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*Collector's Edition*

# ROYAL DYNASTIES



- ROYAL WEDDINGS THROUGH THE AGES ● **HENRY VIII AND ANNE BOLEYN**
- **SECRETS OF ROYAL PARENTING** ● THE WINDSORS IN WORLD WAR TWO
- THE BLOODY PLANTAGENETS ● **ELIZABETH I'S GREAT LOVE**



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*Collector's Edition*

# ROYAL DYNASTIES

## WELCOME



Families matter, especially when you are a king or queen. Throughout history, nothing has been more important to Britain's monarchs than creating a stable dynasty, and to do so has nearly always required a successful marriage and a brood of potential heirs. Get it right – as the likes of Edward III and Victoria did – and the benefits are clear. But family troubles, of the kind that afflicted Henry VIII and Richard III, can lead to disarray for the crown and the country.

In this collector's edition, we have compiled a selection of the best articles on royal families to have appeared in *BBC History Magazine* over the years, accompanied by several new pieces. Over the pages that follow you will meet some of the most fascinating royal couples and family groups, and pick up some tips for raising a royal child and celebrating a royal wedding.

It would be difficult to tackle this subject without exploring the family of our present Queen and so the final section delves into the lives of the Windsors – from their wartime activities to the present day.

I hope you enjoy this collector's edition and please do check out our monthly magazine where we will continue to investigate the lives of British monarchs on a regular basis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Attar'.

**Rob Attar**, Editor

FROM THE MAKERS OF  **HiSTORY** MAGAZINE

# CONTENTS

## ROYAL COUPLES

- 8** **How Matilda rewrote the rules**  
The diplomatic skills of William the Conqueror's canny wife helped the Normans consolidate their hold on England, says Tracy Borman
- 16** **Did Anne Boleyn crave the crown?**  
The argument that Anne refused to sleep with Henry VIII until he made her his queen simply doesn't stack up, says George Bernard
- 24** **Queen Elizabeth I's great love**  
One suitor came closer to Elizabeth I than any other. Tracy Borman explores the 'Virgin Queen's' relationship with Robert Dudley
- 32** **Charles II: too randy to rule**  
Don Jordan and Michael Walsh reveal how the merrie monarch's obsession with sex cost England a fortune and left it vulnerable to attack
- 40** **The A-Z of royal weddings**  
Many were glorious affairs but others were a complete disaster. Tracy Borman takes a look at royal marriages through history

## ROYAL FAMILIES

- 50** **How to raise a royal**  
A monarch's life can be a real challenge. Tracy Borman offers tips on preparing royal children for the demands of being a ruler
- 60** **The Plantagenets**  
Robert Bartlett traces the rise and fall of a remarkable dynasty that dominated England for 331 years
- 68** **Edward III, family man**  
Mark Ormrod explains why Edward III's family played such a critical role in his dreams of empire
- 76** **George III and his relatives**  
George was determined that his own family should be very different from the dysfunctional one in which he grew up, says Janice Hadlow

## WORLD OF THE WINDSORS

- 84** **George V, the modernising monarch**  
The British monarchy's survival into the 21st century owes an enormous debt to George V and his wife, Mary, says Denys Blakeway
- 92** **The Windsors at war**  
Stephen Bates describes how the royal family's response to the Second World War cemented its place in the affections of the British people
- 100** **Elizabeth II: a life in pictures**  
A pictorial story of Elizabeth II, Britain's longest reigning monarch, through six eventful decades
- 108** **The fall and rise of the royal family**  
Royal events today are celebrated with enthusiasm in the UK, a turnaround from the 1990s when the future of the monarchy was questioned, says Sarah Gristwood

24



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# ROYAL C

REGAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT CHANGED HISTORY

- 
- + How **WILLIAM AND MATILDA** rewrote the rules for queenship
  - + Did **ANNE BOLEYN** really insist on being the queen of **HENRY VIII**?
  - + The scandalous romance of the Virgin Queen, **ELIZABETH I**
  - + The obsession with women that made **CHARLES II** a poor king
  - + A match made in heaven? Find out in the A-Z of **ROYAL WEDDINGS**



# COUPLES



## DYSFUNCTIONAL COUPLE

Charles II neglected his wife Catherine, shown here, and squandered time and money on a string of mistresses instead of attending to affairs of state



# MATILDA

*The queen who  
rewrote the rules*

Far from just providing heirs, the relationship between William the Conqueror and his wife Matilda inspired a new model of queenship, says **TRACY BORMAN**, with Matilda's diplomatic skills proving crucial to the consolidation of William's rule



### A NEW KIND OF QUEEN

The statue of Matilda – Queen of England and the benevolent counterweight to William I's brutality – in the gardens of the Palais du Luxembourg in Paris

### FACING PAGE

A coin from the reign of William I (1066–1087). The silver penny shows a portrait of the king with his crown and sceptre





#### WILLIAM'S FLAGSHIP

This scene from the Bayeux Tapestry shows *The Mora*, the magnificent flagship commissioned by Matilda for her husband's invasion of England in 1066

In late autumn 1066, a diminutive woman of 35 prayed fervently in the Benedictine priory of Nôtre Dame du Pré, a small chapel that she had founded in 1060 on the banks of the river Seine near Rouen. Flanked by her ladies, she had spent many hours at her devotions during the previous few days.

It was with good cause that she had kept such an anxious vigil. Her husband William 'the Bastard', Duke of Normandy, had set sail for England more than two weeks before, determined to wrest the throne from Harold Godwinson. At last, a messenger arrived with news that her prayers had been answered. William and his Norman army had triumphed over the Saxons at Senlac hill, close to the town of Hastings by which the battle would henceforth be known. She, Matilda, was now not just Duchess of Normandy, but Queen of England.

Upon hearing the momentous tidings, Matilda joyfully proclaimed that the priory should henceforth be known as Nôtre Dame de Bonnes Nouvelles (Our Lady of Good News). She had good reason to rejoice. The crown of England was a glittering

prize that even she, with her overweening ambition, could not possibly have hoped for when she became the wife of the baseborn Duke of Normandy some 15 years earlier.

But Hastings, decisive as it was, marked the start, not the end, of William's campaign to conquer England. It would take years of bitter fighting before he was finally able to establish a measure of control over the country. William himself realised that he could not rule by the sword alone: he needed to win the hearts and minds of his resentful new subjects. The surest means of achieving this was to place his wife at centre stage.

Matilda had already won great renown within Normandy for her piety, political shrewdness and, above all, her unimpeachable lineage. Daughter of the formidable Count Baldwin V of Flanders and niece of the King of France, she could trace her descent from the great Charlemagne, founding father of the French and German empires.

Even more valuable, from her husband's perspective, was the fact that she had English royal blood in her veins, for she was descended from King Alfred the Great. Little wonder that William had been so desperate to marry her that, according to one account, he

William I pictured in a 13th-century historical chronicle







had ridden at full speed to Bruges and dragged her by the hair into the mud, kicking and beating her until she agreed to become his wife.

**D**espite its rather inauspicious beginnings, William and Matilda's marriage would prove one of the most successful in history. Together, they established the mighty Norman dynasty that would dominate Europe for more than a hundred years. In an age when the primary duty of female consorts was to produce an heir, Matilda exceeded expectations by giving birth to four sons and at least five daughters, all of whom survived well into adulthood.

She may have been the model of wifely obedience on the surface, but this masked a fierce ambition for power.

Matilda combined the unrelenting duties of motherhood with an increasingly active role in the government of Normandy. By 1066, she had gained unrivalled influence over her husband, and he had no hesitation in appointing her regent of the duchy when he embarked upon the invasion of England.

Within weeks of his victory at Hastings, William was sorely missing his wife's presence. He resolved to defer his coronation (which was scheduled for Christmas Day 1066) so that Matilda might join him, "since if God granted him this honour, he wished for his wife to be crowned with him". This was more than mere devotion: he knew full well that Matilda's presence – given her ancestral ties with previous English kings – would lend the occasion much-needed legitimacy. But his advisers urged that he could brook no delay and his coronation went ahead before Matilda was able to leave Normandy.

Matilda had gained unrivalled influence over her husband, and he had no hesitation in appointing her regent when he embarked upon the invasion of England

Matilda was every bit as eager as William to establish herself in England, and had already begun to style herself queen. But it was not until the spring of 1068 that she finally arrived in her new kingdom. The delay had been caused not just by the demands of her regency in Normandy, but also her role as matriarch of the Norman dynasty. She had fallen pregnant shortly before William's departure for England in 1066 (resulting in the birth of a daughter, Adela), and by the time she landed on English soil, she was pregnant once more.

The new queen's arrival in England was noted by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, which referred to her derisively as 'the Lady Matilda', while her new subjects called her 'the strange woman'. Their suspicion was rooted in the fact that the Normans spoke of her as 'la Royne', which implied that she was a female sovereign in her own right. This was shocking to her new subjects: previous English queens had been referred to merely as 'the king's wife'.

Undeterred, Matilda threw herself into the task of bringing much-needed glamour to her husband's court. A magnificent gathering was held at Winchester to celebrate Easter, and another at Westminster shortly afterwards, attended by a host of English notables. Even the anti-Norman chroniclers could not help but be impressed by the opulent spectacle that the couple presented, clad from head to toe in gold-encrusted robes and eating their sumptuous meals from gold and silver platters.

As soon as these celebrations were out of the way, plans began in earnest for the main purpose of Matilda's visit: her coronation. The event was loaded with significance. Besides being vital to William's efforts to reinforce his legitimacy in the eyes of his new subjects, Matilda would be the first queen of England to be formally styled 'Regina'. Her coronation was also the first ever staged just for a queen, and Matilda was determined that it should eclipse her husband's in splendour. Every detail was planned with meticulous care. Special laudes (ritual chants) were written for the occasion, declaring that Matilda 'shared'

William's authority. Never before had a queen's power been so formalised – or so equal to that of the king. It was a sign of things to come.

The new queen's presence did not immediately establish order in England. Barely were the coronation celebrations out of the way than fresh trouble had broken out in the north of the kingdom. Fearing a rebellion, William hastened to York, the principal city of the north, from where he could prepare his own forces to quell any uprisings.

Matilda had no intention of staying behind in the relatively safe confines of the court in London. Sensing an opportunity to win over their recalcitrant subjects, she decided to join her husband in Yorkshire. This involved a journey of some 200 miles on roads that were little more than mud tracks – a considerable enough feat in itself, let alone for a woman who was by then heavily pregnant. Foremost in her mind was the thought that if she could give birth to this new heir in the most rebellious region of her kingdom, it would achieve more towards Anglo-Norman integration than her husband's strong-arm tactics ever could.

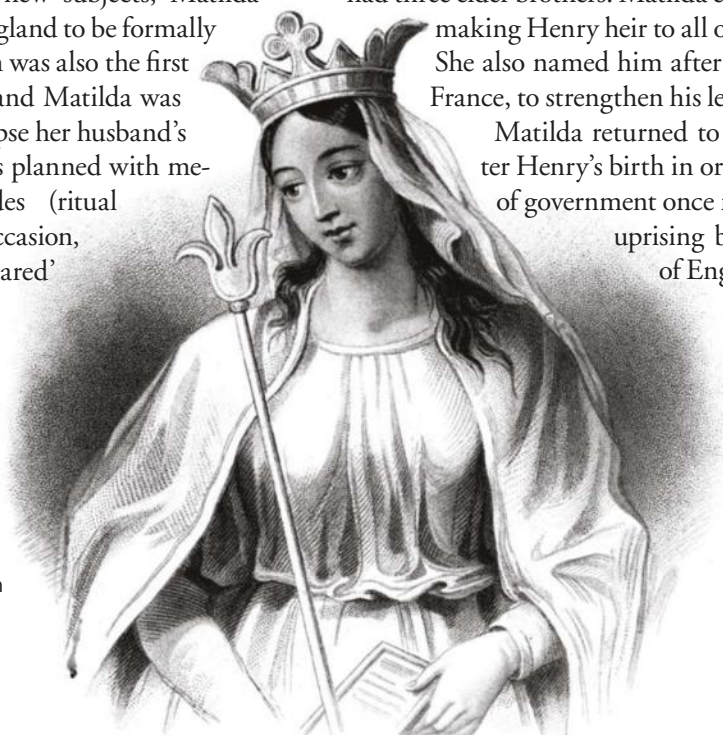
Although she was bound for York, the onset of labour forced Matilda to take refuge in Selby, some 14 miles south of the northern capital. There, she gave birth to Henry, her ninth and final child.

Her plan worked brilliantly. The English came to regard this prince as the only lawful successor to their throne from among the Norman dynasty, even though he had three elder brothers. Matilda encouraged this view by making Henry heir to all of her lands in England. She also named him after her uncle, the King of France, to strengthen his legitimacy.

Matilda returned to Normandy shortly after Henry's birth in order to take up the reins of government once more. But when a fresh uprising broke out in the north of England in 1069, William

#### THE DREAM WIFE

Matilda's piety, political savvy and peerless lineage (she could trace her descent from Emperor Charlemagne) made her quite a catch



ALAMY





**PREPARING FOR BATTLE** William orders fortifications to be built at Hastings, in the Bayeux Tapestry. While he was campaigning in England, the duke left Normandy in the hands of his wife Matilda

urged her return. While he dealt with the rebels in York and the surrounding area, a strong presence was required to guard against any sympathetic uprisings in the south of the kingdom. Matilda, already gaining favour among the English people thanks to her dignified bearing and gentle demeanour, formed a welcome contrast to her husband's brutality. She was therefore ideally suited for this task.

During the next 12 years, Matilda constantly flitted between England and Normandy, bolstering her husband's rule in both lands and becoming an ever more powerful figurehead for the Norman regime. In England, she was particularly active in the sphere of justice. There are numerous references in Domesday Book to her hearing English legal cases during William's absences, which became increasingly frequent during the 1070s. The impressive variety of English charters in which Matilda was involved attests to her versatility in business matters.

The queen was also at the heart of some of the most important religious debates of the reign, notably when she and her husband ordered that the primacy of York should be subject to the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury – a symbolic ruling that effectively brought the north under the control of the court in London.

Ever sensitive to the mood of the English people, though, Matilda subsequently made a series of generous bequests to the church. In so doing, she won praise from the chroniclers, who described her as “munificent and liberal of her gifts” and “indefatigable at alleviating distress in every shape”.

Matilda's liberality set her apart from the other members of the Norman ruling elite who had shared in the spoils of the conquest. And whereas her husband and his

## Matilda's coronation was the first ever staged just for a queen. She was determined that it should eclipse her husband's in magnificence



Norman entourage relied upon interpreters, she made the effort to master the English language – a fact that greatly endeared her to the native population.

As well as winning popularity in her own right, Matilda also gradually succeeded in persuading her husband to adopt a more conciliatory stance towards his conquered subjects. “King William, by the advice of Matilda, treated the English kindly as long as she lived,” observed one contemporary.

When Edward the Confessor’s widow Edith, who had long been a figurehead for the Saxon regime, died in 1075, Matilda urged William to arrange for her remains to be conveyed from Winchester to Westminster with great honour so that she might be interred in the abbey next to her husband. There, a tomb “lavishly decorated with gold and silver” was erected, and William also paid for a suitably ostentatious funeral.

**B**y the time of her last sojourn in England, in 1081, Matilda had earned widespread admiration among the people. A consummate diplomat, she had steadily and patiently overcome their initial suspicion with a brilliantly executed public relations campaign.

Whereas in the early days of her reign, she had been dismissed as William’s ‘gebedde’ (bedfellow), now she was known as “the queen of the English, Matilda, wealthy and powerful”. Even the most misogynistic of the chroniclers claimed that “the common people, the rich, every gender and age, the whole clergy, every tongue, every class” admired her “just” and “prudent” character.

Matilda’s natural shrewdness and diplomacy had done at least as much – if not more – to secure England for the Normans than her conqueror husband’s military campaigns ever could.

Matilda’s death in November 1083 was deeply mourned on both sides of the Channel. As one contemporary observed, she would be “wept for by the English and the

#### A KING RESTRAINED

William issues orders, in the Bayeux Tapestry. Matilda persuaded her husband to adopt a less abrasive attitude to his subjects following the conquest of England



Normans for many years”. Principal among them was her husband, who fell into a deep depression from which he never recovered. He had good reason to mourn her loss. Matilda had proved the mainstay of William’s rule in England, and without her the king was “continually forced to struggle against the storms of troubles that rose up against him”.

Matilda’s career marked the dawning of a new era for royal consorts. By wielding immense power in both Normandy and England – not just on behalf of her husband, but at times in direct opposition to him – Matilda confounded the traditional views of women in medieval society and provided an inspiring new model of queenship. No longer confined simply to the domestic sphere, her successors were able to play an active part in the political, judicial and spiritual life of their kingdoms for centuries to come. ■

AKG IMAGES

Following Matilda’s death, William was “continually forced to struggle against the storms of troubles that rose up against him”



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#### OBJECT OF ROYAL DESIRE

A portrait thought to depict Anne Boleyn, a woman who, says George Bernard, "stood up for her interests as she understood them"

**BACKGROUND** A copy of a letter that Henry wrote to Anne in 1527. The king's missives in this period suggest that he was the one holding back from full sexual relations

**FACING PAGE** King Henry VIII, painted by Hans Holbein the Younger in around 1540





# DID ANNE BOLEYN CRAVE THE CROWN?

For years we have been told that Anne refused to sleep with King Henry VIII until he made her his queen. Yet, says **GEORGE BERNARD**, the argument that she demanded a crown on her head simply doesn't stack up



Henry VIII's passion for Anne Boleyn has never been in doubt. In one of his love letters to Anne, Henry lamented her absence, "wishing myself specially an evening in my sweetheart's arms whose pretty dukkys [breasts] I trust shortly to kiss", noting that the missive was "written with the hand of him that was, is and shall be yours". But while his desire isn't in question, other aspects of the beginnings of their relationship need to be reassessed.

