



# A Guide to Eighteenth-Century Childhood at Chatsworth

in the  
DEVONSHIRE COLLECTION ARCHIVES



*Ameli' which you have not sent, it is very true she  
is brought to bed, & has a very fine boy, & is very happy  
I went to her very often while she was confin'd & was  
devoted with all the ceremonies, one the old Bonfire  
when anybody was pronounced, going out of the room  
to smell if they had any perfumes about them if  
they were sent away. she desired me to*



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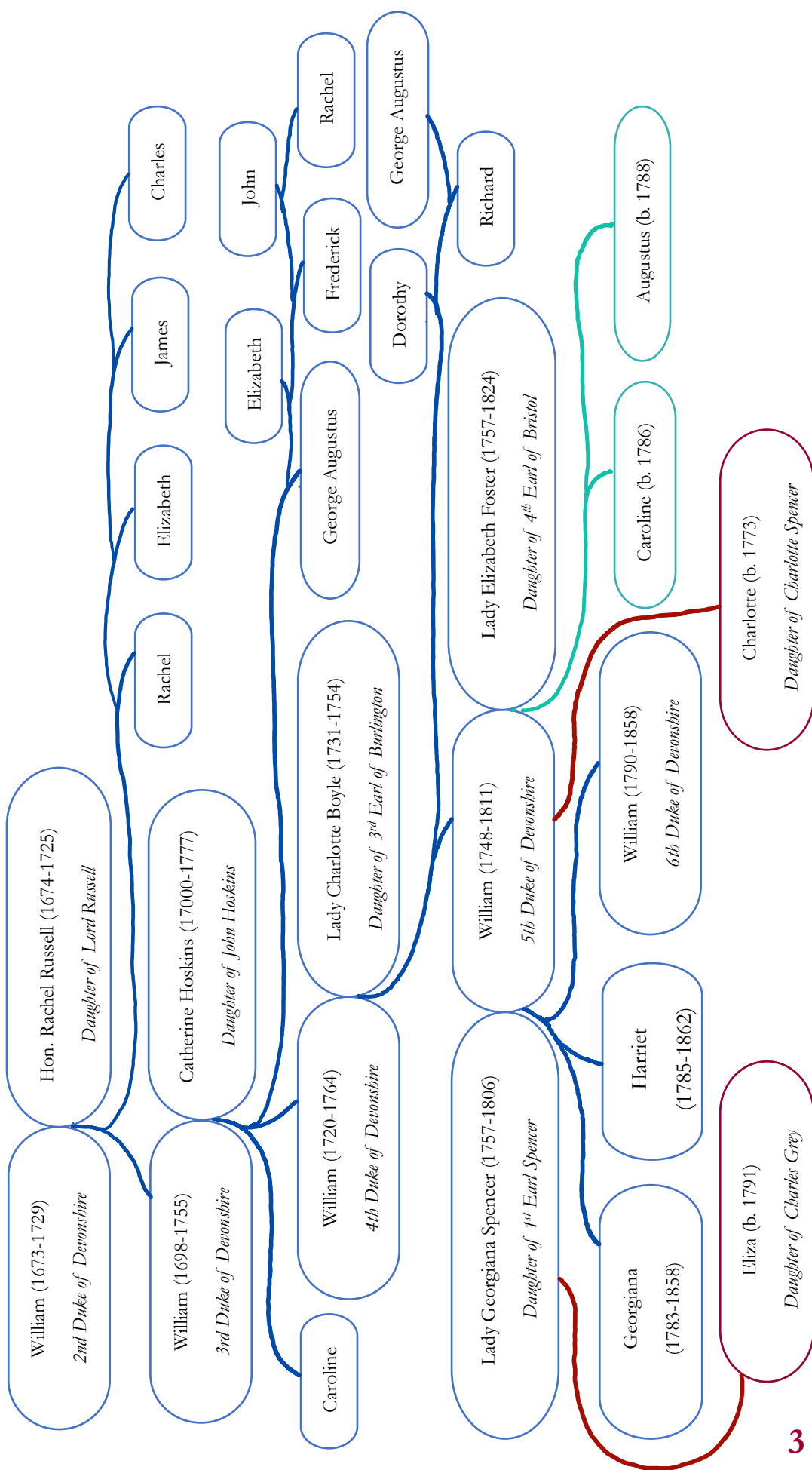
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## Eighteenth-century Childhood at Chatsworth

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# Cavendish Family Tree



# What is this guide?

This guide is an aid to researching eighteenth-century childhood at Chatsworth House, primarily focusing on the Cavendish children. The guide provides an overview of eighteenth-century childhood in general, along with key individuals and themes that feature in the Devonshire Collection Archives.

This topic is spread over multiple collections, mainly the family papers at Chatsworth. It aims to be a starting point for researching the subject of childhood, listing the most relevant collections. It is not a comprehensive list of all the material held at Chatsworth but aims to include as many relevant sources as possible and explores the varying available avenues which may offer further traces.

The contents of the Devonshire Collection Archives reflect the typical elite childhood of the 1700s. However, the period following the marriage of Charlotte Boyle to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke reflects a notable shift from these norms. Their collection of correspondence (CS5) is a rich resource and reflects the shifting patterns linked to Romanticism and the 'cult of motherhood'.

The guide is created for, but not exclusively, A-level and university students, teachers, history groups, and any other parties who may be interested in exploring eighteenth-century childhood at country houses such as Chatsworth.



Above: A Portrait of Lady Georgiana Cavendish as a child

## Overview of Elite Eighteenth-Century Childhood

Despite the importance placed on children within elite families, because of their centrality to ensuring the dynastic future of the title, there has been relatively little work on the lives of wealthy children living in country houses. Much of the work undertaken by scholars is very broad and discusses the family as a whole and is largely based upon the accounts of parents or other adult family members. There is a growing recognition that there needs to be further work to find information about childhood, preferably from the children themselves. The history of childhood is not simple and the ideas and ideals surrounding it have changed a great deal.

