

THE NOBILITY OF ENGLAND

Like most of eighteenth-century Europe, English society had clear distinctions between its various social orders. The dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons comprised the peerage—holders of hereditary titles of nobility, the possession of which carried the right of sitting in the House of Lords. Baronets and knights formed the lesser nobility, possessing various legal privileges but ineligible to sit in the House of Lords. Beneath them ranked the gentry of England—esquires and gentlemen, who had large fortunes or advanced university degrees. Next came freemen of various sorts, divided into many unofficial social categories.

Dozens of eighteenth-century books explained in detail the history and legal prerogatives of English society. In the following extracts from one popular work, the symbol ‡ indicates those titles of nobility which fell into abeyance in the three hundred years since the book's publication, and † indicates titles which have become completely extinct.

1714

Duke

A duke may have, in all places out of the King's or prince's presence, a cloth or estate hanging down within half-a-yard of the ground. So may his duchess, who may have her train borne up by a baroness. And no earl, without permission from him, ought to wash with a duke.



All duke's eldest sons, by the courtesy of England, are from their birth styled *marquesses*, and the younger sons *lords*, and take place of viscounts, but not so privileged by the laws of the land. A duke has the title of "Grace", and being written to is styled "most high, potent, and noble prince". And dukes of the blood are styled "most high, most mighty and illustrious prince".... Dukes are usually styled by the King or Queen "Our right trusty and right entirely beloved cousin"....

- 1483 Thomas Howard, **Duke of Norfolk**, Earl-Marshal of England, Earl of Arundel, Earl of Surrey, Earl of Norfolk, Earl of Norwich, Baron Mowbray, Baron Howard, Baron Segrave, Baron Brewse of Gower, Baron FitzAlan, Baron Warren, Baron Clun, Baron Oswaldstre, Baron Maltravers, Baron Greystoke, Baron Furnival, Baron Verdon, Baron Lovetot, Baron Strange of Blackmere, and Baron Howard of Castle Rising
- 1547 Charles Seymour, **Duke of Somerset**, Earl Hertford, Viscount Beauchamp, Baron Hache, Baron Beauchamp, and Baron Seymour of Trowbridge, KG
- † 1670 Charles FitzRoy, **Duke of Cleveland**, Duke of Southampton, Earl of Chichester, Earl of Southampton, Baron Nonsuch, and Baron Newberry, KG
- 1675 Charles Lennox, **Duke of Richmond**, Duke of Lennox, Earl of March, Earl of Darnley, Baron Settrington, and Baron Methuen, KG
- 1675 Charles FitzRoy, **Duke of Grafton**, Earl of Arlington, Earl of Euston, Viscount Ipswich, Baron Sudbury, KG
- † 1682 James Butler, **Duke of Ormond**, Marquess of Ormonde, Earl of Ormonde, Earl of Brecknock, Earl of Ossory, Viscount Thurles, Baron Butler of Lanthony, Baron Butler of Moor Park, and Baron Arclo, KG
- 1682 Henry Somerset-Scudamore, **Duke of Beaufort**, Marquess of Worcester, Earl of Worcester, Baron Herbert, Lord of Ragland, Lord of Chepstow, and Lord Gower, KG
- † 1682 George Fitzroy, **Duke of Northumberland**, Earl of Northumberland, Viscount Falmouth, Baron Pontefract, KG
- 1683 Charles Beauclerk, **Duke of Saint Alban's**, Earl of Burford, and Baron Heddington
- † 1689 Charles Paulet, **Duke of Bolton**, Marquess of Winchester, Earl of Wiltshire, Baron Saint John
- † 1694 Charles Talbot, **Duke of Shrewsbury**, Marquess of Alton, Earl of Shrewsbury, Earl of Weyford, Earl of Waterford, Baron Talbot Strange, Baron Furnival, Baron Verdon, Baron Lovetot, Baron Gifford of Brimsfield, Baron Comyn, Baron Valence, and Baron Montchensey, KG
- † 1694 Peregrine Osborne, **Duke of Leeds**, Marquess of Caermarthen, Earl of Danby, Viscount Latimer, Viscount Osborne, Baron Osborne of Kiveton