It is widely held that Anne, with whom Henry fell in love in the mid-1520s, was prepared to accept his advances only if he married her and made her his queen. By then Henry (born in 1491 and reigning 1509–47) had been married to Catherine of Aragon for nearly 20 years and she had borne him a child, Mary, though no surviving son. Could it be true that Anne suggested to Henry that his marriage to Catherine, widow of his elder brother Arthur, had always been invalid – that it was against divine law? (Catherine had married Arthur in 1501, but the prince died six months later.) And did Anne steadfastly refuse to yield to Henry until his marriage to Catherine was annulled, leaving him free to marry Anne?

For centuries, historians have reiterated this theory. Yet, examined closely, it does not make sense. Imagine Anne as a lady of the court who was wanted by the king as his mistress. In a world in which divorce on the grounds of the irretrievable breakdown of a relationship did not exist, could such a lady realistically hope to persuade Henry to abandon his wife to marry her? If Anne did make such demands, would there be the risk that Henry would simply laugh at her and look elsewhere?

After all, Catherine was not one of Henry's native subjects but the aunt of Charles V, the powerful Holy Roman Emperor, who had inherited a Spanish and Habsburg empire extending across Europe from Spain and the Netherlands to Austria and the Kingdom of Naples. Such a rejection of Catherine would risk serious diplomatic and dynastic consequences.

It's much more likely that Anne asked that she should be the king's only mistress. That at least was fully in Henry's power, as several of his love letters to Anne discussed. Those who have suggested that Anne was holding out to be queen may have simply misinterpreted her initial reluctance to yield to Henry. What Anne feared was an all-too-common fate of royal mistresses: to be used and discarded at the king's pleasure, as had happened to her sister, Mary. Henry's letters suggest that Anne was won over by his promise to make her his exclusive mistress.

One of the letters confirms Anne did not at first commit herself unreservedly. For a year, Henry lamented, he had been stricken by the dart of love but unsure whether he would find a place in her heart. And so he offered to make her his sole mistress, banishing all others from his thoughts.

Once Anne had accepted Henry's promises, they probably enjoyed full sexual relations for a while – at least, such is suggested by the details of a mission entrusted to one of the king's secretaries, William Knight, in the summer of 1527. Knight was charged with securing a dispensation from the pope permitting the king to remarry if Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon was first annulled.

It has long been noted that this draft dispensation allowed the king to marry someone to whom he was already related in the eyes of canon law – in particular, a woman with whose sister he had enjoyed sexual relations. By this time, Henry had already enjoyed an affair with Mary Boleyn; it's quite likely that he was the father of her two eldest children. With the papal dispensation, Henry was anticipating and attempting to deal with a potential obstacle to a marriage to Anne.

Less often noticed, and usually dismissed, is the provision in the draft dispensation for Henry to marry a woman with whom he had already had sexual intercourse. Why should Henry have included that provision unless it were true? This suggests that, after convincing Anne she would be his only mistress, he did indeed sleep with her.

Anne feared the all-too-common fate of royal mistresses: to be used and discarded at the king's pleasure – as had happened to her sister, Mary



**THE SPURNED WIFE**

Catherine of Aragon is depicted in a 16th-century portrait. Henry worked to have their union annulled, claiming that her previous marriage to his brother invalidated their own





But only for a brief period. It was probably at this point that Henry came to the conclusion that his marriage to Catherine of Aragon had never been valid in the eyes of God, on the grounds that the Bible suggested that a man should not marry his brother's former wife. If that marriage were annulled, Henry realised, he would be free to marry Anne as his first wife. Any child born would be of unquestioned legitimacy. But in order to make his case for an annulment of his marriage to Catherine, Henry needed to hold the moral high ground.

Throughout the proceedings leading to his divorce, Henry claimed not that his marriage to Catherine had broken down but that it had always been against divine law. If Henry had publicly admitted that he had fallen in love with Anne Boleyn, it would have cast doubt on the sincerity of his concern not to break divine law.

In an age without reliable methods of contraception, there was also an obvious risk of pregnancy – and nothing would be more damaging to the king's moral credibility. Jean du Bellay, the French ambassador, vividly outlined the problem in June 1529: "I very much fear that for some time past this king has come very near Mme Anne," adding: "If the belly grows, all will be spoilt."

What's more, Henry was determined that any child he might have with Anne should be indisputably legitimate, not the controversial offspring of a relationship not yet validated. Anne never did become pregnant during the long years in which Henry and his advisors worked towards the end of his marriage to Catherine. That does not prove that it was Anne who was holding Henry back, but is consistent with the suggestion that it was Henry, not Anne, who refrained from full sexual relations.

**H**enry's love letters support this theory. In one he informed "darling" Anne that the letter-bearer was being sent with "as many things to compass our matter and to bring it to pass as our wits could imagine or devise". Once brought to pass, "you and I shall have our desired end, which should be more to my heart's ease and more quietness to my mind than any other thing in this world".

Henry's subscription, "written with the hand of him which desireth as much to be yours as you do to have him", hints that it was Anne who needed reassurance of Henry's desire, and Henry who was holding back.

On another occasion Henry wrote to Anne: "What joy it is to me to understand of your conformableness to reason and of the suppressing of your inutile and vain thoughts and fantasies with the bridle of reason." Continue, Henry urged, "for thereby shall come, both to you and to me the greatest quietness that may be in this world". Here Henry was urging patience, "conformableness to reason", until the church found in his favour.

In a letter most likely written soon after Anne agreed to become his mistress, Henry assured her that "henceforth my heart will be devoted to you only, greatly wanting that my body also could be". Daily he begged God to intervene and help him achieve his goal, hoping that at length his prayer would be heard. Yet, in doing so, Henry was not berating Anne for holding back, for refusing to sleep with him. Instead it was Henry who refrained, and what he regretted were the complexities and the delays imposed by the laws and procedures of the church.

The love letters also reveal that theirs became an intimate relationship. As we have seen, Henry longed to hold Anne in his arms and kiss her breasts. Henry's suit of armour shows he was a big man, and we know he was forceful in emotion: in 1535, he came close to killing his court fool in a rage. If he had wanted to go further with Anne, it is implausible to think that she could have prevented him.

From where, then, did the story arise that Anne was refusing Henry's advances until she was made queen? Perhaps the source was the scholar and cleric Reginald Pole who had gone abroad to study rather than become implicated in the king's divorce. In 1536, Pole attacked Henry fiercely, calling on the king to repent and return to the fold of the church. He berated Henry for the terrible things the king had done for the love of Anne Boleyn; she was presented as a femme fatale who convinced Henry that, as long as he maintained Catherine as his wife, he was living in mortal sin. In doing so Pole was offering Henry a way out – an excuse that he could use if he repented and ended the schism with the Catholic church.

## Henry was determined that any child he might have with Anne should be indisputably legitimate



## TIMELINE

# The love story of Anne and Henry



Henry is convinced that **his marriage to Catherine of Aragon contravenes divine law** and is invalid. With lord chancellor and cardinal Thomas Wolsey (left) and many churchmen and lawyers, Henry tries to persuade the pope to grant an annulment.

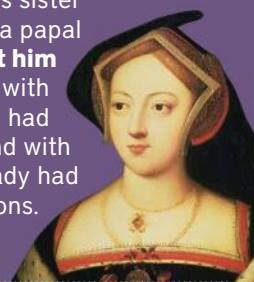
c1525-26

**Henry falls in love with Anne.**

He pursues her for a year before she agrees to become his mistress, though their sexual relationship continues for only a limited time, perhaps a year.

May 1527

Henry, who previously had an affair with Mary, Anne's sister (right), requests a papal dispensation to **permit him to marry** a woman with whose sister he had had sexual relations, and with whom he had already had sexual relations.



Autumn/winter 1527

Henry sees Catherine of Aragon for the last time. **She is forced to leave court**, dying at Kimbolton Castle (in Cambridgeshire) in 1536.

11 July 1531

**Henry marries Anne** in a secret ceremony.

Winter 1532/33



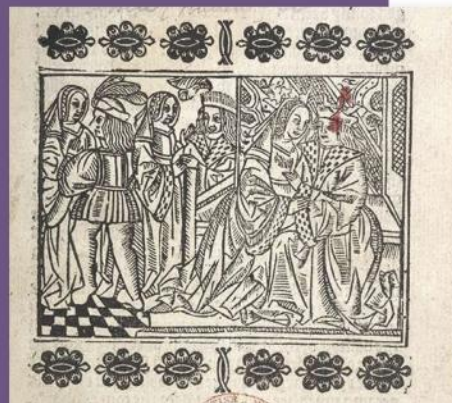
Thomas Cranmer (left), archbishop of Canterbury, **pronounces Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon invalid.**

May 1533

1 June 1533

**Anne gives birth to a daughter, Elizabeth.** This was a disappointment to the king.

September 1533



**Anne is crowned** in Westminster Abbey. Her "tryumphaunt" coronation is shown in this 1533 pamphlet.

**Anne is charged with and convicted of treason.** She is alleged to have committed adultery with five men, including an incestuous liaison with her brother, George.

May 1536



**Anne Boleyn is beheaded** with a single sword strike at the Tower of London, shown here in an 18th-century illustration.

19 May 1536





**A KING IN LOVE**

A portrait of Henry VIII from c1525–30. Once Anne accepted the king's promise to make her his sole mistress, it is implausible to think that she could have prevented him enjoying full sexual relations

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It was a characteristic of Henry's rule that he placed responsibility for unpopular policies on others. Here, Pole was offering him scope to do that again. But even though Anne was by then dead (charged with treason, she was executed in 1536), Henry did not take the opportunity offered by Pole's comments – and we should not treat Pole's remarks as the truth. Nothing in surviving sources from the late 1520s points to Anne being involved in making the case for the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine.

On the contrary, many of the sources suggest the opposite was true. In one of his letters, Henry told Anne he had spent four hours that day working on the book in support of his case for an annulment, collecting and elaborating on biblical examples that justified his stand, but he made no attempt to involve Anne in this.

Henry sent Francis Bryan, a trusted courtier, to Italy to report on how things stood in the papal courts. Bryan took care to write to the king only, giving Henry the opportunity to tell Anne just how much, or how little, he pleased. She was not directing Henry's marital diplomacy.

The suggestion that Anne Boleyn did not refuse to sleep with Henry until they could be married may diminish her in some people's eyes – unfairly, in my view. If Anne insisted that Henry enjoy her as his sole mistress before she agreed to any relationship, it showed that she was no doormat – rather, a woman who stood up for her interests as she understood them. Demanding to be Henry's queen, though, would have been a step too far – and there is nothing to show that she did. ■



#### INNER SANCTUM

Henry's writing box (c1525-27) bears the heraldic badges of both the king and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry may have kept the pens he used to write his love letters to Anne in this box

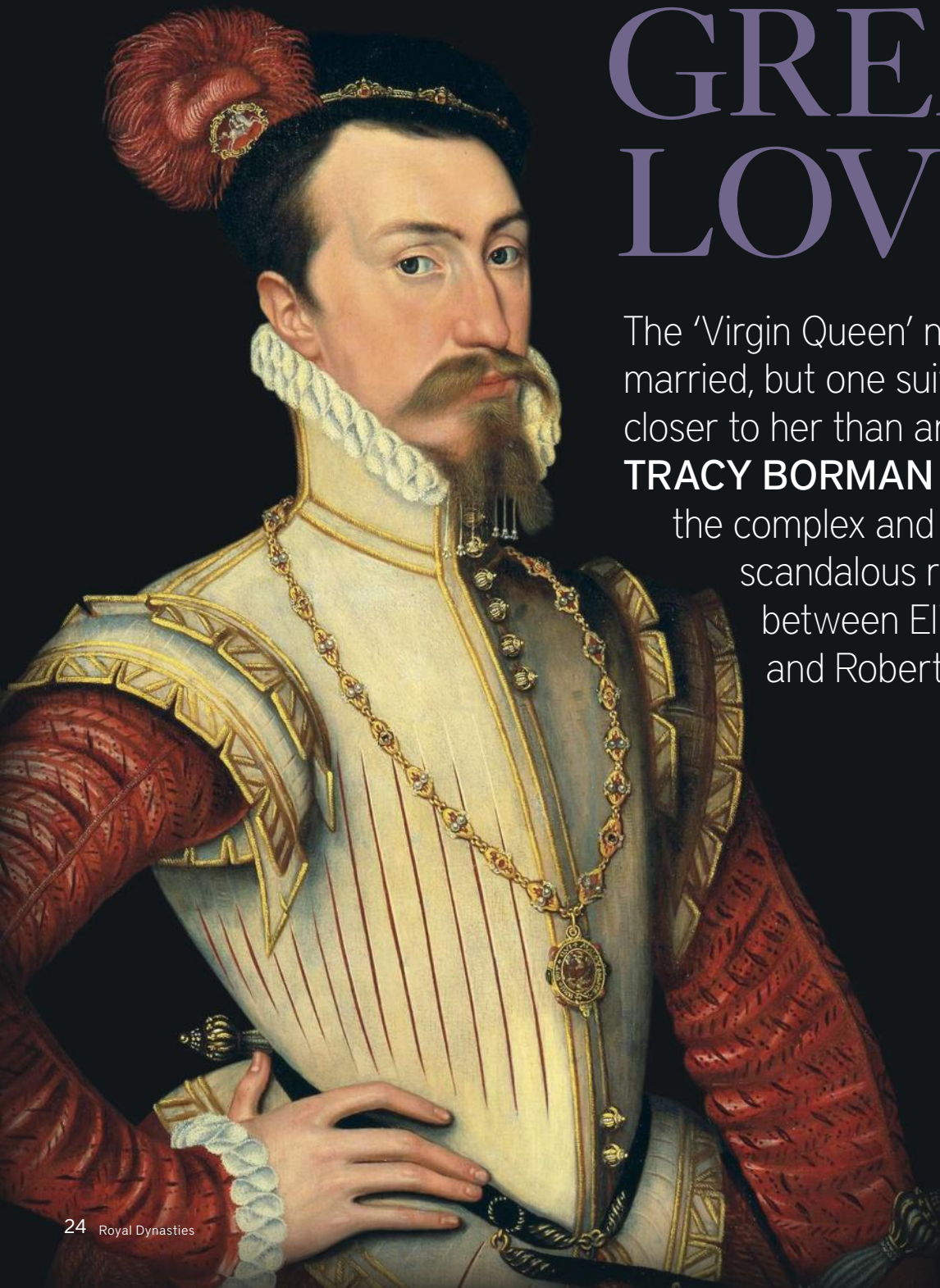
If Anne insisted that Henry enjoy her as his sole mistress before she agreed to any relationship, it showed that she was no doormat



# QUEEN ELIZABETH I'S GREAT LOVE

The 'Virgin Queen' never married, but one suitor came closer to her than any other.

**TRACY BORMAN** explores the complex and sometimes scandalous relationship between Elizabeth I and Robert Dudley







### THE VIRGIN QUEEN

Dismayed by the fate of her mother Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth I (1533–1603) vowed never to marry, but she played various suitors off each other in order to suit her political ends

### FACING PAGE

Courtier Robert Dudley had known Elizabeth since they were children and is thought to have been her one great love – although they never married



Elizabeth I is remembered in history as the Virgin Queen. She was the daughter of Henry VIII by his second wife Anne Boleyn and in stark contrast to her much-married father, she famously declared: “I will have but one mistress here, and no master.” During the course of her long reign, she was besieged by many suitors but gave each one nothing more than “fair words but no promises”. Yet it is generally accepted that there was one man who, more than any other, tempted Elizabeth to relinquish her single state.

Robert Dudley (1532/33–88), was the fifth son of John Dudley, 1st Duke of Northumberland. The duke had wrested power during the minority of Edward VI (who became king aged nine on Henry VIII’s death), but was executed for putting his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, on the throne after the young king’s death in 1553. His son Robert led troops in support of the coup, but was swiftly defeated by Queen Mary I and was thrown into the Tower of London.

Robert Dudley’s sojourn in the Tower coincided with that of the new queen’s half-sister, Elizabeth (who Mary suspected of plotting against her). They had been friends since childhood, Dudley having been among her brother Edward’s companions. Close in age, Elizabeth and Dudley had shared the same tutor, Roger Ascham, who had been greatly impressed by his precocious young pupils.

It was in Dudley that the eight-year-old Elizabeth had confided upon the execution of her third stepmother, Catherine Howard, in 1541, vowing: “I will never marry.” He would always remember the conversation, and it may have been the reason he decided to marry Amy Robsart nine years later. During the years that followed, Robert kept his wife away from court – mindful, perhaps, that it might damage his relationship with Elizabeth.