Through the study of elite childhood, the history of the country house as a family residence becomes more apparent. The two subject areas go hand in hand and provide an insight into family life when not in city residences. There was always one primary residence in the country the family and children especially would spend more time in than the others, despite having their own living quarters in all residences. The primary country house in particular reflected family relationships through the placement of the children's, mother's and father's rooms. While country houses display the family's wealth, they are also a great way to study childhood through the material culture left behind and the associated family papers.



**Above:** A group portrait of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke's children playing outside in the gardens of Chiswick House, 1763-1764

Because much of the research has been adult-centred, it has especially looked at parenthood. Amongst elite families, it has shown that in many country houses fathers were often absent from the lives of children as they had to take care of estate business or had parliamentary duties. Despite this, there is evidence of range of different elite fathers, with some being strict, others indulgent, and some evidence of favouritism. Likewise, motherhood was not a monolithic experience. Some were colder and distant, others more loving and maternally inclined. Even prior to the cult of motherhood which developed in the nineteenth century, there is evidence that mothers were more loving towards their children than their fathers. Maternal care, affection and tenderness were often the primary comforts mothers provided to their children. For both mothers and fathers there was a growing idea in the eighteenth century that parents could be companions and confidants to their children.

In terms of the lives of the children in the country house, a great deal of it was often spent separately from their parents. While adult elites often travelled a great deal, the children would usually remain at home in the permanent residence in the country. There they could continue their upbringing and education via tutors without interruptions. In houses like Chatsworth, children could indulge in a range of leisure activities that were not always available in towns. This meant that there was a belief that children's health often improved in the country, as they could engage in outdoor exercise and games. The health of children was of utmost importance to the families as they would be the ones to one day continue the family names or marry well to secure other connections to strengthen the family.

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Although they were able to enjoy games, many children also had to endure a strict regime to ensure that the correct family values, manners and education were instilled. Imperfections in behaviour and appearance were corrected as much as possible, including physical appearances in daughters. The education of elite children was regarded as important as their health. Treatment and education of children varied between elite families, but there was still a general consensus that children should have a good education. Boys typically received a better education than girls, something feminist writers in the eighteenth century campaigned to change. However, there were progressive parents who allowed their daughters to study alongside their sons and they acquired a better education than most children of other social classes of the period.

Education was not just about formal learning, but there was also a strong emphasis on accomplishments and social skills. This means that, occasionally, children would attend social events with their parents and family. At these gatherings, it was important that children presented themselves and the family name in the best way possible. As a result, not all children were permitted to attend these gatherings if the parents believed the children would cause them embarrassment.



**Above:** A portrait of Lady Dorothy Boyle and Lady Charlotte Boyle, later Cavendish, c.1740

Not all the children in the country house were the legitimate children of the head of the household. They sometimes took in nieces and nephews, and, as we see at Chatsworth, some illegitimate children became part of the family. Usually, illegitimate children of the male household received better treatment than any illegitimate children born by his wife. The need to preserve a pure bloodline caused pressure on the mother to remain faithful and produce healthy children. Children were seen to be the legal property of the father, and so it was usual for the father to have custody of the children. If the mother died, the children were often left with another female relative to act as their maternal guide, either an aunt, a grandmother, or even a godmother.

The Devonshire Collection Archives provide a rich resource which illuminates the key themes of eighteenth-century childhood including parental affections, illegitimate children, gender expectations, education, and generational differences.

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# Key Figures

## in the Devonshire Collection Archives

This section provides a brief introduction to some of the key individuals relevant to the topic of eighteenth-century childhood who feature in the archives at Chatsworth.



Charlotte Cavendish (formerly Boyle), Lady Hartington (1731-1754)

Lady Charlotte was a loving mother and supportive wife to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke. She died very young and so did not get much time to be a doting mother, but her letters are similar to the caring letters Duchess Georgiana sent to her mother. In a letter from her own childhood, Charlotte mentioned the quality time she spent with her mother, and this seems to have left an impression on her. Although the number of letters from Lady Charlotte as a mother is quite limited, those that survive show a strong parental affection for her children. Lady Charlotte wrote to her husband and mother about the children in order to update them on their well-being and adds anecdotes about the children. The anecdotes mostly feature her son Cann, later Lord Hartington. After her death, the children went to stay with her mother, Lady Burlington, who likewise updated the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke about the children; in some letters she demanded he make more time for them. Lady Charlotte's relationship with her children and husband was close and loving, and this warmth was still apparent in the letters the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke wrote to his mother-in-law about the children, showing how both mothers and fathers could care for their offspring.

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well they are in England. 7



## Margaret Georgiana, Countess Spencer (1737-1814)

Grandmothers often played a very important role in the family, particularly when the mother was still young and needed guidance with her firstborn child. Countess Spencer regularly corresponded with her eldest daughter after she married William Cavendish, 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire. She often gave her daughter advice about conceiving children, finances, health, and education. Her advice ensured Duchess Georgiana had had her children inoculated against smallpox. During Duchess Georgiana's absence from 1791-1793, Countess Spencer was in correspondence with the governess of her grandchildren to ensure that their education and upbringing did not suffer during this time.