- 1694 Wriothesley Russell, **Duke of Bedford**, Marquess of Tavistock, Earl of Bedford, Baron Russell, Baron Russell of Thornhaugh, and Baron Howland of Stretham
- 1694 William Cavendish, **Duke of Devonshire**, Marquess of Hartington, Earl of Devonshire, Baron Cavendish, KG
- 1702 John Churchill, **Duke of Marlborough**, Marquess of Blandford, Earl of Marlborough, Baron Churchill of Sandridge, and Baron Churchill of Aumouth, KG
- † 1702 John Sheffield, **Duke of Buckingham and Normanby**, Marquess of Normanby, Earl Mulgrave, Baron Sheffield of Butterwicke, KG
- 1703 John Manners, **Duke of Rutland**, Marquess of Granby, Earl of Rutland, Baron Roos, Baron Trusbut, Baron Belvoir, and Baron Manners of Haddon
- † 1705 John Montagu, **Duke of Montagu**, Marquess of Monthermer, Earl of Montagu, Viscount Monthermer, Baron Montagu
- † 1708 Charles Douglas, **Duke of Dover**, Duke of Queensbury, Marquess of Beverley, Marquess of Queensbury, Marquess of Drumlanrig, Earl of Queensbury, Earl of Sanquhar, Earl of Sollaway, Earl of Drumlanrig, Viscount Drumlanrig, Viscount Tibbers, Viscount Nith, Viscount Tortholwald, Viscount Ross, and Baron Ripon
- 1711 James Hamilton, **Duke of Hamilton and Brandon**, Marquess of Clydesdale, Earl of Arran, Earl of Lanark, Earl of Cambridge, and Baron Dutton

Marquess

A marquess, which by the Saxons is called a *Markenreve*, and signifies a governor or ruler of the Marches, has the next place of honour to a duke.... This honour is hereditary, and the eldest son of a marquess, by the courtesy of England, is called earl or lord of a place, but the younger sons only lords by their Christian names, as Lord John, Lord Thomas, or the like. A marquess has the style of “most noble, most honourable, and potent prince” and may have his cloth of estate reaching within a yard of the ground (the King or a duke not being present) and his marchioness may have her train borne up in her own house, but not in a duchess’ presence....



- † 1687 William Herbert, **Marquess of Powys**, Earl of Powys, Viscount Montgomery, and Baron Powys, Bt
- † 1706 Robert Bertie, **Marquess of Lindsey**, Earl of Lindsey, and Baron Willoughby of Eresby, FRS
- † 1706 Evelyn Pierpont, **Marquess of Dorchester**, Earl of Kingston, Viscount Newark, and Baron Pierpont

Earl

The next degree of honour is an earl, which word and title is borrowed from the Saxons.... An earl had formerly the style or title of *prince*, as dukes and marquesses have, but now it is “most potent and noble lord”, as also “the right honourable and truly noble”. Out of his superior’s presence, he may have a cloth of estate fringed without pendants, and also his countess may have her train borne up by an esquire’s wife....



- 1486 James Stanley, **Earl of Derby**, Baron Stanley, Baron Strange of Knokyn, Baron Mahon, and Lord of Man
- 1529 Theophilus Hastings, **Earl of Huntingdon**, Baron Hastings, Baron Hungerford, Baron Botreux, Baron Molens, and Baron Moels
- 1551 Thomas Herbert, **Earl of Pembroke**, Earl of Montgomery, Baron Herbert of Cardiff, Baron Ros of Kendal, Baron Parr, Baron Fitzhugh, Baron Marmion, Baron Saint Quintin, and Baron Herbert of Shurland, KG, FRS
- 1572 Henry Clinton, **Earl of Lincoln**, Baron Clinton, and Baron Say
- 1603 Henry Howard, **Earl of Suffolk**, Earl of Bindon, Baron Howard of Walden, and Baron Chesterford
- † 1604 Lionel Cranfield-Sackville, **Earl of Dorset**, Earl of Middlesex, Baron Buckhurst, and Baron Cranfield
- 1605 James Cecil, **Earl of Salisbury**, Viscount Cranburne, and Baron Cecil of Effingdon
- 1605 John Cecil, **Earl of Exeter** and Baron Burleigh
- † 1617 Scroope Egerton, **Earl of Bridgewater**, Viscount Brackley, and Baron Ellesmere
- † 1618 John Sidney, **Earl of Leicester**, Viscount Lisle, and Baron Sidney
- 1618 George Compton, **Earl of Northampton** and Baron Compton
- † 1618 Edward Henry Rich, **Earl of Warwick**, Earl of Holland, Baron Rich, and Baron Kensington