The years of uncertainty during Mary Tudor’s reign (1553–58), when Elizabeth lived in constant fear for her life, brought her ever closer to Dudley. He remained loyal to her throughout, even when it risked his own safety. They spent many hours together and had a great deal in common, sharing a love of hunting, dancing and lively conversation. This sparked endless gossip among the princess’s household, particularly given that Dudley was a married man.

His loyalty was rewarded when Elizabeth became queen in 1558,

at the age of 25. She immediately appointed Dudley to be her Master of Horse, a prestigious position that involved regular attendance upon his royal mistress. But it was no longer easy for the couple to meet in private. As queen, Elizabeth’s every move was scrutinised not just by her people, but by the whole of Europe. “A thousand eyes see all I do,” she once complained.

Nevertheless, Elizabeth made it clear that she had no intention of giving up her favourite. If anything, she found ways to spend even more time with him. A year after her accession, she had Dudley’s bedchamber moved next to her private rooms in order to facilitate their clandestine meetings. Before long, their relationship was causing a scandal not just in England, but in courts across Europe.

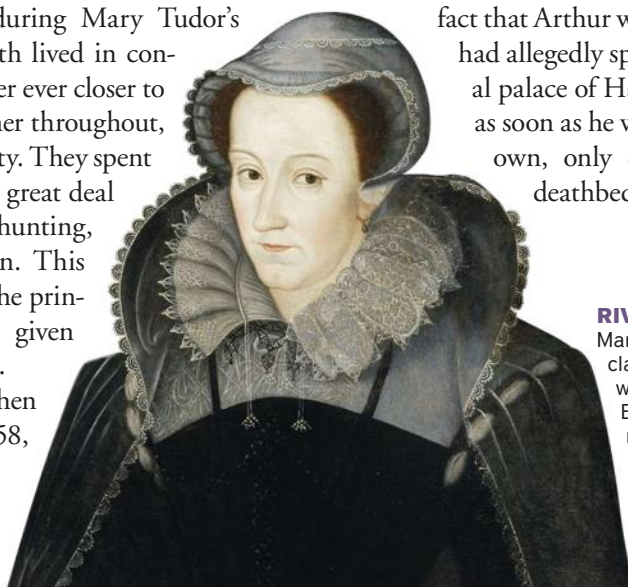
The obvious intimacy between them provoked endless speculation about just how close their relationship was. Elizabeth’s chief rival, Mary, Queen of Scots, was in no doubt that Elizabeth and Dudley were lovers, and later told the noblewoman Bess of Hardwick that he had visited the queen’s bed numerous times. It is unlikely that Elizabeth, who had seen so many powerful examples of the perils of sex and childbirth, would have risked the throne she had fought so hard for by sleeping with her favourite. But their friendship probably charted a careful course between platonic and sexual.

The rumours flared up again in 1587, when a young man going by the name of Arthur Dudley arrived at Philip II’s court in Madrid, Spain, claiming to be the illegitimate child of the English queen and her favourite, Robert Dudley. His age placed his conception at 1561, which coincided with Elizabeth being bedridden with a mysterious illness that caused her body to swell. The account therefore had an air of credibility, made more so by the fact that Arthur was able to name a servant who had allegedly spirited him away from the royal palace of Hampton Court (near London) as soon as he was born and raised him as his own, only confessing the truth on his deathbed in 1583. There is no firm evi-

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#### RIVAL CLAIM

Mary, Queen of Scots, had her own claims to the throne of England and was quick to try and undermine Elizabeth I by criticising her relationship with Dudley







**THE STRIKING PRINCESS** As a young girl Princess Elizabeth, shown aged about 13, shared a tutor with Robert Dudley. The two were close for most of their lives, sometimes infamously so



**SUSPICIOUS DEATH** Dudley came under suspicion when his wife was found dead at the bottom of their stairs. In the ensuing scandal, the queen had to distance herself from him – in public at least

dence to corroborate the story, but it suited King Philip's interests to discredit the English queen.

Ironically, the death of Dudley's wife in 1560, at her residence Cumnor Place, removed any hope that Elizabeth may have privately cherished of one day marrying him. The circumstances were suspicious. Amy insisted that all her servants attend a local fair. When they returned, they found her at the bottom of a short flight of stairs, her neck broken. Whether it was an accident, suicide or murder has never been resolved beyond doubt.

The finger of suspicion pointed at Dudley, whom his enemies claimed would not have flinched from having his own wife put to death so that he could realise his ambitions of marrying the queen. Mary, Queen of Scots quipped that the queen of England was about to marry her "horsekeeper" who had killed his wife in order to

make way for her. Elizabeth was also in the frame: many believed that her passion for Dudley had driven her to have his wife murdered so that she could have him at last.

Yet it is extremely unlikely that Dudley or Elizabeth had any hand in Amy's death. They would hardly have taken such a risk, especially as they would have known that it would prove counterproductive to any plans they may have had to marry. The scandal reverberated not just around the kingdom but across the courts of Europe, so that Elizabeth was obliged to distance herself from Dudley in order to avoid being implicated any further.

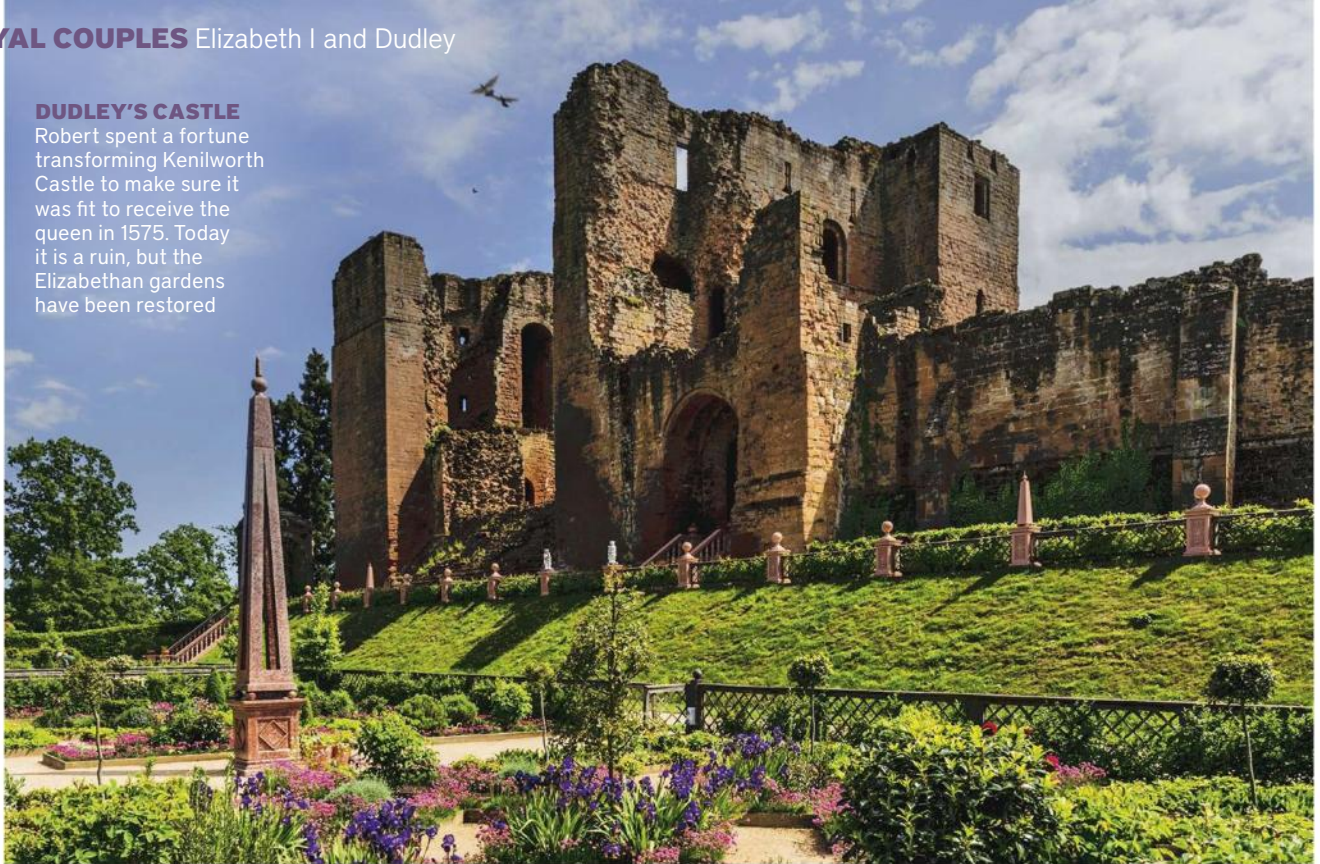
But in private, the queen refused to give up her favorite. Now that the scrutiny of the court was even more intense, she was obliged to go to even greater lengths to conceal their meetings. In November 1561, for example, she disguised herself as the maid of Katherine Howard (later

## Many believed that Elizabeth's passion for Dudley had driven her to have his wife murdered



### DUDLEY'S CASTLE

Robert spent a fortune transforming Kenilworth Castle to make sure it was fit to receive the queen in 1575. Today it is a ruin, but the Elizabethan gardens have been restored



Countess of Nottingham) in order to enjoy the secret pleasure of watching Dudley shoot near Windsor Castle. Another attempt at discretion was less successful. When her close friend and attendant Lady Fiennes de Clinton helped Elizabeth escape court in disguise to meet Dudley at his house for dinner, Philip II of Spain's envoy heard of it and immediately reported it to his master.

In the letters that Queen Elizabeth and Dudley exchanged, they used the symbol 'ôô' as code for the nickname of 'Eyes' that she had given him. Elizabeth kept her favorite's letters, along with his portrait, in a locked desk next to her bed. On a visit to court in 1564, the Scottish ambassador Sir James Melville spied the portrait as Elizabeth was searching for one of his own royal mistress. When he asked if he could borrow it to show the Scottish queen, Elizabeth immediately refused, "alleging that she had but that one picture of his". Spying Robert Dudley in a corner of the bedchamber, Melville slyly observed that she should not cling so to the portrait, since "she had the original."

As her reign progressed and the pressure to marry grew ever more intense, Elizabeth pretended to consider numerous potential suitors. But she would never commit to

any of them. The Venetian ambassador shrewdly observed: "She has many suitors for her hand, and by protracting any decision keeps them all in hope."

Meanwhile, now that the scandal of his wife's death had faded, Robert Dudley stepped up his campaign to make Queen Elizabeth his wife. He besieged her with protestations of his undying affection, all of which his royal mistress received with obvious pleasure but with no firm promises.

By 1575, Dudley was growing desperate and decided to make one last, spectacular attempt to persuade Elizabeth to marry him. Pulling out all the stops, he invited her to his Warwickshire estate, Kenilworth Castle, and staged several days of extraordinarily lavish entertainments at a huge cost. The queen loved every minute of her visit there, but would not be dazzled into acquiescence. Genuine though her affection for Robert was, she knew that marrying him would court disaster in her kingdom, sparking such intense opposition from Dudley's rivals that it might even spill out into civil war.

ISTOCKPHOTO

## Her close friend... helped Elizabeth escape court in disguise to meet Dudley at his house

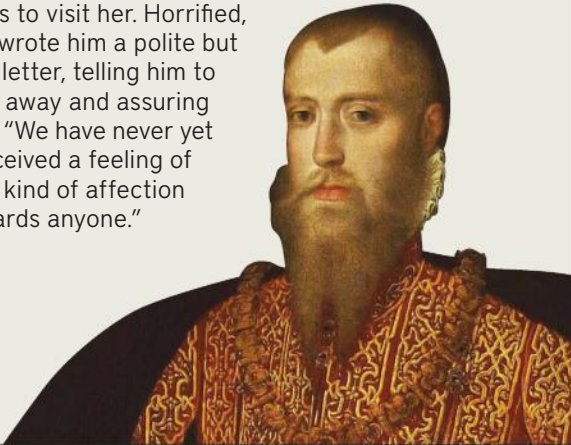


# Elizabeth's other men

*As well as Dudley, the Virgin Queen had several other contenders for her heart*

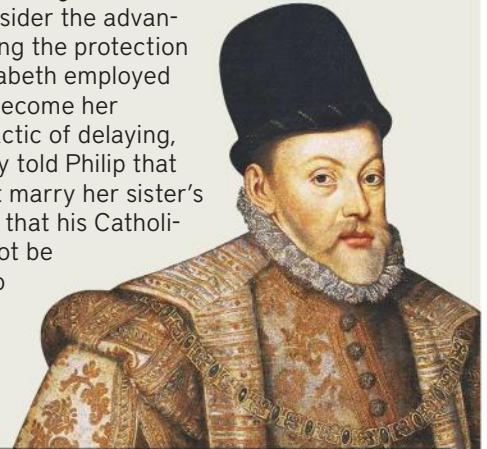
## Eric XIV of Sweden (1533–77)

Realising that marrying a home-grown candidate was fraught with difficulty, Elizabeth's ministers focused upon suitors from overseas for most of her reign. One of the earliest was King Eric XIV of Sweden, who had started to make overtures towards Elizabeth before she was queen. He continued to pursue her for several years and even made plans to visit her. Horrified, she wrote him a polite but firm letter, telling him to stay away and assuring him: "We have never yet conceived a feeling of that kind of affection towards anyone."



## Philip II of Spain (1527–98)

Even while he had been married to her sister Mary I, Philip II of Spain had made overtures towards Elizabeth, beguiled by her youthful charms. When Mary died, Philip – who had been styled 'King of England' for his wife's lifetime only – was reluctant to give up his English kingdom and so sent a proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. He urged the new queen to consider the advantages of having the protection of Spain. Elizabeth employed what would become her customary tactic of delaying, but eventually told Philip that she could not marry her sister's widower, and that his Catholicism would not be acceptable to her people. Thenceforth, they were enemies.



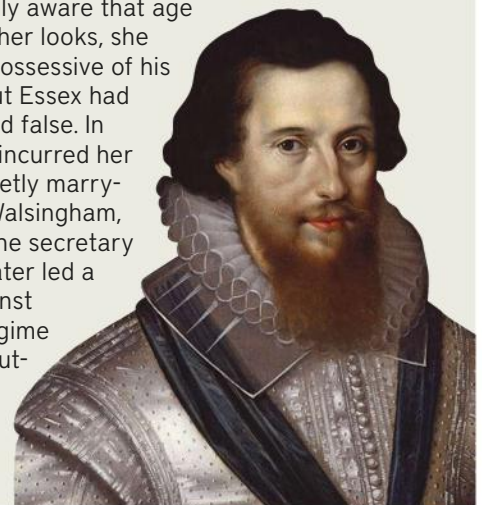
## François, Duke of Alençon and Anjou (1555–84)

Elizabeth's last serious suitor was François, the Duke of Alençon and Anjou, and the youngest son of King Henry II of France. He had first been proposed as a husband in 1578, when he was 23 and Elizabeth 45. Despite the considerable age gap, the pair became very close, aided by the fact that the duke was the only one of the queen's many suitors to court her in person. Calling him her "frog", Queen Elizabeth showered the young duke with affection, and he gave every appearance of returning her love. But it all came to nothing, and François eventually returned to France in 1581.



## Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex (1565–1601)

Robert was the son of Elizabeth's rival Lettice Knollys with her first husband Walter Devereux, 1st Earl of Essex. He was 30 years younger than Elizabeth but gave every appearance of being passionately in love with her. She was beguiled by his darkly handsome looks and swaggering self-confidence, which made him take greater liberties with the queen than anyone else dared. Painfully aware that age had ravished her looks, she was fiercely possessive of his attentions. But Essex had already proved false. In 1590, he had incurred her wrath by secretly marrying Frances Walsingham, daughter of the secretary of state. He later led a rebellion against Elizabeth's regime and was executed in 1601.







Erle of Leceſter, Lorde ſteward  
maieſties houſehould, ſuties in a  
Trent ſouthward, Cuſtable of  
and Caſtell of Winderſor, and  
maieſties moſt honorable priue

**ELIZABETH'S  
'SWEET ROBIN'**

Dudley, ſeen in later life,  
had a close relationship  
with Queen Elizabeth I  
for almoſt 50 years and  
ſhe was deſtroyed by  
his death in 1588



For all his desperation to marry the queen, Dudley had been secretly courting one of her ladies-in-waiting, Lettice Knollys. Described as being one of the best-looking women of the court, she was of royal blood, being the great-niece of Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn. This no doubt added to her attraction for Dudley, who had enjoyed a flirtation with Lettice for the previous 10 years. Now that his last-ditch attempt to persuade Elizabeth to marry him had failed, he took Lettice as his mistress.

For a time, Elizabeth was blissfully unaware that her favourite was betraying her.

