

The Duchess of Cleveland's Box Ticket

A New Discovery

The personal ivory ticket of a Duchess of Cleveland, for her box at the King's Theatre in Haymarket in London, has recently been acquired.



It is dated 1835 and in that case the duchess to whom it belonged was the wife of William Henry Vane formerly Earl of Darlington. 1766-1842. Vane was elevated to the Marquisate of Cleveland in 1827 and to the Dukedom of Cleveland in 1833.



William Henry Vane Earl of Darlington. At Raby castle property of the Lord Barnard.

It was this Vane who developed the Bathwick Estate after the death of Henrietta Laura Pulteney, Countess of Bath in 1808 when the Vanes of Raby inherited the whole of the Bathwick Estate inter alia.

It is for him that streets and sites called 'Vane' and 'Darlington' are named as well as those named 'Cleveland', including the Cleveland Bridge, after he became Duke of Cleveland in 1833.

He was widowed of his first wife, Catharine Margaret Powlett (1768-1807) and he married secondly Elizabeth Russel in 1813 while he was still Earl of Darlington.

The now Countess of Darlington was born Elizabeth Russel and with Vane's elevations she became Marchioness and then Duchess of Cleveland in 1833.

This is, therefore, her ticket to the theatre.



Elizabeth Vane, nee Russel, Duchess of Cleveland.

Full length portrait by Hoppner. Property of the Lord Barnard at Raby castle.

Elizabeth Russel was a good deal younger than her husband and the daughter of a market gardener; she was, therefore, not entirely approved of in the family, I am led to believe.

The ivory pass is unlikely ever to have been in Bath. The Cleveland's London residence was Cleveland house on the corner of King Street and St James' Square. It was a large but older type of London house and was demolished in the 19th cent. There are drawings, kept at Raby castle, of the interiors the countess would have known. Some of the furniture at Raby is also from this house.



Cleveland house St James' Square and king Street.

Redrawn from Dassent's History of London.

After the duke's death in 1842 the then dowager duchess moved out of Raby and set up home at Newton House, Burmiston , Yorkshire and latterly at 26, formerly 23, Grosvenor Square in Mayfair in 1852-61.

As to the theatre, established as The Queen's Theatre in 1705, it was rebuilt after a fire and then the building known to the Duchess of Cleveland burned down in 1867. The theatre's name changes when necessary between His and Her Majesty's with the change of reign and is currently, therefore, Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket.

These personal passes were lent to friends and there is a letter extant in which Henrietta Laura Pulteney thanks the Duchess of Manchester for the use of hers at Covent garden. Why Miss Pulteney did not have her own is a mystery unless her father's notoriously careful attitude to money meant that he would have considered such an expenditure somewhat frivolous.

The passes or 'tickets' rarely survive as each one was for one year only and once redundant most were destroyed. For that reason, it is delightful to find one with connections to Bathwick even if at arms' length.

Michael Rowe. February 2016.