- 1622 Basil Fielding, **Earl of Denbigh**, Earl of Desmond, Viscount Fielding, Viscount Callon, Baron Fielding of Newnam, and Baron Fielding of Caghe
- 1624 Thomas Fane, **Earl of Westmorland**, Baron le Despense, and Baron Burghersh
- 1626 Charles Montagu, **Earl of Manchester**, Viscount Mandeville, and Baron Montagu of Kimbolton
- 1626 Henry Bowes Howard, **Earl of Berkshire**, Viscount Andover, and Baron Howard of Charlton
- † 1626 John Savage, **Earl Rivers**, Viscount Colchester, Viscount Savage, and Baron Darcy of Chichester, Bt
- † 1628 Charles Mordaunt, **Earl of Peterborough**, Earl of Monmouth, Viscount Avalon, Baron Mordaunt of Turvey, and Baron Mordaunt of Ryegate, KG
- † 1628 Thomas Grey, **Earl of Stamford**, Baron Grey of Groby, Baron Bonville, and Baron Harrington
- 1628 Heneage Finch, **Earl of Winchelsea**, Viscount Maidstone, and Baron FitzHerbert of Eastwell, Bt
- † 1628 Philip Stanhope, **Earl of Chesterfield** and Baron Stanhope of Shelford
- † 1628 Thomas Tufton, **Earl of Thanet** and Baron Clifford and Tufton, Bt
- 1643 Charles Spencer, **Earl of Sunderland** and Baron Spencer of Wormleighton
- † 1645 Nicholas Leke, **Earl of Scarsdale** and Baron Deincourt of Sutton, Bt
- 1660 Edward Montagu, **Earl of Sandwich**, Viscount Hinchinbrooke, and Baron Montagu of Saint Neots
- † 1661 Edward Hyde, **Earl of Clarendon**, Viscount Cornbury, and Baron Hyde of Hindon
- 1661 William Capell, **Earl of Essex**, Viscount Maldon, and Baron Capel of Hadham
- 1661 George Brudnell, **Earl of Cardigan** and Baron Brudenel of Stanton Wivil, Bt
- † 1661 Arthur Annesley, **Earl of Anglesey**, Viscount Valentia, Baron Annesley of Newport-Pagnal, and Baron Mountnorris
- 1661 Charles Howard, **Earl of Carlisle**, Viscount Howard of Morpeth, and Baron Dacres of Gillesland
- † 1664 Thomas Bruce, **Earl of Ailesbury**, Earl of Elgin, Viscount Bruce of Amptill, Baron Bruce of Whorlton, Baron Skelton, and Baron Kinlosse
- † 1664 Richard Boyle, **Earl of Burlington**, Earl of Cork, Viscount Dungarvon, Baron Clifford of Langsborough, and Baron Boyle of Youghall
- 1672 Anthony Ashley Cooper, **Earl of Shaftsbury**, Baron Ashley of Wimburne Giles, and Baron Cooper, Bt
- † 1674 Edward Henry Lee, **Earl of Lichfield**, Viscount Quarendon, and Baron Spelsbury, Bt
- † 1674 Thomas Lennard, **Earl of Sussex** and Baron Dacres of Monceaux
- † 1679 Charles Bodville Robartes, **Earl of Radnor**, Viscount Bodmyn, and Baron Robartes of Truro, Bt
- † 1675 William Paston, **Earl of Yarmouth** and Baron Paston, Bt
- † 1679 James Berkeley, **Earl of Berkeley**, Viscount Dursley, Baron Berkeley of Berkeley Castle, Baron Mowbray, Baron Segrave, and Baron Breaus of Gower
- 1681 Daniel Finch, **Earl of Nottingham**, and Baron Finch of Daventry, Bt
- † 1682 Henry Hyde, **Earl of Rochester**, Viscount Hyde of Kenilworth, and Baron of Wotten Bassett
- 1682 Montagu Bertie, **Earl of Abingdon**, and Baron Norris of Ricot
- † 1682 Baptist Noel, **Earl of Gainsborough**, Viscount Campden of Campden, Baron Noel of Ridlington, and Baron Hicks of Ilmington, Bt
- † 1682 Robert d'Arcy, **Earl of Holderness**, Baron d'Arcy de Knayth, Baron d'Arcy of Meinhill, and Baron Conyers
- † 1682 Other Hickman-Windsor, **Earl of Plymouth** and Baron Windsor
- † 1688 James Radcliffe, **Earl of Derwentwater**, Viscount Radcliffe, Viscount Langley, and Baron Tindale, Bt
- † 1688 Henry Stafford Howard, **Earl of Stafford** and Baron Stafford
- 1689 Henry Bentinck, **Earl of Portland**, Viscount Woodstock, and Baron of Cirencester
- † 1689 Arthur Herbert, **Earl of Torrington**, and Baron Herbert of Torbay
- 1690 Richard Lumley, **Earl of Scarborough**, Viscount Lumley of Lumley Castle, Viscount Lumley of Waterford, and Baron Lumley of Lumley
- † 1690 George Booth, **Earl of Warrington** and Baron Delamer of Durham-Massey, Bt
- † 1694 Richard Newport, **Earl of Bradford**, Viscount Newport of Bradford, and Baron Newport of High-Ercal
- † 1695 Frederick Zulestien d'Nassau, **Earl of Rochford**, Viscount Tunbridge, and Baron Enfield
- 1697 Arnold Joost van Keppel, **Earl of Albemarle**, Viscount Bury, and Baron Ashford of Ashford, KG
- 1697 Gilbert Coventry, **Earl of Coventry**, Viscount Deerhurst, and Baron Coventry of Ailesborough
- † 1697 Edward Russell, **Earl of Orford**, Viscount Barfleur, and Baron Russell of Shingey