## Selina Trimmer (1764-1829)

Wealthy families in the eighteenth century often employed tutors for their children, particularly sons. By educating their sons at home, daughters often benefited from a similar education and were taught by the same tutors. Although hiring a female tutor was unusual during the eighteenth century, governess Selina Trimmer was an essential member of the Cavendish household and became an integral member of the family. Selina accompanied the family several times to educate the girls, Georgiana and Harriet, during the family's travels and built a close relationship with their mother Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. While she was not popular among the servants, she was beloved by the girls and the Duchess appreciated the aid she provided for her son who struggled when the Duchess returned home following her exile in 1791-1793. Selina's close relationship with the children continued into their adolescence. Lady Georgiana corresponded with her even after she left her role as a governess and when Lady Georgiana had children of her own. The closeness of Selina with the family and the relationship she built with the girls permits an insight into the way governesses occasionally fulfilled a mothering role in the lives of wealthy children. This stability in the lives of the children made Duchess Georgiana envious at times, but grateful throughout. Upon retirement, the family bestowed her with a fine pension of £400 a year and the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke also aided her family.



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## Lady Elizabeth Christiana Foster (1757-1824)

A friend to Duchess Georgiana and then later the mistress and eventually second wife of the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire, Lady Elizabeth Foster was an influential figure in the Cavendish household. She bore the Duke's illegitimate children around the same time that Duchess Georgiana had her children, and they both gave birth to girls in 1785. She played a supportive role for both the Duchess and Duke individually but did not involve herself greatly in the lives of the children. During the Duchess's absence after her affair in 1791, Lady Elizabeth did not play any role in the education and upbringing of the Cavendish children. Instead, Lady Elizabeth accompanied the Duchess in exile to Europe and left the responsibility of caring for the children to Selina. Unlike Duchess Georgiana or Lady Charlotte, Lady Elizabeth did not have the same strong maternal affections for the children. She and Duchess Georgiana were very similar in age, but it is clear that the affectionate parenting Duchess Georgiana displayed was not as extensive among mothers as it was in the nineteenth century. Although a complicated relationship began when Lady Elizabeth entered the lives of the Cavendish family, she became the primary mother figure when she married the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke in 1809 following Duchess Georgiana's death. Upon their marriage, the children that they had as a result of their prior affair were granted legal legitimacy. However, it was Georgiana's son who became the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke.

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# Key Themes relating to Elite Eighteenth-century Childhood

## Parental Affection

Older scholarship about elite families in the eighteenth century often depicts these households as lacking parental affection. However, in line with more recent research, the papers within the Devonshire collection challenge this scholarship and provide evidence of affection from as early as the mid-eighteenth century.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Duke and Lady Charlotte's correspondence from the 1750s includes evidence of parental affection towards their children. They sent letters to each other, to family members, and to friends such as David Garrick about the well-being of their children. Even after Lady Charlotte's early death, the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke kept his mother-in-law and David Garrick updated about the children. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke too conversed with his son about his grandchildren and their health, mentioning the inoculation process and the recovery.



**Above:** A lock of Duchess Georgiana's hair cut when she was young

Later, the letters of Duchess Georgiana show that she too was anxious to be a good mother. Her correspondence with her own mother for advice and updates about the progress of her daughter's education indicates motherly affection. Duchess Georgiana came from a family where she had experienced maternal affection which resonated with her into her own adulthood. This affection can be seen for example, by the fact that Countess Spencer kept a lock of hair taken from 13-year-old Georgiana even after her daughter married into the Cavendish family. In her letters, Duchess Georgiana described the close relationship between her son William and his father the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire and noted that she felt jealousy and happiness over the affectionate relationship the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke had with his son. Throughout her many absences away from her children the Duchess lamented over the distance between them and described how she could not wait to be with them again. Signs of parental affection being reciprocated can be found in the multiple letters sent from the governess to Countess Spencer that detailed the worries that the Countess' granddaughter, Lady Georgiana had about her mother's eye operation.

# Illegitimate Children



**Above:** Portrait of Caroline St. Jules when a child



**Above:** Portrait of Sir Augustus Clifford

Above are two portraits of the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke's children with Lady Elizabeth who were born while he was still married to Duchess Georgiana

During the eighteenth century, there was not a consistent approach to the treatment and upbringing of illegitimate children. Many factors affected these changes, a primary one being whether the illegitimate child was born to the man or the woman. The 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire's illegitimate child Charlotte was accepted by his first wife as a daughter and was raised alongside her girls despite her having no noble relations from the mother's side. The 5<sup>th</sup> Duke's affair with Lady Elizabeth resulted in the birth of two more illegitimate children, Caroline and Augustus. The existence of these children was not disguised, and they were granted opportunities despite their illegitimacy at birth.

In contrast, the illegitimate daughter of Duchess Georgiana was not granted such a welcome at Chatsworth and was instead given to her paternal grandparents for them to raise as their own. Duchess Georgiana was sent overseas in order to give birth to her in secret and then was kept in exile as punishment; she was also forbidden from having contact with her daughter as a mother. Although the Duchess's daughter Eliza did not know the truth about her mother until after Duchess Georgiana's death in 1806, Eliza still led a very comfortable life in the care of her grandparents.

The requirement for an unquestionable dynasty and legitimate heirs to inherit the title from the husband meant wives had to avoid speculation about their loyalty to their husbands. The 5<sup>th</sup> Duke and other men were not held to the same strict requirements, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke was able to accept his illegitimate children into his household. These notions extend to other generations and families amongst the wealthy classes and the extensive correspondence in the CS5 collection at Chatsworth illuminate them more explicitly.

# Generational Differences



**Left:** Portrait of Richard Boyle, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Burlington, with his wife, daughters, and a Black servant believed to be James Cambridge



**Right:** Portrait of Duchess Georgiana with her daughter Lady Georgiana

Unlike the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke's children, the childhoods of other members of the Cavendish family are not so extensively documented. The 5<sup>th</sup> Duke's childhood, in particular, lacked both essential maternal and paternal influence after his early childhood. His mother had died when he was 6 years old, and his father's career and responsibilities meant he and his siblings were cared for by his grandmother.

