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Article:
Ormrod, William Mark (Accepted: 2016) The Foundation and Early Development of the Order of the Garter in England, 1348-1399. Frühmittelalterliche Studien. pp. 361-392. ISSN: 1613-0812 (In Press)

https://doi.org/10.1515/fmst-2016-0115

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The Foundation and Early Development of the Order of the Garter in England, 1348–1399

The Monarch as Patron of the Order of the Garter, p. 363. – The membership of the Order of the Garter, p. 369. – The Ceremonial of the Order of the Garter, p. 374. – The Religious Practices of the Order of the Garter, p. 383. – Conclusion, p. 390.

The development of princely orders of knighthood, sometimes called secular orders of chivalry, is a particular characteristic of late medieval Christendom [1]. The emphasis on the 'princely' foundation and patronage of these orders helps to differentiate them from a range of earlier examples of knightly confraternity in the medieval European tradition, and to emphasise the way in which rulers sought to identify themselves, and their realms, with the later medieval cult of chivalry. The word 'secular' is used in this context not in the modern sense of meaning entirely outwith religion, but in the technical sense that the members of these princely orders were not religious (that is, monks or clerics) but remained 'of the world'. The point is worth stressing for two reasons. First, the kind of fraternity represented by the princely orders was quite different from the religious orders of knighthood founded in the high Middle Ages, of whom the Knights Hospitaller and the Knights Templar were the most famous examples, because the knightly members of the orders of chivalry did not take monastic vows and remained emphatically laymen. Secondly, the orders of chivalry practised confraternity in not one but two ways: they were brotherhoods of knights, and they were brotherhoods of the secular clergy who supported those knightly members through prayer and other forms of religious ritual. This latter point is especially important in the context of the present collection, since modern approaches, for obvious reasons, often tend to emphasise the chivalric elements of these orders at the expense of their religious ethos and practice.

This contribution concerns the Order of the Garter, founded in 1348. The Garter is not the first secular order of chivalry established in the fourteenth century: it was pre-dated by the Order of the Band in Castile, and by the experiments that led to the foundation of the Order of the Star in France; both of these initiatives are likely, indeed, to have had some influence on the decision to set up the Order of the Garter.

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[1] D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, The Knights of the Crown. The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe, 1325–1520, Woodbridge 1987. I am grateful to Elizabeth Biggs, Lauren Bowers and Anna Duch for discussion of topics raised in this study, and to Lisa Liddy for her assistance in preparing it for publication.

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There are, however, a number of reasons for concentrating particularly on the Garter. Although the origins and early constitutional history of the Order remain matters of speculation and disagreement, the fact that the fraternity survived, more or less continuously, to the present day (and is still under the direct patronage of the monarch) means that a powerful tradition of institutional history and identity developed at least from the fifteenth century, and that we are able to draw on the endeavours of successive, distinguished antiquarian researchers from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, as well as on the work of a series of distinguished professional historians of modern generations[2]. The strong continuity that is axiomatic to the Order's institutional identity and perceived historical significance can be both a help and a hindrance to the scholar undertaking an analysis of its early development: the enduring strength of the foundation myths, coupled with the desire to write back into the fourteenth century some of the institutional realities of the fifteenth century, means that a certain amount of subjectivity and controversy will always be at work here[3]. However, the emphasis of this collection on the theme of monarchs and religious institutions allows one the opportunity to step back from the greater preoccupation of recent scholarship, which has tended to focus on the cult of chivalry and its harnessing to the service

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[2] John Anstis, The Register of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, 2 vols., London 1724; Elias Ashmole, The Institution, Laws and Ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, London 1672; William Dugdale, The Baronage of England, 2 vols., London 1675/76; George Frederick Beltz, Memorials of the Order of the Garter from its Foundation to the Present Time with Biographical Notices of the Knights in the Reigns of Edward III. and Richard II., London 1841; Juliet Vale, Edward III and Chivalry, Woodbridge 1982; Boulton, Knights of the Crown (as note 1) pp. 96–166; Hugh E.L. Collins, The Order of the Garter, 1348–1461. Chivalry and Politics in Late Medieval England (Oxford Historical Monographs) Oxford 2000; Colin Richmond – Eileen Scarff (eds.), St George's Chapel, Windsor, in the Late Middle Ages, Leeds 2001; Nigel Saul (ed.), St George's Chapel Windsor in the Fourteenth Century, Woodbridge 2005; Richard Barber, Edward III and the Triumph of England. The Battle of Crécy and the Company of the Garter, London 2013.

[3] For the foundation myth see, i. a., Susan Crane, Gender and Romance in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Princeton 1994, pp. 137 s.; C. Stephen Jaeger, Ennobling Love. In Search of a Lost Sensibility, Philadelphia (PA) 1999, pp. 140–143; Stephanie Trigg, The Vulgar History of the Order of the Garter, in: Gordon McMullan – David Matthews (eds.), Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England, Cambridge 2007, pp. 91–105, 245–249; Michael John Bennett, *Honi soit qui mal y pense*. Adultery and Anxieties about Paternity in Late Medieval England, in: Robert F. Yeager – Toshiyuki Takamiya (eds.), The Medieval Python. The Purposive and Provocative Work of Terry Jones, New York (NY) 2012, pp. 119–136; Stephanie Trigg, Shame and Honor. A Vulgar History of the Order of the Garter, Philadelphia (PA) 2010. For the complications attached to reconstructing the earliest statutes of the order, see Lisa Jefferson, MS Arundel 48 and the Earliest Statutes of the Order of the Garter, in: English Historical Review 109, 1994, pp. 356–385. For the registers, see Tarik Tolga Gümüş, A Tale of Two Codices. The Medieval Registers of the Order of the Garter, in: Comitatus 37, 2006, pp. 86–100. And for an associated issue over the historicity of the heralds associated with the order, see Jackson W. Armstrong, The Development of the Office of Arms in England, c. 1413–1485, in: Katie Stevenson (ed.), The Herald in Late Medieval Europe, Woodbridge 2009, pp. 9–28; Adrian Ailes, Ancient Precedent or Tudor Fiction? Garter King of Arms and the Pronouncements of Thomas, Duke of Clarence, ibid. pp. 29–39.

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of the late medieval state, and to engage instead in a sustained consideration of what the Order of the Garter can tell us about the ways in which an institution with explicit religious organisation, purpose and ethos contributed to the image and power of its monarchical patron.

What follows concentrates on the history of the Order of the Garter under its first two sovereigns, Edward III (reigned 1327–1377) and Richard II (reigned 1377–1399), with some overlap into the early years of the fifteenth century. I do so not because later stages of the Order's development are not without their very considerable interest, but because the first half-century of the Garter in many ways encapsulates the issues and practices that need to be at the centre of our consideration here. To address the themes of the collection, I organise my analysis under four heads: the monarch as patron; the membership of the Order and its political implications; the ceremonial of the Order as an expression of royal ideology; and the religious establishment that served the Order.

THE MONARCH AS PATRON OF THE ORDER OF THE GARTER

A rich tradition of mythology surrounds the foundation of the Order of the Garter, and it is not an easy task to pick one's way through the imperfect facts and establish a definitive account either of the chronology or of the meaning of the foundation of the Order. In the fifteenth century a tradition began to take root that the Order had been founded at a great feast held to celebrate the taking of Calais by the English in 1347, and aimed to validate an otherwise illicit relationship that Edward III was understood to have had with a lady who gradually emerged around the turn of the sixteenth century with the identity of the countess of Salisbury[4]. As we shall see, there are grounds for assuming that some parts of this myth were already current by the end of the fourteenth century. However – and in spite of a recent attempt yet again to validate it – there is no positive evidence to argue the historical accuracy, or even the essential veracity, of the myth[5]. The best guess that we have, and the general consensus of current scholarship, is that the 'company' of the knights of St George/the Garter (as it was often referred to in the early documents[6]) came into existence at one of the round of tournaments that the king held over 1347–1348 to celebrate his achievement at Calais – most likely at the event at Windsor in June 1348 – and was prompted very much by the confident sense of victory and the general bonhomie of the close group

[4] For an attempt to identify the countess of Salisbury figure as Joan of Kent, cousin of Edward III and wife of his eldest son, see Margaret Galway, Joan of Kent and the Order of the Garter, in: Birmingham Historical Journal 1, 1947, pp. 13–50. For criticism of these conclusions, see Richard Barber, Edward, Prince of Wales and Aquitaine. A Biography of the Black Prince, London 1978, p. 256 note 10; Jaeger, Ennobling Love (as note 3) pp. 272 s. note 13.

[5] The latest exploration of the foundation myth to propose that it contains historical truth is Francis Ingledew, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Order of the Garter, Notre Dame (IN) 2006, pp. 57–80, 93–157.

[6] Barber, Edward III and the Triumph of England (as note 2) pp. 293–339.

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of friends and associates who gathered together for this occasion[7]. It was only later that the historical imagination elided this event with the story, picked up from Valois propaganda circulated against Edward III in the middle of the century, that the English king had in fact raped the countess of Salisbury; and it remained very uncertain as to who that female figure might actually have been.

The relatively informal context in which the Garter began its life means that the initial decision to set up the Order might not have proved enduring; the Garter could easily have gone the same way as a host of other fraternal associations given life, but not permanence, in particular tournaments. What made the difference in this case was a series of decisions undertaken by the king between the tournament of 1348 and the first formal meeting of the fraternity in the following spring. First, Edward III founded a new college of secular priests to service the fraternity feast at Windsor[8]. Secondly, and simultaneously, he re-founded the chapel of St Edward within the Castle of Windsor to provide a permanent headquarters for the Order, and gave the chapel a new triple dedication to the Virgin, St George and St Edward[9]. Thirdly, Edward took the decision that the annual feast of the Order should be held on St George's Day, 23 April. And fourthly, he decided that the insignia of the Order should be a 'garter' and that its motto the enigmatic *Honi soit qui mal y pense*[10]. (The iconographical significance and meaning of these outward signs of the Order will be discussed further below.) The first formal assembly of the new confraternity, bedecked in special robes supplied by the king's household, and complete with its parallel college of priests, then took place on 23 April 1349 – a convention enshrined in the later statutes of the Order[11].

Behind these accumulated data lie clues to three important motivations. First, it is very clear from the context of the tournament that Edward III intended his order to be a celebration of those knightly values that we as historians often draw together under the convenient label of 'chivalry'. Already in 1344, the king had launched a plan for a knightly confraternity at Windsor based on the Arthurian theme of the Round Table. This was altogether a larger affair than the subsequent Order of the Garter, intended to comprise 300 knights from all over Christendom[12]. The 1344 scheme had been called off as a result of the long and intense preparations for a military campaign

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7 Vale, Edward III and Chivalry (as note 2) pp. 76–91; Richard Barber, The Military Role of the Order of the Garter, in: Journal of Medieval Military History 7, 2009, pp. 1–11; Barber, Edward III and the Triumph of England (as note 2) pp. 178–339. For a revised chronology of the tournaments of 1347–1348, see W. Mark Ormrod, For Arthur and St George. Edward III, Windsor Castle, and the Order of the Garter, in: Saul (ed.), St George's Chapel (as note 2) pp. 13–34, pp. 19 s.