But three years into the affair, Lettice became pregnant. She was not a woman to be set aside and insisted that Dudley marry her. Fearing the inevitable backlash from his royal mistress, he agreed only to a secret ceremony, which took place in 1578. The bride was said to have worn "a loose gown" – a coded reference to her pregnant state. It was not long before the secret leaked out at court. When Elizabeth learned that her cousin had stolen the only man she had truly loved, she flew into a jealous rage, boxing Lettice's ears and screaming that "as but one sun lightened the earth, she would have but one queen in England". She then banished this "flouting wench" from her presence, vowing never to set eyes on her again. Although she eventually forgave Dudley, their relationship had lost the intimacy that had defined it for so many years.

**B**ut towards the end of Dudley's life, they grew close once more. In 1586, he went to command her forces in the Netherlands. Missing him, she wrote an affectionate letter, which she signed: "As you know, ever the same. ER." "Ever the same" or "semper eadem" was her motto, but she and Dudley knew how much more it signified in their relationship.

The following year, the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots at Elizabeth's orders threw her into turmoil and it



The queen refused to marry Dudley but was incandescent with rage when he secretly married Lettice Knollys, above

was to her old favourite that she turned for comfort. Dudley was also by Elizabeth's side through the Armada crisis of 1588 (the Spanish navy's failed attempt to invade England, thwarted by the English fleet). By now he was gravely ill but did not hesitate to accept the post of 'Lieutenant and Captain-General of the Queen's Armies and Companies'.

He walked beside her horse as his royal mistress delivered her famous speech at Tilbury on 8 August 1588, while inspecting the troops that had been assembled to defend the Thames Estuary against any

incursion up-river towards London: "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of England too."

He stayed with the queen in the immediate aftermath of the Armada, wishing to be certain that the danger had passed. One of the last recorded sightings of the pair together was at a palace window, watching a celebratory parade staged by his stepson, the Earl of Essex. By now in poor health, Dudley took his leave of Elizabeth. He, at least, must have known that it would be for the last time.

A few days later, he wrote to Elizabeth from Rycote in Oxfordshire, ending the letter: "I humbly kiss your foot... by Your Majesty's most faithful and obedient servant." These were probably the last words ever written by Robert Dudley. Five days later, on 4 September 1588, he breathed his last. Elizabeth was inconsolable at the loss of "sweet Robin", the only man whom she had ever truly loved. Their relationship had survived almost 50 years of trials and tribulations, and Elizabeth was lost without him.

In the days immediately after his death, she kept to her room, unable to face her court or council. The brief note that he had sent her from Rycote now became her most treasured possession. She inscribed it "His last letter", and kept it in a locked casket by her bed for the rest of her life. For years afterwards if anyone mentioned Robert Dudley's name her eyes filled with tears. ■

## Their relationship had survived almost 50 years of trials and tribulations and Elizabeth was lost without him





# *Charles II*

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## TOO RANDY TO RULE

**DON JORDAN** and **MICHAEL WALSH** reveal how the merrie monarch's obsession with sex cost England a fortune and left it vulnerable to attack





#### THE OVERSEXED KING

Charles II, shown in around 1675, was a notorious philanderer whose dedicated pursuit of pleasure led the nation into crisis

#### FACING PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT

Royal sexual partners, official and unofficial: Barbara, Countess of Castlemaine; Queen Catherine, shown with Charles; Louise de K roualle



In late summer 1662, King Charles II stood on the roof of his banqueting house looking over his palace below. Beside him stood his famously voluptuous mistress, Barbara Castlemaine. King and concubine watched a dazzling procession arrive at the palace. It carried Charles's new queen, Catherine of Braganza, who was from a noble house of Portugal. She was moving from Hampton Court, a royal palace on the river Thames a few miles west of the capital, where she and the king had recently honeymooned, to take up residence at Whitehall Palace, London.

This scene – the king and his mistress watching the queen arrive, in effect, alone – is the quintessence of Charles II's hedonistic reign. He was besotted by sensuality. During his 25 years on the throne, he spent more time on the pursuit and enjoyment of women than in council meetings. Nicknamed the 'merrie monarch', he flaunted his mistresses in front of the nation and Queen Catherine.

His court shared his obsession with sex. Leading lights such as the Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Danby were amoral, carefree and licentious. Venereal disease was so common among them that a specialist 'pox doctor' was on call in the court. None among his intimates could have been surprised in 1674 to hear that Charles was infected and that his French mistress of the time, Louise de Kéroualle, had berated him before the French ambassador for laying her low with the infection.

Charles has been cast as a dextrous politician. But interests were neglected and decisions postponed in order to meet the demands of his social life. He once broke off talks on war and peace with a French delegation so as not to keep Barbara waiting for dinner. To reduce the tedium of government business, which he hated, he took to conducting state affairs from Barbara's apartments in Whitehall Palace. Courtier John Evelyn commented that Charles would have made a good ruler, "if he had been less addicted to women".

Charles brought the addiction home in 1660 after parliament issued the invitation for him to ascend a throne empty since his father's execution 11 years beforehand. In the intervening period Charles had remained in exile, living on the charity of the royal houses of Europe. He filled his days partying, riding horses, sailing and seducing women.

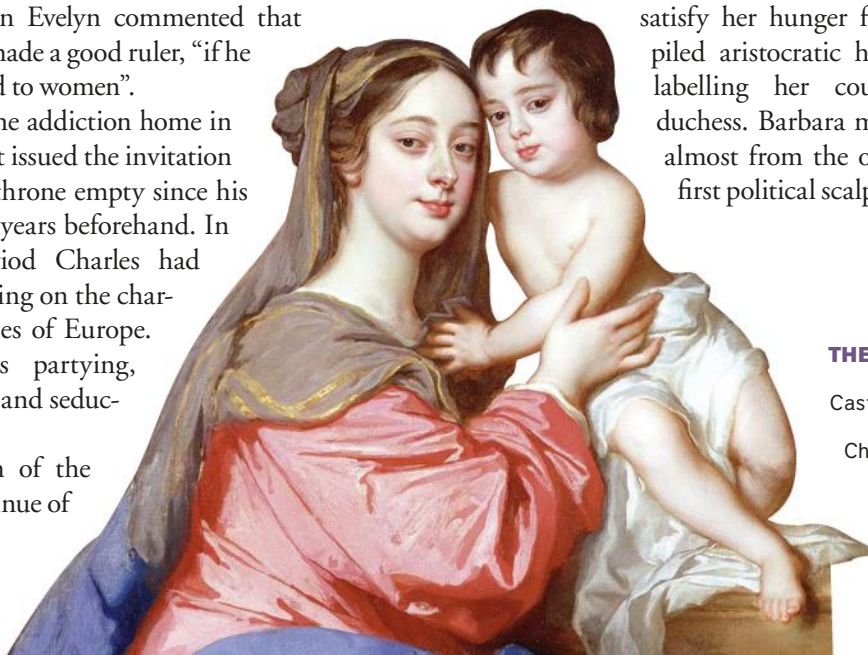
At the restoration of the monarchy, a large retinue of

exiled royalists came home, including Barbara, the daughter of an impoverished peer and wife of the courtier and politician, Roger Palmer. She may well have already become Charles's lover. Two years later, Charles married Catherine of Braganza, daughter of the king of Portugal. Disastrously, the marriage did not produce a royal heir, while Barbara gave Charles several children. A boy, Charles, was born in Hampton Court in June 1662 while the newly wed king and Catherine were honeymooning there. The affront to the queen was the first of many insults Catherine would endure.

At Barbara's behest, Charles insisted Catherine appoint her as a lady-of-the-bedchamber. The queen resisted, supported by the lord chancellor, Clarendon. Usually placid, Charles showed steely determination where sex was involved. He warned Clarendon, "who-soever I find use any endeavour to hinder this resolution of mine... I will be his enemy to the last moment of my life".

Barbara's new position meant she was ensconced in Whitehall, on tap for the king's delight. Her huge palace apartments were ostentatious, while her spending almost certainly outstripped that of anyone else in the kingdom. Charles deluged her with gifts and allowed her to siphon off funds that would otherwise have gone to the public purse. Custom duties brought her £10,000 per annum, beer tax another £10,000, post office revenue £5,000, and so on. One night she lost £25,000 playing cards: Charles picked up the debt.

Barbara wanted Charles to make her position as a courtesan something grander, what the French called a *maîtresse-en-titre*, or official mistress. To satisfy her hunger for status, Charles piled aristocratic honours upon her, labelling her countess and then duchess. Barbara meddled in politics almost from the outset, gaining her first political scalp in 1662 when she



#### THE ROYAL MISTRESS

Barbara, Countess of Castlemaine, with her son Charles II whom King Charles II acknowledged as his own, by court painter Sir Peter Lely





#### HUMILIATION FOR THE QUEEN

Charles II shown at a court ball in the 1660s. He and his inner circle at court were obsessed with partying and he flaunted his mistresses in front of his wife, Catherine

During his 25 years on the throne, he spent more time on the pursuit and enjoyment of women than in council meetings

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helped arrange the dismissal of the venerable secretary of state Sir Edward Nicholas. Later, she played the major part in the downfall of the even more venerable lord chancellor, Clarendon, who had made plain his view of her by refusing to utter her name and banning his wife from speaking to her.

The queen, with the fortitude of a religious upbringing and the breeding of a royal princess, rarely gave vent to her feelings. As Charles paraded his mistresses, Catherine cried in private. Her agony was increased by the arrival from France of Charles's illegitimate first-born son, James Scott, upon whom he doted. He made the boy Duke of Monmouth, a title worthy of a legitimate heir, which prompted Catherine to threaten to leave her husband and "never see his face no more". It was an empty threat; she had nowhere to go.

Though Charles had experienced sex when as young as 15, Monmouth's mother, the Welsh beauty Lucy Walter, was his first meaningful relationship. John Evelyn described her as being "brown, beautiful, bold". Lucy and Charles became lovers in 1648 when they were both just 18 and living in exile. Lucy was soon pregnant and Charles accepted the child as his. His friends abused Lucy as "a whore" and, under pressure, Charles eventually abandoned her and took away her son to be raised under

his mother's protection. Lucy reportedly died in poverty in Paris in 1658, not yet aged 30, possibly having had to take up prostitution.

Prostitution was not a profession with which Charles had a problem. He dallied with all sorts of women, from all social classes. Many were 'actresses' procured by his servant William Chiffinch, known as the king's 'pimp-master'. Some came straight from brothels.

When the queen fell gravely ill, probably following a miscarriage, the talk in the court was that if Catherine died, Charles would marry Frances Stuart, a teenage beauty and one of the queen's ladies-of-the-bedchamber. The queen recovered, only to miscarry at least twice more. Courtiers begged Charles to divorce her and marry Frances but he refused.

While these domestic matters transfixed the court, the country suffered humiliation in a naval battle. England was engaged in war with the Dutch, which had begun in the spring of 1665 in a struggle for supremacy of the sea and trade. In early 1667, the British crown ran out of money, and could not afford to refit the fleet and pay ships' crews. When the crown



# Charles II's other women

*It was hard to refuse such a powerful figure, but one woman famously got away*



## Nell Gwyn

### THE NATION'S SWEETHEART

She is one of the most famous figures in popular British history, but parts of Nell Gwyn's life are clouded in mystery. Dates for her birth range from 1642 to 1651 and her birthplace is uncertain. Even her many famous witticisms were usually reported second-hand and many may be apocryphal. What is certain is that she spent some early years in London's Covent Garden, which was then a slum, by her own admission serving beer in a brothel. Her acting talent was real, making her a huge star, while her shining personality brought her to the bed of a king – she bore him two sons during their 16-year love affair – and into the heart of a nation. She died in 1687.



## Frances Stuart

### THE GREATEST BEAUTY

It was difficult for young women of the royal court to resist the king's advances. But in 1663, a 15-year-old not only bowled Charles over, but managed to keep him at bay for years. This was Frances Stuart (1647–1702), described by the famous naval administrator and diarist Samuel Pepys as "the greatest beauty I ever saw, I think, in my life". Frances had arrived at the court as a lady-of-the-bedchamber to the queen, and Charles immediately saw her as a flower to be plucked. In 1667, fearing that sooner or later she would have to succumb to the king, Frances eloped with the Duke of Richmond and Lennox. She was, literally, the one that got away.



## Hortense Mancini

### THE WILD BISEXUAL

The wildest of Charles's mistresses was Hortense Mancini (1646–99), niece of Cardinal Mazarin, first minister of Louis XIV of France. She was married at the age of 14 to the much older Duke de Meilleraye. He was a religious fanatic who believed milkmaids on his estate could be turned into sex maniacs by touching cows' udders. He therefore had the girls' teeth knocked out to make them unattractive. Hortense ran away several times, eventually travelling to London, where she became Charles's mistress. She was bisexual, and one of her many lovers was Anne, Countess of Sussex, herself the daughter of Charles II and Barbara, Countess of Castlemaine, one of his lovers.

## King Charles II dallied with all sorts of women, from all social classes





**WHILE CHARLES PLAYED...**

In 1667, with the English naval fleet laid up in the Medway river due to a lack of funds for a refit, the Dutch made a devastating raid (illustrated here), even seizing the fleet's flagship *Royal Charles*

asked parliament for the necessary £1.5m it replied that first it wanted to know how the £5m it had previously allocated had been spent. No answer was received. According to Samuel Pepys at the navy board, £2.3m was unaccounted for. It was rumoured that the king had lavished much of this on his mistresses.

With no money forthcoming, Charles made the momentous decision to lay up the bulk of the fleet in the Medway. When the Dutch discovered this, they decided to finish the war in a decisive knockout blow. In June, the Dutch fleet was spotted massing off the Thames Estuary. Charles didn't act. Two days later the Dutch sailed into the river Medway and burnt or captured the pride of the British fleet, even towing away the flagship, the *Royal Charles*. While this was taking place, the king was playing parlour games with Barbara and other favourites. Mobs gathered in London, denouncing the monarchy,

with "the Countess of Castlemaine bewailing, above all others, that she should be the first torn to pieces". As the Dutch sailed from the Medway into the mouth of the Thames, London panicked. Many people fled, thinking the capital was sure to fall. But the Dutch held off, and the capital was saved. Charles could do nothing but seek peace on the best terms possible.

In the aftermath of all this, the king could not, of course, be blamed. The scurrilous and anonymous pamphlets that circulated in London blamed Barbara and even the Earl of Clarendon, who had been against the war from the beginning. A commission was set up to look into the royal finances, but it never met.

This Medway Raid was an illustration of Charles II becoming detached from the realities of policy while spending too much time on personal gratification. There was a pattern to his behaviour; he loved to escape into the femi-

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The bishop of Salisbury said: "The ruin of his reign... was occasioned chiefly by his delivering himself up to a mad range of pleasure"



nine world of frivolity and lack of responsibility (in the 17th century, women of high social standing were expected to exemplify the first and could never have the latter).

Stories abounded of how he hated serious conversation. He enjoyed being with women, making love to them, socialising with them, being pampered by them. Yet he remained aloof, never falling in love, his interest remaining, as pointed out by the contemporary politician and writer George Savile, carnal enjoyment. Charles's emotional need for women's company never developed into the mature bonds that most men and women enjoy. He wanted pleasure, but he also needed female solace and flattery.

**B**arbara's demise as effective *maîtresse-en-titre* came in the wake of the 1670 secret treaty of Dover. This promised Charles huge French pay-offs to back Louis XIV's war of conquest in the Netherlands, while Charles agreed to turn Catholic. As this monumental deal was being concluded in Dover, Charles's eye lit on a baby-faced lady-in-waiting in the French delegation. Typically, he deliberately prolonged negotiations on this hugely important pact just to see more of her.

The young woman was Louise de K  roualle, daughter of an impecunious aristocrat of Brittany, France. With Louis XIV's connivance, Barbara's enemies, led by the Earl of Arlington, plotted the replacement of Barbara by the young woman from Brittany. Arlington tutored her in how to keep the king happy. It was impressed upon her not to "talk business to His Majesty".

It took a year before Louise was secure enough of his affections to allow him to bed her. A measure of how important the role of *maîtresse-en-titre* had become was that the whole court was invited to a celebratory party, at which their first coupling was expected. The celebration lasted two weeks, climaxing in a mock marriage between the pair.

The king allotted Louise a luxurious

suite in Whitehall, showered jewels on her and allowed her to raid the public purses on an even greater scale than Barbara managed. Where Barbara had employed a fearsome temper to get her way, the softly spoken Louise employed tears, embraces and sympathy. Hers was the winning formula with the increasingly jaded king and in 1676 Barbara quit England for Paris, not returning permanently until 1682.

Widely decried as a French spy, Louise certainly appears to have served French interests well. Under her influence, Charles continually resisted popular pressure to contain French expansionism and stood by while France seized more and more of the Netherlands. The most abject moment came when Charles offered not to call parliament again without Louis XIV's agreement. Louise's French biographer Henri Forneron wrote of her: "During 15 years she was holding Great Britain in her delicate little hand, and manipulated its king and statesmen as dexterously as she might have done her fan."

It is somehow fitting that in 1685, on the evening before the onset of his short and fatal illness, Charles enjoyed an evening spent with three of his mistresses: Louise, Barbara and a more recent addition, Hortense Mancini.

His contemporaries were not slow to pass verdict upon him after his death. The bishop of Salisbury, who knew him well, said: "The ruin of his reign... was occasioned chiefly by his delivering himself up to a mad range of pleasure." Sexual pleasure was indeed the problem. He was introduced to it before his 15th birthday, became addicted to it in exile, using it as a defence against a world in which his father Charles I had been executed and he himself had been robbed of his golden years.