The silent hands-off approach to childhood from the start to the middle of the eighteenth century corresponds with the lack of descriptive correspondence relating to children from the beginning to the mid-eighteenth century.

At the start of the century there was a more business-like approach from parents towards their children around their conduct in society and finances. Anxiety around their health and well-being did not start appearing till later in the Devonshire Collection and was heavily influenced by the fear of smallpox which had caused the death of Lady Charlotte, the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke's young wife.



**Left:** A George III painted and gilded baby carriage by William Kent in c.1730 possibly for one of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke's children



**Right:** A 1780 baby carriage made for Lady Georgiana, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke's eldest daughter

# Gender Expectations

The difference in gender expectations is a significant theme which features throughout the history of childhood as primogeniture laws in England favoured firstborn legitimate sons over other children, especially daughters. Primogeniture related to the laws or customs where the firstborn legitimate son inherited the entirety of the family estates and wealth. This often led to a preferential treatment of the legitimate male heir over the other children.

The notion that the male heir was given more lenience compared to any sisters or other siblings is evident in the first few letters between Duchess Georgiana and her mother upon the Duchess's return to England in 1793. Her son William was prone to tantrums which the Duchess made allowance for out of guilt for being away from him for so long; William was her youngest child and the heir to the Cavendish title. This is of interest, as in earlier letters, Duchess Georgiana had been critical of parents who could not control their children's behaviours. Allowances were also made for the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke during his childhood in regards to his education; as he was perceived to be a reserved child his father did not want to push him too much. However, when his father died and his education came under the instruction of his uncle, he was treated with less kindness.

On the other hand, Duchess Georgiana was expectant of her daughters to be accomplished young ladies and was highly alert to any possible negative influences on their education. As time went on the differences in treatment between Duchess Georgiana's children diminished as her son had to uphold expectations and change his behaviour.



**Left:** A child's shoe reputed to have been Duchess Georgiana's, cream silk inside and out with leather in the middle, two stitched button holes where lace may have been originally

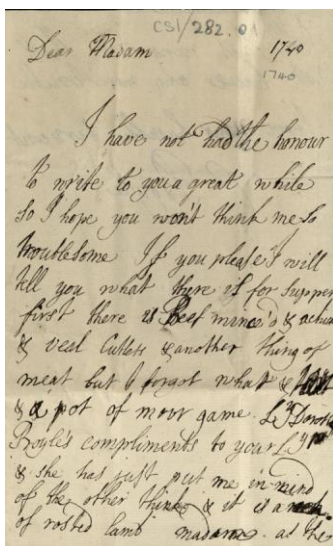
# Education

The education of wealthy children during the eighteenth century was of utmost importance to the parents as these children would eventually inherit the estates, titles and wealth accumulated and maintained by the family. Various letters mention the education of children in the eighteenth century, mostly when the sons went to university or when different tutors were appointed during their time in home education.

After the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke died, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke underwent stricter education to prepare him for the title he had inherited as his uncle deemed his education at Harrow insufficient. The daughters of the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke and Duchess Georgiana were granted the best education possible and perfected many accomplishments including learning French and playing the piano. Selina Trimmer as a governess helped shape the girls' education into one which made them accomplished educated ladies and provided a stable basic education for William, 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire. Her hard work was praised in family letters on many occasions throughout the years. Eventually, individual tutors were alluded to being acquired for the children for further higher education, particularly for the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke. Traditionally as the head of the family, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke made the final decision on the tutors William had, just like his uncle and father made these decisions for him.



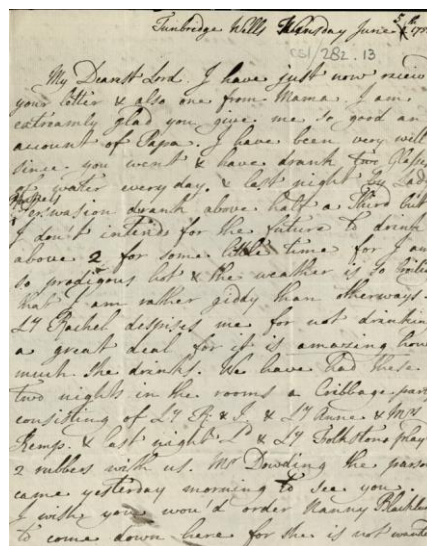
Above: Portrait of Lady Georgiana and Lady Harriet Cavendish in each other's arms



Left: A letter written by Lady Charlotte at age 9 to her mother

Right: A letter written by Lady Charlotte to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke when she was 20

There is a clear improvement in the handwriting. Lady Charlotte's later letters display some of the best handwriting in the collection.



# Relevant Records in the Devonshire Collection Archives

Types of records at Chatsworth include:

- LETTERS
- ACCOUNTS BOOKS
- DIARIES
- NOTEBOOKS
- INVENTORIES

The richest source of information about eighteenth-century childhood are family letters.

The Cavendish children are mentioned in passing letters between their parents and other family members until the middle of the century, after which they began to feature more prominently.

It should be noted that not all collections have been consulted in person during the compilation of this guide, so further research may bring to light additional material of interest.

