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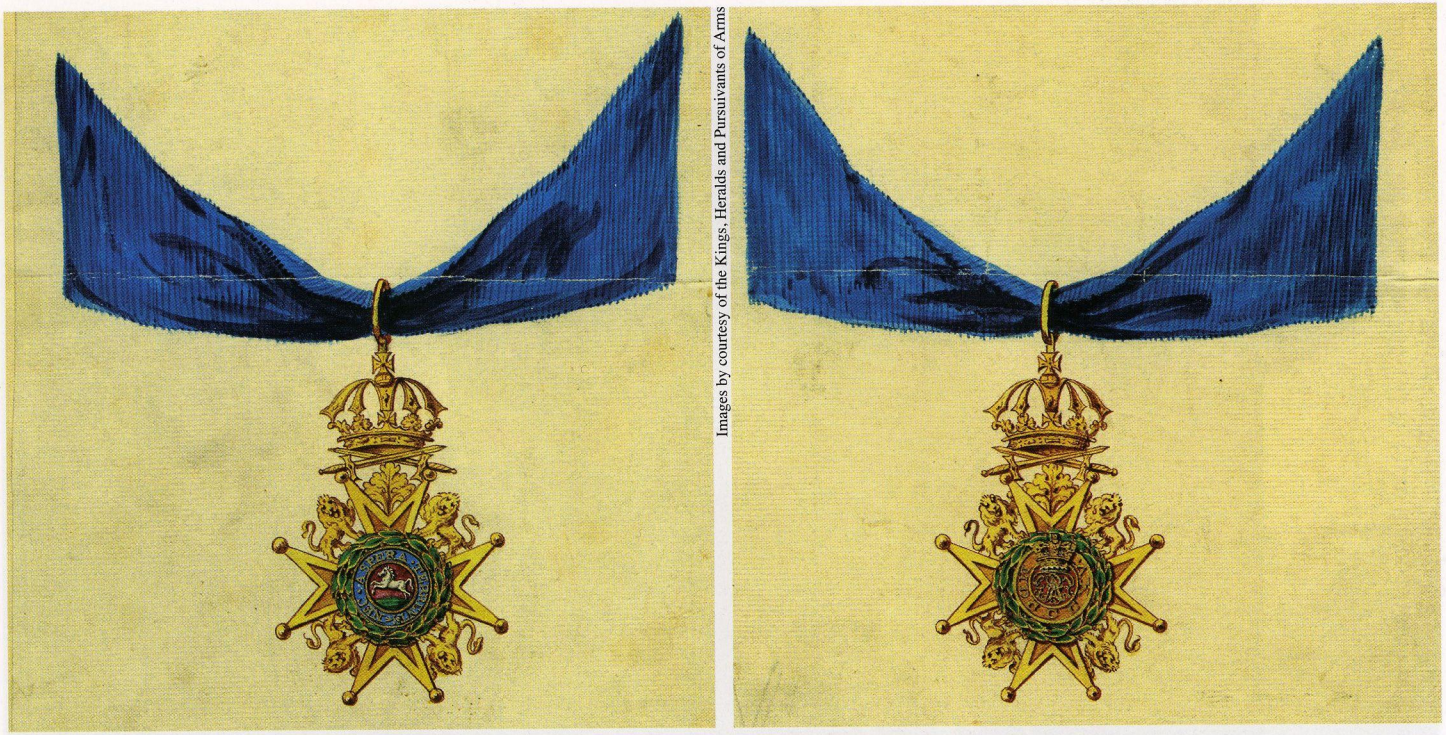
PLATE 2

Count Ernst von Münster (1766-1839). From the portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence in the Royal Collection. *See page 103*.

PLATE 3



Images by courtesy of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms

Drafts for the obverse (*left*) and reverse (*right*) of the badge of the Royal Guelphic Order, 1815, in Sir George Nayler's papers on the foundation of the order. CA Ms 'Guelphic Order' (folder of loose papers). *See page 111*.

REGENCY KNIGHTS: THE ROYAL GUELPHIC ORDER, 1815-1837

Andrew Hanham

The Guelphic Order is a curious, though largely forgotten symbol of the royal dynastic link that once existed between the United Kingdom and the German state of Hanover. It was instituted by the Prince Regent (later George IV) in 1815 under the auspices of the crown of Hanover primarily as a means of rewarding his Hanoverian subjects. But in practice, and as seems to have been intended from the outset, the Order functioned as an honour which the king could award to both his Hanoverian *and* his British subjects. It was not surprising, however, that within the British realm the Order came to be thought of as if it were a purely British order of knighthood. Charles Dodd, in his *Manual of Dignities, Privilege and Precedence* published in 1844, remarked that it was 'for nearly a quarter of a century destitute of any of the characters of a foreign distinction, and British subjects have more largely participated in its honours than any of the natives of Hanover'.[1] When, in 1837, on the death of William IV the succession to the British and Hanoverian crowns separated, the Order ceased automatically to have any significance in Great Britain. In accordance with the terms of its foundation it reverted to being a purely Hanoverian institution and was packed off to Hanover with its new king.

During the years that followed, the Order became subject to much criticism and denunciation. The main cause of complaint was the profuse scale on which it had been handed out, wherein it was heavily implied that not all recipients had actually merited the honour. Even during the brief period of what may be termed its 'British phase', and before the Order had been in existence for very long, there had been acerbic observations about this in the press. In *The Times* one commentator suggested in 1820 that the services of several British recipients seemed unworthy of the honour and speculated 'that in point of numbers and respectability, this Guelphic Hanoverian Order will completely eclipse the Garter, Thistle, or Bath of Great Britain'.[2]

It was the enormous proliferation of awards made during William IV's reign that did most harm to the posthumous reputation of the Order. Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, the noted antiquarian and self-proclaimed expert on the vagaries of the honours system as it had come to exist by the 1830s and 1840s, noted that 'these liberal distributions' were confined not just to the army and navy, but extended to the royal household, the nobility and to the King's 'many personal friends' and family connections.[3] Long

[1] C. R. Dodd, *A Manual of Dignities, Privilege and Precedence* (London 1844), p. 245.
[2] *The Times*, 13 Oct. 1820, p. 3.
[3] N. H. Nicolas, *History of the orders of knighthood of the British Empire* (4 vols., London 1842), vol. 4, 'Guelphic Order', p. 14.

after the Order ceased to have any part in British affairs, the large number and wide range of appointments were considered to have given the Order the appearance of a 'general order of merit', something which neither mid-Victorian politicians nor their Queen were anxious to emulate. In parliament, when calls were made for the – at that stage – meagre system of British honours to be extended, the Guelphic Order was held up with contempt as the perfect example of how a system of honours operating under the royal prerogative could easily degenerate if awards were made seemingly with little discrimination.[4] Similar criticism littered the pages of the *United Service Magazine* where retired, undecorated officers who thought themselves more deserving would pour out their bitterness. One officer complained that 'every fellow who had seen the mustachios of a Frenchman at the other side of a hedge got up a memorial [requesting the order] ... the consequence was that the article gradually lost its value'.[5] The Victorians thus left behind an entirely negative and dismissive attitude towards the Order.

Yet if this misleading veneer is stripped away, it becomes apparent that the Guelphic Order was very much a product of its time: the Regency and late Georgian era. Under the stimulus of the Napoleonic wars, the male dress code had come to reflect an obsession with uniforms and medals, and the return to peace allowed these preoccupations to flourish on an unprecedented scale. At the Regent's court, and in accordance with his own flamboyant example, the expression of rank and status through the wearing of uniforms reached spectacular new extremes. While military and naval dress became increasingly ornate, civilian officials were also required to appear on ceremonial occasions in specially devised uniforms.[6] To these uniform-conscious elites, orders and decorations were essential accessories. They signified individual achievement by particularizing a man's service and military exploits, and enabled the wearer to appear conspicuously in a crowd. However, the pressure to acquire such marks of distinction often presented serious problems for the British government, which, unlike its European counterparts, was highly reluctant to hand out awards in large numbers. In 1815 the hastily contrived expansion of the Order of the Bath led to the adoption of some manifestly arbitrary and unfair criteria for awards in which scores of senior naval and military officers found themselves disqualified.[7] Furthermore, as the ensuing years of peace lengthened, the quota of awards available in the Order was contracted.

[4] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons) ser. 3, vol. 180, cols 404-5: 16 June 1865.