When Charles suddenly gained the throne, for which he had been unprepared, he continued in the same way, ruling, as the 18th-century English poet Alexander Pope put it: "when love was all an easie monarch's care". Charles II was simply the king who never grew up. ■

#### PILLOW TALK

Louise de K  roualle was a beautiful girl from the French court who was tutored to become Charles II's mistress – but many people suspected her of being a spy







Diana and Prince Charles leave St Paul's Cathedral in a horse-drawn carriage after their wedding in London on 29 July 1981

# The A<sup>TO</sup>Z of royal weddings

Many have been the glorious start to long and happy relationships, but others were jinxed from the start by secrets, scandals, riots and disasters. **TRACY BORMAN** takes a look at royal marriages through history

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In 1501 Prince Arthur boasted about his wedding night but his wife claimed the marriage was unconsummated



At the wedding of William to Catherine Middleton, the bride's sister Philippa caused a stir as a stunning maid of honour

## A is for Arthur...

The wedding of Arthur, Prince of Wales, the eldest son and heir of King Henry VII, to Catherine of Aragon (a princess from Spain) in 1501 proved to be one of the most controversial in royal history. The source of the controversy was exactly what happened during the wedding night. The 15-year-old Arthur boasted that he had spent the night "in Spain". He died four months later, and Catherine married his younger brother Henry VIII. When this marriage failed to produce the longed-for male heir, Henry sought to annul it on the grounds that the Bible forbade a man to take his brother's wife. Catherine insisted that her marriage to Arthur had never been consummated. The debate still rages today.

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## B is for Bridesmaid...

Victoria set a new trend by having 12 bridesmaids to carry her train, which was 18 feet long. After that, bridesmaids became an essential part of proceedings. Princess Alexandra, (a second cousin of the Queen) who married Angus Ogilvy in 1963, chose a train so voluminous it slowed her progress down the aisle to a snail's pace. Her bridesmaids had their work cut out to keep it in order. Among them was the 12-year-old Princess Anne, who looked aghast when the bride whispered: "Your turn next." Anne, the Queen's second child, would indeed be the next royal to marry at Westminster Abbey, but not until 10 years later. In 2011 a bride's maid of honour, Philippa (Pippa) Middleton, stole the show with her figure-hugging dress when her sister Catherine married Prince William.

## C is for Commoner...

Until modern times, it was rare for commoners to be admitted into the privileged world of the monarchy. The exception was Charles II's brother, James, Duke of York (later James II), who married two of them. In 1659, he "entered into a private marriage contract" with Anne Hyde. The marriage produced two future queens, Mary II and Queen Anne. After his wife's death in 1671, James married Mary of Modena, who bore him a son, James Francis Edward Stewart, later to be known as the Old Pretender. Commoners now regularly feature in royal nuptials – notably Sophie Rhys-Jones (married Prince Edward in 1999); Mike Tindall (married the Queen's granddaughter Zara Phillips in 2011) and Catherine Middleton.







Edward VIII abdicated so he could marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson. The couple are shown here on their wedding day at the Chateau de Cando in France on 3 June 1937

## F is for Forbidden...

"She promised to bring into my life something that wasn't there." By the time that he wrote these words, Edward VIII had already abdicated from the British throne so that he might marry Wallis Simpson, the American divorcee whom he had met and fallen in love with several years before. His refusal to give her up after he became king in 1936 led to a constitutional crisis that scandalised the world. It was one of the most talked about royal courtships in history, but their wedding was a distinctly low-key affair. They had to wait until Wallis's second divorce came through before marrying, in June 1937, in a private ceremony in France.

## G is for Gold....

At the start of the 20th century, a nugget of gold from Clogau St David's mine in north Wales was given to the royal family. From this, the wedding ring of every royal bride from the Queen Mother in 1923 to Lady Diana Spencer in 1981 was crafted. The Queen was presented with another supply from the company's mine at nearby Bontddu in 1986. She gave some of this to her grandson Prince William after his engagement was announced to Catherine Middleton so that his bride could continue the tradition.

For the last century, royal rings have been made from nuggets of gold from Wales

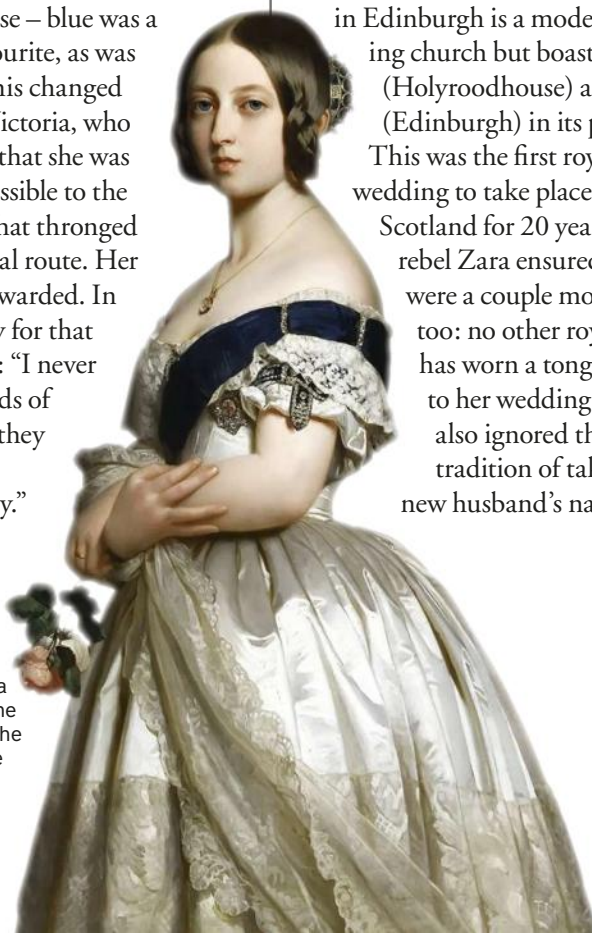


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## D is for Dress...

Think of a wedding dress, and the chances are that you're imagining something white and meringue-like. But the choice of white is a relatively recent tradition in the history of royal weddings. Until the early 19th century, the bride could wear any colour she chose – blue was a particular favourite, as was black. All of this changed with Queen Victoria, who wore white so that she was as visible as possible to the huge crowds that thronged the processional route. Her efforts were rewarded. In her diary entry for that day, she wrote: "I never saw such crowds of people... and they cheered most enthusiastically."

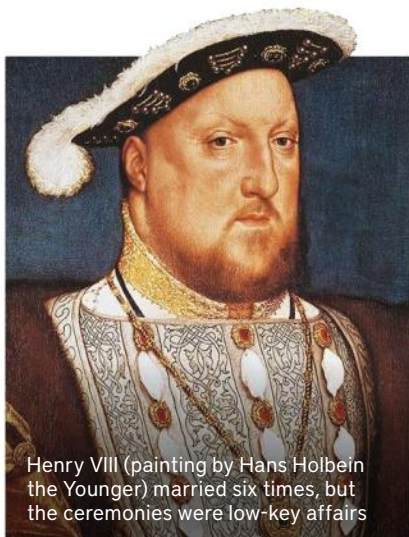
Victoria started a tradition when she wed in white so the crowds could see her from afar



## E is for Edinburgh...

When Zara Phillips, said to be the Queen's favourite granddaughter, married England rugby star Mike Tindall in July 2011, she was so intent upon a low-key wedding that she chose a location as far away from London as possible. Canongate Kirk in Edinburgh is a modest-looking church but boasts a palace (Holyroodhouse) and castle (Edinburgh) in its parish. This was the first royal wedding to take place in Scotland for 20 years. Royal rebel Zara ensured there were a couple more firsts too: no other royal bride has worn a tongue stud to her wedding, and she also ignored the tradition of taking her new husband's name.





Henry VIII (painting by Hans Holbein the Younger) married six times, but the ceremonies were low-key affairs

## H is for... Henry

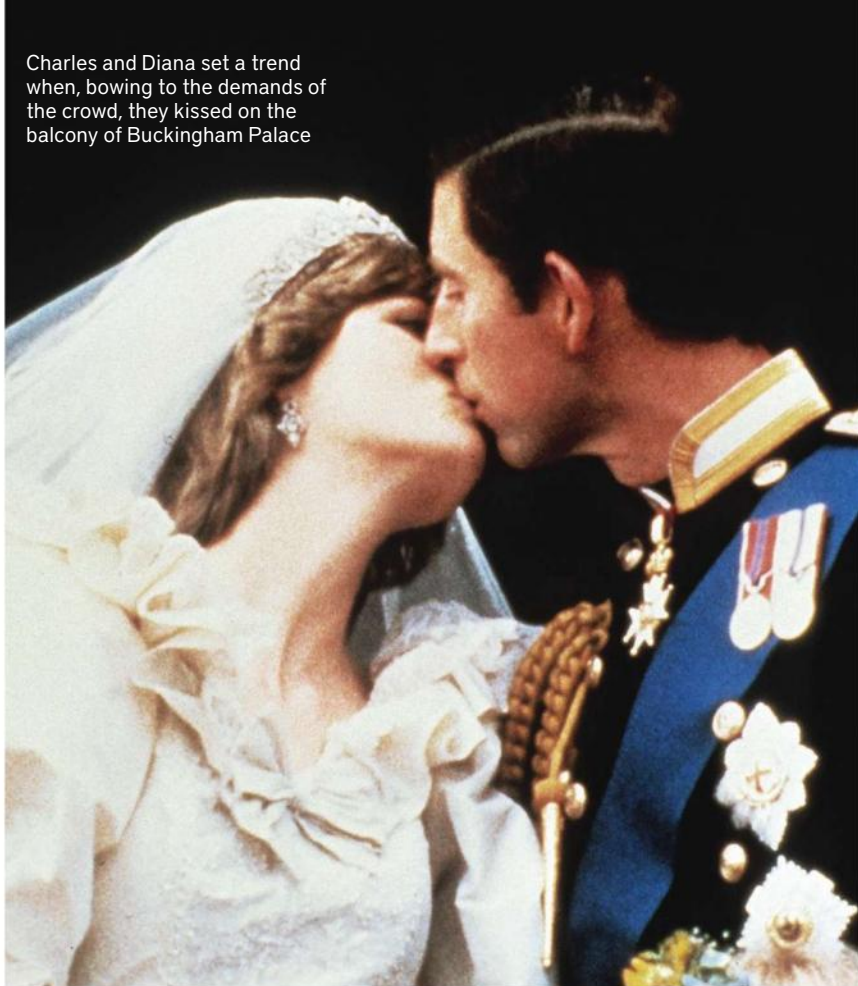
No A-Z of royal weddings would be complete without a reference to England's most married monarch, Henry VIII. Although his courtships were the talk (and scandal) of Christendom, his weddings were surprisingly low-key affairs. He led his first bride, Catherine of Aragon, to the altar with as little fuss as when he attended a normal church service. His last wedding, to Katherine Parr, was just as discreet, taking place in her private apartments at Hampton Court. Ironically, the only wedding to be celebrated in style was to the bride he liked least: Anne of Cleves, the so-called 'Flanders Mare'.

## I is for Indisposed...

Spare a thought for poor Princess Augusta. She was so averse to the idea of marrying the boorish Prince Frederick, eldest son and heir of King George II, that on her way to the ceremony (April 1736) she clung to the skirts of his mother, Queen Caroline, begging: "Please don't leave me." Her husband-to-be made matters worse by bellowing in her ear when she stumbled over the marriage vows. When the ceremony was over, she promptly threw up.

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Charles and Diana set a trend when, bowing to the demands of the crowd, they kissed on the balcony of Buckingham Palace



## J is for Joke...

Amid the pomp and ceremony of a typical royal wedding, there is still room for the odd prank or two. Prince Edward was the chief suspect behind the model satellite dish and accompanying 'Phone Home' slogan with which his brother Andrew's carriage was festooned after wedding Sarah Ferguson in 1986. Meanwhile, Princes William and Harry scrawled "Just Married" across the back window of their father's car after his wedding to Camilla Parker Bowles, and the words "Prince" and "Duchess" were sprayed on either side of the windscreen. Rather less good-humoured was Charles II's jest at his niece Mary's wedding in 1677. When he heard the wealthy bridegroom promising to endow her with all his worldly goods, he told his niece loudly, "Put it all in your pocket, for 'tis clear gain."

## K is for Kiss...

Queen Victoria began the tradition of displaying the newlywed couple on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. On the occasion of her daughter Princess Victoria's wedding, she took pity on the crowds who had been denied a glimpse of the royal couple, and ordered the royal family out onto the balcony. Since then, a new element has been added to the traditional balcony appearance: a kiss between bride and groom. Prince Charles reluctantly obliged only after exhaustive chanting by the crowds below at his wedding to Diana; his son William gave a more convincing performance 30 years later. But Charles refused to oblige second time around when marrying Camilla in 2005, as did his younger brother Edward at his wedding to Sophie Rhys-Jones.





## L is for Lord Chamberlain...

The task of organising a royal wedding falls to the Lord Chamberlain in his capacity as Impressario of Pageantry to the Queen. Among the myriad duties involved is the drafting of the guest list, and as most full royal weddings involve at least 2,000 invitees, this is no mean feat. It is also his job to arrange the seating plan for the ceremony. At Westminster Abbey, this is complicated by the fact that only 800 of the 2,000-strong congregation are able to see anything of the procession, and fewer still catch a glimpse of the wedding ceremony itself. Any would-be royal wedding guest should therefore take note: the worse the view, the less important the guest.

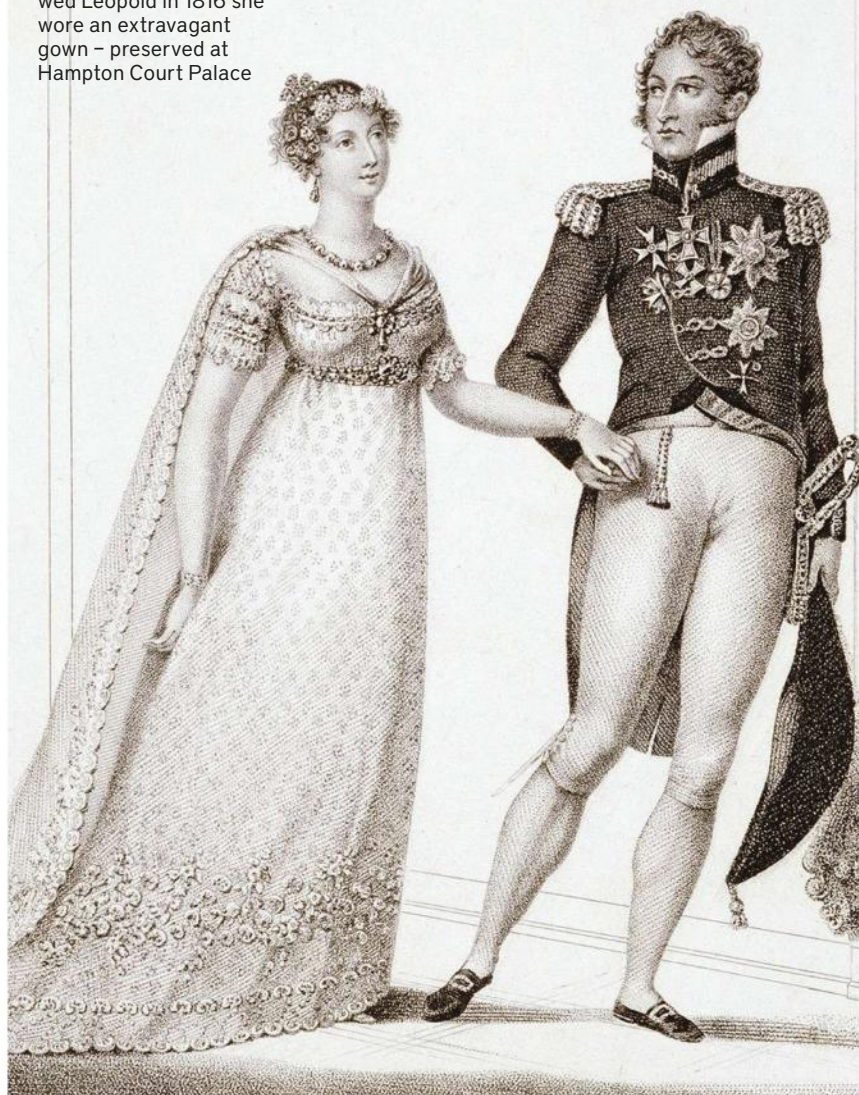
## M is for Myrtle...

Queen Victoria began another royal wedding tradition when she ordered that a sprig of the myrtle from her bouquet be planted at her favourite retreat, Osborne House, on the Isle of Wight. From that sprig grew a bush that has supplied every other royal bride since with a cutting for their bouquet. Although considered lucky, it has not brought all of them the same happiness in marriage that Victoria enjoyed. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Catherine and William, embraced the botanical theme by having an avenue of 20-foot-tall trees installed either side of the main aisle at their wedding, transforming Westminster Abbey into a veritable forest.