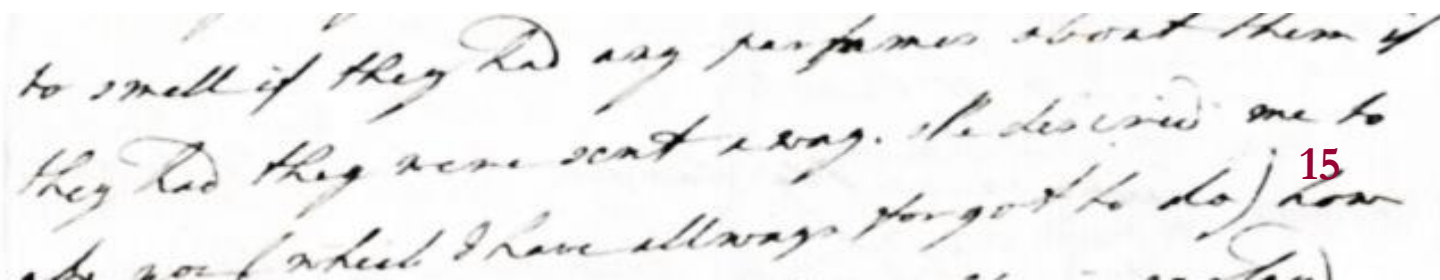
## The Key Archives at Chatsworth

A list of the key eighteenth-century archives relevant to the study of childhood, with pertinent letters/groups of letters highlighted.



### Papers of Willian Cavendish 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Devonshire and Rachel Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (Archive ref: DF32)

The collection includes purchases of jewellery between 1705-7 potentially bought for Duchess Rachel or their daughter. There are also some booksellers' accounts dating from 1712-1727. The books could have been bought for the family including the children to aid in their home studies.



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## Cavendish Family and Associates: 1<sup>st</sup> Correspondence Series (Archive ref: CS1)

This is a very large and varied collection of correspondence comprising letters to and from members of the Cavendish family and their associates sent between 1490 and 1839, with the majority of the material dating from 1670-1755. Parts of the collection have been separated to form the CS4 collection.

The collection includes the correspondence of Duchess Rachel of Devonshire, married to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Devonshire. Her attitude was very cordial and formal when writing to or about her children. Her maternal care still manifests itself through her control and disagreement over finances her sons were privy to and how they used them. She was also very conscious about the family's correct mourning attire when travelling abroad.

- **CS1/10.2** – consoles Duchess Rachel about miscarriages
- **CS1/10.5** – wishes Duchess Rachel that God continues to fight for her to see her children's children
- **CS1/30.10, 30.11, 30.12, 30.13, 30.14** – Duchess Rachel writes to her son during his Grand Tour about finances and gives him advice about spending his allowance more on spending time with friends than with strangers and on gambling, she warns him about inappropriate behaviour, tells him to make good use of his travels and how to budget better

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke did not really mention his children in detail until the disagreement he had with his wife Duchess Catherine about his first son marrying Lady Charlotte Boyle. Duchess Catherine did not approve of Lady Charlotte as a suitable match for her son. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke did not share his wife's opinion about Lady Charlotte and they were temporarily separated. He does, however, converse with his children about the health and inoculation of his grandchildren. He wrote to both his daughter Rachel, Lady Walpole and his son Lord Hartington about this matter.

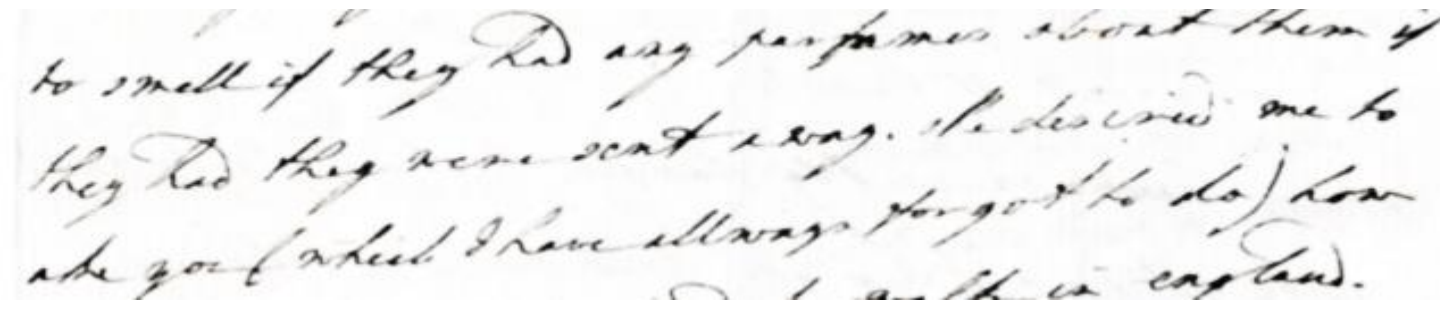
- **CS1/163.81** – discusses when each grandchild will be inoculated after Lady Burlington took them to see the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke
- **CS1/163.92** – comments on the recovery of his daughter's child after being inoculated and them being well



Above: Portrait of 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Devonshire

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These letters have remained in the CS1 series but are closely  
linked to letters in the CS4 series!

Lady Charlotte's papers in CS1 start from when she was just 9 years old, a child herself and offer a glimpse into the world of a child. She wrote letters up until her death of smallpox at age 23.

Her letters include maternal affection for her children and writing to her mother about their health and past times, including a message from her son to her mother. To her husband, she affectionately wrote about her children too and updated him on their health such as when her daughter had a heat rash.

- **CS1/282.0** – Lady Charlotte's first letter at 9 to her mother, apologises for not writing for so long, mentions what will be for supper and promises to not cause trouble
- **CS1/282.1** – letter to mother at 11, asks to see her mother in the morning and requests to dine with parents the next evening, then includes information about food and the weather
- **CS1/282.2** – letter at 12 to father, tells her father about the visit she and the mother were on and the purchase of a new horse she got to ride, speaks fondly about the time spent with her mother
- **CS1/282.3** – letter at 12 to father, speaks about more activities she went on with her mother
- **CS1/282.13** – writes to her husband about the children being well and relays her son's (Cann, Lord Hartington), request for his father to send a big coach with many horses
- **CS1/282.14** – writes to her mother and how Cann sends his love to his grandmother
- **CS1/282.15** – writes to her husband with anecdotes about the children, and mentions Cann's well-being after being in the sun too long
- **CS1/282.21** – writes to her mother about her daughter about being unwell and getting better

The 4<sup>th</sup> Duke's correspondence also mentions his children in a more personal way than his parents' or grandparents' does. A collection of personal correspondence with his friend David Garrick mentions the health and education of the future Duke's children and David Garrick's children.