[5] *United Service Magazine* 1843, vol 1, p. 55.

[6] A. Miller, *Dressed to Kill: British Naval Uniform, Masculinity and Contemporary Fashions 1748-1857* (London 2007); S. H. Myerly, *British Military Spectacle: from the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea* (Cambridge, Mass. 1996).

[7] The problems particularly affected army appointments to the second class of the Order, that of knight commander. To qualify for the KCB it was necessary to have been awarded medals for service at five or more battles or sieges. Thus while some officers were able to meet this requirement, even if they had only 'been present' at various actions, others who had been involved in active command, though at fewer engagements, were unjustly excluded.

By contrast, the Guelphic Order was entirely in the gift of the monarch, and was out of reach from military or governmental interference. Thus the Order was given to many officers who might otherwise have received nothing. What was later seen as one of the Order's main weaknesses was in fact one of its redeeming strengths, for during the brief period of its existence in Britain, it usefully filled, in an *ad hoc* way, the widening gap in the availability of honours that successive governments chose to ignore. Not only was the Order meted out by the monarch as a personal gift to his close cronies and household retainers, it was extensively used to recognise service and distinction across an expanding range of governmental activity both within the military and the civilian spheres. It was also used in an innovatory fashion to acknowledge achievement quite outside the purely governmental sphere in being extended to scientists, physicians and scholars.

Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas provided a brief account of the Order in his classic four-volume work on the British orders of knighthood published in 1841-2, but since then it has not been the subject of any further or more detailed investigation.[8] This article aims partly to redress this situation by examining the development of the Order in Britain during the early nineteenth century.

I

The creation of the Guelphic Order in 1815 arose directly from the elevation of Hanover to the status of an independent kingdom. Britain's connection with Hanover had begun in 1714 when, in accordance with parliamentary statute, the succession to the British crown passed to the next available protestant heir, Georg Ludwig, the reigning duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, a prince-elector of the Holy Roman Empire, whose territories were more commonly known by the name of their principal city, Hanover. For the next 122 years, George I and his successors were rulers both of Great Britain and of their Hanoverian lands in northern Germany. It was a purely dynastic connection or 'personal union' in which the two states retained complete constitutional independence of each other but possessed the same individual as head of state who exercised authority over their separate realms through two entirely distinct governments. 'Guelph' was the old dynastic name of the royal line of Brunswick. It was the oldest of the royal houses of Europe with a royal lineage stretching back to the powerful 'Welfen' dukes of Saxony during the Carolingian Empire in the eighth century.

In 1803, George III was unable to do anything to prevent the Napoleonic invasion and occupation of Hanover, and in 1807 most of the electorate was absorbed into the newly created central German kingdom of Westphalia ruled by Napoleon's brother Jerome Bonaparte. A government-in-exile operated in London under the direction of the Hanover minister Count Ernst Friedrich Herbert von Münster, holding out hope of eventual liberation. Although the French had disbanded the Hanoverian army,

[8] Except for one or two detailed studies published in Germany concerning the Order's insignia, the best of which is A. Thies and W. Hapke, *Orden und Ehrenzeichen des Königreiches Hannover* (Hamburg 1981).

many of its officers and men escaped to Britain, where under George III's Royal Warrant they were formed into the 'King's German Legion' and for the rest of the war served as an integral unit within the British Army. Following Napoleon's crushing defeat at the battle of Leipzig in October 1813, French control over Hanover quickly evaporated and in December, with the help of the Legion, Hanover was liberated. The government of Hanover was quickly placed on a new footing, and the King's youngest son, Adolphus, the Duke of Cambridge, was appointed resident governor. Count Münster, however, remained in London as head of the 'German Chancery' (*Deutsche Kanzlei*)[9] and Hanoverian Minister to the Royal House. Thus as prime intermediary between the administration in Hanover and the Prince Regent, Münster was able to exercise effective control over most aspects of Hanoverian government.[10]

Since taking up office in London in 1805, Münster (**Plate 2**) had established a close working relationship with the royal family, and had made himself indispensable in all matters pertaining to the electorate. He had extensive connections among the German states, and following the dissolution of the old Holy Roman Empire in 1806, was anxious to see the creation of a new association of German princes.[11] The Congress of Vienna, which was convened to decide on the geo-political landscape of post-war Europe, opened in October 1814. Münster attended with the British representative Viscount Castlereagh, and, with the Prince Regent's blessing, secured early agreement to his proposal that Hanover be elevated to the status of a kingdom.[12] His proposal was based on the premise that since there was no inclination to resurrect the Holy Roman Empire, the title of 'elector' had become defunct, and that as the ruler of Hanover was a member of the oldest princely house in Germany, he could not possibly hold a lesser rank than that of the newly announced kings of Bavaria, Saxony and Württemberg.[13] Henceforth, Hanover – which was also granted additional territory – was to be an independent kingdom within the newly established German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*).

Although it is not clear precisely when the idea for the Guelphic Order began to materialise, a preliminary draft of the Order's statutes signed by the Regent on 25 June 1815 would suggest that it was under active preparation during the early months of that year.[14] It may be assumed that both Münster and the Regent agreed

[9] The small suite of offices that comprised the 'German Chancery' was situated in St James's Palace.

[10] M. Bertram, 'The end of the dynastic union, 1815-1837', in B. Simms and T. Riotte (edd.), *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714-1837* (Cambridge 2007), p. 112.

[11] Ibid. p. 115.

[12] Ibid. p. 116.

[13] P. Konigs, *The Hanoverian Kings and their Homeland* (Lewes 1993), p. 162.

[14] College of Arms Ms 'Guelphic Order' [hereafter CA Ms GuO] (bound volume), fos. 1-8. The archive of the Order, originally maintained at the German Chancery at St James's Palace, was transferred to Hanover in 1837 and in due course was absorbed into the private archives of the Hanoverian royal family. These are now administered at the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv at Hanover, but due to current restrictions on access to this collection, it has unfortunately not been possible to examine them. I am very grateful to Dr Sven Mahmens, archivist at the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, for advising me of the current situation.

Figure 1: Sir George Nayler, Garter King of Arms from 1822 to his death in 1831; formerly (from 1794 to 1822) York Herald. Engraving by Edward Scriven from a portrait by Sir William Beechey, now in the College of Arms.

that institution of an order of knighthood in the newly established kingdom of Hanover had become essential as a means of rewarding the services of its politicians, officials and military men. But the close attention that Münster gave to the Order in its formative stages, and afterwards, leaves little doubt that the impetus for it came chiefly from himself. Plans for the Order were drawn up between the Prince and his Hanoverian ministers, and did not in any way involve members of the British government.[15] There is interesting irony in the fact that though this was to be an Order annexed to the crown of Hanover, and would operate as far as British subjects were concerned as a foreign order, it was in Britain that the Order was conceived, established and administered.

II

If the inspiration and initiative for establishing the Guelphic Order had come from the Prince Regent and Count Münster, the process of bringing it into existence was very much the work and enterprise of Sir George Nayler (**Figure 1**). As York Herald, Nayler was one of the officers of the College of Arms, a position he had occupied since 1794, having entered the College the previous year as a pursuivant. From the first he had stood out as an ambitious, business-minded and forceful personality who was regarded with much suspicion by his colleagues. At the outset of his career he

[15] The papers of leading British ministers, particularly those of the prime minister, the Earl of Liverpool, contain no references to the foundation of the Order.

had assumed the right to exercise the powers of his office as Genealogist of the Order of the Bath, which previous incumbents had not fulfilled.[16] The duties of vetting the pedigrees and arms of Knights of the Bath and their esquires had over the years been undertaken by the other heralds. But Nayler, who had purchased the office for £1,300, made no secret of his determination to make it pay, and thought nothing of damaging the practices of the other heralds by seeking to have these duties, and the fees they commanded, declared as solely his. Inevitably, the matter brought him into direct conflict with his superior, Sir Isaac Heard, Garter King of Arms, though in 1795 Nayler was particularly fortunate in obtaining the backing and goodwill of the Order's royal Great Master, the Duke of York, the King's second son. The case was referred to the home secretary, the Duke of Portland, in 1799 and was batted between lawyers for several more years, but Nayler appears to have carried on acting as though he were sole agent for the Order, confident of the correctness of his cause. His connection with the Duke of York also flourished, and in 1813, upon Nayler's failure to obtain a place on the Garter mission to Tsar Alexander I of Russia, it was the Duke who procured for him a compensatory knighthood.[17]

It was therefore only as a matter of course that Nayler was closely involved in the restructuring of the Order of the Bath into three classes which came into effect in January 1815, and it is likely that he was designer of the new insignia. Not only did he advise the Duke of York on the matter in the duke's capacity as Great Master,[18] but he was also consulted by the Prince Regent, on one occasion being summoned to Brighton.[19] Within the new structure of the Order, Nayler was given the additional, newly-created post of 'Officer of Arms Attendant on the Knights Commanders and Companions', a position which provided him with a considerably expanded fee-taking potential within the Order. He was by now an acknowledged expert on all matters concerning orders and decorations, British or foreign, and was evidently enjoying the full flush of royal favour and attention. He was therefore a natural choice to officiate at the birth of the Guelphic Order.

