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## Howard, George William Frederick, seventh earl of Carlisle

(1802–1864)

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**George William Frederick Howard, seventh earl of Carlisle  
(1802–1864)**

by T. Cranfield

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**Howard, George William Frederick, seventh earl of Carlisle** (1802–1864), politician, was born in Hill Street, Berkeley Square, London, on 18 April 1802, the eldest child in a family of six sons and six daughters of George Howard, sixth earl of Carlisle (1773–1848), and his wife, Georgiana Dorothy Howard *née* Cavendish (1783–1858), daughter of the fifth duke of Devonshire. He was educated at Eton College before matriculating at Christ Church, Oxford, on 15 October 1819. In 1821 he won the university prizes for Latin and English verse. He obtained a first class in classics in the following year, and graduated BA in 1823 and MA four years later. In September 1825, when his father became earl of Carlisle, he acquired the courtesy title of Viscount Morpeth by which he was known until he succeeded his father in the earldom in 1848.

In 1826 Morpeth accompanied his maternal uncle, the sixth duke of Devonshire, on a mission to St Petersburg to attend the coronation of Tsar Nicholas I. While abroad he was returned unopposed as a whig in the general election of June 1826 for his family borough of Morpeth, Northumberland. He had initially entered the lists for the large constituency of Yorkshire in this election, but withdrew his candidature on the grounds of youth and inexperience.

Morpeth's early efforts in parliament showed his interest in promoting religious equality. He held to this aim without surrendering any of his loyal, basically broad-church Anglicanism. This was accompanied by marked personal devotion, showing an inclination to evangelicalism in some respects, more especially to incarnationalism and premillennialism. He had also a firm wish to maintain the Church of England as an establishment. Later he showed that his toleration did not extend to Tractarianism, which he denounced in some parliamentary speeches. In his maiden speech, on 5 March 1827, he seconded Sir Francis Burdett's motion for Catholic emancipation, and in April 1830 he spoke in favour of Robert Grant's motion for leave to introduce a bill for Jewish relief. At the general election in August 1830 Morpeth was returned for Yorkshire at the head of the poll, and in March 1831 he extolled the Reform Bill as 'a safe, wise, honest, and glorious measure' (*Hansard* 3, 2, 1831, 1217–20).

Morpeth was returned unopposed for Yorkshire in the general election in May 1831, and for the new constituency of the West Riding in the first post-reform general election in December 1832. He was returned for the West Riding in three subsequent elections, two of which were contested, but was narrowly defeated in the general election of July 1841. In 1833, amid controversy surrounding the campaign for a ten-hour day for all factory workers, he introduced a compromise bill on the factory question. The move was unsuccessful, but it antagonized the Ten Hours campaigners and caused Richard Oastler to stigmatize him as 'the sleek and oily Morpeth' (Southgate, 146). After this, Morpeth continued to be an object of suspicion to the Ten Hours campaigners.

In February 1835 Morpeth proposed an amendment to the address, and this was carried against Peel's Conservative government. On the formation of Lord Melbourne's second ministry in April that year, he

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was admitted to the privy council and appointed chief secretary for Ireland, commencing a lengthy and intimate acquaintance with the affairs of that country. He already had a reputation as a sympathizer with Irish claims for reform. During his difficult chief secretaryship, which he held for six years, he showed marked reforming and debating ability, carrying Irish tithe, poor-law, and municipal reform bills through parliament after long and gruelling struggles. The contentious tithe question was the subject of several reforming bills from 1834. Morpeth failed to carry tithe commutation bills in 1835, 1836, and 1837, mainly because they included the appropriation of Church of Ireland revenues. But in 1838 he carried a much amended tithe bill which did not contain appropriation. The dropping of the rancorous appropriation issue was seen as an olive branch, in return for which the House of Lords might pass Irish poor-law and municipal councils bills. The Irish poor relief question was by no means without dispute but it proved easier to settle than tithes. Morpeth helped to carry a bill in 1838 which applied to Ireland similar provisions to those of the contentious Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 for England and Wales (including workhouses). Efforts to settle the municipal government issue, however, rivalled the tithe in intricacy and difficulty, and took five years to succeed. A bill of 1835 was dropped. One of 1836 was lost through opposition in the Lords, as was another in 1838–9. Finally a bill establishing elective councils on a partial basis was passed in 1840 after heavy amendment by the Lords. Thus Morpeth and his whig colleagues carried their Irish reform programme only to a limited extent.

