measures to persuade him to return to London. Kidnapping his favourite hound, a beast called Jowler, they attached a note to his collar which the king discovered when the dog was released the following day. It said 'Good Mr. Jowler, we pray you speak to the king…that it will please his majesty to go back to London, for else the country will be undone; all our provision is spent already, and we are not able to entertain him any longer'.

Part of the problem was that there were no proper facilities to support the court with all its officials, servants and functionaries and so the king decided to purchase a number of town centre inns and houses to accommodate both couriers and servants. Royston was well provided with inns, as were all the towns on the Great North Road, and the Cock Inn, on the main road, was chosen to be the King's house; the nearby Greyhound was assigned to his guards, and the thatched house in between as the home of the king's privy kitchen.

At first the king was content to reside in this converted inn but, in 1607, he ordered the construction of a purpose-built block of privy (or private) lodgings containing a presence chamber and a privy chamber, the two principal rooms needed to conduct formal business. These were still linked to the old inn where the king apparently slept. The construction of the new lodging signalled the fact that the necessary business of governance would continue while the king was in residence and, indeed, a steady stream of ministers, officials and ambassadors made their way to Royston to conduct affairs of state with the king.

James's on-going passion for Royston led, in 1609, to a decision to enlarge the privy lodgings. The locals grumbled again, 400 loads of timber had to be moved into the town centre; it was harvest time, and they objected to their

carts being requisitioned. Work went ahead nevertheless and a new brick frontage, one room deep, was built against the 1607 privy lodging in the middle of the street. Over the next few years this was embellished and decorated to become a fashionable brick townhouse with decorated gables, a clock tower crowned by obelisks, handsome cresting over the windows and a fine garden at the rear looking over an ornamental pond. The presence chamber, the king's throne room, that was moved into the 1609 block, had a large window looking straight up the Great North Road surmounted by the royal coat of arms; this enabled the king to watch traffic coming and going and every traveller to see that the obstruction in the road was a royal residence.

The house was built by the King's Office of Works, the royal architects department, whose head was Simon Basil, a Jacobean architect whose reputation was hugely overshadowed by his successor in post, Inigo Jones. Basil was an appointee of Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, the King's principal minister. It is likely that Salisbury, obsessed by architecture, was behind the design of the new residence as it was similar, in many ways, to Cecil's brick-built Hatfield House, with its gables, cresting and clock tower under construction at exactly the same time.

By 1617 most of the centre of Royston town had been bought up by the king. An inn called the Three Swans was purchased and fitted up for domestic offices; houses on the main road were bought and converted into lodgings for Prince Henry, extensive stables, kennels, and coach houses were constructed, some of which still survive although converted for modern uses. A circular cockpit was built to provide entertainment on days when the king didn't want to ride out. The Parish Church served as the royal chapel and was partly reconstructed for use by the court, though the king preferred to listen to sermons in the comfort of his presence chamber.

On the face of it, Royston was a place designed to serve the kings obsession for hunting, but in reality, it seems to have been much more than that. James I did not enjoy public ceremonial or the stuffy formality established at court by the Tudors. His way, as we have seen from his life in Scotland, was more informal and relaxed. He was also very bookish and was rarely happier indoors than when closeted away in his library with a group of scholars. While he did his marital duty with Anna of Denmark, his queen, he was much more comfortable in the company of good-looking young men with whom he was surprisingly intimate in public.

Royston became an ideal hide-away. Here the constrictions of space allowed him to live more privately than in London without fussy ceremonial. He often would arrive with only forty or fifty attendants and only once did the Queen join him – Unlike a normal royal residence there were no rooms assigned for the queen's use, but there were apartments for his male favourites.

James loved the fact that Royston was close to Cambridge and a steady stream of theologians and clergymen came to preach and join in theological debates. Books were sent from college libraries and troops of Cambridge players came and performed comedies for him in his presence chamber. The king's life at Royston was thus not that of an ignorant country squire gorging himself on the hunting field, but that of a poet and philosopher. In a typical week in Royston he would hunt for only three days, the rest of the time was devoted to reading, writing, and urgent business of state that could not be put off.

To allow the king to continue to govern while at Royston an elaborate system of post horses was maintained allowing royal messengers to take a steady stream of letters and papers to London, to Lord Salisbury's houses at Theobalds and Hatfield and to the Queen and Prince. The horses, like almost everything else, were purloined from the local populace; for one of Charles I visits in 1636, 150 horses were requisitioned for the royal messengers. At Royston and the nearby house of Newmarket, which was very similar, we see how the first Stuart king liked to live and govern. This was a revelation to a court and country that had become used to the ways of the Tudors who guarded their privacy and maintained their dignity in equal measure. Prince Charles hated his father's ways and longed to re-establish the dignity of the Tudor monarchy. That dignity was not only behavioural, but architectural and next time we will see how, in a state of extreme peril, Charles I made a magnificent court in the most unpromising of circumstances.