A volume of Nayler's surviving papers on the Order at the College of Arms affords an invaluable glimpse at the manner in which the Order was established during 1815-16.[20] Various drafts show the Order's Statutes going through the later phases of redrafting and refinement, though it is clear by this stage that the overall framework of the Order was firmly in place.[21] Nayler and Münster were probably involved jointly in the drafting processes. The completed Statutes were issued in German from Carlton House, the Regent's main London residence, bearing the date

[16] A. Wagner, *Heralds of England: A History of the Office and College of Arms* (London 1967), pp. 432-33.
[17] Ibid. pp. 434-45.
[18] Appropriately, the Duke was also commander-in-chief of the army, and so with the planned influx of military appointments, had a double interest in the planned changes to the Order.
[19] *The Letters of King George IV 1812-1830* (ed. A. Aspinall, 3 vols., Cambridge 1938), vol. 2, pp. 10, 19.
[20] CA Ms GuO. There is also a folder of loose papers.
[21] CA Ms GuO fos. 9-20.

12 August.[22] They opened with a preamble declaring the *raison d'être* for the Order, and did so by revealing that an order of knighthood for Hanover had in fact been under contemplation by George III prior to the French invasion 'to augment the means of conferring upon faithful servants of the State, and individuals devoted to his person, a public mark of his favour'. It was then stated that the expulsion of the enemy from Hanover and the return to legitimate rule 'has given us occasion to review with lively emotion those years of misfortune during which all classes of our beloved German subjects gave such laudable proofs of unshaken fidelity and attachment'.[23] These events, together with the elevation of Hanover into a kingdom, and the 'imperishable fame which our Hanoverian troops have acquired in the Battle near Waterloo' were all cited as having provided the stimulus for the new Order.[24]

Initially, as recited in the first article of the Statutes, it was intended that the Order be deemed as established on 18 June 1815 in celebration of the recent allied victory at Waterloo, thus 'to give the more splendour to this Order', and which was to be the 'anniversary day' of the Order. But second thoughts soon resulted in this being changed to 12 August 1815, a day which admittedly had considerably more resonance for an Order named in honour of the royal Guelphic dynasty.[25] Not only was 12 August the Prince Regent's birthday, it was also the anniversary day of the accession of the Hanover dynasty to the British throne back in 1714, an event which had just passed its centenary year.[26]

Although it was understood at the outset that the Guelphic Order – or to give it its formal title 'the Order of the Guelphs of Hanover' – would belong to the crown of Hanover, in practice it was to bear a distinctly 'Anglo-Hanoverian' character. This duality in the Order's structure was reflected in the three officials who under the terms of Article III in the Statutes were established to manage the Order, and represented a geographical division of responsibility between Britain and Hanover.[27] The senior of the officers, the Chancellor, was always to be the minister-resident at the court of the King of Hanover in London; for the time being that person would be the Order's progenitor, Count Münster. Next, in descending order of seniority, was the Vice-Chancellor who was always to be the senior privy councillor and chief cabinet minister in Hanover. The Secretary was to be the principal secretary to the Hanoverian Chancery in London.[28]

The Statutes did not specifically establish a 'King of Arms' as such, but an extra article, also dated 12 August 1815, appointed 'our Blanc Coursier Herald' to

[22] No English version appears to have been available until a translation by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas was privately published in a limited edition in 1828. Another translation, by John Frost, published in 1831, was more generally available.

[23] Nicolas op. cit. (note 3 above), p. 4.

[24] Ibid. p. 5.

[25] CA Ms GuO fo. 1.

[26] The Hanoverian anniversaries were not, however, explicitly stated in the Statutes.

[27] Nicolas, p. 5.

[28] The Hanoverian-based Vice-Chancellor was Georg Nieper, who resigned in 1824 and was replaced by Georg Hoppenstedt. The London-based Secretary was Ludwig (sometimes known as 'Sir Lewis') Moeller, who in 1833 was replaced by Georg Lichtenberg.

take charge of the heraldic business of the Order.[29] In so doing, the article appointed Nayler to this role, Blanc Coursier being the heraldic title belonging to his office as Genealogist of the Order of the Bath. It can of course be assumed that Nayler was instrumental in drafting this particular article and was able to ensure that by omitting any reference to him in his official capacity at the College of Arms, viz. as York Herald, there could be no suggestion that the College was in any way entitled to share fees arising from his role in the Guelphic Order. Since Nayler's title of 'Blanc Coursier' was one which already made reference to the white horse in the arms of Hanover, it was probably felt that there was no need to provide him with a second heraldic title for Hanover.[30] With regard to the business of the Order, Nayler was subsequently styled either 'Blanc Coursier King of Arms of Hanover', or, as he would sign himself in correspondence with members of the Order, 'King of Arms of Hanover'.[31]

The offices of Genealogist and Registrar, though recognised from the outset as belonging to the Order, were not established under the original Statutes, nor, as far as can be ascertained, were they established under any later article. Nayler's correspondence on the Order indicates, however, that a Genealogist had been appointed by February 1816, to deputize for him in attending to the Order's heraldic and genealogical requirements in Hanover. And similarly, a Registrar was already in place the previous year. Once again, these appointments display the Order's geographical division of responsibility between Britain and Hanover: Heinrich Schaedtler, the Genealogist, resident in Hanover, and William Woods, the Registrar, at the College of Arms in London. There seems little doubt that Woods, who did not become an officer of arms at the College until 1819, was already working there as a close associate of Nayler's. In January 1815 he had been picked by Nayler to be 'Secretary to the Knight Commanders and Companions of the Order of the Bath', and was now involved in providing secretarial assistance to Nayler in the running of both the Bath and the Guelphic Order.

In common with so many of the newer European orders, and like the newly remodelled Order of the Bath, a three-tiered structure was adopted for the Guelphic Order. The Statutes also decreed two divisions, one for military appointments, the other for civilians, each division having three classes: the first, of 'knights grand cross' (GCH); the second, of 'commander' or 'knight commander' (KCH); and the third, of 'knight' (KH).[32] An additional feature, and again one often found with the newer multi-grade orders on the continent, was an associate medal of the Order awarded in gold and silver for valour to non-commissioned officers and soldiers in

[29] Nicolas, p. 11.

[30] There was in any case a shortage of suitable titles: Brunswick Herald and Hanover Herald were titles that were already annexed to offices in the Order of the Bath (and were to remain so until 1857).

[31] See for example, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Field Marshal Viscount Combermere* (ed. M. W. Stapleton, 2 vols., London 1866), vol. 1, pp. 350f.: Nayler to Combermere, 3 Sept. 1817.