8 Anne Katharine Babette Roberts, St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. A study in early collegiate administration, 1348–1416, Windsor 1947.

9 Ormrod, For Arthur and St George (as note 7) p. 21.

10 Vale, Edward III and Chivalry (as note 2) pp. 76–82.

11 Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) pp. 13 s. and note 14.

12 W. Mark Ormrod, Edward III, London 2011, pp. 300–303.

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against the French, but the spirit of the round table remained clearly evident in some of the performance connected with the later feast days of the Garter. It was also, arguably, present in the emblem of that order, for the rather oddly named 'garter' is now generally thought to represent a miniature sword belt and thus to reference the knightly status and martial prowess of the wearer[13].

The second motivation that we can detect in the evidence of 1348–1349 relates to the dynastic claims that Edward III made towards the throne of France. The two kingdoms had been at war since 1337 over those parts of France to which the English ruling house had ancestral claims and which, in the case of the duchy of Aquitaine, remained in Plantagenet possession. In 1340 Edward III had added a new dimension to the quarrel by asserting his right to the throne of France through his mother, the daughter and last surviving child of Philippe IV (Philippe le Bel)[14]. While the claim was originally a diplomatic ruse, the very significant advances that the English made in the war during the mid-1340s, culminating in the spectacular victory over Philippe VI's army at Crécy in 1346, gave validity to the claim and may even have encouraged Edward to take seriously the thought that he could one day be monarch in both England and France[15]. The use of the French royal colour of blue, rather than the traditional Plantagenet red, for the robes of the Order, and the enigmatic motto, which translates as ‚Shamed be he who thinks ill of it', are now generally held to reference the king's claims in France and thus, regardless of whether Edward ever actually made good those claims, to perpetuate the validity of them. It is worth pointing out here that, in spite of the fact that the war begun by Edward III ended a century later in disaster and the almost complete withdrawal of the English from France, the memorialisation of the claim had longer resonances for a monarchy that continued formally to assert its right to the French throne down to the early nineteenth century.

Finally, the chronology of the foundation of the Garter requires us to consider the extraordinary social and cultural condition in which the English court, and the kingdom at large, found themselves in 1348–1349. The Black Death – that devastating outbreak of (most probably) bubonic plague that swept over Europe from 1347 – reached England's shores just a few weeks before Edward founded the new college of priests to service the Garter at Windsor Castle[16]. Understanding nothing of the nature

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13 Barber, Edward, Prince of Wales (as note 4) pp. 85–87.

14 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 212–214; Id., A Problem of Precedence. Edward III, the Double Monarchy, and the Royal Style, in: James S. Bothwell (ed.), The Age of Edward III, Woodbridge 2001, pp. 133–153; Craig Taylor, The Salic Law and the Valois Succession to the French Crown, in: French History 15, 2001, pp. 358–377.

15 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 322–355.

16 For the chronology of the plague and its impact on the king, see John Findley Drew Shrewsbury, A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles, Cambridge 1970; W. Mark Ormrod, The English Government and the Black Death of 1348–9, in: Id. (ed.), England in the Fourteenth Century. Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium, Woodbridge 1986, pp. 175–188.

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of the terrible disease or the methods that might be used to control it, the king joined with the archbishops and bishops of the realm to promote a policy of public penance and economic austerity that might somehow win divine favour and save the kingdom from ruination[17]. Unlike the earlier and unsuccessful confraternity of the round table, then, the Order of the Garter may be thought to have had, from the start, a very explicit and necessary religious – indeed, positively penitential – dimension. And more generally, the Garter can be seen to have had a special role to play within Edward III's own preoccupations and obligations with commemorating the achievements and serving the souls of the monarch, the royal family, and the network of valorous military commanders gathered together in this new confraternity[18].

Although the first extant set of statutes of the Order of the Garter survives only from the early fifteenth century, the reconstructions of the Order's membership that are possible from chronicles and royal household accounts make it clear that, from the first, the Order consisted of twenty-six knights. Two of the places were intended *ex officio* for the ruling monarch and his heir apparent; however, the latter was not necessarily left vacant when (as under Richard II) the king had no son. The other twenty-four places were occupied by men formally elected by their fellow-knights – though very often in reality nominated by the monarch. The only formal qualification for membership was that the individuals under consideration should be knights of unimpeachable character. The latter point reflects the fact that the founder members had, in all probability, been members of two tournament teams fighting with the king and the Prince of Wales (heir to the throne) at the Windsor tournament of 1348: they were not selected, in the first instance, because of their particular social status or political influence, but because they were personally connected or known to the royal family and were, quite literally, in the right place at the right time[19].

Further details on the membership of the Order and its political significance follow in the next section. Here, however, we need to address some more general questions about what the foundation and monarchical patronage of the Garter meant in terms of princely power. The argument that the original membership derived its identity from tournament teams is a powerful representation of the ethos of the Edwardian court. From his youth, and especially since his engagement in war with Scotland and France from the 1330s, Edward III placed at the heart of his kingship a series of values that were encapsulated in the chivalric ideals: honour, faithfulness, liberality, and generosity[20]. An essential element of the courtly displays of chivalry during the 1330s had been a sense of equality and informality between the king and his friends. They exchanged each other's heraldry, wore identical clothing as what we would call

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17 The Black Death, transl. and ed. Rosemary Horrox, Manchester 1994, pp. 117–118, 287–290.

18 W. Mark Ormrod, The Personal Religion of Edward III, in: Speculum 64, 1989, pp. 849–877; Barber, Edward III and the Triumph of England (as note 2) pp. 259–292.

19 Vale, Edward III and Chivalry (as note 2) pp. 86–91, 176–177.

20 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 131–146.

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team colours, and assumed the names of the knights of King Arthur's Round Table[21]. All of these devices were intended to represent and perpetuate a sense that the king's growing success as martial monarch and political patron was made possible by the strong support of an inner group of aristocratic friends and allies. These ludic devices may have been quite studied, or may have been a simple manifestation of the king's natural collegiality; either way, they yielded a rich harvest in the 1340s through the series of stunning successes that Edward and his fellow-commanders secured in the wars against Scotland and France. In the establishment of the Order of the Garter in 1348–1349, we can therefore see a number of political elements working themselves out. Paramount, however, was Edward's strong commitment to the essential equality of the knightly calling: whether they were princes, nobles or (as was the case in the founding group) men of quite modest background, the knights of the Garter were united in their adherence to the chivalric ideal, and through it functioned as one, cohesive whole.

Questioning whether this strong sense of equality and unity worked either to strengthen or to weaken the practical and/or moral authority of the monarch is to raise a whole series of complex issues over the nature of late medieval English politics. From the thirteenth century, the rise in the importance of the royal council and the emergence of parliament created a new, more institutionalised and more pervasive sense that the exercise of rule was not solely personal but also corporate: that is, that the basis of effective governance lay in the active cooperation between the king and the great men of the realm and the perpetuation of a collegial model of rule[22]. Edward III's monarchy has long been upheld as the exemplar of collegiality, and in recent years scholars have begun to appreciate that this was in many ways the prevailing notion and practice over the later Middle Ages, whether under the supposedly more masterful command of an Edward I or the blatantly inadequate leadership of a Henry VI[23]. It would be unrealistic, therefore to see the crafted equality established among the twenty-six knights of the Order of the Garter as somehow potentially threatening to a monarch less socially and politically adept as Edward III. In particular, an emphasis on the religious ideology and practice of the Order, to which we shall return below, provides a sense of the fine balance that emerged in the English political tradition over the later Middle Ages between the king as *semi-deus* and the crown as a collective institution.

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[21] Caroline Shenton, Edward III and the Coup of 1330, in: Bothwell (ed.), The Age of Edward III (as note 14), pp. 13–34; Juliet Vale, Image and Identity in the Pre-History of the Order of the Garter, in: Saul (ed.), St George's Chapel (as note 2) pp. 35–50.

[22] John Watts, The Making of Polities. Europe, 1300–1500, Cambridge 2009.

[23] W. Mark Ormrod, The Reign of Edward III. Crown and Political Society in England, 1327–1377, London 1990; John Watts, Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship, Cambridge 1996; Caroline Burt, Edward I and the Governance of England, Cambridge 2012; Andrew Spencer, Nobility and Kingship in Medieval England. The Earls and Edward I, 1272–1307, Cambridge 2013.

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That balance is also, indeed, discernible in some of the socio-political refinements in the Order's practices during the later fourteenth century. As we move through the records of the 1350s, 1360s and 1370s, we see subtle changes emerging that reflected Edward's own advancing age, his greater emphasis on the performance of majesty, and the increasingly complicated hierarchy of court life[24]. In 1337 Edward had adopted the French practice of naming his eldest son a duke (of Cornwall), a title not previously used in England; and in the 1360s he began to extend the practice to create ducal coronets and titles for his younger sons, Lionel of Antwerp (as duke of Clarence) and John of Gaunt (as duke of Lancaster)[25]. They and other members of the royal family received Garter robes differentiated by the use of ermine in order to demarcate their 'super-status' within the Order[26]. A similar sense of majestic distance is created by the record of the golden throne commissioned for Edward III, apparently in preparation for what proved to be his last Garter meeting, at Windsor in April 1377, and at which two of his grandsons were admitted as knights of the Order[27].

For all these reasons, then, one would hesitate to suggest that there was too fundamental a difference between the manner in which Edward III and his immediate successor, Richard II, managed their presidency of the Order of the Garter. A long tradition of distinguished scholarship has drawn a fundamental contrast between Edward's commitment to the collegial model and Richard's increasingly authoritarian views of kingship[28]. To suggest that this difference manifested itself in divergent practice with regard to the Garter, however, would be both to perpetuate what is arguably too stark a contrast between the ideologies of the two monarchs and also, indeed, to over-play the political significance of the Order itself. Some scholars have come of late to appreciate that Richard II sought very consciously to emulate the martial prowess and chivalric virtues of his grandfather and, especially, of his esteemed father, Edward of Woodstock (who died shortly before Edward III, in 1376)[29]. Richard's understanding of the value system that underpinned the Order is duly reflected in his active management of its membership; his particular patronage of the emerging association of the Ladies

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24 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 299–321, 446–471.

25 Chris Given-Wilson, The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages. The Fourteenth-Century Political Community, London 1987, pp. 43 s.

26 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) p. 534.

27 Ibid. pp. 573 s.

28 For Richard's views on, and performance of, kingship, see Nigel Saul, Richard II, London 1997; Michael John Bennett, Richard II and the Revolution of 1399, Stroud 1999; Simon Walker, Political Culture in Later Medieval England, Manchester 2006; Christopher Fletcher, Richard II. Manhood, Youth, and Politics, 1377–99, Oxford 2008. For his interest in St George, see Jonathan Good, Richard II and the Cult of Saints George and Edward the Confessor, in: Laura H. Hollengreen (ed.), Translatio, or The Transmission of Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Modes and Messages (Arizona studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance 13) Turnhout 2008, pp. 161–178.

