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The English Court and the English Country House 1603-1625

Emily Cole discussed the royal progresses, the installation of royal state apartments in country houses, and local reactions to royal visits. Elizabeth I made twenty-three progresses. 1575 was the high point of these. James I spent a third of his reign outside London and in 1617 visited Scotland, despite the entire Privy Council, on their knees, begging him not to. He was more regular and more frequent in his visits than his predecessor. Elizabeth I had 320 hosts, James I 305. Despite these elaborate progresses, and the need to set up extraordinary postal stages, they were well organised. Gentlemen ushers would 'apparell' a house eight days in advance. The monarch was generally accompanied by the royal kitchen, a secretary of state, furniture for the royal bedchamber and trumpeters. Progresses did not save money. In 1619 Queen Anne sold jewels to pay for a progress. Some nobles also made their progresses 'like the court of a prince'. Motives were to avoid disease; to hunt; and to deal with unrest. James I often visited modest houses such as Bisham Abbey. So many people came to see him on progress that in 1612 the Venetian Ambassador wrote that he was astonished at the splendour of the King's entertainment; the court was 'much fuller than it is in London'. In some houses the apartments prepared for the monarch were kept in the same state for centuries, like a relic.