[32] Articles XI-XV: Nicolas, pp. 6f.

the Hanoverian Army, and which carried a small pension of about nine shillings per month.[33]

Several articles in the Statutes dealt specifically with the way in which the Order was to operate in Hanover. There was to be no limit to the numbers admitted to any class of the Order, and it was stated as a point of principle that 'distinguished merit' was never to go unrewarded due to a lack of vacancies. There were, however, particular rules which restricted the bestowal of the Order's first and second classes to particular ranks in the army, and, on the civilian side, to senior officials and post-holders within the government and diplomatic service. It was stated, for instance, that the grand cross could not be given to military officers below the rank of lieutenant-general, and that a knight commander's insignia could not be given to lower than a major-general, or to equivalent ranks in the civil service. The third class, that of 'knight', was by contrast not confined to any rank.[34]

British appointments were made possible by virtue of the provision in the tenth Article of the Statutes which decreed that 'foreigners' could be admitted as 'extra members' of the Order.[35] Under this crucial provision the King of Hanover was at liberty to appoint not only his Hanoverian subjects to the Order, but also his British subjects and any other foreign nationals whom he might choose to nominate. In common with all appointments to the Order, Britons were chosen by the king strictly in his capacity as king of Hanover. Each appointment was made through the Hanoverian government, and letters of confirmation to the recipient would be written and signed by Count Münster without reference to the British government. British appointees were given no special or explicit recognition in the Statutes, but belonged to the Order by virtue of the general category of 'ausländer' or foreigner awards (as distinct from the 'inländer' or native Hanoverian awards), their status being no different from that of any other foreign nationals admitted to the Order.[36] The main distinction between the foreign and native categories was that the rigid rules and procedures relating to awards to Hanoverian subjects, did not apply to foreign

[33] Nicolas, pp. 5, 7, 18. It was usually known as the 'Guelphic Medal'. Unlike the Order itself, the award of the Medal was confined to Hanoverians. A rare gold version was awarded in 1826 to J. C. Stahlschmidt of Lambeth, for his wartime services as deputy-purveyor to the Hanoverian Army and latterly as a member of a Board at Chelsea Hospital to examine the claims of invalid soldiers of the King's German Legion; N. Carlisle, *A Concise Account of the Several Foreign Orders of Knighthood* (London 1839), pp. 172-5.

[34] Articles V-IX, XVI-XXIII: Nicolas, pp. 5-9. In the case of Hanoverian appointees, the Statutes laid down an elaborate procedure whereby the eligibility and claims of nominees to the Order were 'investigated' by a committee of grand crosses in Chapter which would consider various testimonials and make its recommendations to the sovereign-grand master. Schaedtler, deputizing for Nayler in Hanover in August 1816, reported to him upon the installation held to celebrate the Order's first anniversary, and upon the Chapter meeting held the same day which had lasted three hours (CA Ms GuO fo. 130: Schaedtler to Nayler, 16 Aug. 1816).

[35] Article X: Nicolas, p. 6.

[36] I have occasionally found it necessary in this article to adopt such phrases as 'non-British foreigners' simply to highlight the distinction between British and other foreign appointments to the Order.

appointees. In short, from the point of view of the British government the Guelphic Order was a foreign order; and from the point of view of the kingdom of Hanover British recipients of the Order were 'foreigners'. Only from the standpoint of the king himself, as ruler of both Britain and Hanover, did British and Hanoverian members of the Order appear on an equal footing.

There was one vital exception, however, to the clear demarcation of the king's separate roles as ruler of Britain and of Hanover in relation to the Order, and where such a demarcation could not be maintained. This concerned the sensitive question of the acceptance of foreign orders. In 1812 the British government had laid down rules which forbade British subjects from accepting orders from foreign princes, unless the honour was for specifically defined military service.[37] But although Hanover was constitutionally distinct from Britain, it was impossible (as well as unthinkable) to regard its king as 'foreign' and the Guelphic Order as a 'foreign order'. Thus in the case of grants of the Guelphic Order to British subjects it was never suggested by British ministers or their officials that the Foreign Office rules should be applied. It was only after Hanover ceased to have any connection with the British crown in 1837 that they began to be enforced.[38]

The insignia or 'ensigns' would be the essential visible testimony of the Order's existence. Their basic features were outlined in the completed Statutes, but the process of finalising the designs continued through the summer of 1815. It would appear that Nayler, who was a skilled miniaturist, was himself responsible for the design work, while John Bridge, one of the partners of the royal insignia makers, Rundell, Bridge and Company, oversaw the production of prototypes of the various badges and stars, and the collar chain.[39] At every stage Nayler referred his designs to Münster who in turn referred them to the Prince Regent. The Regent took a detailed interest and made a number of significant changes to Nayler's designs that were incorporated into the finished insignia. It was he who stipulated for instance that the green wreath surrounding the central devices of the badge and star should be of laurel for military awards, and oak for civilian. With regard to the collar he disliked the inclusion of 'swords in saltire', and asked for the 'badge of Hanover' to be replaced with the royal cypher of 'G.R.'

The 'badge of Hanover' – the galloping white horse on a red background – did, however, appear prominently as the central feature of the various stars and badges of the three classes, encircled with a light blue band bearing the Order's motto 'nec aspera terrent' ('difficulties do not terrify'), the motto used in the arms of Hanover, but which had an obvious reference to Hanover's recent history. The badge of the Order, which was common to each class, was in the form of a distinctive gold Maltese cross with lions passant guardant between each arm, and similar to the newly-devised

[37] Carlisle, op. cit. (note 33 above) pp. xvii-xix. Specifically, the rules stated that foreign awards could only be accepted in recognition of military service 'in the face of the enemy', or in the actual military service of a foreign sovereign.

[38] See below, note 83.

[39] T. Woodcock, 'Sir George Nayler', in *Oxford DNB*; CA Ms GuO fos. 59-61, 67: Münster to Nayler, 18, 22 July 1815, Nayler to Münster [n.d.], J. Bridge to Nayler, 28 Sept. 1815.

badge of the Order of the Bath. The lions on the Guelphic badge might easily be taken for 'British' lions, except that the lion was also a popular symbol in the royal family's Hanoverian duchy of Brunswick. The reverse of the badge, however, was certainly unambiguously 'British', bearing the royal cypher 'G.R.' in gold and surmounted by the British crown (**Plate 3**). This, therefore, was a carefully contrived, conscientiously Anglo-Hanoverian design that combined elements of both British and Hanoverian symbolism, and clearly sought to please British recipients as much as it did those in Hanover. Moreover, it strove to avoid any possible feeling that the Order was inferior, suggesting instead a kind of parity with the Bath, even though technically it was a foreign Order with no position in the British order of precedence.

When they were appointed to the Order, the only item recipients were actually 'given' was the badge attached to its light blue moiré riband (whether for grand cross, knight commander, or knight), but even this had to be returned to the Chancery of the Order at St James's upon the decease of the holder.[40] This was an age when the 'official' stars normally presented with an order's badge were inexpensive-looking embroidered or 'tinsel' items, continuing the practice which had been customary throughout the eighteenth century. It was becoming increasingly the fashion during the Regency period, however, for recipients of British orders to purchase at personal expense stars that were properly fashioned in silver and embellished with gold and enamel, and if one's pocket was deep enough, with precious stones. Several firms of London jewellers were involved in manufacturing stars, not only of British orders, but also of foreign ones, including Rundell, Bridge & Co., Hamlet, and Storr & Mortimer, while in Hanover the chief suppliers were Carl Busch. On special occasions, knights grand cross wore the badge with the collar of the Order, rather than its broad riband, and these, too, had to be purchased by the knights themselves. The Statutes did not specify that a mantle was to be worn by the knights grand cross, but Nayler's papers contain a description of one that was intended for the Prince Regent. It was to be of a 'large Knight of the Bath' size, of 'rich white satin, lined throughout with blue silk with blue and gold cordons'.[41] It is also known that the Duke of Cambridge wore a mantle of the Order when presiding over its 'festivities' at his court in Hanover.[42] But there is no indication that mantles were ever worn by knights on these or any other occasions.