29 James L. Gillespie, Richard II. Chivalry and Kingship, in: Id. (ed.), The Age of Richard II, Stroud 1987, pp. 115–138; Nigel Saul, Richard II and Chivalric Kingship. Inaugural Lecture presented at Royal Holloway, University of London, on 24 November 1998, Egham 1999.

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of the Garter, which allowed a fixed and recognised place with the ceremony of the fraternity for royal and noble women; and in his general vigilance in maintaining the royal presence at the annual feast of the Order at Windsor[30].

If one were to hazard a sustainable contrast between the two monarchs, it would be much less around the way in which they performed their formal presidency of the Order and instead about their approach to the wide cultural meaning and political usages of the Garter's headquarters at Windsor. During the 1350s, Edward III rebuilt much of the upper ward of Windsor Castle to accommodate the large-scale magnificence that he occasionally (as in 1358) applied to the annual feast of the Order but that also functioned more generally as a political theatre for diplomatic negotiations and for major family-related celebrations such as the weddings of his eldest son (1361) and daughter (1365)[31]. Edward had been born at Windsor, and the rebuilt castle was very self-consciously designed to parallel Edward's achievements with another, mythical monarch having strong Windsor associations: Arthur[32]. Richard II, by contrast, had much less of a personal association with the castle, and the major locus of his building works, and political-cultural activities, was the royal complex of Westminster, where he was a major benefactor of the abbey and rebuilt the great hall of the palace in the late 1390s[33]. The example is a reminder that the Garter was simply one instrument among many in the repertoire of royal political management, and that each successive monarch took a relatively strong or weak interest in the Order according to his own instincts and inclinations.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE ORDER OF THE GARTER

As a result of its almost accidental emergence from a royal tournament held at some point in the spring or summer of 1348, the founding membership of the Order of the Garter included not only very high-ranking members of the English nobility but also quite obscure knights of continental extraction, including professional soldiers

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30 James L. Gillespie, Ladies of the Fraternity of St George and of the Society of the Garter, in: Albion 17, 1985, pp. 259–278; Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) pp. 301 s.

31 Christopher Wilson, The Royal Lodgings of Edward III at Windsor Castle. Form, Function, Representation, in: Laurence Keen – Eileen Scarff (eds.), Windsor. Medieval Archaeology, Art and Architecture of the Thames Valley (Conference Transactions 25) Leeds 2002, pp. 15–94; Steven Brindle – Stephen Priestley, Edward III's Building Campaigns at Windsor and the Employment of Masons, 1346–1377, in: Saul (ed.), St George's Chapel (as note 2) pp. 203–224; Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 448–451.

32 Martin Biddle et al., King Arthur's Round Table. An Archaeological Investigation, Woodbridge 2000, pp. 517 s.; Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) p. 307.

33 R. Allen Brown et al., The History of the King's Works. The Middle Ages, 2 vols., London 1963, 1, pp. 527–533; John F. Cherry – Neil Stratford, Westminster Kings and the Medieval Palace of Westminster, London 1995; Nigel Saul, Richard II and Westminster Abbey, in: John Blair – Brian Golding (eds.), The Cloister and the World. Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey, Oxford 1996, pp. 196–218; Saul, Richard II (as note 28) pp. 311–316, 338 s.

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from Flanders and the Netherlands who had made their way into English royal service during the wars with Scotland and France[34]. This latter group tended to fall away after the first wave of vacancies appearing in the Order's ranks, for the obvious reason that the prestige that seems to have rapidly attached itself to membership tended to mean that places were reserved for those of high status. During the first fifty years of its existence, the focus of my analysis here, the membership of the Garter therefore falls into four broad categories: members of the English royal family; the English titled nobility; foreign princes; and knightly members of the court usually enjoying the close trust of the sovereign.

The royal family – considered not just as the princes and princesses of the blood, but also those linked to them through marriage – increased significantly in size over the course of the fourteenth century, largely as a result of the survival to adulthood of such a large number of the children of Edward III[35]. The growing prestige of the Garter and the need to maintain a clear sense of precedence at court therefore meant that, form the 1360s, a significant number of the stalls were filled by those we might define principally as members of the dynasty. These included: Edward III's three middle sons, Lionel, John, and Edmund (their youngest brother, Thomas, becoming a knight of the Garter only later, in 1380); his sons-in-law, the duke of Brittany and the earls of Bedford and Pembroke; and his grandsons, Prince Richard and Henry of Bolingbroke[36]. Within the wider network of royal connections, we might especially mention the Holland family[37]. Sir Thomas Holland was one of Edward III's principal military commanders in the middle years of the reign, and was one of the founder knights of the Garter. Holland was married to the king's cousin, Joan, heiress to the earldom of Kent, who subsequently married Edward of Woodstock; as a result, the Holland children were half-brothers and -sisters to Richard II. The oldest of them, Thomas, became a knight of the Garter around the same time that Richard himself was admitted to the Order; Thomas's younger brother John was elected in 1381; and following Thomas's death his son, another Thomas, was quickly admitted. We see a similar pattern later in Richard II's reign with the admission to the Garter of his trusted cousin Edward, heir to the duchy of York, and Edward's brother-in-law Thomas Despenser[38]. The fact that Richard II had no children of his own made these

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34 The founding group has been extensively researched, with some resulting revisions to received scholarship, by Barber, Edward III and the Triumph of England (as note 2) pp. 301–306, 511–519.

35 W. Mark Ormrod, Edward III and his Family, in: Journal of British Studies 26, 1987, pp. 398–422; Jeffrey Hamilton, The Plantagenets. History of a Dynasty, London 2010.

36 Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) pp. 289 s. See also the dominance of the daughter, daughters-in-law and granddaughters of Edward III in the lists of the Ladies of the Fraternity of St George: ibid. pp. 301 s.; Barber, Edward III and the Triumph of England (as note 2) pp. 313–317.

37 Michael Miles Nicholas Stansfield, The Hollands, Dukes of Exeter, Earls of Kent and Huntingdon, 1352–1475, University of Oxford (DPhil thesis), Oxford 1987.

38 Alastair Dunn, The Politics of Magnate Power in England and Wales, 1389–1413, Oxford 2003, pp. 111 s.; Rosemary Horrox, Edward, Second Duke of York (c. 1373–1415), in: Henry C.G. Mat-

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connections highly charged, and the question of whether members of the royal family and circle were, or were not, members of the Garter may be assumed to have had some impact on courtly perceptions of their place in what remained a very uncertain question over the order of succession.

What is most remarkable here, however, is the omission from the Garter of the family that arguably had the strongest claim to provide the heir general to Richard II. Roger Mortimer, second earl of March (d. 1360) was one of the founder members of the Garter. Edward III carefully arranged the marriage of Roger's son, Edmund, the third earl (d. 1381) to the king's favourite granddaughter, Philippa, the heiress to Lionel of Clarence[39]. Edmund, however, was never elected to the Garter. Nor, even more surprisingly, was his son, Roger, the fourth earl (d. 1398) – who, according to a credible chronicle tradition, was recognised by Richard II as heir to the throne[40]. The reasons may simply be to do with the accidents of availability: the frequent absence of the Mortimers on their own and the king's business in Ireland, combined with the unexpectedly early deaths of both Edmund and Roger and the resulting repetition of long minorities, perhaps meant that the opportunity for admission to the Garter simply did not occur in time. It is worth reflecting, however, that Roger's son, Edmund, the fifth earl, born in 1391, was also excluded from the Garter by the new house of Lancaster ruling after 1399. On the basis of the Mortimer family's claim to the royal succession, Edmund became the figurehead for a series of plots and revolts against Henry IV and Henry V, and in spite of the personal loyalty that he demonstrated to the latter was consistently denied his place in the Garter hierarchy. These omissions, whether accidental or conscious, provide a useful glimpse of the uncertainty and neuroses around the question of the royal succession between the death of Edward III in 1377 and the suppression of the final anti-Lancastrian plot in 1415[41].

The question of inclusion and exclusion is also vital for a consideration of the number and identities of the members of the English titled nobility elected to the Garter under Edward II and Richard II. It is worth stressing in a comparative collection of this kind that the extremely small size of the membership of the Order of the

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thew – Brian H. Harrison (eds.), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 60 vols., Oxford 2004, vol. 17, pp. 801–803; Rosemary Horrox, Despenser, Constance, Lady Despenser (c.1375–1416), ibid. vol. 15, pp. 908 s.

39 The couple were affianced as children in 1358: Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) p. 391.

40 Eulogium historiarum, ed. Frank Scott Haydon, 3 vols., London 1858–1863, 3, p. 361; The Westminster Chronicle, 1381–1394, ed. Leonard Charles Hector – Barbara F. Harvey, Oxford 1982, pp. 192–195; Robert Rees Davies, The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr, Oxford 1995, pp. 175–180, 361 note 4; Michael John Bennett, Edward III's Entail and the Succession to the Crown, 1376–1461, in: English Historical Review 113, 1998, pp. 580–609, p. 595 and note 4; Chris Given-Wilson, Legitimation, Designation and Succession to the Throne in Fourteenth-Century England, in: Isabel Alfonso et al. (eds.), Building Legitimacy. Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimation in Medieval Societies, Leiden 2004, pp. 89–105; Ian Mortimer, Richard II and the Succession to the Crown, in: History 91, 2006, pp. 320–336.

41 Thomas B. Pugh, Henry V and the Southampton Plot of 1415, Southampton 1988.

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Garter was itself a reflection of the very restricted nature of noble status in England. Insofar as nobility was equated by the later fourteenth century with peerage (that is, the right to receive a personal summons to parliament), there were normally no more than ten to twenty families holding dukedoms, marquisates and earldoms (the only ranks in existence before 1399)[42]. Even so, and partly as a result of the swelling of the ranks of the royal family, there were only restricted opportunities in the Garter for non-princely nobles, and some of the omissions may reflect political unease and conflict in the courts of Edward III and Richard II. It has been argued, for example, that Edward III consistently and consciously denied membership to Richard Fitzalan, earl of Arundel (d. 1376). In spite of distinguishing himself in the wars of Edward III and becoming a major lender to the English state in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, Arundel was apparently the victim of a grudge that the king held against him for speaking out publicly against royal policy during the quarrel between Edward and his archbishop of Canterbury, John Stratford, over the winter of 1340–1341[43]. Another significant point to be made in this context concerns the removal of members of the Order disgraced by their subsequent actions. The earl of Oxford, Robert de Stat (d. 1392) was married to another granddaughter of Edward III, Philippa de Coucy, and became a close friend of Richard II, who admitted him to the Garter in 1384 and elevated him to the unprecedented title of duke of Ireland in 1385. But he was disgraced in 1388 and went into exile, being then formally excluded and dismissed from the fellowship of the Garter[44]. The episode demonstrates that the idea that the Garter was a reward solely determined by the personal will of the ruler and could therefore be controlled entirely at his command has to be somewhat modified.

