

George IV: The Role of the Crown

- George IV became King in January 1820, having been Prince Regent since 1811 due to his father's mental illness.
- He was universally disliked by Tories, Whigs and Radicals alike.



- It is almost impossible to exaggerate George's personal spending and vulgarity.
- He spent money on huge palaces, horses, jewels and mistresses.
- At a time when weavers earned just 8 shillings a week and it cost 1 shilling to buy a loaf, he amassed huge debts - at one time these rose to the equivalent to £64,000,000.

One of George's palaces: Royal Pavilion, Brighton



In 1817 George survived an assassination attempt.

- George was personally terrified of the Radical movement.
- Following the Peterloo massacre he sent a message congratulating the Manchester magistrates on how they had handled the situation.

- The public's dislike of George extended to his treatment of his estranged wife, Princess Caroline.

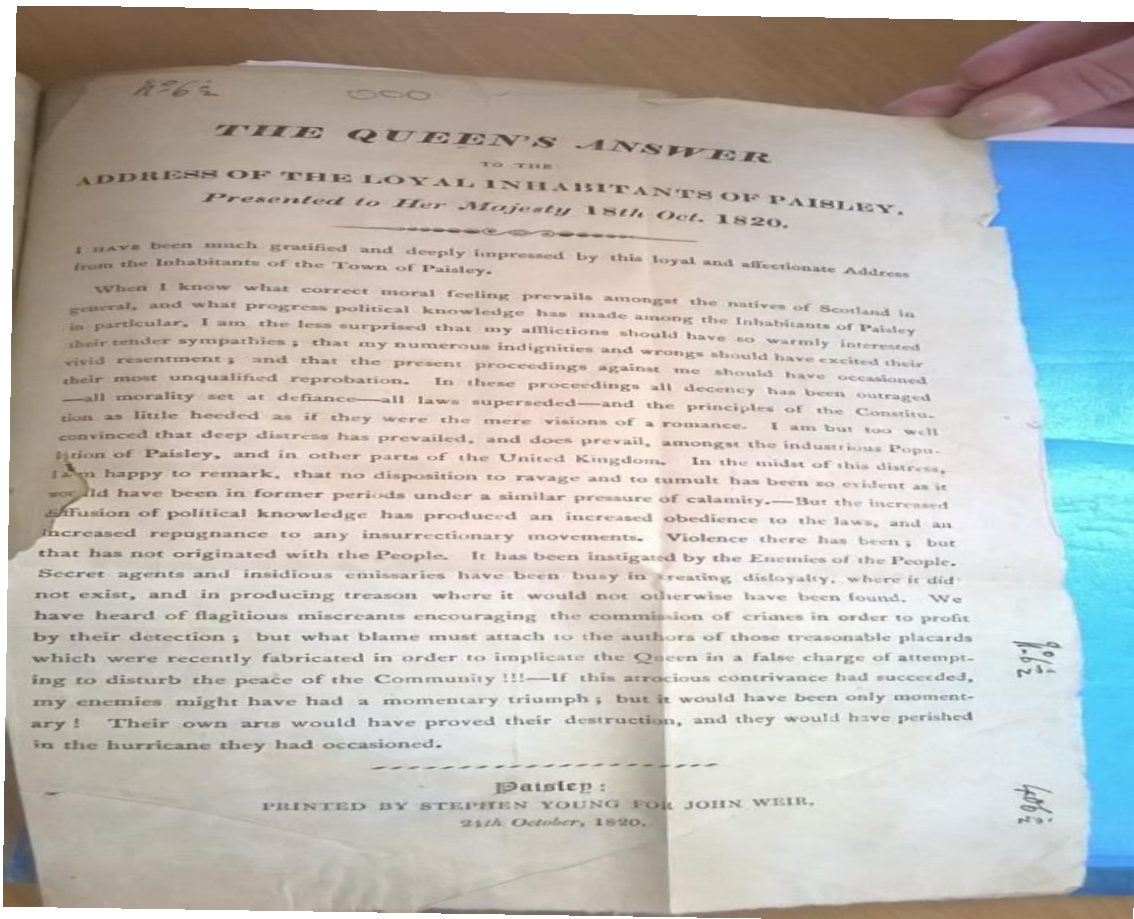


- George allowed Caroline restricted access to Charlotte, their only child, and did not inform her when Charlotte died in 1817.
- George unsuccessfully tried to have legislation passed that would have allowed him to divorce her.

- Caroline was hugely popular among the people who sympathised with her and despised George for his immoral behaviour.
- Many local authorities sent petitions in support of her. This included Paisley.

Paisley's Letter of Support

Just 6 months after the Rising, the people of Paisley sent this letter of support.



Heritage Centre, Renfrewshire Leisure

What happened after 1820?

- Caroline died in 1821, having been barred from George's Coronation service.
- In 1822 George undertook a visit to Scotland, in part to help calm unrest.
- Responsibility for preparations was given to Sir Walter Scott.
- Inexplicably the visit proved a hugely popular spectacle

- Sir Walter Scott's writing had popularised "Scottishness".
- In organising the event, Scott used the pageantry of tartan and the kilt to create a particular 'Scottish' image that persists to this day.

Portrait of kilted King George IV



George's later years

- George became increasingly unwell, continuing to eat and drink in huge amounts, and becoming addicted to laudanum.
- He became increasingly reactionary, clashing with his Tory ministers whom he believed to be too radical!
- George died in 1830.
- In 1832 the first Reform Act extended the franchise.