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Source: *eSharp*, Issue 13: Atlantic Exchanges (Spring 2009), pp. 69-89

URL: http://www.gla.ac.uk/esharp

ISSN: 1742-4542



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# The Very Model of an Early Modern Major General: Thomas Gage and the British Atlantic World, 1763-1775

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'People would not believe', wrote Major-General Thomas Gage after the first shots of the American Revolutionary War in 1775, 'that the Americans would seriously resist if put to the test, but their Rage and Enthusiasm, appeared so plainly […] that I am certain [that with] the small force I then had, I could not have stood my ground' (Gage to Barrington, 12 June 1775, II. p. 684.).[1] With these first battles of the War for Independence, the British Atlantic World - a world built on trade, the generation of wealth, a common language, and the shared concept of British 'liberty' – was split asunder. Thomas Gage was a crucial player in the events leading up to the American Declaration of Independence. He held, from the close of the Seven Years War in 1763 until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the highest military position in the Americas - Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces - and was from 1774 also the Governor General of Massachusetts' Bay.

This paper aims to analyse the ways in which Gage, an active member of American society but a committed Briton, provides us with a lens through which to view and understand the much-discussed concept of the 'Atlantic Community' in the eighteenth

[1] Unless otherwise stated, all of Gage's correspondence is from Carter (1931 and 1933).

century. That is to say, the paper aims to analyse the ways in which Gage's identity – as a Briton, as an American, and as a member of the Atlantic World – altered and developed throughout his tenure as Commander-in-Chief. This will primarily be achieved by making use of the large collection of Gage's official and private transatlantic correspondence with the various Secretaries of State with responsibility for the American colonies and with his life-long friend and confidante, the Secretary at War, Viscount Barrington. This correspondence provides a unique insight into the mindset of the leading British military official in the Americas. It allows us to test the hypotheses of current historiography with regards to a 'Greater Britain' spread across the British Isles, the American colonies and the West Indies. Furthermore, we can establish the ways in which one of the leading men in the Anglo-American political, social and military communities – in other words, a society spread on both sides of the Atlantic – typifies what we now think was the norm.

## Westminster, Canada and Culloden

Gage's family history is not a particularly glorious one, but the changes and experiences of the family throughout the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries provide an archetypal example of the establishment of Britishness amongst the lesser aristocracy. Thomas Gage's forefathers had consistently managed to pick the losing side in British history: they had supported Charles I during the British Civil Wars (1642-1651), were in favour of James, Duke of York (later II of England and Ireland, and VII of Scotland) during the Exclusion Crisis, and continued to practice Catholicism into the early years of the eighteenth century. The Gages officially adopted English Protestantism as late as 1715 (Oliver 1857, p. 125). With the abandonment of the *Popish* faith, however, the Gage family was

allowed to enter British society and play their part in Georgian politics. We cannot, therefore, overstate the crucial nature of Gage's public religious persuasions in his ability to be accepted, and promoted, in the British establishment.

Born in 1719 (or early 1720) at Highmeadow, Gloucestershire, the young Tom Gage was the second of three children of Viscount Gage and his wife, Benedicta Maria Theresa Hall. Like his elder brother, William, Tom attended Westminster Public School. Leaving in 1736, after eight years, Gage probably formed many important friendships during his school years; Augustus Keppel (later Admiral Keppel), George Keppel (later the Earl of Albemarle) and Welbore Ellis (later the Secretary at War), for example, all attended Westminster School while Gage was there (Alden 1948, p. 12).

By 1740, Gage had enlisted in the army as an ensign and, in January 1741, he bought his commission – through the influence of his elder brother's friend, the Duke of Newcastle – as a lieutenant under Colonel Chomondeley. By May 1742, Gage was a captain-lieutenant in an Irish corps, and was made captain by the beginning of 1743. In 1744, Gage was sent as an aide-de-camp to the Duke of Albemarle (the father of his school-time friend, Augustus Keppel) with the British troops sent to Flanders. In 1745, Gage was in Scotland fighting Bonnie Prince Charlie, again as Albemarle's aide-de-camp, where he took part in the battle on Culloden Moor. Promoted to lieutenant-colonel in March 1751, Gage remained with the forty-fourth for almost ten years and it was with this regiment that he sailed to the Americas in 1754 (Alden 1948, pp. 13-15).