The first sense that the Garter might take on an international, princely element in its membership came in 1375, with the election of Jean (IV) de Montfort, duke of Brittany. In many respects, in fact, Montfort might be treated simply as a member of the extended English royal family and aristocratic elite, with whom he had fought in the wars and had close family and political connections[45]. A clearer way forward therefore came with the admission of the duke of Guelders and the count of Hainault, both in 1390, and of the Count Palatine in 1397, as markers both of familial and of close diplomatic links with England[46]. The high water mark, however, came with the

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42 James S. Bothwell, Edward III and the English Peerage. Royal Patronage, Social Mobility and Political Control in Fourteenth-Century England, Woodbridge 2004; Peter Coss, An Age of Deference, in: Rosemary Horrox – W. Mark Ormrod (eds.), A Social History of England, 1200–1500, Cambridge 2006, pp. 31–73.

43 Vale, Edward III and Chivalry (as note 2) pp. 89–91.

44 George E. Cokayne, The Complete Peerage, ed. Vicary Gibbs et al., 13 vols., London 1910–1959, 2: The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom: extant, extinct, or dormant, London 1912, p. 581.

45 Michael Jones, Ducal Brittany, 1364–1399. Relations with England and France during the reign of Duke John IV, Oxford 1970.

46 Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) pp. 53–62.

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installation in 1416 of the Emperor Sigismund as a member of the Garter. Sigismund's intervention in the pursuit of peace between England and France proved abortive, but the relationship provided by the Garter became a kind of touchstone of his efforts to resolve the Great Schism and to win English support for his interventions in the Council of Constance[47]. After 1416, the trend continued, and the international element continued to be a regular feature of the Garter membership for the rest of the Middle Ages.

Given the pressure on places and the increasing emphasis on high-status, titled and princely members, it might be assumed that the Order of the Garter offered progressively fewer opportunities for the honouring and advancement of ordinary knights. In fact, there continued a fairly regular set of appointments to the Order of men who were barons (untitled peers), bannerets (high-ranking knights below the peerage, distinguished from ordinary knights by being allowed to bear square banners, rather than pennons, on the field of battle) and simple knights. Most of these owed their place to close personal association with the monarch, often in the context of service in the royal household. Examples include: the Hainaulter Sir Walter Mauny, who was later elevated to the baronage and married a cousin of Edward III; Sir Richard Pembridge and Sir Alan Buxhull, prominent members of the royal household in the early 1370s; and models of chivalric practice such as Sir Nicholas Sarnesfield and Sir Peter Courteney, promoted by Richard II in the 1380s[48]. In some cases, the tradition perpetuated itself. Sir Richard la Vache, a prominent soldier in the wars of the mid-century and constable of the Tower of London, was made a knight of the Garter in 1356; his son Philip, who became a prominent courtier of Richard II and is associated with the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, was admitted to the Garter shortly before Richard's deposition in 1399. The most striking cluster of family members of this rank is, however, provided by three members of the Burley clan: the brothers John (elected to the Order in 1377) and Simon (elected 1381) and John's son Richard (elected 1382). John and Simon were closely associated with the household and retinue of Richard II's father, Edward of Woodstock. Simon became steward of the household in 1377 and served as tutor to the young king, and it was his cultural and political influence over Richard that presumably account for the admission of his brother and nephew in quick succession. The position is remarkable, and reflects the fact that the Order of the Garter was closely associated in these years with an emerging faction based around the Burleys and other court families: as Hugh Collins has remarked, "it is surely not coincidental that three members of one Herefordshire gentry family should have been elected to such a socially exclusive body within the space of five years."[49] Much good did it do them: John died in the early 1380s, Richard died on campaign in 1386, and Simon was disgraced and put to death in the Merciless Parliament of 1388. Once more,

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[47] Christopher Thomas Allmand, Henry V, London 1992, pp. 233–256.

[48] Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) pp. 44–53, 62–69.

[49] Ibid. p. 97.

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membership of the Garter, and the royal favour that it denoted, provided only limited protection against the vagaries of court faction and national politics.

To categorise and thus characterise the membership of the Order of the Garter in terms of four coherent groupings is, of course, to run the risk of over-determination and to suppose that monarchs and their advisers took a planned and coherent approach to the question of filling the vacant stalls in St George's Chapel, Windsor. Once again, we seem to need to stress the limitations of the Garter as a tool of political management. In comparison with other forms of patronage that the crown had at its disposal – titles, offices, lands and revenues – the Garter was very strictly limited in the scale and opportunity that it provided for detailed and consistent building of political groupings. This was not simply a function of the very small size of the Order; it was also to do with the fact that the Order had no really coherent existence outside the solemnities conducted at Windsor on its feast day every year. It is striking how little evidence we have for any sense of corporate activity, or identity, among the members of the Order beyond the activities of St George's Day. But before we dismiss the Order as ornamental, or assume that it had no real role to play in maintaining political and court life, we need to come back to the points made at the beginning of this analysis and stress – in a way that has often not been the case in recent scholarship – that the Order also had specific ceremonial and religious functions to fulfil in support of the ideology and practice of Plantagenet monarchy. It is to these issues that we now turn.

THE CEREMONIAL OF THE ORDER OF THE GARTER

There are important questions to be raised about the way in which the Order of the Garter manifested its presence, proved its purpose, and built its prestige over the first fifty years of its existence. The historical phenomenon of the fraternity is of interest and value not simply in institutional terms; the more particularised ritual manifestations and dynamics of that institution also provide crucial explanations about the cultural meaningfulness of fraternity in the given society. In this section we will examine the secular aspects of the ceremonies associated with the Garter feast centred on St George's Day (23 April) before going on in the final section to look in more detail at the religious elements of the feast and the wider implications for the ideological elements within the Order's foundation and ethos. There is a necessary degree of artificiality involved in splitting off the ceremonial from the specifically religious, and it is important to recognise that the elements were closely intertwined – thematically, temporally and logistically – and necessarily mutually reinforcing.

We need immediately to recognise that the foundation of the Order of the Garter did not result in some sudden, dramatic and immutable change in the ceremonial life of the English court and state. What is remarkable for the first decade or so is not the extent but the very limited nature of contemporary comment upon the performance of the Order's activities. Almost all the narrative accounts and literary allusions to the foundation of the Garter come from a later generation, and the chronicles and poetry

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of the mid-fourteenth century are remarkably unyielding on the question of how, if at all, the ceremonies of the Garter impacted either on courtly life or on wider public perceptions [50]. While this is, in part, a function of the paucity of historical writing in the mid-fourteenth century, it is also some measure at least of the way in which the monarch saw the institution that he had conjured up in 1348–1349. In spite of the apparently very assertive nature of the Order's iconography, with its allusions to the king's claims in France, the deep disruption of the Black Death and the continued reluctance of the French to be pushed into a ready diplomatic settlement after the defeats of 1346–1347 meant that Edward III's title to the throne of France remained a remote prospect, and its too obvious parading to a public audience remained contentious and arguably self-defeating [51]. This, then, must explain in part the absence of evidence suggesting that attendance at and involvement in the Garter ceremonies was extended beyond the inner circle of the royal household and the members of the Order before the late 1350s. There were also practical considerations at play here. Windsor Castle was not Westminster Palace: that is, it did not sit next to a major urban centre whose population might be called out to witness royal magnificence and whose civic elite might (on the precedent of some of Edward III's civic tournaments) be invited to participate in processions, pageants and banquets [52]. More than this, Windsor Castle was actually a building site for much of the 1350s and 1360s, as the king gradually formulated his plans for the re-ordering of the lower bailey to provide the liturgical space and domestic accommodation for the Garter's college of canons and for the development of the upper ward, at first (as it seemed) into some kind of tournament space, and then into a complex of public rooms and apartments fitted to large-scale displays of magnificence [53]. All of this, then, provides some sense of a relatively slow start in terms of the ceremonial practice of the Order of the Garter. Indeed, before 1358 there is a sense that the Garter was hardly recognised as a ceremonial institution at all and that its feast was simply one (relatively undifferentiated) part of the wider rhythm and repertoire of court life.

The real turning point came as a result of a second great victory by the English over the French at the battle of Poitiers in 1356, and the capture on the field of the Valois monarch Jean II. Jean was taken back to England by his captor, the Prince of

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50 Ibid. pp. 234–278.

51 For Edward's diplomatic strategy and claims between 1347 and 1356, see Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 322–355.

52 For Londoners' participation in metropolitan tournaments and other forms of royal display, see Sheila Lindenbaum, The Smithfield Tournament of 1390, in: Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies 20, 1990, pp. 1–20; Caroline Barron, Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture in Medieval London, in: Peter Coss – Maurice Hugh Keen (eds.), Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England, Woodbridge 2002, pp. 219–242; Mario Damen, Tournament Culture in the Low Countries and England, in: Hannah Skoda et al. (eds.), Contact and Exchange in Later Medieval Europe. Essays in Honour of Malcolm Vale, Woodbridge 2012, pp. 247–265.

53 Brindle – Priestley, Edward III's Building Campaigns (as note 31) pp. 207–217.

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Wales, and treated to an extraordinary round of courtly magnificence carefully calculated to maximum national and international effect. The high point of this publicity campaign came with the Garter feast at Windsor in April 1358. Heralds were sent to France, Germany and the Low Countries to announce the forthcoming jousts, and the duke of Luxembourg and a large contingent of Gascon knights were among those who answered the call. General invitations also went out to the nobility of England, male and female, to attend the spectacle[54]. One chronicle, critical of the extravagance of it all, claimed that Jean II berated Edward III for dining from gold and silver plate while paying for the whole thing with credit[55]. It is also possible that the event is referenced in a contemporaneous Middle English poem, 'Winner and Waster', in which a great international gathering hosted by a king wearing the Garter robes becomes the venue for a debate over the merits or otherwise of lavish expenditure[56]. On the whole, however, most English commentators were eager to see the Garter feast of 1358 as a valid piece of political theatre and a true expression of Edward III's authority over a vanquished and humiliated rival. There are similar expressions of interest by contemporary commentators around the election of Emperor Sigismund to the Garter in 1416, suggesting that these rare but spectacular events had a significant long-term impact on the ceremonial style, and public impact, of the Order's formal proceedings[57].

When there were no foreign captors or visitors to impress, the Garter feast was a rather more subdued affair, its formalities being based around three days of religious services and processions, a business meeting or chapter, and a feast[58]. Exasperatingly – and in very marked contrast to the early years of Edward III's reign – we know virtually nothing of the detail of the tournaments that may (or, indeed, may not) have been held at the time of the St George's Day celebrations at Windsor during the second half of the fourteenth century[59]. If jousting did indeed occur, we may assume that it mostly took the form of individual combats rather than general affrays – though it is important to note that the extensive parks and forests surrounding the castle also offered the opportunity for the kind of team sports that had been the more usual manifestations of the tournament in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries[60]. With the exception of the 1358 event orchestrated to impress Jean II of France, the general silence continues through the reigns of Edward III and Richard II, and raises some significant questions about the degree to which the undoubted association of the

54 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 387–389.