The Statutes required the arms of each member of the Order to be engraved and painted on individual copper plates, and put up in the Church of the Royal Palace, the Herrenhausen, in Hanover, so that 'a lasting memorial of his distinguished merit and services may descend to posterity'. It was ordained, too, that a second set of plates was to be put up in the Palace's Hall of Knights.[43] The purpose of these arrangements was to provide the Order with a permanent shrine and to place it firmly within the knightly tradition of other European orders of knighthood. The plates were to be large, medium or small, commensurate with the class of award, and specific directions were given concerning the heraldic format in which the arms were to be

[40] Article XV. Nicolas, p. 9.
[41] CA Ms GuO, fo. 115.
[42] Ibid. fo. 30.
[43] Nicolas, pp. 9, 11.

displayed: the shield encircled by a light blue band bearing the Order's motto in gold, and surrounded by either a laurel or oak wreath denoting the division to which a member belonged, and his class of insignia were also to be depicted (for a grand cross, a collar and badge encircling the wreath; for a knight commander, a neck badge and riband; for a knight, the badge suspended from a breast riband), and the whole to be surmounted by a helmet.[44]

Nayler's papers contain large numbers of finished paintings of the armorial bearings of both British and German knights.[45] But it is clear that he gave little guidance on these matters to his deputy, Heinrich Schaedtler, in Hanover, and repeatedly ignored the latter's pleas to be properly informed of his functions as the Order's Genealogist.[46] Although Schaedtler was evidently providing Nayler with details and drawings of the arms of Hanoverian knights on a regular basis, Nayler's persistent failure to answer his inquiries strongly suggests his determination to keep a firm personal control over the Order and not to allow Schaedtler to exercise a monopoly over its heraldic and genealogical business in Hanover.[47] It is not in fact certain whether the intended plates were ever set up in Hanover, either in the Herrenhausen Church, or in the Palace Hall of Knights. In 1818 we find Schaedtler asking Nayler for the plates Nayler has had prepared to be sent to Hanover.[48] But Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, writing during the early 1840s, stated quite categorically that this part of the enterprise was never carried into effect.[49] The institutional life of the Order in Hanover nevertheless became a regular feature of routine at the Palace, the principal event being the 'chapters' held there each year on its anniversary date of 12 August, at which the appointments made over the preceding year were formally proclaimed, and the claims of candidates for admission were considered.[50]

[44] Nicolas, *History of the orders of knighthood* (see note 3 above) iv, 'Miscellaneous Remarks', pp. 21f.; 'Guelphic Order', pp. 20f. It is not clear, however, whether this stipulation was intended to apply to 'foreign' as well as 'native' knights.

[45] An unbound folio of Guelphic papers at the College of Arms also contains many drawings of arms both of Hanoverian and British members of the Order. These papers, mainly covering a slightly later period, appear to be those of William Woods, the Order's Registrar.

[46] CA Ms GuO fos. 77, 78, 80, 81, 84: Schaedtler to Nayler, 17 Feb., 11 Mar., 15 May, 16 Nov. 1816, 14 July 1818.

[47] Nayler's protectiveness over the Order was likewise exhibited towards his colleagues at the College of Arms. In the preface to his *Calendar of Knights*, Francis Townsend, Rouge Dragon Pursuivant, records that Nayler had denied him information about the Order's membership: F. Townsend, *Calendar of Knights ... from 1760 to the present time* (London 1828), pp. xxx-xxxi.

[48] CA Ms GuO fo. 84: Schaedtler to Nayler, 14 July 1818.

[49] Nicolas, 'Guelphic Order', p. 21. The Herrenhausen Palace itself was entirely destroyed by bombing in 1943. Intriguingly, however, the armorial plate for Count Münster surfaced at a sale by the London auctioneers, Dix Noonan Webb, in 2003. The auction catalogue entry stated that it had come to light in St George's Chapel, Windsor, which would suggest that some plates, at least, were manufactured, but were never transported to Hanover. (Dix Noonan Webb, catalogue 2 April 2003, lot 530, plate IV).

[50] Carlisle (note 33 above), p. 170.

Since in Britain the Order was technically a foreign one, the appointment of British nationals to the first or second classes did not entitle them to automatic knighthood. From its inception, however, the Prince Regent established an unwritten rule that Britons appointed knights grand cross or knights commander should receive the accolade of knighthood if they had not already done so.[51] It was a practice that was rigorously observed by both George IV and William IV. Occasions when individuals were formally invested with the Order were never reported in *The London Gazette* or *The Times*, the chief sources of information about activity at court. This, of course, was in keeping with the practice of not formally recording acts by the monarch in his capacity as king of Hanover. What was reported, however, were the presentations at court of new appointees to the Order, either to 'kiss hands' on being appointed, or specifically to receive the accolade. Insignia may have been presented on these occasions, or, as also very often happened, they might be sent. But the significant point is that the bestowal of knighthood was never officially treated as being automatically consequent upon the receipt of the Order's insignia. These were plain knighthoods of the rank and style of knight bachelor, and possession of the GCH or KCH did not accord a higher a position in the order of precedence.

The designation of the third class of 'knight' gave rise to some confusion, not least among several of its recipients. Several third class knights were under the mistaken impression that they had been created knights bachelor and adopted the appellation of 'Sir', or were assumed by others to be so entitled. The habit appears to have been encouraged by the example of some KHs who were actually knighted within a short time of receiving the Order. A notable instance of this occurred in the case of the eminent Hanover-born astronomer, Dr William Herschel. Herschel was appointed as the very first KH in April 1816 and was often known as 'Sir William' both during his lifetime and afterwards, despite never receiving the accolade.[52] Lingering uncertainty on the issue persisted, and in October 1831 a memorandum was presented to William IV urging the case that all 'knights' appointed by the King to the Order automatically became knights bachelor. These assertions were promptly dismissed by the Lord Chancellor who confirmed the King's view that the honour of knighthood could only be conferred in person by the royal act of dubbing with the sword.[53] Thus those who were not 'knighted' in this fashion had no right to use the rank and style of 'Sir'. The King nevertheless continued the practice occasionally of bestowing knighthoods in tandem with nominations to the third class of the Order. In an effort to allay ongoing confusion over the designation of 'knight' in the third class, the Lord Chamberlain's Department issued a directive in February 1833 that members of the third class of

[51] This also applied to peers who had no need of the appellation of 'Sir'. When the Marquess of Hertford was invested with the Garter in November 1822, it was stated that he was not knighted, having previously received the accolade when given the GCH in 1819. *The Times*, 23 Nov. 1822, p. 2.

[52] His son John Herschel, who continued his father's astronomical work, was appointed a KH in October 1831, and was knighted the same month.

[53] Nicolas, 'Guelphic Order', pp. 25-8.

the Order should in future be styled 'companions' instead of knights.[54] This was not consistently observed, however, and in the *London Gazette* during the 1830s both styles were in use.

III

Although formally instituted on 12 August 1815, the Order's ceremonial inauguration in Hanover did not take place until the close of the year. Nayler played the leading part in devising the formalities, which are well documented in his detailed plans of the processional route through the state rooms of the Herrenhausen Palace.[55] The first investiture took place on 29 December, presided over by the Duke of Cambridge acting for his brother the Prince Regent as governor of Hanover. Nayler, in accordance with the Regent's warrant, invested the Duke with the insignia, mantle and collar in the Duke's private apartments.[56] From there, a long procession of courtiers made its way from the Marble Hall of the Palace through the state apartments to the Great Ballroom. There, the Duke invested 61 Hanoverian appointees: 13 grand crosses, 17 commanders, and 31 knights.[57] The procession back to the Duke's apartment was accompanied by the ringing of bells from the Palace Church and the firing of gun salutes. The proceedings were followed by a reception and ball in the evening. A few months after his return from this mission, and in recognition of his important role in the creation of the Order, Nayler was appointed by the Regent as one of its very first knights alongside Herschel.

In London, news that the Prince Regent had instituted an 'Order of the Guelphs' for his Hanoverian subjects received the briefest of notices in *The Times* on 15 January 1816.[58] In future years, however, it was never customary for appointments to the Order, even of British nationals, to be mentioned in the official British press. Such announcements were published in Hanover's official gazette, the *Hannoversche Zeitung*. The number of British appointments during the Order's early years was in fact rather small and insignificant in comparison with the huge influx of appointments to the Order of the Bath at this time. For some while there seems to have been little public awareness of the Order outside of court society. The first nomination of Guelphic knights in August 1815 had been restricted to princes of the royal blood, namely the Prince Regent's brothers, the Dukes of York, Clarence, Kent, Cumberland, Sussex, and Cambridge, and his cousin the Duke of Gloucester. But in preparation for the formal inauguration of the Order in December, a substantial body of 118 initial appointments across the three classes was announced, comprising 25 grand crosses,

[54] College of Arms, 'Guelphic Order' (folder of loose papers): William Martin, Lord Chamberlain's Department, to Sir William Woods, 25 Feb. 1833.
[55] CA Ms GuO fos. 30f.
[56] CA Ms GuO fo. 27: instrument to Sir George Nayler, signed by Prince Regent, 13 Dec. 1815.
[57] These figures are derived from the deliveries of insignia to Nayler on 14 and 15 Dec. 1815 to be taken by him to Hanover: CA Ms GuO fo. 29.
[58] *The Times*, 15 Jan. 1816, p.2.