- **CS1/260.130** – mentions the well-being of his children
- **CS1/260.167** – pleasure at receiving a drawing from his son, and grateful Lady Burlington did not send his children to visit his sister as he thinks them still too young, a very caring and compassionate letter from 4<sup>th</sup> Duke about his children
- **CS1/354.2** – David Garrick mentions the health of his children
- **CS1/354.10** – mentions the dutifulness of daughters writing letters

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## Papers of George Augustus Henry Cavendish, Elizabeth, Countess of Burlington and other family members (Archive ref: DF31 Papers)

These are papers of George Augustus Henry Cavendish, son of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke, and his wife Lady Elizabeth Cavendish. The collection contains personal letters from the couple, Lady Elizabeth's 12 pocket diaries and 2 notebooks, as well as some papers of her ancestors. The diaries include information about her health and the health of her family, her appointments, and her engagements. The two pocket notebooks include her expenditures. This collection may include information about the children of the extensive Cavendish family and possibly any items bought for their children.

## Correspondence of William Cavendish, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire (Archive ref: CS4)

The CS4 collection sadly holds very few letters between the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke and his children. The letters between the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke and Lady Burlington, his mother-in-law, hold the most references to the children after the death of his wife Lady Charlotte. Letters about the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke's education are present in this collection too, discussing his reserved nature at school and the need to improve this. This string of correspondence and the one which follows highlight the high educational expectations for heirs or in this case the new Duke. The correspondence may provide insight into the type of training that the Duke lacked and the education that he was still expected to acquire. Although not very extensive, the appointment of new tutors presents affection and concern on a level typical of paternal figures in the lives of children during the eighteenth century. The Duke wrote about missing his children and making arrangements for them to visit. Letters exchanged with his brother Lord Frederick occasionally discussed the well-being of the children mixed with business affairs.



**Above:** Portrait of 4th Duke of Devonshire

- **CS4/29** - Countess Dorothy Boyle, Lady Burlington reports to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke about the children, that they are well and includes snippets of their personalities
- **CS4/120** – A letter from Lord Fredrick to the Duke about family and military affairs, mentions the good health of the children and how they are the most handsome children ever seen in his life and their education

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D. 1. 1. 1. in England.

- **CS4/132** - Countess Dorothy Boyle writes to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke about the children missing him, that they were ‘very impatient’ as he has been away ‘so long’
- **CS4/181** – Lady Burlington writes to 4<sup>th</sup> Duke about possibly purchasing a Fairfaxes property she believes would be suitable for the grandchildren, No.1 Savile Row, that it would be a ‘pretty thing for one of the younger ones’, she hopes he will see his children soon
- **CS4/200** – a letter from the Duke thanking Countess Dorothy Boyle for making a house purchase with the children in mind, he is sympathetic to his children and their circumstances, he sends his love to them
- **CS4/354.33** – a letter from David Garrick reporting his wife went to visit the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke’s children who were visiting their grandmother Duchess of Devonshire
- **CS4/381** – Countess Dorothy Boyle reports to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke that the children are well
- **CS4/788** – a letter from Richard Newcome, Bishop of Landaff to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke discussing the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke attending his school at Hackney, compliments the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke for this decision
- **CS4/831** - Countess Dorothy Boyle writes to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke about Cann, Lord Hartington, being well and taking Bob to Harrow
- **CS4/2027** – concerning the future 5<sup>th</sup> Duke and his education after he leaves school, Richard Newcome, Bishop of St Asaph writes to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke offering his services as a tutor to his son for 1 or more years

Correspondence of Duchess Georgiana, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire and their family (Archive ref: CS5)

The CS5 documents contain the correspondence of the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke and his family. This is predominantly the correspondence of Duchess Georgiana.

Unusually, the Devonshire Collections hold both sides of the correspondence between Duchess Georgiana and her mother Countess Spencer as well as other prominent people including the governess, Selina. As many family affairs were handled by the Duchess her correspondence involves details about her family and especially her children. These letters are descriptive of the health, well-being and progress of her children and her role as a mother. Her fears about motherhood before and after she has her children are scattered among this correspondence and her affectionate mothering is proof that the cult of motherhood did not only appear in the nineteenth century. There is some censorship present in this collection through gaps in her correspondence during her absence when she went to the continent to have her illegitimate child



Above: Portrait of Duchess Georgiana, 5<sup>th</sup> Duke's wife

to smell if they had any perfumes about them if  
not was. she desired me to

they had they were sent away. He said  
she got (which I have always forgot to do) how  
I am in England.