Before leaving for the Americas, Gage tried – unsuccessfully – to enter the House of Commons as an MP. As was common in the eighteenth century, Gage would have been able to boost and better his military career through having a seat in Parliament. Gage, along

with his father, stood for election (and re-election in Viscount Gage's case) in Tewkesbury. Both men, however, were denied seats after a somewhat controversial contest (Namier 1982, p. 131). When Viscount Gage died a few months after the election, Thomas gave up any ambitions to enter Parliament.

Sailing to America in 1755, Gage began his long path towards the position of Commander-in-Chief. His war record during the Seven Years War was unimpressive, but not dishonourable. He saw battle, primarily in Canada, throughout the war. While John Shy has suggested that the then Commander-in-Chief, Jeffrey Amherst, thought Gage to be lacking in aggression in 1759, he provides no reference to support this claim (1978, p. 5). Either way, the war ended before Gage had the chance to distinguish or disgrace himself in battle. While he proved to be a mediocre warrior, his real success lay in his ability to administrate the American army over the coming twenty years – at least until the outbreak of hostilities between the colonies and Britain.

## Whither *Briton* or *American?*

The development of our understanding of the increasing power and influence of a British, and an 'Atlantic', national identity has taken great strides in recent years. The pre-eminent work on the nature of British nationalism in the eighteenth century is Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (1992) in which we find a persuasive, well-written and convincing account and analysis. Colley's main arguments revolve around the central importance of Protestantism and the French Catholic 'Other', and the significance of the development of an effective fiscal-business culture in the British Isles, in the creation of an all-encompassing (or almost all-encompassing) British identity.

More recently, there have also been attempts to understand the nature of the connection between the British-American colonists and Britons-in-Britain. Historians such as Eliga Gould, David Armitage and T.H. Breen have recently analysed the idea of Britishness and how it applies to the British Isles (that is, including Scotland and Ireland) as well as the First British Empire in North America.[2] In moving away from the rather cynical view of politics as a power-struggle amongst country gentlemen espoused by Lewis Namier in the first half of the twentieth century, these modern historians see in Hanoverian Britain an evolving, dynamic, modernising and highly commercial world with a 'shifting relationship between an expansive metropolitan state and a loosely integrated group of American colonies' (Breen 1997, p. 14).

The American Revolution, Gould points out, saw the splitting of a largely hegemonic metropolitan Anglophone society and nation in the Atlantic Empire into two distinct units connected by culture, commerce and language, but no longer the same *nation* (Gould 2000, p. 210). Armitage argues similarly that new analyses of 'Greater Britain' must include comparative histories of 'Atlantic America' and 'Atlantic Europe', and must show the links between Britons, Americans and Europeans wherever in the world they may be, while avoiding the 'lingering taint of anti-Europeanism' in studies of British history (Armitage 1999, p. 444).

This type of Atlantic history is based on an understanding of the personal, commercial and political ties connecting the various parts of the First British Empire. So, for example, the ways in which merchants were connected with the African coast, through various points of contact in Britain, and eventually through to the colonies in America because of the slave trade, provides the historian with an

[2] See, *inter alia*, Gould 1999, 2000, Armitage 1999, Breen 1997, and Clark 1997.