- 1697 William Villiers, **Earl of Jersey**, Viscount Villiers of Dartford, and Baron Villiers of Hoo
- † 1716 Henry d’Nassau, **Earl of Grantham**, Viscount Boston, and Baron Alford
- † 1705 John Campbell, Duke of Argyle, Marquess of Argyle, Earl of Argyle, **Earl of Greenwich**, and Baron Chatham, KG, KT
- † 1706 Thomas Wharton, **Earl of Wharton**, Viscount Winchendon, and Baron Wharton
- † 1706 John Poulet, **Earl Poulet**, Viscount Poulet of Hinton Saint George, and Baron Poulet of Hinton Saint George, KG
- † 1706 Francis Godolphin, **Earl of Godolphin**, Viscount Rialton, and Baron Godolphin of Rialton
- 1706 Hugh Cholmondeley, **Earl of Cholmondeley**, Viscount Malpas, and Baron Cholmondeley of Wich-Malbank
- † 1711 Robert Harley, **Earl of Oxford and Mortimer**, and Baron Harley of Wigmore, KG
- 1711 Robert Shirley, **Earl Ferrers**, Viscount Tamworth, and Baron Ferrers of Chartley, Bt
- † 1711 Thomas Wentworth, **Earl of Strafford**, Viscount Wentworth of Wentworth Woodhouse, Viscount Wentworth of Stainborough, Baron Raby, Baron New March, and Baron Oversley, Bt, KG
- 1711 William Legge, **Earl of Dartmouth**, Viscount Lewisham, and Baron Dartmouth

Viscounts

The next degree of honour is a viscount, which was anciently no more than the name of an office under an earl... but about 18 Henry VI it became a degree of honour... He has the title of “right honourable and truly noble (or potent) lord”. He may have a traverse in his own house, and his viscountess may have her train borne up by a woman in her superior’s presence, and out of their presence by a man. Viscounts are usually styled by the King (or Queen) “Our right trusty and well-beloved cousins”....