Myrtle doesn't always live up to its billing as the herb of everlasting love



When Princess Charlotte wed Leopold in 1816 she wore an extravagant gown – preserved at Hampton Court Palace



## N is for Names...

The most nerve-wracking part of any wedding is the exchange of vows. Spare a thought, then, for the royal couples of recent times. Not only have they had to perform in front of a 2,000-strong congregation but the ceremonies have been relayed live to up to 700 million people across the globe. Nerves famously got the better of Lady Diana Spencer when she muddled the order of the names of her husband-to-be, calling him “Philip Charles Arthur George”, instead of Charles Philip Arthur George.

## O is for Old...

The oldest surviving wedding dress is that of Princess Charlotte, who married Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld in 1816. It was an extraordinarily ornate gown made from silver tissue with a netted silk underskirt, richly embroidered shells and bouquets, and trimmed with Brussels point lace. It was then worth in excess of £10,000 – around £400,000 in today's money. The gown is now preserved at Hampton Court Palace in Surrey as part of the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection.



The 2011 wedding of Prince William and Catherine, pictured in the state carriage afterwards, cost £20 million



## P is for Pricey...

The wedding of Prince William to Catherine Middleton in April 2011 was said to have been one of the most expensive ever staged. Despite the couple's wish to tone down the pageantry in favour of personal touches (such as a chocolate 'groom's cake'), the price tag was reportedly £20 million. The cost to the economy of the extra public holiday in honour of the wedding was estimated at a further £3 billion. At least part of this was offset by the substantial boost that the wedding gave to British tourism, however, with an extra 4 million people from across the globe converging on the capital.

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## Q is for Quick...

The wedding of Sarah Armstrong-Jones – daughter of the Queen's sister Princess Margaret – to her long-term partner, Daniel Chatto, on 14 July 1994, was one of the most rapid in royal history. It took place at the small church of St Stephen Walbrook (designed by Christopher Wren) in London, which holds just 200 guests. The ceremony was so quick it caught the chauffeurs of the guests unaware, and several members of the royal family, including the Queen, Prince Philip and Princess Diana, were obliged to make small talk while waiting for their cars to arrive.



High-speed ceremony: Sarah Armstrong-Jones on her wedding day





## R is for Reluctant...

Throughout history, royal weddings have been made more for policy than for love. But not everyone was prepared to accept this. In 1795 the future George IV proved to be one of the most reluctant grooms in history. Madly in love with Maria Fitzherbert (whom, it was rumoured, he had secretly married), he steadfastly refused to wed Caroline of Brunswick, the bride whom his father had chosen. Upon first meeting her, he had been so horrified that he had called for a brandy and spent the next 24 hours in a drunken stupor. The marriage proved a total disaster and George and Caroline separated after the birth of their only child, Princess Charlotte.

## S is for Secret...

Not all royal weddings were celebrated with the ceremony that we are used to now. One of the earliest, between William the Conqueror and Matilda of Flanders in the 11th century, was so secret that to this day nobody knows exactly when or where it took place. They were marrying in defiance of a papal ban – something Henry VIII would have sympathised with. Edward IV kept his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 a secret because he did not dare tell his council he had married a widow and, worse still, a commoner. He only admitted to it five months later. It aroused such opposition it was declared invalid after his death in 1483.



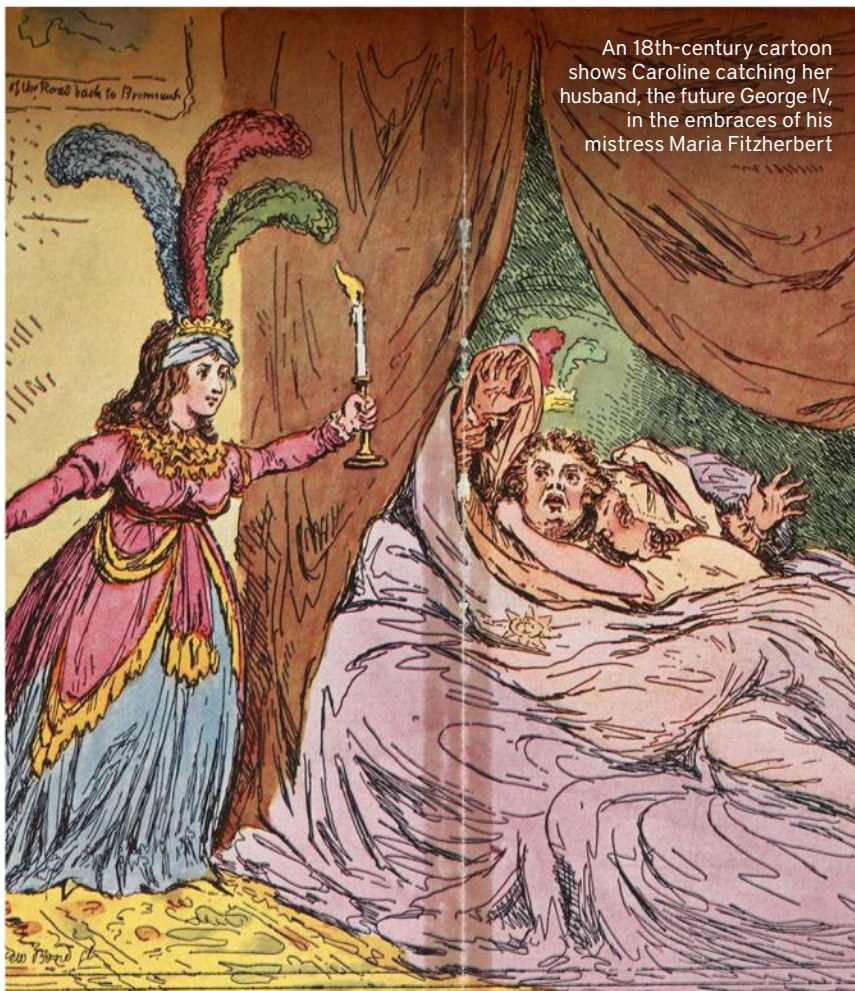
An unusual wedding present came from a concerned American

## T is for Turkey...

What do you give the couple who have everything? A turkey, apparently. A woman in Brooklyn sent this bizarre gift to the future Queen Elizabeth II on her marriage to Philip Mountbatten in 1947 because she thought that the princess was going hungry on the same rations as everyone else in postwar Britain. To avoid such unwanted presents, the royal family now traditionally invites donations to nominated charities instead.

## U is for Undressed...

The consummation of the marriage was by no means as private an affair in the past as it is today. At the end of the wedding day, the ceremony of undressing would begin. Once disrobed by her ladies and put into bed, the bride would be joined by her husband, led in by a group of rowdy, drunken friends. This is when the party really started. Everyone would drink 'benediction posset' – hot wine mixed with milk, eggs, sugar and spice – then play a game of 'fling the stocking', a little like throwing the bouquet today. When the couple were at last alone, they would be serenaded with lewd songs from the other side of the door, often until the following morning.



An 18th-century cartoon shows Caroline catching her husband, the future George IV, in the embraces of his mistress Maria Fitzherbert





Westminster Abbey is a popular venue for royal weddings. Prince Andrew, the Queen's third child, married Sarah Ferguson there on 23 July 1986

## V is for Virgin...

Elizabeth I was having none of this wedding caper. She had witnessed the disastrous marital history first of her mother, Anne Boleyn – who Henry VIII had executed in 1536 – and then the string of unfortunate women who had taken Anne's place as the king's wife. Later on, there was Mary, Queen of Scots, whose notorious marital escapades were the scandal not only of Scotland but of Christendom. Little wonder that Elizabeth resolved to remain a virgin. She famously declared: "I am married to England."

## W is for Westminster Abbey...

Founded in the mid-10th century and rebuilt by Edward the Confessor almost a hundred years later, the abbey is steeped in royal history. As well as being the traditional venue for coronations, it also soon became popular for royal weddings. The first to take place there after the Norman conquest was that of Henry I to Matilda of Scotland, and it was used on numerous occasions up to 1986, when Prince Andrew married Sarah Ferguson there. The abbey was subsequently abandoned in favour of less grand venues, but it enjoyed a glorious resurgence when Catherine Middleton and Prince William chose it in 2011.

## X is for Xenophobia...

Mary Tudor was so intent upon marrying Philip II of Spain that she rode roughshod over her subjects' objections to a foreign king. It was love at first sight, even though it was only his portrait she had seen. She was no less besotted when she met him, and married him two days later, on 25 July 1554, at Winchester Cathedral. The marriage was deeply unpopular with the English, and there was a rebellion against it even before Philip set foot on English soil.

## Y is for York...

There have been some notable royal nuptials at York Minster. The first was between Edward III and Philippa of Hainault in January 1328. They were not put off by the fact that it was still being built and the nave lacked a roof. True to form, the British weather spoilt the day and the ceremony was conducted in a heavy snow storm. Six centuries later, in 1961, the Queen's cousin the Duke of Kent chose the more sensible month of June for his wedding there to Katharine Worsley.

## Z is for Zzzz...

Since Victorian times royal weddings have been held during the day. Before, they were always evening affairs, conducted in private with a handful of guests. One such wedding was that of James II's daughter Mary, who married her first cousin, Prince William of Orange, in 1677, in a ceremony that took place at 9pm in her bedchamber at St James's Palace, London. The lateness of the hour is something that can never be repeated by future royals – not without a change in the law. ■



# ROYAL F

THE RELATIVES THAT HELP OR HINDER A RULER

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➤ A handy guide to **RAISING KINGS AND QUEENS**

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➤ The **PLANTAGENET** family and its 331-year rule

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➤ How **EDWARD III** used his children to create a dynasty

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➤ Why **GEORGE III** changed royal private lives

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# FAMILIES

## HAPPY DAYS

Queen Victoria with Prince Albert and some of their nine children. She had a dismal childhood so made sure that royal duties did not rule out a happy and stable life for her own family







# HOW TO RAISE A ROYAL

Leading an army; marrying a partner who doesn't speak English; serving as God's representative; curing scrofula; or simply riding a horse – a monarch's job description includes some challenging tasks. **TRACY BORMAN** offers tips on making sure your royal children are up to the job





#### HANDS-ON PARENTS

The Prince and Princess of Wales, seen leaving hospital after the birth of William in 1982, gave their children something approaching a 'normal' childhood – a successful example of royal parenting despite the couple's marital differences

#### FACING PAGE

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert take time out from their state duties to play with their young children, c1845 →



# 1 Don't forget the spare heirs

*The onerous task facing all royal couples: produce 'an heir and a spare'*

Until Britain's present queen changed the law of succession so that girls have equal precedence to boys, every monarch in history has wanted a male heir to inherit the throne (plus at least one spare in case of accidents). Little wonder that the firstborn son has always been the focus of most attention when it comes to their upbringing and education: after all, they have to be trained to be king one day.

Even though she doted upon her firstborn son, Robert 'Curthose', Matilda of Flanders gave her husband William the Conqueror three other boys. Each of them benefited from an exemplary upbringing for a royal prince, which included military training as well as academic subjects. As a result, the three 'spare heirs' all grew into highly competent and formidable young men. By contrast, Robert was feckless, hot-headed and intemperate. He later led a rebel-

lion against his father, which failed miserably and resulted in William depriving him of his inheritance. Upon the latter's death, Robert became Duke of Normandy but his younger brother William Rufus secured the greater prize of being King of England. When Rufus was assassinated in England's New Forest several years later, his youngest brother Henry seized the throne, becoming the most successful of all William's sons.

Even though Henry I was a fourth son, he was trained in all the subjects useful for a ruler – which was fortunate as he ended up reigning from 1100 to 1135

## *How not to do it*

England's most famous king, Henry VIII, was never destined for the throne. That honour was reserved for his elder brother, Arthur, upon whose upbringing his father Henry VII lavished great attention and expense, crafting him into a leader of men. By contrast, Henry was spoilt by his mother, Elizabeth of York, and allowed to indulge whatever pastimes he wished. Arthur's death thrust Henry into the spotlight, but by then his character was – fatally – set.





Charles I (1600–49) was devoted to his queen, Henrietta Maria, who was his confidante and companion. Their children included two future kings



## 2 Put your spouse first and your children second

*Loving and respectful royal parents create sensible princes and princesses*

At the heart of some of the most successful royal parenting examples in history is a strong and stable marriage. Take Edward III and Philippa of Hainault, for example. Their marriage, in 1328, was made for love as well as policy. It produced nine children who survived into adulthood. Having learned from their parents' example, most of these children went on to have long and happy marriages.

Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was another great love match, and despite raising their large brood amid the turmoil of the Wars of the Roses, they created a happy and nurturing environment for their children. The ill-fated Charles I might have been a failure

as king but he was a devoted husband to Henrietta Maria, and together they raised a brood of happy, healthy children who included two future kings.

Queen Victoria was famously devoted to her husband, Prince Albert, and although they doted on their children, their love for each other always remained paramount. Putting one's spouse ahead of one's children in this way seems to have ensured that the latter grow up as grounded and (for the most part) sensible individuals, with an excellent role model for their own marriage as adults. But with most royal marriages being made for politics rather than love, this was one parenting tactic that was not always easy to achieve.

### *How not to do it*

**In the early years of her marriage, Eleanor of Aquitaine was passionately in love with her husband Henry, Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou (later Henry II) and bore him eight children. But their tempestuous relationship eventually turned sour and in 1173 Eleanor supported a revolt by one of their sons against her husband. Henry had her locked up as a punishment and she was only released upon his death 16 years later.**



# 3 Protect royal children from the glare of publicity

*Many monarchs court popularity, but too much exposure is damaging and counter-productive*

When it was announced in December 2012 that the Duchess of Cambridge was expecting her first child, the world's media was thrown into a frenzy. Since marrying Prince William in April 2011, speculation had been rife about when she would become pregnant – particularly as William's mother Diana conceived just 12 weeks after her wedding.

But William has always been determined to protect his family from the paparazzi, who, it was claimed, had hounded his mother to her death. There was, however, little that he could do to prevent the media circus setting up camp outside the Lindo Wing of St Mary's Hospital in London, as well as at Kensington Palace and Bucking-

ham Palace, during the weeks leading up to the birth. When the duchess was admitted on 22 July in the early stages of labour, the world held its breath. But she and William managed to conceal the birth of their son George for a few hours before it was officially announced.

Although they dutifully presented him to the world the next day, they subsequently made it clear that their son would be raised away from the glare of publicity. The same is true of their daughter Charlotte, born in May 2015. Safeguarding the privacy of their children in this way will help ensure that they enjoy as normal an upbringing as possible.

## *How not to do it*

**Henry VIII was so convinced that his second wife, Anne Boleyn, would give him a son that when she was expecting their first child, he prepared to shout it from the rooftops. As well as planning jousts and fireworks, he instructed his scribes to draft letters announcing the birth of a 'prince' to all the heads of state in Europe. When Anne gave birth on 7 September, the scribes had to go back to those letters and add 'ss' to the word. She had given Henry another useless girl. The jousts and fireworks were canceled immediately.**

After the experience of his mother, Diana, Prince William was determined to maintain a private life with his children and to shield them from the paparazzi







George II disliked his son Prince Frederick, and sidelined him in official affairs. The prince consoled himself with his passion for music, art and theatre. *The Music Party of 1733* shows him performing in a family concert

## 4 Take time to cherish your children

*Royal children, like the rest of us, need the loving attention of their parents*

Most royal children had little contact with their parents (at least by today's standards), but there were some notable exceptions. Far from being ashamed of her daughter Elizabeth (who should have been a boy), Anne Boleyn so doted on her that she had a special velvet cushion made so that the baby could lay next to her when she was conducting court business.

Two centuries later, George III was similarly besotted with his children – all 15 of them. He established Buckingham Palace as a happy family home, and he also took his growing brood on regular visits to the country retreats of Kew and Richmond. The king never allowed his royal duties to disrupt his family time and he favoured an informal and relaxed domestic life. To the dismay of some

royal courtiers, who were more accustomed to displays of grandeur and strict protocol, he was often spotted playing with his small children on the carpet. Unusually for a monarch, he was especially fond of his girls, whereas his sons later proved something of a disappointment. His wife Charlotte was painstaking in her concern for the children's welfare and education, but was a much less relaxed parent, displaying little spontaneous affection.

After the turbulent marital history of so many of his predecessors, King George's subjects loved him for his devotion to his family and his simple, moral principles. He gave his children an upbringing that many other royal offspring would probably have envied.

### *How not to do it*

George III's father, Prince Frederick, suffered a horrendous upbringing at the hands of his parents, George II and Queen Caroline. They despised their eldest son and left him behind in Hanover when they accompanied his grandfather George I to take up the British throne. Frederick was eventually allowed to join his family, but they made no secret of their loathing for him, and his mother once famously declared that he made her want to 'vomit'.



# 5 Appoint the right nursery staff

*When royal children are raised away from their parents, faithful retainers are crucial*

For centuries, protocol dictated that royal offspring should be raised not by their parents, but by a team of nurses, governesses and tutors. Often, royal babies were sent away from court in early infancy and established in their own households. This was the case with the future Elizabeth I, packed off to Hatfield House, north of London, at just three months with a veritable army of attendants.