- **CS5/10, 11, 62, 65, 66, 226, 543, 1314** – Countess Spencer educates her daughter Duchess Georgiana about various things and provides pieces of advice about troubles and habits
- **CS5/57** – Duchess Georgiana writes verses to her mother about their friendship and affection
- **CS5/103** – Lord Spencer chides Duchess Georgiana for her miscarriage and cautions her to be more careful
- **CS5/370, 382, 416** – Countess Spencer reassures Duchess Georgiana that she will be able to have children again and the stress of waiting to get pregnant
- **CS5/539** – Duchess Georgiana discusses the bathing practice of her daughter and the opinions of other people about the practice to prevent illnesses and colds. She shows extensive care for the child she has waited a long time for
- **CS5/580** – Advice about children based on European practices and new research at the time about building the immunity of children
- **CS5/608** – Duchess Georgiana lamenting on the distance between her room and the nursery at Devonshire House
- **CS5/649, 665, 706, 707, 708, 711** – Inoculation of children against smallpox pushed by Countess Spencer, concerns about the process, bigger fears of what could happen if they are not inoculated, experiences of others, how to occupy sick children, worry for children after the process, advice about the process
- **CS5/817, 870, 889, 901, 905, 917** – Duchess Georgiana aims to improve her life to be a better role model, a better mother, and a better educator to them and how to improve her education to teach them too
- **CS5/938** – Duchess Georgiana includes a verse on watching children grow up in a letter to her mother expressing her motherly attitude
- **CS5/942, 948, 1064, 1074, 1131** – health of the children mentioned
- **CS5/951, 1015, 1039, 1042, 1764** – education of the children is discussed, Duchess Georgiana praises her new governess and how the children like her the regard for Selina is mentioned in many letters as well as the Duchess's worry for her governess' wellbeing, and finally the appointing of new tutors for the children who are more specialised
- **CS5/994, 1108** – Duchess Georgiana displays care for Charlotte (the Duke's first illegitimate daughter) and her illness, previous correspondence from the Duchess mentions the internal conflict she had about being happy with Charlotte being in Paris but acknowledging that Charlotte cannot stay there with the unrest, nor is Charlotte learning much more than exceptional French
- **CS5/1004, 1010, 1107.1** – Duchess Georgiana's disapproval of mothers being far away from their children for long periods of time despite having to do the same
- **CS5/1028** – Duchess Georgiana mentions the line of succession and who will have a comfortable life if she does or does not have a son. She also writes about the kindness of the eldest daughter who has the best prospect to marry well and support the rest of the children
- **CS5/1041** – the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke is pleased with the educational progress the children are making and their beauty

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- **CS5/1050, 1052** – Duchess Georgiana is delighted to see her children and talks about the progress in accomplishments they have made and the praise they receive from others, particularly for her eldest daughter
- **CS5/62, 64** – Some unhappiness with the governess and her change in behaviour and slips in manners, Duchess Georgiana was worried about how this would affect her children, particularly their own manners
- **CS5/1148** – Countess Spencer giving direct advice about the education of the children on Duchess Georgiana's behalf
- **CS5/1180, 1183** – the appearance of the children is discussed and the way this will be improved, for example, Lady Georgiana's teeth and then a progress update about her recovery
- **CS5/1195** – Duchess Georgiana mentions how the nursery is on the bottom floor with the room for her and the Duke right above it, does not mention the access but it meets the later norm of having the mother's room close and above or below the children's accommodation. A later letter mentions that the children's study rooms were being kept close to the Duchess's room
- **CS5/1196** – Duchess Georgiana laments over the better relationship her son has with his father who can soothe his mood swings and tantrums. She worried her absence caused this distance but still speaks about being patient with him and showing her care
- **CS5/1223** – Duchess Georgiana mentions the accomplishments the daughters are learning as well as the lenience she has with her son who does not need to go horse riding if he does not wish to
- **CS5/1335.1** – Lady Georgiana writes to her governess to update her about her new accomplishments displaying her fondness for Selina
- **CS5/1670, 1672, 1673** – The governess corresponds with Countess Spencer about the children and the Duchess's health after her eye operation and how the children worry about their mother
- **CS5/1709** – A letter from Duchess Georgiana to Selina expressing her appreciation for her hard work and was grateful to have her support during her hard times
- **CS5/1756** – Lady Harriet sends a letter to Selina about the books she has been reading
- **CS5/1906** – Duchess Georgiana writes about the care she still feels for Lady Elizabeth and her well-being after the death of one of Lady Elizabeth's friends

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### Papers of Elizabeth Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (formerly Lady Elizabeth Foster) (Archive ref: DF11)

This collection of papers is very small as most of her correspondence is in the CS5 collection. It does however include 8 volumes of her transcribed journals dating from 1782-1799 before her marriage to the 5th Duke of Devonshire. These may include details about the children she had with her previous husband and their childhood as well as possibly some information about her illegitimate children with the 5th Duke. The journals may include some information about Duchess Georgiana Cavendish's exile as she accompanied Georgiana to the continent where she had her illegitimate daughter.

### Papers of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (Archive ref: DF12)

Contains notebooks, scrapbooks, and poetry manuscripts created or compiled by Duchess Georgiana. The majority contain creative works including work created for the Duchess. In these notebooks and scrapbooks, Duchess Georgiana may have included sentiments about her children, further presenting her strong affection for them. The collection also holds a lock of Duchess Georgiana's hair, cut when she was 13 years old. This was a common practice; hair was cut as a keepsake or given to a loved one sometimes in the form of jewellery.

### Inventories and valuations of the household effects and other material goods of the Cavendish family (Archive ref: CH36)

This is a collection of inventories created and accumulated by the Cavendish family from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries concerning their household goods, collections of artworks, plates, gems and other material belongings. They cover multiple family properties.

**CH36/7/1a** – Chatsworth & Hardwick Inventory 1792, page 9 mentions the room of Georgiana and Harriet, pages 8-15 list the nurseries quarter was near the servants quarters and away from the other apartments

**CH36/5/5** – Devonshire House Inventory 1811, the house also lists the children's quarter as being away from the main quarters

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# How are the archives arranged and catalogued?



This subject guide is not a comprehensive list of all relevant individual items in the Devonshire archive collections. Many of these collections are not fully catalogued so there may be more items than those highlighted in this guide that refer to eighteenth-century childhood.