- 1550 Price Devereux, **Viscount Hereford**, Bt
- † 1554 Henry Brown, **Viscount Montagu**
- † 1624 Laurence Fiennes, **Viscount Saye and Sele** and Baron Saye and Sele
- † 1643 Thomas Bellasyse, **Viscount Fauconberg** and Baron Fauconberg of Yarum, Bt
- 1682 Charles Townsend, **Viscount Townsend** and Baron Townsend of Lynn-Regis, Bt
- 1682 Thomas Thynne, **Viscount Weymouth** and Baron Thynne, Bt
- † 1683 William Hatton, **Viscount Hatton** and Baron Hatton of Kirby
- † 1690 Talbot Yelverton, **Viscount de Longueville** and Baron Grey of Ruthen, Bt
- † 1696 Richard Lowther, **Viscount Lonsdale** and Baron Lowther
- 1712 Henry Saint John, **Viscount Bolingbrook** and Baron Saint John of Lidiard Tregoz

Barons

Amongst the noble and honourable persons, barons have the next place.... Barons are of three kinds—viz., by tenure, by writ, and by creation or patent. Barons by tenure are those which do hold any honour, castle, or manor as the head of their barony *per baroniam*. A baron by writ is he unto whom a writ of summons in the name of the King is directed to come to the Parliament appointed at a certain time and place to be holden. A baron by creation by reason of letters patent is that noble person whom the King (or any of his progenitors, kings of this realm) have created barons by such their letters patent, begun in the reign of King Richard II.... Barons are usually styled by the King or Queen “Our right, trusty, and well-beloved”....



- 1295 Charles Mildmay, **Baron Fitzwalter**
- 1299 *John West*, **Baron La Warr**
- 1342 Edward Ward, **Baron Dudley** and Baron Ward of Birmingham
- 1392 *George Neville*, **Baron Bergavenny**
- ‡ 1313 James Touchet, **Baron Audley of Heleigh**
- 1448 *Edward Stourton*, **Baron Stourton**

- 1491 George Verney, **Baron Willoughby de Broke**
- † 1547 Charles Willoughby, **Baron Willoughby of Parham**
- 1552 Henry Paget, **Baron Paget** and Baron Burton
- 1553 Charles Howard, **Baron Howard of Effingham**
- ‡ 1553 William North, **Baron North of Kirtling** and Baron Grey of Rolleston
- ‡ 1553 James Bridges, **Baron Chandos**, Bt
- 1558 Andrew Saint John, **Baron Saint John of Bletso**, Bt
- † 1558 William Ferdinand Cary, **Baron Hunsdon**
- 1603 Robert Petre, **Baron Petre**
- † 1605 Henry Arundel, **Baron Arundel of Wardour**
- 1615 Rowland Dormer, **Baron Dormer**, Bt
- 1616 Henry Roper, **Baron Teynham**
- 1621 William Greville, **Baron Brooke of Beauchamp Court**
- † 1627 Neville Lovelace, **Baron Lovelace**
- † 1627 Banaster Maynard, **Baron Maynard of Eaton Parva** and Baron Maynard of Wicklowe, Bt
- † 1628 Charles Howard, **Baron Howard of Escrick**
- † 1643 Edward Leigh, **Baron Leigh of Stoneleigh**
- 1643 William Byron, **Baron Byron**
- † 1643 William Widdrington, **Baron Widdrington**, Bt
- † 1644 John Colepeper, **Baron Colepeper**
- † 1645 Lewis Watson, **Baron Rockingham**, Bt
- † 1645 Robert Sutton, **Baron Lexington**
- † 1657 Marmaduke Langdale, **Baron Langdale**
- † 1658 William Berkeley, **Baron Berekeley of Stratton**
- † 1661 Charles Cornwallis, **Baron Cornwallis**, Bt
- † 1661 Nathaniel Crewe, **Baron Crewe**
- † 1664 John Arundel, **Baron Arundel of Trerice**
- 1665 William Craven, **Baron Craven**
- † 1672 Hugh Clifford, **Baron Clifford of Chudleigh**
- † 1681 John Carteret, **Baron Carteret**, Bt
- 1682 Charles Benet, **Baron Ossulstone**
- † 1682 William Stawell, **Baron Stawell**
- 1683 Francis North, **Baron Guilford**
- 1686 James Waldegrave, **Baron Waldegrave**, Bt
- † 1689 John Ashburnham, **Baron Ashburnham**
- † 1692 Thomas Farmor, **Baron Leominster**, Bt
- ‡ 1693 Charles Butler, **Baron Butler of Weston**
- † 1694 Henry Herbert, **Baron Herbert of Chirbury**
- † 1696 Maurice Thompson, **Baron Haversham**, Bt
- † 1697 John Somers, **Baron Somers**
- 1698 Christopher Vane, **Baron Barnard**
- † 1700 Charles Montagu, **Baron Halifax**
- 1703 Heneage Finch, **Baron Guernsey**
- 1703 John Levison Gower, **Baron Gower**
- 1703 Francis Conway Seymour, **Baron Conway of Ragley**
- 1703 John Hervey, **Baron Hervey of Ickworth**
- † 1706 William Cowper, **Baron Cowper**
- † 1706 Thomas Holles-Pelham, **Baron Pelham**, Bt
- † 1711 Simon Harcourt, **Baron Harcourt**