They included Blanche Parry, a young Welsh lady given the task of overseeing the four 'rockers' of the infant princess's cradle. This was an important task, for it would keep the child quiet and amenable, and ensure favourable reports of her could be sent back to court. She quickly struck up a close relationship with Elizabeth and doted upon

the child. She sang her to sleep with Welsh lullabies and taught her the rudiments of that language as she grew older. She accompanied Elizabeth on her frequent changes of residence during her childhood and provided much-needed stability in a fragile and turbulent world, particularly after the sudden loss of her mother, Anne Boleyn.

The young princess came to trust in her steady kindness and unswerving loyalty, which provided a benchmark against which all of her other attendants were measured (and usually fell short). Blanche devoted the rest of her life to Elizabeth, and the latter kept her old childhood nurse as one of her closest companions when she became queen. By Blanche's death in 1590, she had served Elizabeth for 56 years.

## *How not to do it*

Another member of Elizabeth's childhood staff was Katherine (Kat) Astley, her governess. Like Blanche, Kat was utterly devoted to the princess, but she was notoriously impetuous and indiscreet. When Elizabeth was a teenager, Kat foolishly encouraged the flirtatious advances of the philandering Thomas Seymour towards her young charge. In 1549 that mistake led Kat to a short spell of imprisonment in the Tower of London.



Henry VIII shown on a visit to his son Prince Edward, who was raised away from court from an early age. The prince, born in 1537, is seen in a walking frame

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Victoria had a sad and restrictive childhood, so she made sure her children had plenty of fun, albeit of the instructive kind. The family is photographed here on vacation at Osborne House in 1854

## 6 Help children learn through play

*Fun and productive activities help royal children become rounded individuals*

In stark contrast to her own childhood, Queen Victoria ensured that all nine of her children enjoyed a happy upbringing. The best times were spent at Osborne House, their “quiet and retired” home on the Isle of Wight. Here, Albert built a ‘Swiss Cottage’ for his young children. Hidden in the woods on the Osborne estate, this wooden chalet became the children’s favourite retreat. Albert intended it as a place where his offspring could play at being adults and learn the skills he believed would make them better people and rulers.

The older boys, Bertie and Alfred, helped lay the foundations for the cottage. Victoria proudly noted in her journal that Alfred had “worked as hard and steadily as a regular labourer”, and he was paid by

Albert at the going rate. Meanwhile, the princesses learned how to bake and would often serve tea to their parents and guests. They had a well-furnished kitchen, and ran a toy grocer’s shop stocked with basics and exotic spices. They also kept accounts which their father reviewed. Each child had their own garden plot where they tended fruit, vegetables and flowers using miniature tools and their own monogrammed wheelbarrows. The produce was assessed by the under-gardener and, if good enough, Albert would pay the market rate to the child who had grown it.

Victoria and Albert’s children cherished such happy memories of Swiss Cottage that, when they were all grown up, they returned with their own children.

### *How not to do it*

**Victoria’s own childhood was, as she put it, “rather melancholy”. Her mother, the Duchess of Kent, was extremely protective, and Victoria was raised largely isolated from other children under the ‘Kensington System’, an elaborate set of rules and protocols. Victoria was obliged to share a bedroom with her mother, and was only allowed to see people deemed suitable. Even by the standards of royal childhood, it was a restricted and stifling existence, and one that Victoria rebelled against as soon as she became queen.**



Princess Diana with her children William and Harry at an amusement park in 1993. It was one of the 'normal' childhood activities that she made sure the two princes experienced



## 7 Keep in touch with the real world

*Growing up in a rarified atmosphere can mean monarchs are unable to relate to people*

Diana broke the mould of royal motherhood, as well as of being a princess. From the very start, she was determined to give her boys as 'normal' an upbringing as possible. Unlike every royal mother before her, Diana insisted upon a hospital birth for both her sons, William and Harry, rather than giving birth at home as was the tradition for royal wives. All subsequent royal mothers have followed suit. As well as being the first royal baby to be born in hospital, Prince William was also the first to be taken on a royal trip. Diana would not hear of leaving him behind, not least because she was breast-feeding – another first for a royal wife.

Diana's quest for normality continued as her boys grew up. She

would take them to school and collect them whenever she could. She took them for fun days out to places such as Thorpe Park, a popular theme park, and organised children's parties for them. On one famous occasion, she took them on the London Underground to Piccadilly Circus and caught the bus back to Kensington Palace. She also took them to McDonald's, but insisted that they wait in line like everyone else.

Prince Charles, too, was a more hands-on father than his predecessors. He attended his sons' births and was not averse to changing the occasional nappy. He and Diana ensured William and Harry would grow up as grounded young men, despite their status – one of the most successful examples of royal parenting in history.

### *How not to do it*

**James I (James VI in Scotland) and Anne of Denmark are among the worst examples of royal parents. They invested little time or attention in their children, consigning them instead to all the strict protocols and formality of a royal upbringing. This had disastrous repercussions for their second son, the future Charles I, who grew up with an unpredictable temper and a dangerously exaggerated sense of entitlement. The rest is history.**



# 8 Encourage sibling rivalry

*A competitive atmosphere helps mould ambitious and capable leaders*

Although this flies in the face of modern parenting advice, the need to produce a brood of highly capable, ambitious and authoritative heirs to strengthen the dynasty inspired many royal parents to foster an atmosphere of competitiveness in the nursery.

Regardless of their place in the order of succession, most royal children were given an exemplary education. Even if they were not destined for the throne, princes were expected to play an active role in war, politics or the church when they reached maturity, while their sisters were groomed to make prestigious political marriages. Royal nurseries were therefore often hothouses of learning, with each sibling trying to outdo the other in accomplishments. The fact that some royal children – notably

'Bloody' Mary I and Elizabeth I – were set up in separate establishments fostered an even greater sense of rivalry between them.

Boys were encouraged to compete in the field of combat. This paid dividends for Edward IV, Richard III and their two brothers, who had battled to outdo each other as children, but whose combined military prowess as adults secured victory for the House of York in the Wars of the Roses. The warlike sons of Eleanor of Aquitaine fought each other as both children and adults, but two of them went on to become kings of England, ensuring that their formidable mother's legacy lived on for generations. ■

## *How not to do it*

**There is a fine line between healthy sibling rivalry and all-out civil war, as William the Conqueror would discover. In the closing years of his reign, all three of his sons were at such loggerheads that they threatened to destroy the Anglo-Norman kingdom that he had fought so hard to establish.**

Edward IV and his family, shown in c1477. Edward and his brothers' military training as children helped when it came to the Wars of the Roses, beginning in 1455





**ONE OF A LONG  
LINE OF KINGS**

Richard II (reigned 1377–99) was of the Plantagenet dynasty, which descended from French count Geoffrey of Anjou and ruled England from 1154 to 1485

**FACING PAGE**

Geoffrey's badge was the broom plant (*planta genista*), after which England's most resilient royal family was named







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# ENGLAND'S *ULTIMATE* FAMILY DRAMA

That a single dynasty, the Plantagenets, was able to rule England for 331 years, when disease or violence could transform the political landscape overnight, is truly remarkable, says **ROBERT BARTLETT**



Monarchies are now rare in the world, numbering around 20 in a system of almost 200 independent states. But for hundreds of years monarchy was the way that politics worked in most countries. And monarchy meant that power was in the hands of a family – a dynasty – and hence politics was family politics. It was not elections that shaped political life, but the births, marriages and deaths of the ruling family. This added further unpredictability to the unpredictable business of ruling.

Between 1154 and 1485, a period of 331 years, England was ruled by one family. Every king during that time was a descendant in the male line of a French count, Geoffrey of Anjou, whose badge the broom plant – *planta genista* in Latin – is the origin of their name: the Plantagenets.

The Plantagenet dynasty had its origin in the Loire valley, and the first two Plantagenet kings of England, Henry II and Richard the Lionheart, spent much more time in France than in England. This French connection continued throughout the Middle Ages. The body of Henry III lies in Westminster Abbey, but he commanded that after his death his heart should be interred in the Plantagenet family mausoleum of Fontevrault in the Loire valley. Richard II was sometimes called ‘Richard of Bordeaux’ from the place of his birth, while Edward IV was born in Rouen.

Despite these ties with France, the Plantagenets are England’s longest-reigning dynasty. It was their births, marriages and deaths that shaped the political history of England and much of France. They provide a perfect example of what dynastic rule meant.

Most Plantagenets, like most people in the Middle Ages, died before their 10th birthday. Those who survived – who are the ones we know something about – might live a fair bit longer. The average age at death of the Plantagenet kings was 45. The unlucky ones, like Edward V, one of the ‘princes in the Tower’, did not make it to their 13th birthday. The longest survivor, Edward I, died at the age of 68.

Sudden and unexpected deaths, either through violence, like that of Richard I, or from disease, like that of Henry V, could transform the political world overnight. From both these deaths the eventual outcome was the expulsion of the Plantagenets from most of their French possessions.

But long-lived kings presented problems too. Heirs might get impatient and fractious, while the so-called dotage of Edward III (when the king was in his 60s, a relatively youthful age) created serious problems, which affected English politics and undermined the Plantagenet war effort in France. Kings were meant to have sons, but not too many. Given the high rate of infant mortality, it was best if they produced numerous children. Edward III and his queen, Philippa, had at least 12 children; nine of these survived infancy, and five of the nine were boys. This ensured that the dynasty would continue in the male line, but it also stored up trouble for the future, with many royal descendants ready to make claims if given a chance.

But kings without sons were vulnerable – get rid of them, and there would be no heirs to fight back and pursue revenge. When Henry Bolingbroke usurped the throne from Richard II, he faced opposition, criticism and, sometimes, rebellion, but Richard had no son to fan the flames. In contrast, when Henry VI was removed by Edward IV in 1461, there was a son, and Edward’s regime was not truly secure until the killing of that son 10 years later. A son or two was the safe formula for a medieval king.

These sons became active early. Henry II, the first Plantagenet king, started as the son of a French count, but by the time he was 20, he had fought and married his way to become one of the most powerful rulers in Europe. This early start was not unusual. This was a world in which teenagers could rule. Henry’s son Richard became Duke of Aquitaine, ruling a third of France, aged 14.



Richard I’s tomb at Fontevrault Abbey in the Loire valley, where the Plantagenet dynasty had its roots. Richard spent far more time in France than in England

AKG IMAGES





**FAMILY STRIFE** Henry Bolingbroke (on horseback) confronts King Richard II at Flint Castle in north Wales. When Bolingbroke deposed Richard to become Henry IV, the ousted king's ability to fight back was hamstrung by his lack of a son

Edward III took control of the government, killing his mother's lover and sending her into permanent house arrest, when he was 18. His son, the Black Prince, won his spurs at the battle of Crécy, aged 16. Richard II confronted and won-over a crowd of armed rebels when he was 14.

(and by) queen-mothers, and, of course, endless negotiations about future brides.

For a dynasty to survive, it had to reproduce. And by the 11th century, in most parts of western Europe, this meant marriage as defined by the church. Earlier, more casual arrangements had been replaced or marginalised. William the Conqueror's alternative nickname was William the Bastard, but during the Plantagenet centuries illegitimacy was taken seriously as a bar to succession. None of the numerous illegitimate children of the Plantagenets raised a claim. When Richard III decided to take the throne from his nephews, he thought it necessary to undertake an elaborate process to declare them illegitimate. Even if no one believed his arguments, he felt it a case he had to make: if the princes were not of legitimate birth, they could not be kings.

An unusual example of illegitimate children rising high is provided by the offspring of John of Gaunt and his mis-

**B**ut, if youthful kings and princes could certainly exercise powers of command effectively, the accession of an infant was a dangerous moment. At this juncture, learned men would quote the line from Ecclesiastes 10, 16: "Woe to the land where a child is king!" Unlike earlier periods, when an adult male was the preferred successor, the rules of succession that applied in the Plantagenet centuries took no account of the age of the heir. Henry III came to the throne aged nine, Richard II aged 10, poor Edward V at the age of 12. This meant regencies, rival factions, decisions about

It was a world in which teenagers could rule. The future Richard I presided over a third of France, aged 14



tress Katherine Swynford, though they needed the backing of both pope and king to be declared legitimate. Katherine was the daughter of one of the knights of Hainault who had come to England with Philippa of Hainault, queen of Edward III. Katherine had married an English knight but had also been recognised as Gaunt's mistress.

The high-born ladies of the royal dynasty were not amused when John of Gaunt and Katherine subsequently got married. "We will not go anywhere she is," they said. "It would be a disgrace if this duchess, who is low born and was his mistress for a long time when he was married, should have precedence over us. Our hearts would break with grief, and with good reason." But the ladies were ignored. The children of Gaunt and Katherine were given the aristocratic-sounding surname Beaufort; they and their descendants were to be one of the most important political families in England for the next century. And Margaret Beaufort, Katherine's great-granddaughter, was the mother of the first of the Tudors, Henry VII.

**H**owever, most ruling families used formal marriages as an essential part of their strategy and hence they became a never-ending subject of debate, discussion and disagreement. Marriage was indeed one of the prime preoccupations of this dynastic world. There were always marriage negotiations going on, many leading nowhere. Sometimes this even involved babies being committed to future brides or bridegrooms. Henry 'the Young King', son of Henry II, was married at the age of five to the even younger daughter of the king of France. Contemporaries noted with some disapproval this marriage of "little children still wailing in the cradle", but it brought Henry II the important border territory of the Vexin in northern France as the baby princess's dowry.

Marriages at this social level were about power and property, especially the forging of links with other ruling dynasties. For the first three centuries of Plantagenet rule, the queens of England were all foreign, the majority of

them French, indicating the central place of France in the Plantagenet world. Indeed, between 1066 and 1464, no English king married an English woman.

One of the jobs of queens was to produce children, especially sons. Because men are capable of fathering children longer than women are capable of bearing them, it was not uncommon for kings to remarry after the death of a queen. Edward I produced 16 children with his first wife, Eleanor of Castile. He then had three more when he was in his 60s with his young bride, Margaret of France.

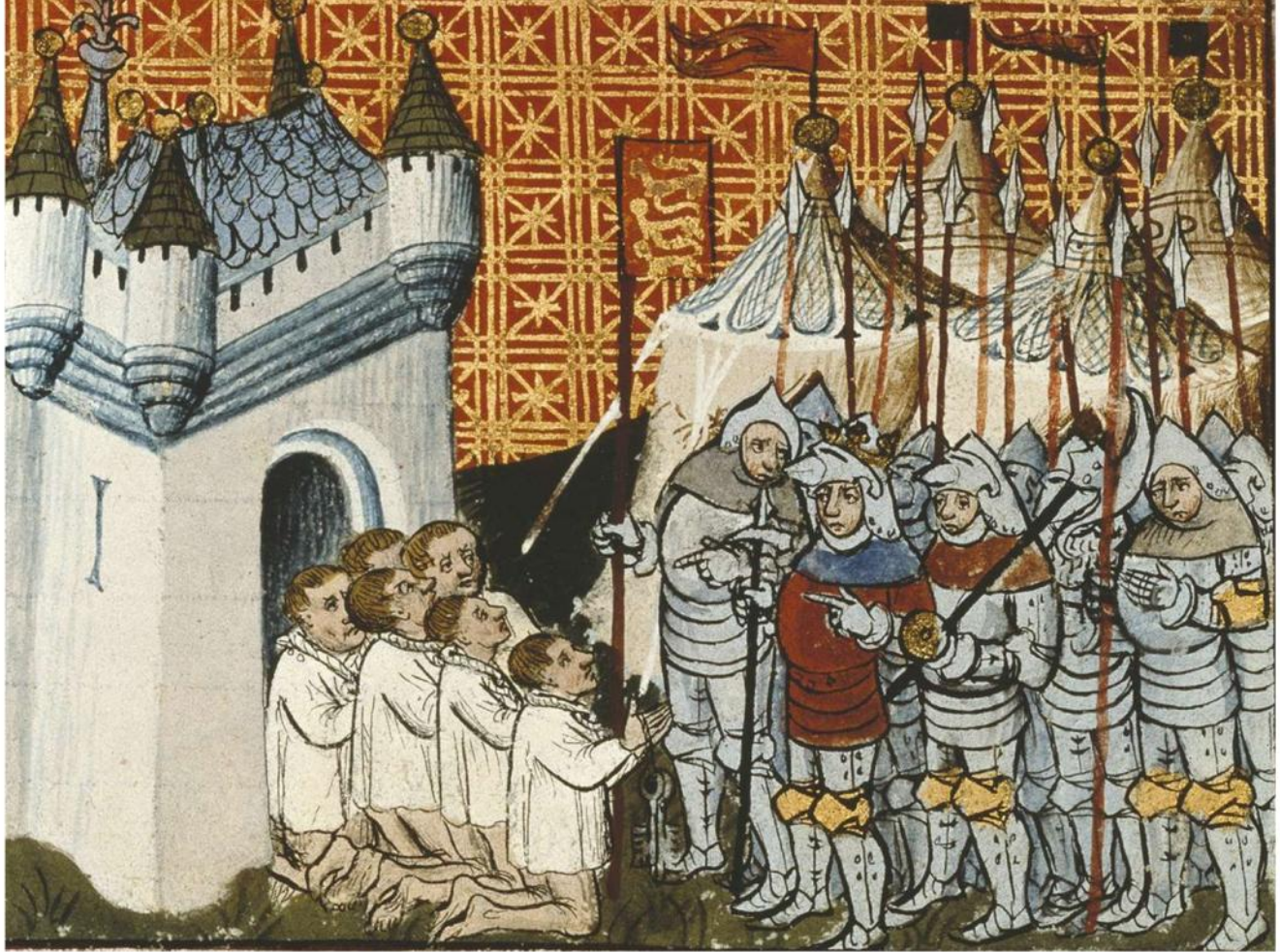
Queens were also meant to be mediators, softening the harsh masculine power of their husbands. A famous example is Philippa of Hainault pleading for the life of the burghers of Calais, six men from the French town whom Edward III had ordered to be hanged. A less well-known example of the same queen's intercession occurred early in King Edward's reign, when the wooden stands set up for Philippa and her ladies to watch a tournament collapsed. No one was badly hurt, but the carpenters would have suffered if she had not pleaded for mercy with her husband.