55 A Chronicle of London from 1089 to 1483, ed. Nicholas Harris Nicolas, London 1827, pp. 63 s.

56 Wynnere and Wastoure, ed. Stephanie Trigg (Early English Text Society 297) Oxford 1990, pp. 4 s.

57 See the chronicles referenced in Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 388 s., and Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) pp. 213, 267 s.

58 Boulton, Knights of the Crown (as note 1) pp. 150 s.

59 Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) p. 207.

60 Stephen A. Mileson, Parks in Medieval England, Oxford 2009, pp. 92–95; Juliet R. V. Barker, The Tournament in England, 1100–1400, Woodbridge 1986, pp. 17–44.

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Order of the Garter with St George, the patron saint of chivalry, did in fact serve to perpetuate any wider notion of 23 April as a moment in the calendar set aside for the celebration of martial values and knightly prowess.

The one ceremonial element that does spring clearly from the surviving accounts of the royal household is the distribution of robes to the knights and ladies of the Order, using the characteristic blue fabric 'powdered' (appliquéd) with embroidered images of garters[61]. Quite what happened to these once they had been worn for that occasion is not clear, and the point is intriguing given the fact that new robes were distributed each year. An early image of Sir Nigel Loring in the 'Liber benefactorum' (or 'Liber vitae') of St Albans Abbey shows him dressed in a robe powdered with garter imagery[62]. Since St Albans had no other obvious association with the Order of the Garter, the image suggests the possibility either that the knights of the Order did wear their garter robes on other occasions or (as we know to have happened, for example, with one of the spectacular sets of robes originally commissioned for Edward III's queen, Philippa of Hainault) that they handed them on to ecclesiastical institutions to be made up into altar frontals, copes and other liturgical vestments[63]. Given the paucity of evidence relating to public access to and understandings of the Garter ceremonial in this period, it is indeed intriguing to speculate as to whether recycled robes used in high-status churches become one of the means by which a wider community came to observe and understand the imagery of the Garter.

With regard specifically to the feast, we also have remarkably little detail from the later fourteenth century as to the nature of the event, the precise choreography of it, or indeed for a time even the venue in which it was held. The abortive experiment with the foundation of a round table in 1344 had involved plans for a circular structure in the upper ward of Windsor Castle with a central arena open to the sky and a narrow covered walkway running round its perimeter. The foundations of this building still exist and were subject to archaeological investigation in 2006[64]. It would appear to have been designed not simply as an arena, with a viewing area, for the conduct of tournaments but also as a space in which (weather permitting) the king could have entertained his fellow-knights to a feast held in the round. The symbolism of the circle

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61 The records of liveries of these robes were much analysed by earlier scholarship, most systematically by Beltz, Memorials (as note 2) pp. 2–11, 243–256.

62 London, British Library, Ms. Cotton Nero D.VII, fol. 105v, reproduced, i. a., in Stella Mary Newton, Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince, Woodbridge 1980, p. 45; and in W. Mark Ormrod, The Order of the Garter, in: Edmund King, Medieval England, 1066–1485, Oxford 1988, pp. 174–175, p. 174. For the significance of this manuscript, see James G. Clark, Monastic Confraternity in Medieval England. The Evidence from the St Albans Abbey *Liber benefactorum*, in: Emilia M. Jamroziak – Janet E. Burton (eds.), Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000–1400. Interaction, Negotiation, and Power, Turnhout 2006, pp. 315–331.

63 Thomas Dinham Atkinson, Queen Philippa's Pews in Ely Cathedral, in: Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society 41, 1948, pp. 59–66.

64 Julian Munby et al., Edward III's Round Table at Windsor. The House of the Round Table and the Windsor Festival of 1344, Woodbridge 2007.

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of fellowship represented in the Arthurian tradition was very strong in the culture of the later medieval English court: Edward I is known to have held round tables, and Edward III had the older round table at Winchester Palace refurbished with imagery that referred to his own Arthurian endeavours at Windsor[65]. While the hall that eventually housed the Garter feast, created as part of the rebuilding of the upper ward in the 1350s and 1360s and now known as St George's Hall, accorded in some respects with the architectural norms of a great hall, the Garter feast may not have observed the conventional idea of the king and a few favoured guests sitting on the dais at the short end with the wider group of guests seated at tables below. Rather, if later representations of the feast are indicative, a single line of tables was set up down the length of St George's Hall, with the monarch seated in the middle[66]. The choreography of the Garter feast may therefore have been adapted, even in Edward III's day, to provide some sense of equality among the knights, with the order of precedence below the monarch conceivably dictated not by social rank but by date of admission to the Order.

The foregoing analysis tends towards a view that, contrary to what might be expected, the Order of the Garter was not, in fact, a major element in the public representation of monarchy either under Edward III or under Richard II. Indeed, an argument could be constructed that this fraternity was originally intended emphatically not to promote the cults of kingship and chivalry, but rather to serve as a kind of privileged club or exclusive society of trust whose members maintained confidentiality around its deeper and more serious purposes. There is an obvious danger of getting into conspiracy theories here, but in the context of a series of essays devoted to monarchs and fraternities, we need to understand not just the expansive and propagandist potential of orders of chivalry but also their functioning as keepers of the king's inner counsels. If, as we have argued and accepted above, the imagery of the Order of the Garter was indeed primarily focused on Edward III's claims in France, then the very obvious failure of the king to maintain and realise his dynastic rights beyond the Channel must have become, within a comparatively short while, a matter of genuine anxiety and even embarrassment to those charged with maintaining the dignity and purpose of the Order. In 1360 Edward very publicly offered to renounce his title to the throne of France in return for a diplomatic settlement designed to deliver him sovereign control over his ancestral lands and acquisitions in Calais, Ponthieu and Aquitaine. The

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65 Roger Sherman Loomis, Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast, in: Speculum 28, 1953, pp. 114–127; Richard Morris, The Architecture of Arthurian Enthusiasm. Castle Symbolism in the Reigns of Edward I and his Successors, in: Matthew Strickland (ed.), Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France. Proceedings of the 1995 Harlaxton Symposium, Stamford 1998, pp. 63–81; Marc Morris, Edward I and the Knights of the Round Table, in: Paul Brand – Sean Cunningham (eds.), Foundations of Medieval Scholarship. Records Edited in Honour of David Crook, York 2008, pp. 57–77; Biddle et al., King Arthur's Round Table (as note 32) pp. 393–424.

66 Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) pp. 198 s. For the idea of a single table below the dais, see the late-seventeenth-century depiction of the Garter feast by Wenceslaus Hollar reproduced, i. a., in Anna Keay, The Magnificent Monarch. Charles II and the Ceremonies of Power, London 2008, p. 137.

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chronicle and literary evidence of the time suggest that there may have been significant disquiet among the knightly classes about the loss of face – and the loss of opportunity – that resulted from this withdrawal of dynastic ambitions towards the throne of France[67]. Such an about-face may also have had a significant effect on the internal culture of the Order and encouraged a reorientation of its iconography to soften the political liability of linking it too obviously to Edward III's earlier dynastic ambitions.

The evidence for such an argument rests in the unique manuscript of the famous poem, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', and the appearance of the Garter motto, rendered as *Hony soyt q*[*ui*] *mal pence*, written below the conclusion of the text[68]. There remains considerable debate about the date of the manuscript, which could come from any point between the mid-fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and about whether the Garter motto is in the hand of the main scribe of the poem or is a later addition. These issues apart, and supposing that the appearance of the motto denotes some connection imagined between the subject of the poem and the Order of the Garter, then the most obvious link is between the garter motif and the green girdle worn by the poem's hero. The girdle functions both as a punishment for Gawain's illicit relationship with the unnamed wife of his host, Sir Bertilak, and as an act of penance that redeems Gawain and restores him to honour in King Arthur's court. In light of the arguments set forward here, I suggest that the appearance of the Garter motto in the 'Gawain' manuscript reflects the speculations of a very privileged group of Garter knights and associated courtiers who, understanding that the claim to the French throne, though renewed after 1369, was no longer at all central to English military and diplomatic objectives, resorted to inventing a whole series of imagined encounters that provided alternative explanations for the origins of their Order.

There are two ways in which to take the implications of this hypothesis. The first is to assume that the monarchy itself patronised and utilised the myth-making that surrounded the foundation of the Garter. Telling tales and construing riddles was, after all, the stuff of courtly entertainment, and Edward III used equally elusive mottos in other contexts: ‚It is as it is', employed at the Dunstable tournament of 1342, provides a classic example[69]. The whole point of such epithets was their enigmatic nature, and they derived their force from the very fact that access to true meanings was confined to the few. We could therefore argue that the uncertainty that still attaches to

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67 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 385–413; Denise N. Baker, Meed and the Economics of Chivalry in Piers Plowman, in: Id. (ed.), Inscribing the Hundred Years' War in French and English Cultures, Albany (NY) 2000, pp. 55–72; Andy King, War and Peace. A Knight's Tale. The Ethics of War in Sir Thomas Gray's Scalacronica, in: Chris Given-Wilson et al. (eds.), War, Government and Aristocracy in the British Isles, c. 1150–1500. Essays in Honour of Michael Prestwich, Woodbridge 2008, pp. 148–162.

68 London, British Library, Ms. Cotton Nero A. X, fol. 128v. For a digital facsimile of the manuscript, see http://contentdm.ucalgary.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/gawain/id/356/rec/175 [last visited June 18, 2016].

69 Vale, Edward III and Chivalry (as note 2) p. 64.

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the Garter's emblem and motto is there because Edward III made it so; and the nature of the fraternity that he founded to perpetuate those elusive elements lends some force to the idea that the Garter's true social and political effectiveness lay, ironically, in its exclusiveness and the closing of its business to the wider polity and generality. The point derives further force from the way in which Richard II may have added new iconography and secret meaning to the Garter. A number of scholars have noted that the knights of the Garter were the first recipients of Richard's personal badge of the white hart when he distributed these signs of favour at the Smithfield tournament in London in 1390, and have pointed to the possible points of reference between the blue robes of the Garter members and the blue mantles adorned with badges of the white hart worn by the supporting angels in that most famous of statements of Richard's monarchical ideology, the Wilton Diptych [70]. The distinguished art historian, John Harvey, who pushed the argument as far as it could go, even suggested that the angels in the diptych represent the inner circle of aristocratic supporters that the king drew around him in the last years of his reign – the group that the chronicler Thomas Walsingham disparagingly called the *duketti* (‚dukelings'), and who were themselves a conspicuous and dominant group in the Order of the Garter by the late 1390s [71]. To follow this line of thinking is, then, to suggest that one of the crucial reasons why the Garter was able to outlive its original context and continue as a meaningful political and social entity was the flexibility of its iconography and motto and the fact that kings as different in tone and priority as Edward III and Richard II could both make good use of it as a means of mobilising the support of courtly society.