analysis of, and a narrative on, the nature of this Atlantic world. Moreover, the ways in which Americans viewed this British Empire is crucial: as McConville (2006) has recently established, the Americans at first tried to be more British-than-the-British. It was only when they realised that their position as colonials (and therefore as subordinate to, or different from, those in the United Kingdom) was entrenched in the mind of Britons that Americans cast off their allegiances to the crown. Before this, however, Americans were more than willing and happy to share in the joys of the growth of George's dominions: H.B. Bowen (2002), for example, demonstrates well the ways in which Americans viewed the Asiatic British Empire and the public joy experienced after British victories in that area of the world. It is important to note here that the first spark of the American Revolution was caused by an upset in Britain's Asian empire: the tea dumped into Boston Harbour came from the East India Company and was sent, by ministers in Britain, to try to restore the balance in the Indian part of the empire. As Britain's empire began to expand in a new way in Asia and Africa – through conquest, as opposed to (relatively) peaceable settlement – Americans began to fear for their own liberty and saw Britons as French-style conquerors (Bowen 2002, pp. 291-6). The American Revolution was, as a result, an attempt to maintain historical British liberties in response to the supposed threats from the aggressive, expansive and continental-style government in the metropolis. It is with these new understandings of eighteenth century nationality, national awareness and empire that we must try to re-assess Gage's position in this revolutionary time period.

Having established that Protestantism was the cornerstone of Britishness and of the Anglophone Atlantic World in general, we must first consider Gage's religious affiliations. It is somewhat

unfortunate, however, that Gage's correspondence leaves us little information on his personal religious views. This should perhaps be expected: Gage was a military man, writing to his military and political superiors, and so personal anecdotes and discussion on religion and religious issues would be highly unlikely. Nevertheless, Gage did on occasion show his support for the Church of England when, for example, he suggested to Lord Dartmouth in June 1775, that several Church of England clergymen 'whose Loyalty obliges [them] to quit the Country [New York] and who I recommend to your Lordship's Notice [as these men have] distinguished themselves greatly in the Cause of Government' (Gage to Dartmouth, 12 June 1775, I. p. 404). Of more importance to our analysis, however, is the fact that Gage officially embraced Anglicanism and there was never any public doubt as to his religious convictions.

Protestantism is but one part of the many-faceted evolution of British national identity as discussed by Colley. Of similar consequence to the development of Britishness was the threat from the French 'Other'.[3] This form of Francophobia – made more acute by almost constant warfare between Great Britain and France throughout most of the eighteenth century – gave Britons of all classes a common enemy with which to compare and contrast themselves.

In the Americas, although the French threat had been effectively removed during the Seven Years War, there remained a French population in Canada and significant French interests amongst the Native American populations, as well as considerable Spanish possessions in Louisiana and South and Central America. As

[3] An example of British Franco-phobia in poetry from the mid-eighteenth century: 'Let France grow proud, beneath the tyrant's lust/ While the rack'd people crawl, and lick the dust/ The manly genius of this isle disdains/ All tinsel slavery, or golden chains' (Colley 1992, p. 36).

Commander-in-Chief, Gage naturally had to 'keep a Watchful eye upon Them' and ensure there was no major threat to British possessions in North American from either His Most Christian or His Most Catholic Majesty (Conway to Gage, 24 October 1765. II. p. 28).

In Gage's letters, therefore, we see an almost constant paranoia over the actions of the French, particularly with regard to their supposed support for Native American tribes. For example, in 1764 Gage reported that it was widely believed amongst the Indian tribes that 'a Fleet and Army would come to Quebec from France to retake the Country' should they rebel against the British (Gage to Halifax, 7 January 1764. I. p. 10). To prove to the Indians that the French were unwilling and, indeed, unable to return and fight for Canada, Gage decided to use French-Canadian troops in the war against Northern tribes. Writing to Halifax, Gage stated that:

> Nothing can certainly So soon convince the Savages of their Error in Expecting Assistance from the French, or so soon give them an Idea of the Addition of Strength, acquired by Great Britain, by her late Acquisition than to see a Body of Canadians in Arms, and ready to act Hostilely against them, in Conjunction with His Majesty's other Troops (Gage to Halifax, 13 February 1764. I. p. 17).