In attempting to carry government policy Morpeth was tactful and fairly successful in his relations with O'Connell's repealers, with whom the whigs were allied from 1835. He exerted himself to execute the policies initiated by his under-secretary, Thomas Drummond, a zealous reformer with whom he worked closely and effectively. Morpeth entered the cabinet in February 1839, but lost his seat for the West Riding at the general election in 1841 and did not return to parliament until 1846.

During a year spent in North America, Morpeth was nominated as a candidate for the city of Dublin at a by-election in January 1842, but narrowly lost the contest to a Conservative. In a by-election for the West Riding in February 1846, however, he was returned unopposed. After the fall of Peel's ministry in June that year, Morpeth was appointed (on 7 July) to Lord John Russell's cabinet as chief commissioner of woods and forests (a position his father had held in 1827). On 22 July 1847 he succeeded his father as lord lieutenant of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and in the general election in August he was again returned unopposed for the West Riding (this time along with Richard Cobden). After an unsuccessful attempt at public health reform in 1847, Morpeth reintroduced his Public Health Bill in February 1848, and after a struggle this became law by the end of the parliamentary session. Considered a weak and inadequate measure by the later standards of state intervention, it was original and ground-breaking if not very decisive or far-reaching.

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Morpeth became the seventh earl of Carlisle in October 1848 on the death of his father, and took his seat in the Lords in the following February. Carlisle was made chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster on 6 March 1850, remaining in the cabinet. He left his post when Russell's ministry resigned in February 1852, and was disappointed not to receive office in the Peelite-Liberal coalition which came to power in December. In consequence of this he believed that he had failed in politics. He was installed as lord rector of Marischal College, Aberdeen, in March 1853, and spent most of the next twelve months travelling on the continent.

In February 1855 Carlisle was invested with the Order of the Garter and was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland by the new Liberal premier, Lord Palmerston. As Irish viceroy he had reached the summit of his public career. He filled this important office for most of the remainder of his life, leaving it only between February 1858 and June 1859 when Palmerston was out of office. In Ireland, Carlisle's periods as lord lieutenant were a time of continuing political tension, and there was marked Conservative encroachment on the Liberals' electoral position. But there was comparatively little direct political threat or action. The Irish Independent Party dwindled into a small and disparate number of individuals by 1857. A motion in favour of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Ireland was defeated in the House of Commons in May 1856, and the issue was not raised again in parliament until 1868. Fenian threats to the regime were in the wings, but did not materialize in the form of rebellion until 1867. Nor did the constitutional movement for Irish reform become effectively organized again until 1864. During Carlisle's periods of viceregal office, therefore, the turbulence was either dying or in the making, rather than being active in the open. He experienced something of a lull before a storm, and attained a fair degree of popularity through his expansive social behaviour (which included wearing an enormous bunch of shamrock on St Patrick's day) and his encouragement of agricultural and industrial improvements.

Ill health compelled Carlisle to retire from the lord lieutenancy in October 1864, after he had presided at the Shakespeare tercentenary at Stratford upon Avon in the preceding April. He died at his main residence, Castle Howard, near Malton, Yorkshire, on 5 December 1864, and was buried in the family mausoleum in the park. He had never married, and was succeeded in the earldom by his brother, the Hon. and Revd William George Howard, rector of Londesborough, Yorkshire, a living belonging to his cousin the duke of Devonshire.