The second line of thinking to arise from the adaptation of the motto of the Garter leads us back to that group of nobles and courtiers who, for various reasons, were not admitted to the ranks of the royal fraternity. It is arguable that the most conspicuous among those omitted sought ways to rationalise the offence caused to them. We have already seen that in spite (or perhaps because) of Richard II's apparent willingness to recognise Roger Mortimer, fourth earl of March, as his heir general, Roger was never elected as a member of the Order of the Garter. Leo Carruthers has constructed an argument that a passage in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' alludes to this Mortimer's rights to inherit the title of duke of Clarence left vacant since the death in 1368 of his maternal grandfather, Lionel of Antwerp, the second son of Edward III [72]. In this case, the appearance of the Garter motto at the end of the manuscript points not just to a general interpretation of the poem as an exercise in the redemptive powers

[70] For the details and historiography of these arguments, see the convenient summary by Nigel Morgan, The Significance of the Banner in the Wilton Diptych, in: Dillian Gordon et al. (eds.), The Regal Image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych, London 1997, pp. 197 s. and 326–332, p. 331 note 65.

[71] John H. Harvey, The Wilton Diptych. A Re-examination, in: Archaeologia 98, 1961, pp. 1–28; Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397–1400. The Reign of Richard II, ed. and transl. Chris Given-Wilson, Manchester 1993, pp. 74 s.; Collins, Order of the Garter (as note 2) pp. 102 s., 291 s.

[72] Leo Carruthers, The Duke of Clarence and the Earls of March. Garter Knights and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, in: Medium Aevum 70, 2001, pp. 66–79.

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of chivalric honour but to a conscious sense of grievance by a noble family over the king's denial of their rightful standing within the wider royal family and, thus, the inner circle of the Garter fellowship. The implications of this argument are complex and multifarious given (as we have seen) the subsequent rebellion of Roger's son Edmund against Henry V in 1415. It would clearly be dangerous to speculate too much around the ways in which those with grievances against the crown might have subverted the Garter and its symbolism. Nevertheless, the fact that, within fifty years of its foundation, the Garter was already arguably subject to some significant changes of meaning and purpose once again emphasises the fluidity and utility of the institution in the hands both of its champions and, arguably, of its detractors.

This discussion of the association between 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' and the Order of the Garter has stressed the privileged, internalised and coded nature of social practice and its meanings at the later medieval English court. At the same time, however, it would be a mistake to assume that the ceremonies of the Order of the Garter took place as a totally private event outside the round of more public activity undertaken by the king and his household. In a detailed study of Edward III's itinerary, I have shown how the Garter feast on 23 April became a kind of nodal point for the court season by the 1360s; that, except in those years when he was on campaign, Edward can be shown to have been at Windsor for virtually every St George's Day feast from 1349 to the end of his reign in 1377; and that the royal household increasingly took up residence at Windsor for a significant period stretching forward for two or three months from St George's Day to other acknowledged spring-time occasions for outdoor sports and tournaments, especially the feasts of the Ascension, Pentecost and the Nativity of John the Baptist on 24 June[73]. Nigel Saul and Christopher Fletcher's work on the itinerary and household expenditure of Richard II has revealed a rather different pattern. Windsor certainly continued to feature regularly for the Garter feast itself on 23 April. But the king tended to move off much faster than his grandfather would have done, in order to undertake itineraries that took him more frequently (especially in the later years of the reign) away from the Thames basin and into the Midlands. These provincial visits were themselves accompanied by significant public displays of magnificence, as for example in the court at Nottingham on the Nativity of John the Baptist in 1392[74]. These differences in the way in which the two successive monarchs deployed St George's Day, and Windsor Castle, within the wider round of court ceremony may therefore tell us something significant about the contrasting political uses to which they chose to put the Order of the Garter. As a direct consequence of Edward III's complete commitment to the Garter feast, a significant part of the court season became fixed at Windsor, allowing the wider elite the knowledge and planning time that enabled their more regular attendance upon the king. Thus, while the knights of the Garter did not normally have any more than

[73] Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) pp. 449–451.
[74] Saul, Richard II (as note 28) pp. 337 s.; Fletcher, Richard II (as note 28) pp. 194–204.

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a single annual obligation to assemble together at Windsor, the placing of the Garter feast within the wider rhythms of the court calendar may have served at once to ascribe more significance to 23 April and to have made the members of the Garter the essential actors in a round of courtly events that lasted throughout the spring season every year. Richard II, while generally observing the feast of St George at Windsor, did not continue this pattern of a longer presence at Windsor, and the sense of continuity in terms of the perpetuation of the Garter's own spirit and ideology may therefore have been lessened.

The crucial expression of this difference of emphasis can be perceived in the hosting of major international events. We have seen that Edward III orchestrated the Garter feast of 1358 to expose his captive, Jean II of France, to an exuberant display of chivalric imagery and courtly magnificence. When Richard II came to host large-scale diplomatic occasions, however, he chose to do so emphatically and exclusively in a metropolitan setting. The reasons are not to do with some kind of a wholescale rejection of Windsor and its cultural values: at the Smithfield tournament in London in October 1390, for example, the participating knights were supposedly led to the arena by the ladies of the Garter – a rare example (if it is accurate) of an articulation of the institutions of the Garter outside the context of the Windsor meetings of 23 April[75]. Instead, the fixing of major events in the capital seems mostly to do with an increasing interest by the English court in the tradition of the *joyeuse entrée* as maintained in France and the Low Countries, wherein princely courts and urban authorities combined to produce prodigious spectacles to celebrate the arrival of political leaders in the given city[76]. London and other English towns had their own traditions of welcoming the king, but the direct involvement of the royal household and the dramatic increase in the scale and ambition of such events under Richard II suggest a new and much more conscious attempt to emulate continental practice[77]. In choosing the urban setting of London, and its great public arena of Smithfield, for his diplomatic and political set pieces, Richard II was not, then, directly rejecting the opportunities offered at

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[75] Saul, Richard II (as note 28) p. 342.

[76] Lindenbaum, Smithfield Tournament (as note 52) p. 4; Lawrence M. Bryant, The Medieval Entry Ceremony at Paris, in: János M. Bak (ed.), Coronations. Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual, Berkeley (CA) 1990, pp. 88–118; Elizabeth A. R. Brown – Nancy Freeman Regalado, La grant feste. Philip the Fair's Celebration of the Knighting of his Sons in Paris at Pentecost of 1313, in: Barbara A. Hanawalt – Kathryn L. Reyerson (eds.), City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe, Minneapolis (MN) 1994, pp. 56–86; Saul, Richard II (as note 28) pp. 342–354; Michael C. E. Jones, The Rituals and Significance of Ducal Civic Entries in late Medieval Brittany, in: Journal of Medieval History 29, 2003, pp. 287–314; Marlo Damen, Princely Entries and Gift Exchange in the Burgundian Low Countries. A Crucial Link in Late Medieval Political Culture, in: Journal of Medieval History 33, 2007, pp. 233–249; Nicola Coldstream, 'Pavilion'd in Splendour'. Henry V's Agincourt Pageants, in: Journal of the British Archaeological Association 165, 2012, pp. 153–171.

[77] Lorraine Attreed, The Politics of Welcome. Ceremonies and Constitutional Development in Later Medieval English Towns, in: Hanawalt – Reyerson (eds.), City and Spectacle (as note 76) pp. 208–231.

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Windsor. Rather, he was subtly shifting the representation of his monarchy, and the political ideals that underpinned it, away from a royal castle associated especially with the imperial visions and martial values of his grandfather and towards locations in direct proximity to his own evolving architectural expressions of princely authority at Westminster. This is again a reminder of the way in which the tastes and priorities of each successive king served fundamentally to shape the activities and ethos of the Garter. And it is a story echoed in the religious aspects of the Order of the Garter, to which we now turn.

THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE ORDER OF THE GARTER

We turn finally, but by no means least, to the explicitly religious elements of the Order of the Garter and their significance for both the monarch and the wider perceptions of his fraternity of St George. As was noted earlier, the Garter – and, more precisely, its clerical establishment at St George's Chapel, Windsor – were set up in the context of the onset of the Black Death in 1348. Nor was this the only initiative taken by the king in response to the shock of the plague. On the same day he founded the college of secular priests to service the Order of the Garter, he created a parallel establishment of canons in the royal chapel at Westminster Palace, dedicated to St Stephen[78]. Two further foundations were completed in the two years that followed: the house of Dominican nuns at Dartford in Kent, brought to fruition to fulfil a vow of the king's father, Edward II; and a new Cistercian monastery hard by the Tower of London[79]. The sense of loss suffered in the royal family and its inner circles during these years was very real: one of the king's daughters, Princess Joan, fell victim to the plague at Bordeaux in July 1348 on her way to marry the son of the king of Castile; and at least one founder member of the Garter, Hugh Courtenay, died in 1349, most likely from the pestilence[80]. At his two new collegiate establishments in particular, Edward III revealed his commitments to the souls of deceased family and friends. The east wall of St Stephen's Chapel was painted in the 1350s with images of the king, the queen

[78] Clive Burgess, An Institution for All Seasons. The Late Medieval English College, in: Clive Burgess – Martin Heale (eds.), The Late Medieval English College and its Context, York 2008, pp. 3–27, at pp. 20 s.

[79] John Lee, Nunneries, Learning and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society. The Dominican Priory of Dartford, York 2001; Emilia Jamroziak, St Mary Graces. A Cistercian House in Late Medieval London, in: Paul Trio – Marjan de Smet (eds.), The Uses and Abuses of Sacred Places in Late Medieval Towns, Leuven 2006, pp. 153–164. See also Christopher Phillpotts, Richard II and the Monasteries of London, in: W. Mark Ormrod (ed.), Fourteenth Century England VII, Woodbridge 2012, pp. 197–224. For the endowments of these and Edward III's other foundations, see Chris Given-Wilson, Richard II and his Grandfather's Will, in: English Historical Review 93, 1978, pp. 320–337.

[80] W. Mark Ormrod, The Royal Nursery. A Household for the Younger Children of Edward III, in: English Historical Review 120, 2005, pp. 398–415, p. 413 note 83; Barber, Edward III and the Triumph of England (as note 2) p. 300. Barber points out (pp. 299 s.) issues relating to the tradition that two other founder members of the order died during this first outbreak of the plague.

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and their children, as a perpetual reminder of the key beneficiaries of the round of religious services performed on a daily basis in the chapel[81]. Still more striking is the obligation and commitment demonstrated at St George's, Windsor to the knights of the Garter. On the death of a member of the Order, the surviving knights were required to pay for a series of requiem masses on a sliding scale ranging from 1,000 by the king to 100 by an ordinary knight[82]. It has been calculated that, when Edward III died in 1377, the Garter knights alone provided over 5,000 masses within the first three months following his death, not to mention the annual obits and other memorials that his soul would enjoy, as was assumed, until Doomsday[83]. These are prodigious figures even in a culture that was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the perils of purgatory and the need to provide salvation for souls[84]. As Richard Barber has recently stressed, we cannot understand the cultural and political resonances of the fraternity of the Garter without appreciating the extraordinary commitment that was made by the king, the knights and, above all, the canons of St George's, to the salvation of the souls of its members[85].