Although it was part of the job description, and certainly an important strategic and tactical consideration, we find in Gage a man obsessed with the motives, movements and plans of the French and the Spanish. Thus, as late as 1772, Gage remained concerned over actions of individual Frenchmen who spent time in the colonies, 'learnt the English language, and got a shallow Knowledge of our Laws' as they were a potentially subversive and destructive element in British America (Gage to Hillsborough, 2 September 1772, I. p. 331). Gage's letters to the principle secretaries of state from 1763 include well over 150 mentions of French actions and intentions in the Americas. The 'cursed French settlements, with the Strolling French

and Canadians […] give a great deal of Trouble' and, Gage claimed, should be 'removed' as soon as was possible (Gage to Barrington, 4 March 1769. II. p. 502). Furthermore, in the early 1770s, when war between Britain and Spain was on the verge of breaking out over the crisis in the Falkland Islands, Gage sought to put the Americas on a sound war-footing in the belief that the French and Spanish would soon attack the colonies (Alden 1948, p. 69).

While this concern is understandable at the close of the Seven Years War, Gage never ceased in his mistrust of his Gallic neighbours. Even in 1768, Gage continued to report that:

> Tho' the French may not be desirous of promoting immediate Hostilities, People from Canada and the Mississippi, do certainly endeavour to keep up an Interest of the French, amongst all the Indian Nations, to make use of on a good Occasion. They desire them to hold fast the old Chain of Friendship, assure them that their Father will return, and request they keep the Axe bright, and ready to strike, as soon as a proper Opportunity shall offer (Gage to Hillsborough, 17 August 1768. I. p. 185).

The French, therefore, were a constant worry for Gage. He continued to worry about the newly acquired formerly French colonies in Canada and believed that the only way to ensure the continued loyalty of French settlers was to maintain a militaristic style of government (i.e. maintain the power of the military governor of Quebec) and ensure the continuation of well-supplied and maintained forts in the area. While this proposal was expensive, and therefore likely to be dismissed or viewed dimly by the Treasury in London, Gage pointed out that this system would be the only way to provide 'a check upon his Majesty's new Subjects […] whom I apprehend will not be the most faithful Subjects' (Gage to Shelburne, 22 February 1767. I. p. 122 and Gage to Barrington (Private), 4 March 1769. II. p. 502).

So concerned was Gage about the potential threat from the French – particularly in the years just after the end of the Seven Years War – that he wrote, in 1764, to complain of French actions (most notably, in helping support Native American uprisings against British troops and colonists) to French officials complaining of their actions regarding the Indian tribes. This step blurred significantly the lines between the civil and the military powers in the colonies. Confusing the 'military' and the 'civil' balance of power in the colonies was one aspect of British control which the American Declaration of Independence rails against, and was a problem which gave Gage significant troubles throughout his period as Commander-in-Chief (Struan 2006, pp. 67-75).

Gage also suffered over a year of political and social fights and arguments with the Governor of New York in the 1760s. The situation between the two men became so bad that Gage had to write to his superiors, and his friends, in London to be provided with clear instructions – and a clear definition of his powers *vis-à-vis* the various governors – to settle the situation. The issue of the poor relationship between Gage and Governor Sir Henry Moore (which started over a disagreement between Mrs Gage and Mrs Moore, and revolved around which wife deserved a higher social status in New York) caused a substantial amount of political noise in Parliament and Hillsborough wrote to Gage that:

> I am commanded by the King to write your Excellency a private Letter in regard to the Contest that has subsisted between the Governor of New York and the Commander in Chief in relation to Precedency…This foolish Matter made a good deal of Noise last Session of Parliament in the House of Commons…I think I can now confidently assure you, that the right Principles and Purposes with regard to America, are adopted by all the King's confidential Servants; and I make no Doubt that the Measures which will be pursued at the opening of the next Session of Parliament will warrant me in this

> Information (Hillsborough to Gage, 4 August 1770. II. p. 111-3).[4]

Moor was not the only governor to have issues with Gage's position: James Murray (military Governor of Quebec) and George Johnstone (Governor of West Florida) both caused Gage significant headaches, and Johnstone became so insufferable in the mid-1760s that Gage refused to have any further contact with him in a professional capacity (Struan 2006, p. 69).