- 1711 Charles Boyle, **Baron Boyle of Marstown**
 - 1711 George Hay, **Baron Hay of Penwarden**
 - † 1712 Thomas Windsor, **Baron Mountjoy**
 - † 1712 Thomas Mansell, **Baron Mansell**
 - 1712 Thomas Willoughby, **Baron Middleton**
 - † 1712 Thomas Trevor, **Baron Trevor**
 - † 1712 George Granville, **Baron Lansdowne**
 - † 1712 Samuel Massam, **Baron Massam of Oates**
 - † 1712 Thomas Foley, **Baron Foley**
 - 1712 Allen Bathurst, **Baron Bathurst**
 - † 1713 Peregrine Osborne, **Baron Osborne of Kiveton**
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There are three kinds of persons capable of the title and dignity of queen amongst us, and each of them different in power and privilege. The first is a queen sovereign, to whom the Crown descends by birthright and is equal in power to a king.... She is her husband's sovereign and he her subject in England, although he were an emperor, so was King Philip of Spain to Queen Mary and George, Prince of Denmark, to Her present Majesty... The second in honour is the queen consort, and the third the queen dowager or queen mother....

The daughters of the Kings of England are all styled princesses; the eldest is called the Princess Royal...

Women in England, according to their husband's qualities, are either honourable and noble, or ignoble. Their honourable dignities are princess, duchess, marchioness, countess, viscountess, and baroness. The *nobless*, as the French call them, are all knights' ladies, who in all writings are styled *dames*; all esquires' and gentlemen's wives only *gentlewomen*. The third sort comprehends the plebeans, and are commonly called *goodwives*.... All the daughters of dukes, marquesses, and earls are by the ancient custom of the realm styled *ladies* and have precedency according to the degrees of their parents; and of this custom the laws take notice and give allowance for honour and decency, but nevertheless in the King's courts of justice they bear not those titles of honour—no more than the sons of such noble persons—so in this point the law is one way and the honour and courtesy of ladies another...

Of Knighthood in General

The addition of *Sir* is attributed to the names of all knights, as Sir John, Sir Thomas, and the like. And to baronets, the said addition of *Sir* is granted by a particular clause in their patents of creation, though they are not dubbed knights. No man is born a knight of any title or degree whatsoever...

Of the several degrees, or orders, of knighthood, I shall speak first of that of the **Order of the Garter** as being the most singular and illustrious, and their just place according to precedency... Consonant to all authentic histories, this most ancient and noble order was instituted by King Edward III, *anno* 1350, which was 50 years before the instituting of the French Order of Saint Michael by Louis XI, 229 years before Henry III devised the new Order of the Holy Ghost, full 80 years before the Order of the Golden Fleece was instituted by Philip the Good of Burgundy, 190 years before King James V refined the Order of Saint Andrew in Scotland, and about 209 years before the Kings of Denmark began the Order of the Elephant, which gives it clearly the pre-eminence before other orders in point of antiquity.... The patron of this order is Saint George. A man of great renown for chivalry, he suffered martyrdom at Lydia under Diocletian...