The ceaselessness of this round of services is also the vital clue to the wider institutional permanence and public perception of the Order of the Garter. Whereas, as we have stressed, the Garter feast was but a single moment in a larger and more elaborate calendar of court events, the religious rituals of the chapel of St George emphatically functioned throughout the year. The care shown to the capacity and quality of those services is evident in the injunction laid upon the dean and canons of the college, that they could only draw the full value of the incomes allocated to their benefices by being in attendance at Windsor. Many of the men appointed as canons of St George's by Edward III and Richard II were also members of the central civil service functioning in London and Westminster, and could not physically be present in Windsor all the time. Nevertheless, analysis of the surviving registers of the chapel has shown that at least half of the total compliment was usually resident at any one time[86]. This represents an unusual situation in English collegiate churches, where the absence of obligation for the cure of souls meant that most canons tended to hold *in absentia* and the main priestly presence comprised the vicars whom they appointed as substitutes.

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81 Emily Howe, Divine Kingship and Dynastic Display. The Altar Wall Murals of St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, in: Antiquaries Journal 81, 2001, pp. 259–303.

82 Boulton, Knights of the Crown (as note 1) p. 140.

83 Ormrod, Personal Religion (as note 18) p. 855.

84 Joel T. Rosenthal, The Purchase of Paradise. Gift Giving and the Aristocracy, 1307–1485, London 1972; Eamon Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580, London 1992; Robert Swanson, Catholic England. Faith and Observance before the Reformation, Manchester 1993; Robert N. Swanson, Indulgences in Late Medieval England. Passports to Paradise?, Cambridge 2007.

85 Barber, Edward III and the Triumph of England (as note 2) pp. 326–339.

86 Nigel Saul, Servants of God and Crown. The Canons of St George's Chapel, 1348–1420, in: Id. (ed.), St George's Chapel (as note 2) pp. 97–115.

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From this we can deduce that the original intention, and result, was to ensure that the relatively senior and distinguished men who made up the clerical establishment at St George's should be properly active in its religious life. In this pursuit, the thirteen canons were properly supported by domestic accommodation and a corporate life regulated by the dean and resourced by the foundation itself. The collegiate establishment also provided for two other important groups: the twenty-six so-called 'poor knights', who lived in grace-and-favour apartments in the lower ward of the castle and whose responsibility it was to inhabit the stalls of the absent knights of the Order during the regular round of liturgy; and the thirteen vicars, who were charged to celebrate daily masses for the souls of members of the Order and others [87]. Far from being a deserted and notional place of religious confraternity for most of the year, then, St George's Chapel renewed and remembered the Order of the Garter every single day, and offered the capacity for an appropriately intensive and ostentatious application of the *opus Dei*.

The best way to imagine and investigate the religious life of St George's Chapel in the later fourteenth century is to consider the physical spaces in which the liturgy was performed and the musical establishment that the chapel supported. Although most of Edward III's architectural work in the chapel was removed when, in the fifteenth century, his descendant Edward IV set about an ambitious rebuilding in the perpendicular style, we have a good deal of documentary evidence to supplement those fragments of the fourteenth-century buildings that do survive. The building works that Edward III began in the lower ward of Windsor Castle in the early 1350s were intended to create a suitably sumptuous space for the religious observations of the Order of the Garter – although, as at the sister foundation of St Stephen's Westminster, he worked with the existing chapel building rather than starting afresh. At Windsor, the older chapel of St Edward, built by Henry III, was remodelled to accommodate the new stalls inserted for the new collegiate establishment. Domestic accommodation (some of which still survives) was built anew to provide appropriate residences for the canons and other collegiate staff. New glass and panel paintings were commissioned and installed; and in 1367 a new, monumental alabaster reredos was set up over the high altar. The king also personally commissioned splendid sets of vestments and plate for the chapel [88].

The intention and effect of Edward's works in and after the 1350s was to turn the lower ward of Windsor Castle into a palace chapel complex akin to that at Westminster and paralleled in other parts of Europe, including the thirteenth-century Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and Charles IV's programmes (contemporaneous with the English developments) at Aachen and at Prague. Windsor shared with some of the other great

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87 Boulton, Knights of the Crown (as note 2) pp. 142–145. The numbers of canons and vicars fluctuated during the early years of the Garter's history.

88 Brown et al. (eds.), History of the King's Works (as note 33) 2, pp. 872 s.; Tim Tatton-Brown, The Constructional Sequence and Topography of the Chapel and College Buildings at St George's, in: Richmond – Scarff (eds.), St George's Chapel, Windsor (as note 2) pp. 3–38; John A. A. Goodall, The Aerary Porch and its Influence on Late Medieval English Vaulting, in: Saul (ed.), St George's Chapel (as note 2) pp. 165–202.

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European palaces of the fourteenth century a particular sense of the importance of sacred space within the palace precinct – demonstrated, for example, in the adoption of architectural designs and iconographic motifs more usually found in church buildings [89]. The configuration of the castle at Windsor, with its clear division into the lower and upper wards, seems to have facilitated relatively open access to the religious spaces, leaving the upper ward for the exclusive use of the king, the royal household and the elite invited in as privileged guests. One sense of the relative openness of the lower ward, and of the Garter chapel of St George within it, comes from the function of the chapel as a repository of royal relics. Both the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and the Karlstein in Prague were conceived to accommodate precious relics of the Crown of Thorns. St George's, Windsor was not originally developed around such an object or theme. But in 1352, Edward III deposited in the chapel what was then the most precious item in the English royal relic collection: the fragment of the True Cross known as the Croes Nawdd, which had been taken by Edward I during his wars of conquest in Wales [90]. The presence of this esteemed object seems to have turned St George's into a site of pilgrimage; Edward III himself lobbied the papacy for special indulgences to be granted to those who venerated the relic at Windsor [91]. The status that the chapel derived from its possession of the Croes Nawdd also explains its ability to attract other major items of devotion in the decades that followed, including drops of the Virgin's milk, a stone with which St Stephen was martyred and various memorials of St George himself. The Emperor Sigismund sealed his relationship with Henry V on his installation as a member of the Order of the Garter in 1416 by presenting the chapel with relics of the skull and heart of St George [92].

Theses precious items significantly enhanced the already rich sensory experience, and thus the perceived spiritual efficacy, of the liturgy performed in St George's Chapel. We know that the relic of the True Cross, displayed on the high altar, was venerated by the king at the Garter feast and at Easter [93]. Since Edward III so regularly kept a number of the high days in the church calendar at Windsor, we can readily imagine the ways in which this and other relics were also deployed as part of the wider liturgical and para-liturgical ceremony that took place in St George's and in the precinct of the lower ward. It is important not to assume too large an audience of onlookers for these events: as we have noted, Windsor was a small town, and there is little sense that

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89 Paul Crossley, Architecture, in: Michael Jones (ed.), The New Cambridge Medieval History VI. c. 1300–c. 1415, Cambridge 2000, pp. 234–56, pp. 238 s.

90 Edward Owen, The Croes Nawdd, in: Y Cymmrodor 43, 1932, pp. 13–17; Arnold J. Taylor, Royal Alms and Oblations in the Later Thirteenth Century, in: Frederick Emmison – Roy Stephens (eds.), Tribute to an Antiquary. Essays presented to Marc Fitch, London 1976, pp. 93–125, p. 119 note 49; Vale, Edward III and Chivalry (as note 2) p. 53.

91 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) p. 311.

92 Clive Burgess, St George's College, Windsor. Context and Consequence, in: Saul (ed.), St George's Chapel (as note 2) pp. 63–96, p. 78 note 41.

93 Ormrod, Personal Religion (as note 18) p. 856.

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the court ceremonial performed at the castle, either secular or religious, was organised (as some events at Westminster and London very obviously were) as entertainment for the masses. Rather, the audience is to be imagined particularly as the wider membership of the royal household and the court: in other words, sophisticated and knowing people who could readily interpret the symbolism and messaging that was involved.

A key part of this cultural environment was the musical establishment attached to St George's Chapel. The scale of this group altered slightly over the first fifty years of the college's life, but at full capacity amounted to thirteen vicars choral, four clerks or song-men, and six singing boys. Roger Bowers has emphasised the importance of this musical provision, as of the exactly parallel complement at St Stephen's, Westminster, for the evolution of resident groups of vicars into effectively full-time, professional choirs capable of performing the new polyphonic music that was emerging as a feature of papal and princely chapels in the fourteenth century[94]. A particularly important period, in Bowers' view, is the 1390s, when, in accordance with the fashion of the time, the collegiate establishment at Windsor broke away from using young career-priests as vicars choral and began to employ men in minor orders who were recognisably expert in musical performance[95]. Whether Richard II had any particular part to play in such a development is difficult to discern, though the king's general interest in religion and religious performance is certainly well attested[96]. It may be no coincidence that, although St George's Chapel is likely to have had an organ from the 1350s, it is in the 1390s that the instrument and its embellishments become recognisably documented[97].

What seems to have provided the particular creative force at Windsor, however, was the fact that the canons themselves tended, so unusually, to be in residence for long periods. Coming as they did from more conspicuous and privileged backgrounds, all with some substantial education and some with university training, they provided the real powerhouse of musical innovation at St George's. Certainly, it is this group of men who provide the best documented evidence of original musical composition. The best known of the canons of St George's, John Aleyn, who flourished in the 1360s, was the composer of the anthem 'Sub Arturo plebs'. This is a work of intense interest: its words, which dwell upon the divine favour bestowed on those who live under the rule of King Arthur, reflect the growing cult (itself so closely associated with

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94 Roger Bowers, The Music and Musical Establishment of St George's Chapel in the Fifteenth Century, in: Richmond – Scarff (eds.), St George's Chapel, Windsor (as note 2) pp. 171–214. See also, in general, Andrew Wathey, Music in the Royal and Noble Households in Late Medieval England, New York 1989.

95 Roger Bowers, Obligation, Agency and laissez-faire. The Promotion of Polyphonic Composition for the Church in Fifteenth-Century England, in: Iain Fenlon (ed.), Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Patronage, Sources and Texts, Cambridge 1981, pp. 1–15, p. 8.

96 Shelagh Mitchell, Richard II. Kingship and the Cult of Saints, in: Gordon et al. (eds.), Regal Image of Richard II (as note 70) pp. 115–124; Saul, Richard II (as note 28) pp. 293–326.