Gage's position also came under significant attack in the numerous editions of *The Administration of the Colonies* written by the then famous MP, Thomas Pownall (Struan 2006, p. 74; see also Nicolson 2000, p. 207). There also remained a somewhat confused relationship between the British Army and the Royal Navy in the Americas, which led to some significant problems during the tumults of the 1760s and 1770s. (See, for example, Commissioner of the Customs at Boston to His Excellency General Gage and to Colonel Dalrymple, 11 July 1768). This lack of imperial boundaries and a lack of clear direction for the empire led to the problems between Gage and the various civil governments in the Americas and led to the American claim that George III had 'affected to render the Military independent of, and superior to, the Civil Power' (American Declaration of Independence, 1776).

## An Empire of Liberty?

Perhaps of greater importance when studying Gage, however, is the extent to which he typified that of a member of an 'Atlantic Empire' or an 'Anglo-American community'. Our understandings of these connections and ties are relatively new, and are still undergoing historical analysis and debate. In Gage, we can find an example of a

[4] For details of the discussion in the Commons, see Hansard (1813).

member of the 'Atlantic Empire'; as Gould, Armitage and Breen have very recently pointed out, the pre-Revolutionary Empire was one of shared culture, trade, language and tradition. The colonies were, then, an extension of the metropolitan centre of Britishness, where Britons forged a new England, built on the same traditions of commerce, liberty and 'toleration' of religion found in Britain. Certainly, the colonists themselves viewed this to be the case during their argument with the British ministry in the 1760s: colonists consistently claimed they simply wanted to be treated the same as their English brethren in Lancashire or Sussex. More than that, however, there was a sense of one nation, spread across the Atlantic, working together under George III and his Parliament (at least before the crises of the 1770s). [5]

As McConville (2006, pp. 313-6) has discussed, even after the formation of the United States, Americans remained attached to British culture. It took the former colonists a number of years to remove themselves from a truly British cultural norm and develop a new, and an American, national identity. So, for example, as George Washington was hailed the first ever President of the United States of America, the crowd sang odes to their war hero to the tune of 'God Save the King' (McConville 2006, p. 314). The fact that it took Americans so long to cast off their old nationality – their old allegiances to crown, brethren, mother country and 'home' – shows how persuasive, and how deep-rooted, Britishness was in the colonies before the American Revolution.

Gage, although perhaps unaware himself, does to some degree characterise a member of our idea of the pan-Atlantic Anglophone community. Gage's marriage to an American (Margaret Kemble), his not inconsiderable property in the Americas, his length of stay in

[5] For some discussion on this point, see Armitage (1999) and Breen (1997).

America (which was much of his adult life), and his various American connections suggests he is the prime example of this 'Greater British' nation. Although he never considered himself to be a 'proper' American (that is, one of the colonists), Gage's connections to America were arguably stronger than his relationship with England. His children were raised in America – although his son (who would later inherit the title of Viscount Gage and lands at Firle, Sussex) was educated in Britain – and Gage was an active and well-liked member of the New York society. He was a regular attendee at high-class New York social events and became quite a popular figure in the Americas. He entertained a number of leading Americans, including Native American leaders. He viewed New York as 'home' and was disappointed when he had to move to Boston as he felt part of New York's society and culture (Struan 2006, pp. 97-9) So strong was his influence in the colonies, and particularly in his home-away-from-home city of New York, that he was honoured repeatedly by the New York Assembly (including being given the key to the city) and viewed as an exceptionally sociable and capable commander (Struan 2006, pp. 20-5 Alden 1948, p. 52).

What is perhaps of greater significance is the view Gage held of the British Empire. At the crux of the problems between Great Britain and America in the time of the American Revolution was sovereignty. This issue over sovereignty – and particularly regarding whether the local colonial assemblies had the same rights, or a similar level of rights, as the Houses of Parliament in Westminster – has largely become amongst historians an accepted aspect of the Revolution (Thomas 1992). It is also now accepted that the position of Commander-in-Chief was a controversial one, and its growth in

power caused important constitutional and legal ramifications (Reid 1977).