Carlisle's main role was that of an effective though not a foremost Liberal politician and reformer over a very wide range of questions in both Britain and Ireland. He was intellectually very able and had strong literary and theological interests, whose depth was revealed by the extracts from his journals privately printed after his death. He published a good deal of poetry, a play (*The Last of the Greeks, or, The Fall of Constantinople*) in 1828, speeches, pamphlets, lectures on literary figures, and his own travel diaries. His *Lectures and Addresses in Aid of Popular Education*, published in 1852, indicates

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a deep concern with this subject. He gave it much practical help by assisting the establishment of mechanics' institutes, founding a reformatory on his estate at Castle Howard, and supervising the village schools on his land. He had an attractive but not a forceful personality, and was a notably fluent speaker.

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*DNB*

Burke, *Peerage*

## Archives

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Castle Howard, Malton, Yorkshire, corresp. and papers incl. diary

BL, corresp. with Lord Broughton, Add. MSS 47226–47228

BL, corresp. with W. E. Gladstone, Add. MSS 44356–44403

BL, corresp. with Lord Holland, Add. MSS 51583, 52010

Bodl. Oxf., corresp. with fourth earl of Clarendon

Borth. Inst., corresp. with Sir Charles Wood

Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, letters to dukes of Devonshire

NA Scot., letters to second Lord Panmure

NRA, priv. coll., letters to Harriett, duchess of Sutherland

St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, letters to duke of Newcastle

TNA: PRO, letters to Earl Granville, PRO 30/29

TNA: PRO, corresp. with Lord John Russell, PRO 30/22

U. Durham L., Grey MSS

U. Southampton L., corresp. with Lord Palmerston

UCL, corresp. with Edwin Chadwick

W. Sussex RO, letters to duke of Richmond

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# Likenesses

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drawings, 1818–1853, Castle Howard, Malton, Yorkshire

D. Wilkie, group portrait, oils, 1837 (*The Queen presiding after her first council*), Royal Collection

C. R. Leslie, group portrait, oils, 1838 (*Queen Victoria receiving the sacrament at her coronation*), Royal Collection

C. Moore, marble bust, 1839, NG Ire.

T. H. Carrick, miniature on marble, exh. RA 1843, Castle Howard, Malton, Yorkshire

F. Holl, stipple and line print, 1854 (after G. Richmond), NG Ire.

J. H. Foley, bronze statue, 1870, Phoenix Park, Dublin

J. H. Foley, statue, 1870, Brampton Moat, Carlisle

J. H. Foley, statue, 1870, Carlisle

T. Cranfield, photograph, NPG [see illus.]

J. Doyle, caricatures, drawings, BM

J. H. Foley, bust, town hall, Morpeth, Northumberland

J. H. Foley, two busts, Castle Howard, Malton, Yorkshire

G. Hayter, group portrait, oils (*The House of Commons, 1833*), NPG

F. Holl, engraving, Castle Howard, Malton, Yorkshire

F. C. Lewis, stipple (after J. Slater), BM, NPG

J. Partridge, group portrait, oils (*The Fine Arts Commissioners, 1846*), NPG

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J. Partridge, oils, Castle Howard, Malton, Yorkshire

D. J. Pound, stipple and line print (after photograph by Mayall), NPG

C. Scott, oils (after photograph), Castle Howard, Malton, Yorkshire

S. C. Smith, oils, Dublin Castle

oils, Eton

watercolour, Castle Howard, Malton, Yorkshire

wood-engraving, NG Ire.; repro. in *ILN* (13 Feb 1864)

## Wealth at Death

under £160,000: resworn probate, June 1868, *CGPLA Eng. & Wales*

### Archive Edition

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### See also

Howard, George, sixth earl of Carlisle (1773–1848), politician <<http://oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-13901>>

Holland House set (act. 1797–1845) <<http://oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-93786>>

Health of Towns Association (act. 1844–1849) <<http://oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-95366>>



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Lord lieutenants of Ireland (1640–1922) <<http://oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-92828>>

## External resources

History of Parliament <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/howard-george-1802-1864>>

Bibliography of British and Irish history <[http://cpps.brepolis.net/bbih/incoming.cfm?odnb\\_id=13902](http://cpps.brepolis.net/bbih/incoming.cfm?odnb_id=13902)>

National Portrait Gallery <<http://www.npg.org.uk/live/search/person.asp?LinkID=mp00756>>

National Archives <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F47580>>