41 commanders and 52 knights. Appropriately, almost all of these appointments went to ministers, governmental officials and army officers in the service of Hanover. There was also a virtual absence of Britons, with only four knights commander among them, three of whom were in fact commanders in the Hanoverian army, while the fourth was the Prince Regent's principal equerry.[59]

Between 1815 and 1837, up to the accession of Queen Victoria, a total of 1,764 awards of the Guelphic Order were made.[60] Examination of the Order's membership in statistical terms reveals something of the way in which the Order was used by the Prince Regent/George IV and his brother and successor William IV (see Table, p. 116). The figures confirm the general view expressed in the 1840s by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas that William IV distributed the Order far more liberally than his elder brother. The number of awards made in any year by George IV, as regent and king, rarely went into double figures, but when they did they signify awards to Hanoverians rather than Britons. Even the number of KHs handed out to British nationals was annually very small. Only during 1821, the year of the king's state visit to Hanover, do the levels of some awards appear unusually high in comparison with earlier and later figures: the 22 honorary grand crosses presented to a host of German princes and ambassadors who evidently used the occasion of the king's presence in Hanover to visit him and pay their respects; and no fewer than 50 KHs to officers of the Hanoverian army and various middle-ranking government officials. But with these lone exceptions the bestowal of the Order by George IV was kept within strict limits.

The picture changes radically, however, under William IV. From the beginning of the king's reign, the number of awards to Britons in all three classes rose markedly. The pattern of awards to Hanoverians and foreigners, on the other hand, remained substantially unchanged. Thus, by 1837, and taking the entire 'British phase' of the Order's existence into account, there had been noticeably fewer awards to Hanoverians than to Britons, despite the fact that it had been founded primarily with Hanover in mind. These trends underline the distinct contrasts of attitude towards the Order by the two monarchs.

George IV, as regent and king, regarded the Guelphic Order very much as his 'personal order', and not as an award emanating from his British or Hanoverian ministers. When, after being appointed to the Order, the Marquess of Hastings sent his thanks to the Prince Regent in 1819 from Calcutta, where he was in residence as governor-general of India, he took special note of the Prince's words that he 'must

[59] The four British KCHs were Major-Generals Sir James Lyon, Sir Hugh Halkett, and Sir Colin Halkett, each of whom had commands in the Hanoverian army, and Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, the Regent's chief equerry.

[60] These figures are of actual appointments and do not recognise promotions of individuals within the Order. On the British side, at least, they may contain a small margin of error, being based largely upon Shaw's section on the Order in his *Knights of England*. Shaw stated that he had been unable to trace the whereabouts of the Order's British 'register' of members and had therefore relied mainly on the annual lists printed in Hanover's official yearbooks which he collated with the lists in Nicolas, *Orders of Knighthood*; Shaw, *Knights* vol. 1, 'Preface' p. vii.

	Grand Crosses (GCH)			(Knight) Commanders (KCH)			Knights (KH)		
	Britain	Hanover	Foreign	Britain	Hanover	Foreign	Britain	Hanover	Foreign
1815	7	17	8	4	33	3	-	46	3
1816	14	3	11	5	7	5	12	49	26
1817	12	-	3	4	-	1	3	22	7
1818	4	-	9	2	7	5	8	26	16
1819	8	1	3	8	3	4	5	11	5
1820	4	-	8	3	4	1	3	15	5
1821	2	5	22	11	7	12	4	50	9
1822	1	-	1	4	4	3	3	12	1
1823	3	-	1	-	-	8	4	9	7
1824	1	5	3	2	1	6	2	10	5
1825	7	2	3	1	6	3	3	9	2
1826	2	1	2	1	2	-	-	1	-
1827	7	1	5	4	5	-	2	18	5
1828	-	-	5	2	-	1	2	2	-
1829	1	-	7	2	1	3	-	8	10
1830	8	3	5	6	15	9	6	40	4
1831	20	1	5	35	4	8	27	11	7
1832	10	4	8	39	8	5	47	24	5
1833	7	-	1	8	3	-	31	17	2
1834	12	1	9	22	3	8	39	9	6
1835	9	1	3	15	3	6	40	14	4
1836	10	1	6	12	1	4	74	6	5
1837	7	4	11	22	10	9	85	21	12
	156	50	139	212	127	104	400	430	146

TABLE: Yearly appointments to the Guelphic Order, 1815-37

Sources: W.A. Shaw, *The Knights of England* (2 vols. London, 1906), I, pp. 449-79; *Königlich Grossbritannisch-Hannoverscher Staats-Kalender* (up to 1823); *Staats und Adress Kalender für das Konigreich Hannover* (from 1824).

keenly prize the Royal Guelphic Ribband because it was your own Order'.[61] This preferred usage sometimes resulted in what appeared to be the Prince's glaring misuse of the Order in honouring services regarded as manifestly not connected with the state. One notable case was that of Colonel Sir Thomas Henry Brown, a member of the so-called 'Milan Commission', which had been sent by George IV to seek out evidence of the adulterous liaisons alleged to have been conducted on the continent by his estranged wife, Queen Caroline. It was Brown's promotion from KH to KCH in 1820 that led to the first expression of mild public disapproval of the Order noted earlier.[62]

The GCH was often given by the Regent as a personal gift to senior military and naval commanders who had already been rewarded with the Bath. But there were also early instances where KCHs and KHs were bestowed on military men who failed to qualify for the Bath due to the narrow and often anomalous regulations which were due to its hasty remodelling in 1814-15. A typical example was Colonel Sir George Wood who had commanded the British artillery at Waterloo, but who had only been rewarded with a CB. The Regent, who had appointed him an aide-de-camp in 1814, evidently thought him worthy of greater recognition and in 1816 awarded him a KCH. It was hardly surprising that officers who failed to obtain the Bath should try their luck in obtaining the Guelphic Order, even though by 1820 it was quite clear that it was given much more sparingly than the Bath. These applications were passed to Count Münster who would refer them for comment to the Duke of Wellington, himself one of the first British GCHs in 1816. Confronted with one such request in 1822, Wellington replied to Münster: 'I confess that I am so strongly impressed with a sense of the necessity of keeping an honour of this description very circumscribed in respect to the number on whom it is conferred in order that it may be considered a distinction and may be an object to those who really deserve it that I would recommend in every instance a strict adherence to the rule in the disposal of it'.[63] In fact, the Duke seems to have exercised a personal rule never to recommend any officer for the Order, professing ignorance of the regulations under which, as a foreign order, it operated.[64] Moreover, he counselled Münster to strict observance of its rules of admission in granting awards, as to do otherwise would encourage torrents of applications from officers all pressing similar claims.[65]

While George IV was alive, Münster was able to maintain tight control over the disposal of the Order. The king did not permit nominations directly from his British or Hanoverian ministers. The usual procedure was for nominations to be 'confidentially communicated' to Münster as chancellor of the Order, and for him

[61] *Letters of King George IV* (note 19 above) ii, p. 295: Hastings to Regent, Calcutta, 14 July 1819.

[62] *The Times*, 13 Oct. 1820, p. 3.

[63] Southampton University Library, Wellington Ms WP1/710/12: Wellington to Münster, 20 May 1822 (copy).

[64] Ibid, WP1/712/15: Major John Taylor to Lord Fitzroy Somerset, 27 June 1822.

[65] Ibid, WP1/715/9: Wellington to Münster, 12 July 1822 [draft].

to consider whether it would be appropriate for individual recommendations to be made to the King.[66] As already indicated, this might often entail his seeking advice as to the suitability of nominees from other senior military or political figures. There is also evidence, however, that nominations for military appointments to the Order were put directly to the King by his brother the Duke of York as commander-in-chief of the army.[67] In Britain, the Guelphic Order quickly established its value as a means of rewarding military and civilian services not covered by the Order of the Bath.[68] Apart from occasional awards for naval and military service, all three classes of the Order were used to reward colonial governors, members of the diplomatic and consular services, and members of the King's household or the households of other members of the royal family.