In this light, and with these understandings, we see that Gage's view of the Empire was basically conservative. He consistently supported the rights of Westminster over the American Assemblies. This is not surprising: as a Briton, and a member of the establishment, it would be unlikely that he would champion American rights. He was, moreover, ordered in 1775 to do all in his powers to restore the 'publick Tranquillity' and to try to re-establish the 'natural' relationship between the Houses of Parliament and the colonial assemblies (Dartmouth to Gage, 3 March 1775. II. p. 187). Gage's personal opinion on the relationship of the colonies to the mother country show through in various letters, both private and official, and he made no secret of the fact that he thought Great Britain supreme in all cases whatsoever:

> After the many Proofs His Majesty has given of his Paternal Tenderness to all his People, particularly in the Manner in which he has now referred the Consideration of the Disturbances in the Colonies to the Wisdom of his Parliament; And the Temper and Moderation shewn in the Addresses of both Houses on that Occasion, in which they express so much Care for the honor of His Majesty's Government, and at the same Time profess so much Regard for the Welfare of all his People; None but the most stubborn and factious Spirits can refuse to submit the Decision of their Constitutional Rights, to the Wisdom of the British Legislature. And I most sincerely hope that the People of the Colonies will rely on it's Decision with that Duty and Submission which they owe to the Legislative Acts of the Mother Country (Gage to Conway, 28 March 1766. I. p. 85).

It was, as many critics – both modern and contemporary – of the British response to American demands at this time have pointed out, this type of rigidity in thinking and a lack of appreciation for the situation which led the Americans to cast off their allegiance to the

House of Hanover. We ought not, however, to think of Gage merely as a rigid, conservative and backwards military man with no potential for dynamism. Rather, we find in Gage's communication an intelligent and thoughtful man, with a great wealth of ideas on all aspects of British colonial policy. Topics under his command and consideration ranged from the best system of 'management' for the Indian tribes where Gage was very influential in establishing the superintendant system, which was considerably more successful than previous British methods, to improving systems of trade, where Gage suggested that Britain adopt a French-style monopolistic approach to some aspects of trade, in order to maximise the benefits and even methods of transportation along water highways in and out of Montreal in Canada (Struan 2006, pp. 30-6; see also Alden 1948, pp. 55-6)

Gage was not alone in discussing alternate plans for the empire in the Americas: there was, as McConville (2006, pp. 220-44) has established, a number of imperial theorists working throughout the eighteenth century to try to improve, and to codify, the empire's constitution. Where Gage differed, however, was that he had ready access to the men able to make the changes. While theorists such as Thomas Pownall or Martin Bladen might have had some influence in Parliament (both men were MPs), Gage was able to communicate directly with Shelburne, Conway, Hillsborough, Dartmouth and Barrington. These various secretaries of state were the men with direct responsibility for British planning for the Americas and so when, for example, in the 1760s it was suggested that a new colony should be created in the Americas, Gage's insistence that the policy would be a catastrophic failure led Hillsborough to solidify his position in cabinet (Struan 2006, pp. 89-93).

The Empire, therefore, in Gage's view was an extension of Britain. Although he kept the distinction between *Briton* and *American*, this mainly manifested itself at times of crisis. He was happy to accept the colonists as equals and thought them worthy of the 'blessed constitution' as established after the Glorious Revolution. Gage's view of the attitude and intention of the colonists through the 1760s and 70s was more realistic than that of his British counterparts: he repeatedly warned his superiors of the dangers of colonial extremism, and of the lengths to which some Americans would go to ensure their American liberty. Gage had established the root of the problems, and transmitted them to London, as early as 1765:

> […] the Spirit of Democracy is strong amongst them. The Question is not of the inexpediency of the Stamp Act, or the inability of the Colonys to pay the Tax, but that it is unconstitutional, and contrary to their Rights, supporting the Independency of the Provinces, and not Subject to the Legislative Power of Great Britain (Gage to Conway, 21 October 1765. I. p. 69).

As such problems intensified in the 1770s, Gage continued to have a realistic and sound grasp of the situation. He was well aware of the problems quelling any widespread American rebellion would bring, and knew that the troops then under his command would be nowhere near sufficient to control all of the thirteen colonies.

