



***Hanoverian to Windsor Consorts:
Power, Influence, and Dynasty***

**Edited by Aidan Norrie, Carolyn
Harris, J.L. Laynesmith, Danna R.
Messer, and Elena Woodacre**

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Reviewed by: Amy-Jane Humphries



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Hanoverian to Windsor Consorts is the fourth and final volume in the *English Consorts: Power, Influence, and Dynasty* series, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2023. The collection is separated into two sections, the first covering the Hanoverian consorts—Caroline of Ansbach, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Caroline of Brunswick, Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen, and Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha—and the second focusing on the Windsor consorts—Alexandra of Denmark, Mary of Teck, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, and Philip of Greece and Denmark. For the first time, these consorts are united in one volume and, as well as focusing on consorts of the past, the collection also looks to those of the present and future by briefly exploring the roles of Camilla Shand, consort of Charles III, and Catherine Middleton, consort of Prince William. The absences of Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, consort of Frederick, prince of Wales and mother of George III, and Diana Spencer, first wife of Charles III and mother to the present prince of Wales, are notable. Though neither woman became queen consort, their fifteen-year tenures as princesses of Wales had a lasting impact on the country and, more significantly, their heirs. Sophia Dorothea of Celle, wife of George I before he became king, may also have merited inclusion as their divorce, and the absence of a queen consort during his reign created challenges for the monarch and dynasty. However, as she had little direct influence after their divorce, her exclusion is logical.

The consorts of this collection lived during periods of considerable domestic, global, and monarchic change. That the monarchy has survived to the present is testament to its ability to navigate the challenges of the previous two centuries successfully. It is an institution now prized for its ability to adapt to a changing world while remaining an emblem of continuity and stability. It was during the period covered by this collection that the monarchy transitioned into its present constitutional format, and each consort, alongside their monarch and family, contributed to this development in different but crucial ways. Indeed, by including both male and female consorts, the collection provides a fuller account of the how the monarchy modernised than would have been achieved by focusing solely on queen consorts. In doing so, it also highlights the difficult constitutional positions of Princes Albert and Philip. There had only been two married regnant queens (Mary I and Queen Anne) prior to Queen Victoria, which meant that there was no established position and pattern of activities for Albert, and subsequently Philip, to inherit. Therefore, as their respective chapters highlight, both men had to shape their roles for themselves, just as their wives had to determine what their rule would be like, too.

As well as the introductory and concluding chapters, Carolyn Harris provides vital contextual chapters for each section that highlights the similarities and differences between each consort and emphasises the value of bringing these individuals together in one volume. The collection begins with Emma Jay's chapter on Caroline of Ansbach, consort of George II, who she examines through Caroline's cultural and political influence at the courts of the first two Hanoverian monarchs. Karin Schrader's chapter on Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, consort of George III, focuses on Charlotte's cultural and scientific interests, thereby highlighting similarities between Charlotte and Caroline. Both chapters also reflect on the positive partnership between the consort and their monarch, which contrasts with Katie Carpenter's chapter on Caroline of Brunswick. Carpenter shows how the breakdown of Caroline's marriage to George IV dangerously destabilised the monarchy, demonstrating the importance of a strong partnership between monarch and consort. Joseph Massey highlights Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen, consort of William IV, as a more conventionally acceptable consort in comparison to her predecessor. Massey also shows that Adelaide became an important figure of continuity after her husband's death and explores the ways that conflicting political allegiances made the relationship with her niece, Queen Victoria, challenging. It was upon Queen Victoria's marriage to Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha that the nature of the consort's role was required to change, reflecting how highly gendered the role was. Charles V. Reed's chapter on Albert explores his attempts to forge a fulfilling public role for himself. It shows that Albert became a significant domestic and international leader, effecting considerable change within the structure and outlook of the monarchy, emphasising its imperial links while also advancing it towards the present constitutional format. Paige Emerick's chapter concludes this section by reflecting upon the public face of the Hanoverian monarchy during royal visits. As well as examining the role of the consort within these public performances, Emerick also tracks the domestication of the monarchy which developed under George III and Queen Charlotte and reached its zenith under Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

The second section focuses particularly on the public image of the Windsor consorts and how it was received by both domestic and international audiences. Kate Strasdin explores how Alexandra of Denmark, consort of Edward VII, used dress to construct her personal image and maintain her popularity even when her husband was heavily criticised. Cindy McCreery examines the embodiment of the idealised consort by Mary of Teck, consort of George V, but also looks at how the First and Second World Wars shaped the monarch, consort, and the monarchy itself. The impact of the Second World War is further explored by Daniella McCahey through the public image of Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, consort of George VI. As with Alexandra, McCahey shows that Elizabeth was able to win and retain the affection of the public while other royals were criticised, and in later life, Elizabeth came to be seen as an enduring figure of stability for the monarchy, as Mary had been before her. Sarah Gristwood looks at the life and career of Philip of Greece and Denmark, consort of Elizabeth II, who helped steer the monarchy through its most challenging moments of the second

half of the twentieth century, particularly in the turbulent 1990s. Philip believed that the monarchy needed to maintain its relevance to survive, and this is reflected in the indefatigable work of both Philip and the wider family domestically and internationally. Gristwood also reflects on the recent underappreciation of Philip in Britain, where he has been viewed as a comic figure, highlighting that globally, he has been viewed more favourably as someone who was ahead of their time on issues such as climate change.

Sarah Betts's chapter deftly weaves the experiences of these consorts together, demonstrating how their influence helped to change the monarchy and ensure its longevity. Carolyn Harris's final chapter then looks to the present and future by drawing on the legacies of previous consorts to contextualise the roles of Camilla Shand and Catherine Middleton. The inclusion of the latter, in anticipation of her future role as queen consort, is welcome and will hopefully serve as a basis for future academic study. This collection builds a clear picture of the changes that have occurred within the monarchy since the eighteenth-century. It is a highly valuable collection, one which has broken ground for future research in eminently interesting and often understudied consorts.

AMY-JANE HUMPHRIES

University of Liverpool