In Hanover, fewer awards tended to be made since it was here that the Order's precise rules of admission were in force; they did not of course apply to the 'honorary awards' made in Britain or elsewhere. The GCH and KCH were restricted to senior officers of the Hanoverian army, ministers of state, senior officials of the Hanoverian government, and members of the Duke of Cambridge's gubernatorial court. The list of military KCHs and KHs included many ex-officers of the King's German Legion, which had been disbanded and absorbed into the new Hanoverian army. Occasionally, awards were made to Hanoverian subjects in British service, such as officers serving with British regiments, officials of the German Chancery, or members of the various royal households. A notable example of the latter was the Rev. Dr Wilhelm Küper, appointed KH in 1818. Küper had served as chaplain at the Royal German Chapel at St. James's Palace since 1802 (an office which he still held in 1852) and was domestic chaplain to the Duchess of Clarence, later Queen Adelaide. He was a popular figure at court, and in 1825 he co-ordinated the collection of a subscription in Britain to relieve the victims of severe floods in Hanover's coastal regions.[69]

The Order served a highly important purpose as a diplomatic tool, and 'honorary' awards were extended throughout Europe. The GCH was distributed widely among the princes of the many royal houses of Germany, though very seldom to non-Germanic royalty. The first such gifts of the Order were made in 1815 by the Prince Regent to his Brunswick cousins and other relatives by marriage. Apart from princes of the kingdoms of Prussia and of the Netherlands, the princely families of the Germanic Confederation recur frequently among the roll-call of 'foreign' appointments: Hesse-Cassel, Saxe-Meiningen, Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Württemburg, Hesse-Philippsthal-Barchfeld, Hesse-Homburg, Saxe-Weimar, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Hesse-Darmstadt, Baden, Liechtenstein, Schaumburg-Lippe, Thurn und Taxis, Solms-Braunfels, and Reuss. There were also a few non-royal rulers, such

[66] *The Taylor Papers: being a record of certain reminiscences, letters and journals ... of Lieut.-Gen. Sir Herbert Taylor* (ed. E. Taylor, London, 1913), p. 328: Münster to King William IV, 4 Sept. 1830.

[67] See C. P. de Bosset, *Parga and the Ionian Islands* (London 1821), pp. 212f.

[68] The civil division of the Order of the Bath still consisted at this time of only one class, that of knight grand cross, and was not expanded into three classes until 1847.

[69] *The Times*, 5 Nov. 1852, p. 6.

as two successive prince-bishops of Paderborn, while princelings from even tinier states were sometimes accorded the KCH (Lippe-Detmold, Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt). Beyond the confines of mainly Germanic royalty was a geographically more diverse range of statesmen, ministers, diplomats and soldiers. Among the military figures these included former commanders of allied forces during the Napoleonic Wars such as Blücher, Barclay de Tolly, Schwarzenburg, Pozzo di Borgo, Radetsky, and Wallmoden, while among the statesmen, leading figures such as Metternich, Hardenburg, Nesselrode, Lieven, Esterhazy, Woronzov and Bülow stand out among hosts of others now long forgotten. Many such GCH awards would, of course, have been presented by the Regent/King or by the Duke of Cambridge to dignitaries visiting their courts in London and Hanover, with KCH and KH awards being presented to associated entourage and embassy staff.

There can be no doubt that the Order had considerable value in sustaining both British and Hanoverian diplomacy across Europe, and denoted a personal expression of the king's friendship and goodwill throughout the courts and ministries of post-Napoleonic Europe. It accentuated the unique role of the British monarch as a member of the post-war community of German princely states, and carried a certain cachet in maintaining Hanover's position and relationships within the network of large and small states of the German Confederation. It is also clear that British ministers favoured its judicious bestowal on key statesmen and diplomats in the governments of major European powers, particularly as there was a marked reluctance to utilise the Order of the Bath for these purposes.[70]

IV

Within weeks of succeeding his brother as king in June 1830, William IV clashed with Count Münster over nominations to the Order. The Duke of Cambridge had submitted a list of thirty Hanoverian nominations which Münster, with the duke's agreement, proceeded to reduce to twelve. The King, however, insisted that the original list stand. In a memorandum to the King at the beginning of September, Münster protested that his objections to two Hanoverian ministers proposed for the grand cross arose purely from their unsuitability on personal grounds. One, the president of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice in Hanover, had decimated his fortune through gambling, while in the case of the president of the Chamber of Finance, there were questions about his morality; furthermore, both men had lately been guilty of neglect in managing their respective departments.[71] 'As to the other nominations', Münster warned, 'several of them might create the impression that their choice has been guided rather by the favour the individuals accidentally enjoy than by their merit'. Münster's advice was nevertheless overruled and the appointments went ahead.

[70] See for example, *The Correspondence of the later Earl Grey with His Majesty King William IV and with Sir H. Taylor from Nov. 1830 to June 1832* (ed. Henry, Earl Grey, 2 vols., London 1867), pp. 462, 464: Grey to Taylor, 6 June, Taylor to Grey, 6 June 1832.

[71] *Taylor Papers*, pp. 328-31: Münster to the King, 4 Sept. 1830

Larger events were also turning against him, however. The wave of revolutionary unrest spreading at this time across Europe soon ignited in Hanover's university town of Göttingen, and the recognition that the kingdom's constitution required extensive reform led in February 1831 to the autocratic Münster being asked by the King to resign. He did so with immediate effect. Curiously, Münster's resignation provided the occasion for the only corporate event in the Order's history to be held on British soil. On 23 March the King hosted 'a grand dinner party' at St James's Palace for members of the Order, to mark Münster's retirement to Hanover after serving some forty years in England, of which twenty-five had been as Minister Resident. Invitations were issued to 97 knights grand cross and knights commander, and about eighty attended together with the Order's officials.[72] Münster was succeeded as Chancellor of the Order by Baron Ludwig von Ompteda, the new Hanoverian minister in London, and who appears to have been quite happy to follow the King's lead in relation to the Order.

Münster's departure left the King with a much freer hand over the Guelphic Order. Yet even before Münster had left British shores the Order was being earmarked as the instrument of a significant loosening of ministerial policy in the disposal of honours. After many years of Tory government, Lord Grey's reforming Whig ministry took office in November 1830. One of its progressive elements, Lord Brougham, the lord chancellor, was particularly anxious to see honours extended to British scientists, scholars and literati whom he felt had long been neglected by previous governments. In January 1831 Brougham wrote to several leading scientists and men of letters seeking their views. In explaining his thoughts, he noted that a specially instituted order of merit was seen by some as liable to be shunned as a novelty, but the award of 'one of the existing orders of knighthood, as the Guelphic, has been seen by others as free from the objection'. One of Brougham's respondents, the poet laureate Robert Southey, felt that honours meant more to scientific men than to men of letters whom he thought were better without them: 'For myself, if we had a Guelphic order, I should choose to remain a Ghibelline'. Southey felt that the most useful encouragement the government could provide his own trade would be a reform of the copyright laws.[73] Nevertheless, the responses Brougham received from his scientific acquaintances were enthusiastic enough for him to take matters further, for in October that year a cluster of distinguished scientific men were appointed to the Order's civilian third class of knight.[74] In a similar fashion, several of the county's

[72] *The Times*, 24 Mar. 1831, p. 5. In recognition of his services the King appointed Münster a GCB, the first honorary appointment to the Bath to be made in the civil division.

[73] *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey* (ed. C. C. Southey, 6 vols, London 1850) vol. 6, pp. 129-36.

[74] *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Walsh Carlyle* (ed. C. R. Sanders, Durham, NC, 1970 et seq.) vol. 6, p.30: Thomas to John Carlyle, 21 Oct. 1831. They were: Charles Konig, an eminent botanist and mineralogist, and an assistant keeper at the British Museum; John Leslie, mathematician and natural philosopher; John Herschel, mathematician and astronomer; Charles Babbage, pioneer of the computer; Charles Bell, a physiologist and surgeon; John

leading antiquarian scholars received the KH the following year.[75] It was the first time in Britain that non-knighthood honours were made available to individuals for distinction in scientific and cultural endeavour.

There are strong grounds for believing that the King himself had actively encouraged Lord Brougham in this initiative. Prior to his succession, William had begun to take a serious interest in the affairs of the Order of the Bath, having succeeded his brother, York, as its Great Master, and became concerned that its 'peculiar regulations' were excluding from it many worthy officers – not least those of his own service, the navy – whose individual merits outshone those who came within its rules.[76] Although he would not have been unaware that the Order's statutes had been so contrived to keep numbers within bounds, this, to him, was a secondary issue. He was equally mindful of the pressing need to find means of recognising civilian achievement, and in February 1828 had suggested to the prime minister, the Duke of Wellington, that the civil division be extended into three classes.[77] His concerns failed, however, to invoke ministerial sympathy. It was therefore from a developed awareness of these shortcomings in the supply of honours that William, once he became king, took matters into his own hands and purposely embarked on a wider distribution of the Guelphic Order.