All collections that are fully catalogued will be available via:



| Key Collections   | Arrangement   | Catalogued                                | Link to catalogue or further info   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cavendish Family and Associates: 1 <sup>st</sup> Correspondence Series (CS1)  | The collection holds 2660 items, mostly letters, between 1490 and 1839. The letters are grouped by person and organised in approximately chronological order.   | Yes, most letters also have a description | <a href="https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb2495-cs1">https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb2495-cs1</a>                           |
| Papers of George Augustus Henry Cavendish, Elizabeth, Countess of Burlington and other family members (DF31 Papers) | This collection contains personal papers, pocket diaries and notebooks. The collection is grouped by person.  | Yes                                       | <a href="https://www.chatsworthh.org/media/12457/df31_rev_201902.pdf">https://www.chatsworthh.org/media/12457/df31_rev_201902.pdf</a> |
| Correspondence of William Cavendish, 4 <sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire (CS4)                                       | This contains mostly the letters to and from the 4 <sup>th</sup> Duke and his family. This series has been organised chronologically with undated letters put at the end of the year they are estimated to relate to. | Yes, most letters also have a description | <a href="https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb2495-df2">https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb2495-df2</a>                           |

# How are the archives arranged and catalogued? (continued)

| Key Collections   | Arrangement  | Catalogued  | Link to catalogue or further info   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Correspondence of Duchess Georgiana, the 5 <sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire and their family (CS5)          | This contains the letters of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Duke, his friends, family and acquaintances. Most of the letters are written to and from Duchess Georgiana.   | Yes, most letters also have a description.          | Contact the archives for a spreadsheet listing of this collection.  |
| Papers of Elizabeth Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (formerly Lady Elizabeth Foster) (DF11)                | This collection contains a small selection of letters which should be viewed alongside the CS5 series, transcripts of journals, and some personal papers.  | Yes   | <a href="https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/f0e3dcab-cf7d-4200-a346-5170ea793aca">https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/f0e3dcab-cf7d-4200-a346-5170ea793aca</a> |
| Papers of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (DF12)   | The collection includes notebooks, poetry manuscripts, scrapbooks, letters from the last 2 years of her life, and a lock of Duchess Georgiana's hair cut when she was 13.  | Yes, items in the collection also have descriptions | <a href="https://www.chatsworthh.org/media/12404/df12_rev_201811.pdf">https://www.chatsworthh.org/media/12404/df12_rev_201811.pdf</a>   |
| Inventories and valuations of the household effects and other material goods of the Cavendish family (CH36) | This collection contains the inventory journals of some of the properties owned by the Cavendish family. The dates of the material are between 1728 and the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, but some of the later material is closed for general research. | Yes   | Please contact the archives for more information.   |

For more information on how to access the archive and its resources, please visit our website: <https://www.chatsworth.org/visit-chatsworth/chatsworth-estate/art-archives/access-the-collection/archives-and-library/>





## ! Disclaimer !

There are still many letters of Duchess Georgiana's which have not yet been listed, so their content is not easily accessible. A detailed study of the as-yet unlisted letters will fill in some of the blanks during the later period covered by the CS5 collection. However, the collection is also incomplete: censorship and destruction of letters have been carried out in the past, particularly Duchess Georgiana's letters to her mother Countess Spencer during her period of absence abroad when she had her illegitimate daughter. Survival of letters more broadly during the eighteenth century is variable, so some family members are much more fully represented than others.



## Selected Further Reading

### Essays from Printed Books

Benzaquen, A. S., 'The Doctor and the Child: Medical Preservation and Management of Children in the Eighteenth Century', ed. Anja Müller, *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006).

Giovanopoulos, A., 'The Legal Status of Children in Eighteenth-Century England', ed. Anja Müller, *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006).

Griffin, B. & Delap, L. & Wills, A., 'Introduction: The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain Since 1800', ed. Griffin, B. & Delap, L. & Wills, A., *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain Since 1800*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Lippincott, L., 'Expanding on portraiture: The market, the public, and the hierarchy of genres in eighteenth-century Britain', ed. Bermingham, A. & Brewer, J., *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, (London: Routledge, 1997).

Retford, K., 'Patrilineal Portraiture? Gender and Genealogy in the Eighteenth-Century English Country House', ed. Styles, J. & Vickery, A., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830*, (London: Yale University Press, 2006).

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it is in England.

Sherman, C. R., 'Resentment and Rebellion in the Scholarly Household: Son and Amanuensis in the Godefroy Family', ed. Susan Broomhall, *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1900*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Smith, L., 'Taking the children: Children, childhood and heritage making', ed. Kate Darian-Smith & Carla Pascoe, *Children, Childhood and Cultural Heritage*, (London: Routledge, 2013).

### Printed Books

Christie, C., *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

Cunningham, H., *The Invention of Childhood*, (London: BBC Books, 2006).

Fletcher, A., *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600-1914*, (London: Yale University Press, 2008).

Girouard, M., *Life in the English Country House*, (London: Yale University Press, 1978).

Girouard, M., *The Victorian Country House*, (London: Yale University Press, 1979).

Hartcup, A., *Children of the Great Country Houses*, (London: National Trust Enterprises Limited, 2000).

James, A. & James, A. L., *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Kane, P., *Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction*, (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995).

O'Day, R., *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900: England, France & the United States of America*, (Hampshire: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1994).

Retford, K., *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-century England*, (London: Yale University Press, 2006).

Stone, L., *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1979).

Wilson, M. I., *The English Country House and its furnishings*, (London: Chancellor Press, 1977).

Wilson, R. & Mackley, A., *Creating Paradise: The Building of the English Country House 1660-1880*, (London: Hambledon and London, 2000).

Written and compiled by Michaela Vargova as part of the University of  
Derby Masters in History degree program, 2023

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