97 Bowers, Music and Musical Establishment (as note 94) p. 182.

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Windsor) of Edward III as the new Arthur; and in musical terms it is one of the most sophisticated works of polyphony known to have been written in fourteenth-century England. While we cannot tell for certain that 'Sub Arturo plebs' was performed at Windsor, we can say with some assurance that this was surely its most natural home, and it has been posited that it was performed at the Garter feast of 1358 as part of the general spectacle laid on to announce the English victory of Poitiers[98]. A strong case has also been made for a Windsor provenance for an extant manuscript containing fifteen vocal pieces (some of considerable length) associated with the Marian liturgy and referencing both St Edward the Confessor and, seemingly, Edward III. 'Singularis laudis digna' is the most conspicuously political of the items in this collection, calling upon the Virgin to support the English in their search for victory over the French[99]. The way in which 'Sub Arturo plebs' and 'Singularis laudis digna' interweave what we might define as the religious and the political bears striking testimony to the presence, real or implied, of the king and court at the occasions on which these works were sung. The choral forces available at St George's, and the high level of their skills that is attested by these and the further musical works associated with the chapel from the fifteenth century, reveal the very highest capacity and quality of liturgical performance and serve further to emphasise the importance of the fraternity as an institution in the projection of the political ideology of Plantagenet kingship under Edward III and Richard II.

The practice of religion at St George's Chapel, such as it can be observed in the second half of the fourteenth century, therefore strongly supports the assertion that the Order of Garter itself had a permanent presence in part-reality through the clerics and lay establishment that kept going, all round the year, at its great headquarters of Windsor Castle. There is, however, another element to the religious practices of the Garter that requires final consideration, and which shifts our focus again from the sense of a privileged and enclosed fraternity and towards the wider cultural ramifications of the Order. There is a long tradition that the foundation of Edward III's order of chivalry set in train the emergence of St George as the patron saint of England[100].

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98 Brian Trowell, A Fourteenth-Century Ceremonial Motet and its Composer, in: Acta Musicologica 29, 1959, pp. 65–75; Roger Bowers, Fixed Points in the Chronology of English Fourteenth-Century Polyphony, in: Music and Letters 71, 1990, pp. 313–335; Andrew Wathey, The Peace of 1360–1369 and Anglo-French Musical Relations, in: Early Music History 9, 1990, pp. 129–174; Caroline Shenton, The English Court and the Restoration of Royal Prestige, 1327–1345, University of Oxford (DPhil thesis), Oxford 1995, pp. 207 s.

99 Frank Harrison, Polyphonic Music for a Chapel of Edward III, in: Music and Letters 59, 1978, pp. 420–428; Ernest Sanders, English Polyphony in the Morgan Library Manuscript, in: Music and Letters 61, 1980, pp. 172–175.

100 For what follows, see Samantha J. E. Riches, St George. Hero, Martyr and Myth, Stroud 2002; David A. L. Morgan, The Banner-bearer of Christ and Our Lady's Knight. How God Became an Englishman Revisited, in: Saul (ed.), St George's Chapel Windsor, pp. 51–62; Jonathan Good, The Cult of St George in Medieval England, Woodbridge 2009.

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In point of fact, George had already become associated with English kings and their armies at least from the later thirteenth century; and it is arguable that he did not become the 'official' patron of England until his feast day was raised to the status of a double holiday in 1415[101]. In so far as the emerging national cult was driven by a conscious royal policy, however, it is hard to escape the conclusion that it was the intense interest of Edward III in the saint that provided the significant leap forward. Edward's association with St George is well attested from his early years[102]. The foundation of the Order of the Garter, coming in the wake of Edward's great victories at Crécy and Calais in 1346–1347, naturally took on the same association in its three-fold dedication to the Virgin, St George and St Edward the Confessor[103]. The members of this distinguished triumvirate, singly and in combination, appear regularly in royal iconography of the second half of the reign, including perhaps most strikingly the representation of the Virgin and St George on the new great seal of England adopted in 1360[104]. And although Richard II had a much closer personal devotion to the third member of this group, Edward the Confessor, he too acknowledged the potency of the connection between royal office and the cult of St George. The Wilton Diptych depicts the king, supported by the Confessor and two other saints, receiving from the Virgin and Child the banner of St George surmounted by an orb representing the kingdom of England[105]. The Wilton Diptych is an intensely personal object intended for use in the king's private oratory, and there is nothing to suggest that its imagery contributed directly to the wider iconography of nationalism. Rather, it represents an outstanding example of the wider nationalistic deployment of St George that became such a feature of English political culture in the fifteenth century.

The discussion of the evolving public cult of St George is thus important not only to the wider history of royal patronage of religion but also to an understanding of the specific role played by the Order of the Garter in promoting the kingship of Edward III and his successors. We remarked above how the lack of credibility attach-

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101 Michael Prestwich, Edward I, London 1988, pp. 199–200; Jeremy Catto, Religious Change under Henry V, in: Gerald L. Harriss (ed.), Henry V. The Practice of Kingship, Oxford 1985, pp. 97–115, pp. 107 s.; W. Mark Ormrod, The English Monarchy and the Promotion of Religion in the Fourteenth Century, in: Ludger Körntgen – Dominik Wassenhoven (eds.), Religion und Politik im Mittelalter. Deutschland und England im Vergleich, Coburg 2013, pp. 205–217, at pp. 214 s.; Jenny Stratford, St George and St Denis, in: Anne Curry – Malcolm Mercer (eds.), The Battle of Agincourt, London 2015, pp. 50–62.

102 Morgan, Banner-bearer of Christ (as note 100) pp. 58 s.; Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) p. 15.

103 Burgess, St George's College (as note 92) p. 76.

104 Ormrod, Personal Religion (as note 18) p. 858.

105 Mitchell, Richard II (as note 96) p. 115; Dillian Gordon, Making and Meaning. The Wilton Diptych, London 1993; Nigel Saul, Richard II's Ideas on Kingship, in: Godron et al. (eds.), The Regal Image of Richard II (as note 70) pp. 27–32; Lisa Monnas, The Furnishing of Royal Closets and the Use of Small Devotional Images in the Reign of Richard II: The Setting of the Wilton Diptych Reconsidered, in: W. Mark Ormrod (ed.), Fourteenth Century England III, Woodbridge 2004, pp. 185–206.

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ing to the Plantagenet claim to the throne of France after the 1360s could account for a shift in the meaning of the Order's emblem and motto and the development of a foundation myth based more generally in the honour code of chivalry. It is important to stress, however, that the foundation myth did not go into general and popular circulation until the sixteenth century. From the point of view of the wider polity of later fourteenth-century England, the fraternity founded by Edward III in 1348 was therefore seemingly of interest not for the iconography of its garter or for the precise meaning of *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, but for the connections it established between the king on earth and the saints in heaven, and specifically for the association it helped to cement between the English people and St George. Herein, then, lay the wider public and propagandistic potential of the Garter and its cultural implications for social groups well beyond the courtly and the ecclesiastical. To call either the Order of the Garter or St George's Chapel 'national' institutions would be profoundly anachronistic. To suggest that they both played their part in the creation of a newly dynamic sense of the relationship between king and kingdom would, by contrast, be to capture an important truth about the exploitation of the Garter's wider cultural implications by monarchs and their subjects in later medieval England.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, it is useful to consider some of the wider ramifications of the early history of the Order of the Garter for conceptualising the relationship between rulers and religious communities and institutions, and specifically the connection between kings and fraternities. It is no accident, it seems, that the first monarchical order of chivalry set up in England was founded by Edward III, a ruler whose collegial approach to government and politics became enshrined in the image of the monarch and his small band of knightly brothers working together in sworn confraternity for the mutual preservation of their military exploits and the salvation of their souls. It would have been much more surprising for Richard II, with his hierocratic and hierarchical views on princely power, to have created an institution of this kind. The reason why Edward III's original model survived, however, was precisely because it could adapt to the different priorities of successive monarchs. We have emphasised here the subtle but significant changes that occurred over the first fifty years of the Garter's existence, as the understanding of its imagery shifted to reflect new realities and priorities in international relations and the early emphasis on the meaning of the garter gave way to the significance of St George as the emerging patron saint of England. Equally, however, some things remained constant: in the influence that the king enjoyed over nominations to the fellowship, and above all in the Order's commitment to a religious round focused on collective salvation. And while some individuals beyond the immediate circle of the fraternity may have expressed their frustration at non-admission through more subversive readings of the Order's symbolism, the Garter fellowship itself seems never to have become either a critical or a

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subversive element in the wider political repertoire of late medieval English kingship. Rather, the fairly modest investment of time and resource put into the original foundation reaped rich dividends in terms of the symbolic prestige and practical authority that the king expressed and tested through his role as president of the society of St George.

In 1354, Edward III declared to the pope that he intended to be buried at St George's Chapel, Windsor[106]. Edward had a tendency to offer this prospect whenever it suited him: he seems to have suggested during his visit to Cologne in 1338, for example, that he would like to be interred near the shrine of the Magi in the cathedral there[107]. If they were ever in doubt, his real intentions were expressed formally and publicly in 1359 when he committed firmly and publicly to burial in the principal royal mausoleum of Westminster Abbey[108]. Richard II similarly followed the family pattern by commissioning for himself and his first wife a double-tomb set up in his own lifetime in the abbey church at Westminster[109]. The declaration of 1354 was, however, prophetic in the sense that it heralded the onset, after Edward IV's re-foundation of the chapel at Windsor in the later fifteenth century, of a new function for St George's, Windsor as a burial place of kings and princes[110]. Whether the remains of rulers were lodged there or not, St George's Chapel and the knights of the Garter who met at Windsor every spring had a permanent and on-going responsibility to commemorate their founder and his successors both as monarchs and as members of the knightly fraternity. From 1348, Windsor was therefore the centre of a cult, served by a perpetual institution of laymen and clergy, that reinforced the continuity of the English state by honouring the line of kings that had gone before and confirming their collective devotion to the Christian faith. Many other religious institutions in medieval England prayed for the souls of deceased monarchs and for the health of the current ruler, and developments in royal ecclesiastical patronage in the fifteenth century would, for a time, deflect attention from Windsor to major new foundations set up by Henry V at Syon and Sheen and by Henry VI at Eton and Cambridge[111]. Beyond the major palace and abbey complex of Westminster, however, there were no other ecclesiastical foundations in the later fourteenth century that could claim such strong personal association with the royal family, or perform the related ceremonies in so striking and sumptuous a manner, as the chapel and college of St George. In these and many other

106 Ormrod, Edward III (as note 12) p. 307.

107 Ormrod, Personal Religion (as note 18) p. 860.

108 Ibid. p. 872; David A. Palliser, Royal Mausolea in the Long Fourteenth Century (1272–1422), in: Ormrod (ed.), Fourteenth Century England III (as note 105) pp. 1–15, pp. 9 s.

109 Ibid. p. 10. See also, in general, Paul Binski, Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets. Kingship and the Representation of Power, 1200–1400, London 1995.

110 Anne F. Sutton – Livia Visser-Fuchs – Ralph A Griffiths, The Royal Funerals of the House of York at Windsor, London 2005.

111 George W. Bernard, The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability before the Break with Rome, London 2012, pp. 43 s.

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ways, the Order of the Garter and its headquarters at Windsor Castle created a new and enduring space in which to celebrate both the sacred and the secular facets of English monarchy, articulated through the special institution of a fraternity dedicated to the principles of chivalric brotherhood and Christian commemoration.

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