The leading politicians in Britain were simply unwilling to accept Gage's warnings and proclamations of American hostility as the situation worsened. 'If you think ten Thousand Men sufficient', wrote Gage to Barrington from Boston in 1774, 'send Twenty, if one Million is thought enough, give two: you will save both Blood and Treasure in the End' (Gage to Barrington (Private), 2 November 1774. II. p. 527). Similarly, Gage wrote to Dartmouth that 'if Force is to be used at length, it must be a considerable one, and Foreign Troops must be hired; for to begin with Small Numbers will encourage [further]

resistance' (Gage to Dartmouth (Private), 30 October 1774. I. p. 381; see also PRO 30.23.3.2, fos 465-472). The reply from Dartmouth to these warnings came early in 1775; it patronised Gage and reaffirmed the position of the leading British politicians in believing that Gage was running scared with no real appreciation for the *true* American situation. Dartmouth wrote:

> I am persuaded, Sir, that you must be aware that such a Force cannot be collected without augmenting our Army in general to a War-Establishment; and tho' I do not mention this as an objection, because I think that the preservation, to Great Britain, of her Colonies demands the exertion of every effort this Country can make, yet I am unwilling to believe that matters are as yet come to that Issue (Dartmouth to Gage (Secret), 27 January 1775. II. p. 181).

As a result of the ministerial short-sightedness, Gage was forced to start fighting a continental war – against up to two million Americans – with as few as 3,500 troops (most of whom were trapped inside Boston). By August of 1775, however, and with a growing realisation in Westminster and Whitehall that the American problem was a significant one, Dartmouth ordered that the army in America be 'at least 20,000 men inclusive of Canadians and Indians' (PRO 30.29.3.2, fos 475-477).

## The Very Model of an Early Modern Major General?

Gage was dismissed from the position of Commander-in-Chief in September 1775. He set sail for England, leaving America never to return, on 11 October and arrived in London just over one month later. Public opinion regarding General Gage remained split in England after his recall; while some commentators condemned him, others were talking of him as a 'good and wise man…surrounded by difficulties' (Alden 1948, p. 284). Certainly, it seems that Gage was in an impossible situation by 1774. The American people were unwilling

to be coerced into submission and all shows of force were perceived as British tyranny. On the other hand, British officials were similarly unwilling to back down but, crucially, they were also reluctant to send Gage the men and arms he would have required to force the colonies into submission. Gage lost favour in London because of his caution, his unwillingness to start an armed conflict on his own initiative, and his insistence that any war waged between Britain and America would be hard-fought, costly, long and devastating.

Gage's time in America provides a fascinating insight into the concept of Britishness, American-ness, an Atlantic World, and the descent to war in the Anglophone world. Although he was ultimately unsuccessful in preventing the American Revolution, Gage's career was not a dismal failure. Gage was a reasonably effective bureaucrat, controlling a vast army throughout the Americas, with equally gigantic amounts of paperwork and administrative tasks. Moreover, Gage undoubtedly believed that George III's subjects in the American colonies *should* be taxed to pay for their administration and – vitally – their defence by British redcoats. Such opinions are scattered throughout Gage's official and private correspondence, where he shows an appreciation for the need to tax the colonists to pay for the soldiers stationed in the Americas.

In addition, Gage's family's recent history shows the influence the 'accepted' British norm had to influence – or coerce – British subjects into modifying their personal and public lives' to match the common expectation. As a result, Gage could claim that he truly was a *Briton* and a child of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. More than that, however, he was also a member of a vast Anglo-American empire connected by trade, by culture, by politics, and by language. While it is important to remember that Gage and his contemporaries would never have used this type of terminology – they would never have

seen themselves to be part of an 'Atlantic Community' or to be developing ideas and ideals of Britishness – we nevertheless find in Gage, and in his correspondence, an excellent example of a truly Atlantic man: a man whose life was crucially linked to both Great Britain and to the American colonies. This shared Atlantic Empire, however, was to come to an abrupt and painful end under Gage's watch: the events of 5 March 1770 and 6 December 1773, and the first shots of the American Revolution in 1775, forever changed the nature of the Atlantic community and radically altered the course of Gage's life.

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