Not all of those who were the focus of Lord Brougham's innovation were happy, however. Charles Babbage, the early pioneer of the computer, publicly declared that he had been 'insulted' by the government 'with the offer of the lowest decorative order', and refused to accept it after his name had been announced.[78] Babbage was, of course, quite correct about the KH, for as a foreign decoration it occupied no position at all in the table of precedence. The remaining years of William IV's reign would see only a small handful of further instances of the Order being used to recognise achievement outside the usual boundaries in which honours were given by the British crown. The majority of Britons on whom William IV bestowed it were army or naval officers, or civilian government officials, whose wide-ranging categories of service did not bring them within the narrow limits of the Order of the Bath. Very often the Order served an 'imperial' purpose and was used to reward men who held governorships or commands in far-flung outposts of the empire. Other appointees were ambassadors, envoys or embassy staff. The King's generous nature frequently

[*Note 74 continued*]
Ivory, mathematician; and David Brewster, a natural philosopher and optics expert. The antiquarian Nicholas Harris Nicolas was also nominated. Additionally, Leslie, Herschel, Bell, Brewster and Nicolas were knighted.

[75] Frederick Madden, librarian, British Museum; Nicholas Carlisle, secretary, Society of Antiquaries; Francis Palgrave, archivist and barrister in peerage cases; Henry Ellis, librarian, British Museum; and Edmund Lodge, Clarenceux King of Arms.
[76] NA (PRO), WO 80/13, Sir Herbert Taylor to Col. James Arnold, 13 Aug. 1838.
[77] *Despatches, correspondence and memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington ...from 1818 to 1832* (ed. the 2nd Duke of Wellington, 8 vols, London 1867-80), vol. 4 p. 260: Clarence to Wellington, 10 Feb. 1828.
[78] *The Mechanics Magazine*, no. 539, 7 Dec. 1833, p. 176.

favoured naval captains or army colonels whom he felt had not been recognised for their services in times long past.[79] The inflated numbers of KCH and KH awards during the first two full years of his reign suggest that there were many such officers who had attracted his concern. It was unfortunate that the King's concern to use the Order to reward merit and service across a broader spectrum was compromised by his seemingly more conspicuous bestowals among courtiers, friends and family connections.

The distinct impression is gained that William IV preferred to regard the Guelphic Order as an established 'British' order of knighthood and was keen to play down its 'foreign' status. But it was partly on account of its extraneous character that it came in for sharp public censure during his reign. Charles Babbage's refusal to accept the Order prompted a ripple of public enquiry about why the king of Great Britain needed to use a Hanoverian decoration to reward those of his subjects who distinguished themselves in literature and science, or in the civil departments of the government. In 1834 the issue was raised in parliament by the radical MP Joseph Hume who lamented the lack of a suitable indigenous order of merit.[80] A further, underlying cause of disquiet was the fact that the King's extensive distribution of the Order in Britain took place entirely without ministerial advice or recommendation, which as one commentator pointed out 'was little in accordance with the spirit or practice of the constitution'.[81] It is likely that the King did take ministerial advice in many cases, though it was essential to maintain the pretence that he did not, as British ministers were unable to interfere in his powers and prerogatives as king of Hanover.[82] This gave rise, therefore, to an awkward predicament which left the King unavoidably exposed to criticism.

V

It was clear, however, that such misgivings about the Order could only be temporary. The death of William IV on 20 June 1837 brought the Anglo-Hanoverian connection to an end. The law of succession in Hanover followed the ancient Germanic Salic principle whereby a woman could not inherit the crown. Thus while the young Princess Victoria of Kent succeeded her uncle William IV in Great Britain, the crown of Hanover passed to the next surviving royal male, the late King's younger brother, Ernest Augustus, Duke of Cumberland. The Guelphic Order, deemed to belong 'for ever' to the crown of Hanover, immediately ceased to have any monarchical

[79] It was not unknown for the King to bestow the Order in an impromptu fashion on the spot. For the example of Major-General Robert McCleverty, see D. F. Bittner, '"The Fortunate Nine": Royal Marine Officers, William IV, Honours, and the Order of the Guelphs', *Royal Marines Historical Society, Special Publication No. 26* (2002), p. 122. I am indebted to Michael Phillips for drawing this article to my attention.

[80] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), ser. 3, vol. 22, cols 954-5: 18 Apr. 1834.

[81] Nicolas, 'Guelphic Order', p. 14

[82] There was the additional difficulty that British ministers could not be seen to be recommending to a 'foreign order' in the light of the 1812 regulations which in most cases forbade British subjects from accepting them.

connection with Britain.[83] The German Chancery at St James's Palace was wound up, and its records, including those of the Order, were despatched to Hanover.[84]

The separation of the two crowns had, of course, long been anticipated. An opportunity to make preparations for the eventual transfer of the Guelphic Order to Hanover had presented itself early in William IV's reign. The death of Sir George Nayler, the Order's King of Arms, in October 1831 appears to have opened up the question of whether, with the future in mind, it might be more expedient to appoint a native of Hanover as the new King of Arms, rather than another British official. Accordingly, the Order's Hanover-based Genealogist, August Neubourg, was appointed to combine his present role with that of King of Arms or *Wappenführer*. This left only one British officer responsible for the Order at the College of Arms, Sir William Woods, who had been the Order's Registrar since 1816, and who in 1838 would succeed as Garter. After 1837, however, when the rapid flow of appointments in Britain came to an end, there was little administration to do except liaison with the secretary of the Hanoverian Legation in London to ensure the return of officially issued insignia upon the decease of recipients.[85]

During its British phase in the early nineteenth century the Guelphic Order flourished as a valuable adjunct to Britain's otherwise heavily restrictive system of honours. It enjoyed the ambience of being a 'personal' order of the monarch in which ministers were unable to obtrude, while at the same time serving to a large extent as a much-needed civilian 'order of merit'.[86] The flexibility within the Order's structure allowed it to be adapted for a variety of purposes for which its nearest equivalent, the Order of the Bath, could not be used. Successive British governments showed no inclination to go the way of many European powers and spread the supply of honours more widely among military and non-military servants of the state; and still less were they prepared to recognise achievement in science and literature. Nevertheless, George IV and William IV showed considerable personal initiative in using the Order to make significant inroads into these areas. Although this helped to alleviate pressure

[83] After the death of William IV, the British subjects who received the award from Hanover's new king, Ernest I, needed to seek permission in the form of a royal licence to accept and wear the insignia, but this was only forthcoming if the award was for military service of some kind. A GCH that had been promised by William IV shortly before he died to Joseph Planta, a diplomatist, MP, and former secretary to the Treasury, was conferred a few weeks after the King's death by Ernest I, but was never recognised (see BL Add. Ms 43237 (Aberdeen Papers) fos. 384-91). Several KCHs for military service were admitted, but the usual knighthood was not accorded; while several KHs, including one to an equerry of the Duke of Cambridge, also went unrecognised (see Nicolas, 'Guelphic Order' pp. xi, xvii.)

[84] CA Ms 'Guelphic Order' (folder of loose papers), Carl Klingemann to Albert Woods, 17 July 1841.

[85] This chore devolved on Woods' son, the future Garter King of Arms, Sir Albert Woods, who at this early stage in his career was Portcullis Pursuivant.

[86] Its importance in this respect has escaped the notice of a recent work on the evolution of the modern Order of Merit: S. Martin, *The Order of Merit: One Hundred Years of Matchless Honour* (London 2007).

on government ministers to create new distinctions, it also had the effect of extending expectations of awards in many other directions. In consequence, when the Guelphic Order was terminated in Britain in 1837 it left a serious vacuum in which the absence of a civilian 'third class' decoration was particularly felt. By the time this was rectified in 1847, with the expansion of the civil division of the Order of the Bath into three classes, the problem had become much bigger and was to go on growing during the remainder of the nineteenth century as governments repeatedly resisted the need to institute a 'general' order of knighthood. It took until 1917, and the establishment of the Order of the British Empire, to bring that ideal into being.[87]

[87] This article originated from the author's Scriveners' Company Lecture to the Heraldry Society on 28 April 2004 at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, London. He would like to thank David White for bringing the Guelphic Order Mss in the College of Arms to his attention, and Robert Yorke for arranging access to them. For their help in the preparation of this article he is also grateful to Clive Cheesman, Peter O'Donoghue, Clarissa Campbell-Orr, and Hubert Chesshyre.