That the memory of Saint George might be still continued, [the sovereign gives members] for a part of their daily habit the image of Saint George encountering with the dragon or devil, enchased with pearls and precious stones, appendant to a blue ribbon, continually to be worn about their necks. As for the habit of this order, beside the George and ribbon before-mentioned, a garter enameled with gold, pearl, and precious stones, with the motto *Honi Soit qui Mal y Pense* embroidered upon it, which is fastened about the left leg with a buckle of gold, from

whence they were called Knights of the Garter. And without these two ornaments, none of these knights are to appear in public. There also properly belongs to this order a cassock of crimson velvet and mantle and hood of purple velvet, lined with white sarsenet on the left shoulder, whereon is an escutcheon of Saint George...

Knights of Bath, so called from part of the ceremony at their creation, are commonly made at the coronation of a king or queen, at the creation of a prince or of a duke of the blood royal....

He that receive the dignity of a **knight** kneels down and then the King slightly touches him on his shoulder and says in French, "Sois chevalier au nomme de Dieu," and afterwards, "Avance chevalier"... No man is born a knight, as he may be to titles of honour by patent... The name of a knight is a name of dignity and a degree, as in the name of a duke, earl, etc., and in all actions he shall be styled *knight*. A knight also must be named by both his Christian and surnames, as *Sir A. B., knight*, but those degrees honourable that are made by patent may be named only by their Christian names and by their title of honours, as *Gilbert, Earl of Shrewsbury*....

Though by civil law there are no gentlemen of title under knights, but all the rest went under the name of *people*, yet with us there are in this rank which have names of pre-eminence whereby they are in degree above the rest, as **esquires** and **gentlemen**, all which give ensigns of coats of arms, and are thereby distinguished from the meaner people... it has not further prerogative in it than it makes them differ from the baser sort of people. Of these two sorts of gentlemen, with us the esquire has the priority, but it seems if an esquire be named gentleman, or a gentleman called an esquire, it is no offence or fault in legal proceedings.... There are five distinct sorts of esquires observed. Of these sorts, the principal at this day are the eldest sons of viscounts and lords. Next are all noblemen's younger sons. Then are accounted those that are select esquires for the King's body. The next are knights' eldest sons successively. In a fourth rank are reckoned those to whom the King himself, together with the title, gives arms or creates esquires... In the fifth and last place be those that have any superior public office in the Kingdom, as high sheriffs, justices of the peace, etc., or serve the King in any worshipful calling....

In 2015, Great Britain had twenty-four non-royal hereditary dukes (compared to twenty in 1714, nine of which dukedoms became extinct by 2015). Thirty-four hereditary titled nobles held a marquessate as their primary titles in 2015 (compared to three in 1714, all of which eventually became extinct). 190 non-royal hereditary earldoms existed as a primary title in 2015 (compared to 1714's sixty-six, of which thirty-seven became extinct and another ten became subsidiary to a higher title), and 114 nobles held a primary title of viscount in 2015 (compared to ten in 1714, of which six became extinct and two others became subsidiary titles). Finally, 444 hereditary baronies currently exist as primary titles (compared to sixty-six in 1714, of which thirty-nine became extinct and fourteen became subsidiary).

The Laws of Honours, or, a Compendious Account of the Ancient Derivation of All Titles, Dignities, Offices, etc.. Spiritual as Temporal, Civil, or Military. Shewing the Prerogative of the Crown, Privileges of Peerage, and of Parliament, the True Rank and Precedency of All Dignified Persons, the Most Memorable Debates and Cases of Parliament upon Claims of Honours, Precedency, or Otherwise. With a Complete and Useful Table of the Nobility, Setting Forth their Ancient and Present Honours, Offices, Employments, Creations, Consecrations, etc. The Whole Illustrated with Proper Sculptures, Engraved upon Copper Plates. To Which is Added an Exact List of Officers Civil and Military in Great Britain, as they Properly and Distinctly Fall Under the Supream Officers of the Kingdom, or are any Way Remarkable in the Dispatch of Publick Business. (London: Gosling, 1714) [modernized]