And queens were often fierce champions of the rights of their sons. The Plantagenet dynasty owed its crown to the determined and persistent efforts of Matilda, daughter of Henry I, who never gave up the fight until her son, the future Henry II, was recognised as heir to the English throne. She was never queen, but she kept the title 'empress' from her first marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor, and she lived for 13 years after Henry's accession with her status as the king's mother.

In the last decades of Plantagenet rule, it was Margaret of Anjou, queen of the disabled Henry VI, who led the struggle for the rights of their son, Edward, Prince of Wales. She was described as "a great and strong laboured woman". At the low point of their cause, Margaret lobbied persistently for French support, and even agreed to an alliance with the Earl of Warwick, a former chief enemy who had fallen out with the Yorkist side. But the apparent triumph of 1470, when Warwick put Henry VI back on the throne, was followed by the crushing defeat of 1471,

# Edward I produced 16 children with his first wife, Eleanor of Castile. He had three more when he was in his 60s, with his young bride, Margaret





**A QUEEN'S INTERCESSION** Calais surrenders to Edward III, England's seventh Plantagenet king, in a 15th-century illustration. Only the intervention of Edward's wife, Philippa of Hainault, prevented him from having the six burghers of the town hanged

the deaths of Warwick, Edward Prince of Wales and Henry VI. Margaret was a prisoner but, with the death of her son, no longer had a cause for which to fight.

**F**or the sons who did not succeed to the throne, some kind of provision had to be made. And it could be spectacular. In several cases, the younger sons of the Plantagenet dynasty aimed at crowns for themselves: John, son of Henry II, was meant to be king of Ireland and was sent a peacock crown – although he had to settle for ‘Lord of Ireland’ instead, a title the kings of England bore down to the time of the Tudors, when it was upgraded to ‘King of Ireland’.

Edmund, son of Henry III, was, famously, proposed as king of Sicily, although the only result of this scheme was an explosion of resentment among the English baronage and the civil war of 1264–65. John of Gaunt, son of Edward III, claimed and fought for the crown of Castile. The only one actually to establish himself on a distant throne, however, was Richard of Cornwall, the younger brother of Henry III, who became ‘King of the Romans’, which meant Holy Roman Emperor elect, and was crowned in Charlemagne’s old capital of Aachen.

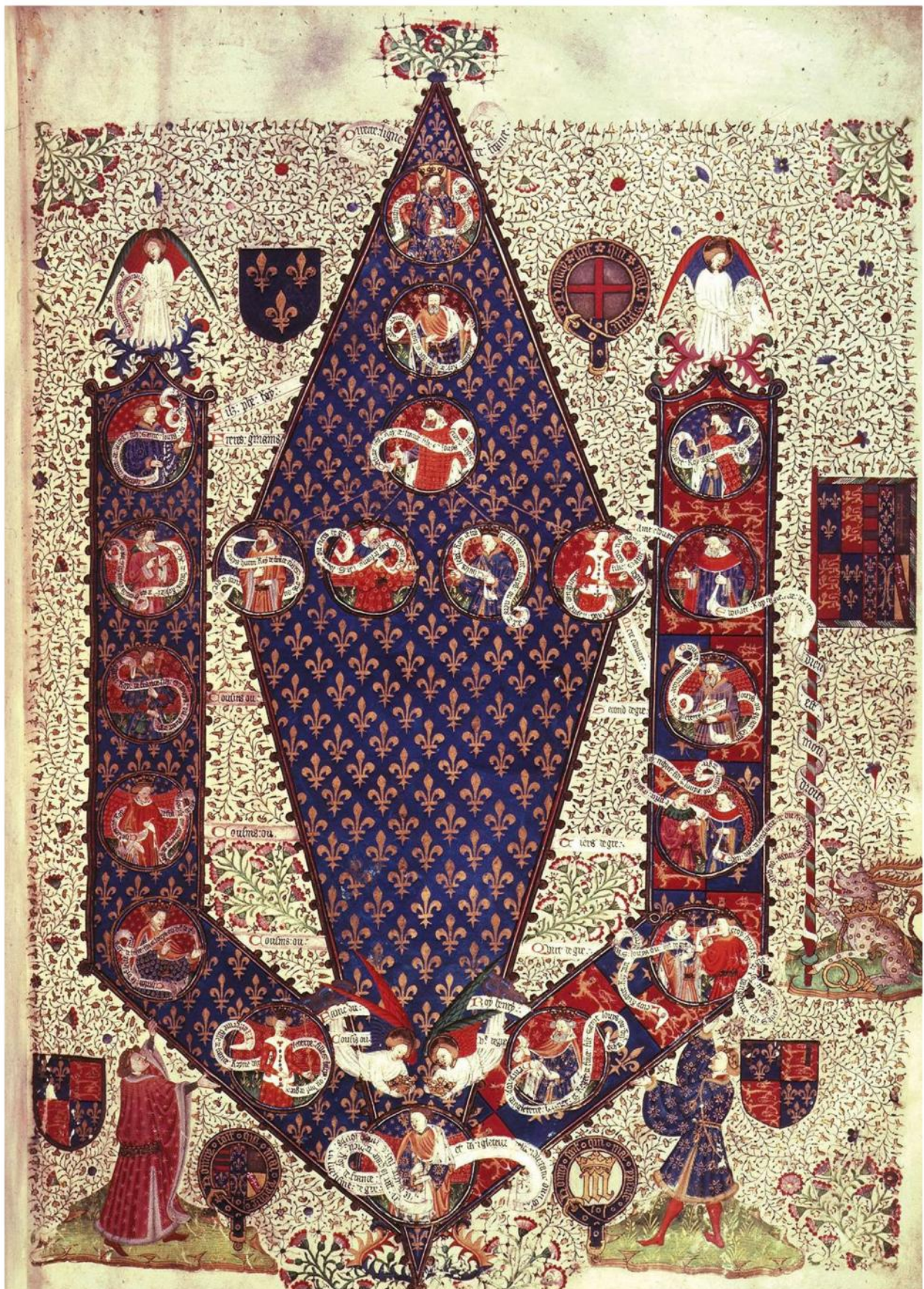
Dynasticism was characterised by ambitions that ex-

tended far beyond the boundaries of states. Dynasties looked out for their family interests, not for those of a nation or people (insofar as these can be said to have ‘interests’). And the horizons of the Plantagenet dynasty extended well beyond England and France. Richard the Lionheart conquered Cyprus, establishing what was to be the most long-lived of the crusader states, and Edward I was knighted not in Westminster or Windsor, but in Burgos, on the occasion of his marriage to Eleanor of Castile.

Edward named one of his sons Alfonso, and this child was for many years his heir apparent. If Alfonso had not died at the age of 10, Edward I might have been succeeded by Alfonso I and English naming patterns could have been different to this day, with Alfonso as normal a name as Edward.

In a dynastic world, everything hung on the thread of a vulnerable human life. This life might be wiped away by illness at any time. Or it could be unbalanced, as in the case of Henry VI, whose mental illness came upon him in the summer of 1453. It is sometimes thought that Henry’s madness can be traced to his maternal grandfather, Charles VI of France, but they had very different forms of illness. Charles had remarkable fantasies, such as the belief that he was made of glass and so might break, but →





**LAYING CLAIM TO FRANCE** Henry VI's family tree, shaped as a French lily in order to signify English kings' claims to the French crown. The Plantagenet period was dominated by war in France



Henry simply slumped into a stupor, failing to register even the birth of his only son.

Sudden sickness and madness were part of the uncertainty about the succession – a recurrent anxiety in the dynastic world. Naturally, people sought out methods to diminish that uncertainty and to have guidance for the future. Some of these methods were dangerous, as Eleanor Cobham found out. Eleanor had married Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, brother of Henry V, in 1428. She had been his mistress for some years, and once he had his first marriage annulled, she was able to become his wife. After the death of his older brother, Humphrey was next in line for the throne. If Henry VI died, Humphrey would be king and Eleanor queen.

Eleanor was perhaps unwise. She consulted two astrologers to see whether the young king would live and obtained potions from a wise woman to help her conceive – she could be the mother of kings. The astrologers, both of them respectable and learned men, told the duchess that Henry VI would suffer a life-threatening illness in the summer of 1441.

**T**he events of that summer were in fact very different. Duke Humphrey had his enemies, as well as his ambitions, and they saw their chance when they heard that his wife had been dabbling in magic and getting predictions of the king's illness or death. In July 1441 Eleanor was arrested and tried on charges of necromancy. She admitted that, in order to help her become pregnant, she had obtained potions from 'a wise woman' – a phrase that her accusers would interpret without a doubt as 'a witch'. She was forced to repent her errors.

One of Eleanor's astrologers died in the Tower of London, while the other was hanged, drawn and quartered. The 'wise woman' that she had consulted was burned alive. Eleanor herself had to do penance, walking barefoot to the church. She was divorced from Duke Humphrey and spent the remaining 11 years of her life as a prisoner in remote and windy castles. She was never the mother of kings.



The Plantagenets were always looking to expand the dynasty. As with many marriages, that of Edward I (top) to Eleanor of Castile (below) was for political reasons

But another permanent threat was simple physical violence in what was a complex and brutal world. In the medieval period there were 58 male descendants of Count Geoffrey of Anjou (excluding those who died as babies). Of these, 23 died through violence – 16 of them (almost three-quarters) in the 15th century, the last century of Plantagenet rule.

This century clearly belongs to what the great medievalist Maitland called "the centuries of blood", after an earlier period when the upper classes had been relatively less bloodthirsty in their feuds. And this bloodletting marked the end of the Plantagenet dynasty, as Henry Tudor picked up the bloody crown at Bosworth field. But it was certainly not the end of dynastic politics. ■

There were 58 male descendants of Count Geoffrey of Anjou... Of these, 23 died through violence





**POWER GAMES**

Edward III grants his son, the Black Prince, the principality of Aquitaine (south-west France). By using his offspring as pawns in alliances, the king hoped to wield power over a confederation of dependent states bound by family ties

FACING PAGE Edward III, seen on his great seal





# KING EDWARD III

## *The family man*

King Edward III's wife and children played central roles in his private life and his dreams of empire. **MARK ORMROD** explains the significance of the king's celebrated family in his dynastic ambition



**I**n the winter of 1342–43 King Edward III of England spent several months away from home fighting in Brittany, France. He kept in close touch with his family by letter, writing regularly to his wife, Queen Philippa, as his ‘sweetheart’.

Soon after returning home, Edward headed for the queen's manor of Havering, north-east of London, where he was reunited with a number of his growing brood of children. The king, delighting in this moment of domesticity, chose to eat dinner in the company of Lionel of Antwerp, then aged four, John of Gaunt, who had just turned three, and Edmund of Langley, a toddler of 18 months – surely a riotous homecoming.

Edward III, who reigned from 1327 to 1377, was nothing if not a family man. For 40 years and more, his devotion to his children was the primary driver of policy.

It is easy to see why Edward should have invested so much in his dynasty. His parents, Edward II and Queen Isabella, had been notoriously at odds with each other. When the prince, born in 1312, was 12 years old, the queen had openly charged the king's favourite, Hugh Despenser, with creating discord between the royal couple. Retreating to France with her son, Isabella had begun an adulterous relationship with Roger Mortimer, with whom she invaded England. Edward II was deposed in 1327, and within a year he was declared dead, most likely murdered by Roger's henchmen. When Edward III eventually seized his moment in 1330 and removed his mother and Mortimer from power, he referred publicly to the trauma that had been suffered within the ruling house.

The process of political healing now depended, to a significant degree, on the restoration of dynastic unity. One way of achieving this was to punish the defectors. Isabella may not have been locked away by her son, but she was subjected to an elaborate regime of religious observance designed to demonstrate her public contrition.

The real focus of attention, however, was on the current and future generations. Edward III was supremely lucky in his own bride. Edward and Philippa of Hainault (in modern-day Belgium) had been married in 1328 to seal a political alliance. But if the teenage couple were not in love at the start, they quickly developed a strong bond of affection.

In the conventional courtly manner, the couple exchanged sumptuous gifts like the spectacular sapphire brooch that Edward gave Philippa at New Year 1332. More tellingly, they spent as much of their time as possible in each other's company.

Philippa was often entrusted with important functions of state while the king was away fighting in what is now termed the Hundred Years' War. This conflict began in 1337 when Philip VI of France and Edward III declared war in a long-standing dispute over the English-held duchy of Aquitaine (the war would continue after Edward's death in 1377, ending in 1453). On some occasions, Philippa even accompanied her husband to military headquarters in northern England and Flanders (a state encompassing parts of what are now Belgium and northern France). And where the queen went, the children often went too.

**E**dward's contemporaries were clear that his abundance of offspring was a blessing. In 1362, on the king's 50th birthday, parliament was told that “God has truly blessed him in many ways, and especially in the begetting of his sons”. Between 1330 and 1355 Queen Philippa had at least 12 pregnancies, and nine children survived to their teens.

Edward was an indulgent father. The oldest son, Edward of Woodstock (later known as the Black Prince), was set up with his own household while still an infant. The younger children remained in the queen's care. After the infant Prince Lionel was betrothed in 1342, his fiancée, the 10-year-old Elizabeth de Burgh, joined him in the royal nursery. Thomas of Woodstock, the youngest, was kept close: the aged Edward III lavished large sums on the figure-hugging tunics he favoured.

From birth, Edward's children were caught up in a ceaseless round of dynastic negotiations. In 1340, Edward took the extraordinary decision to announce himself King of France by right of descent through his mother. To challenge the ruling Valois dynasty, he had to find as many allies as possible.

#### **MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN**

Effigies of Edward III and his queen, Philippa, in London's Westminster Abbey. They seem to have been made for each other, spending as much time as possible together



ALAMY





Edward kept in close touch with his family by letter,  
 writing regularly to his wife, Queen Philippa,  
 as his “sweetheart”





The use of royal children as diplomatic pawns had its fair share of casualties: Princess Isabella was jilted by the Count of Flanders in 1347; and poor Princess Joan became one of the first English victims of the Black Death when she died at Bordeaux in 1348, en route to her wedding with the heir to the throne of Castile (a territory in modern-day Spain).

But Edward persevered. Only the older royal children were allowed some say in their choice of partners. The Black Prince, heir to the throne and a bachelor in his early 30s, surprised everyone in 1361 by marrying his cousin, Joan of Kent. The king, eager to make the best of the situation, quickly negotiated the papal dispensations that the cousins needed to marry, but had neglected to obtain. He organised a second wedding for them at Windsor Castle, and hosted a great tournament in London around the provocative theme of the seven deadly sins.

**A**ll that said, it is clear that Edward III intended his children to serve, and benefit from, his great scheme of strategic alliances. The king viewed his wars as the means of re-assembling that great agglomeration of lordships across the British Isles and the continent over which Henry II had ruled in the 12th century. In 1346 Edward defeated Philip VI of France at the battle of Crécy and went on to take Calais in 1347. Philip's son, John II, was taken prisoner by the Black Prince at Poitiers in 1356. The capture of David II of Scotland in 1346 and of John II of France in 1356 gave Edward the diplomatic leverage that he thought might bring his ambitions to fruition.

In the early 1360s the king rolled out his great plan. He would give up the claim to the throne of France, but would have sovereign control of much of northern and western France. The Black Prince was made Prince of Aquitaine and sent to Bordeaux to head up a glittering new Plantagenet court. The Duke of Brittany, who was married first to the English princess Mary and then to a step-daughter of the Black Prince, would acknowledge the King of England as his liege lord. Lionel of Antwerp, created Duke of Clarence, took up the destiny marked out for him through his marriage to a great Anglo-Irish heiress and assumed the lieutenancy of Ireland.

As for John of Gaunt, he would be adopted by the childless David II as heir to the throne of Scotland. Edmund of Langley would, it was hoped, marry Margaret de Male, heiress to the Count of Flanders, and bring within his father's sway a vast new domain in the Low

## EDWARD III'S DYNASTIC AMBITION IN EUROPE

The king made full use of his family by placing them in strategic positions and marriages

### 1 Ireland

Run by Lionel of Clarence as lieutenant of Edward III between 1362 and 1366. Lionel's first wife was an important Anglo-Irish heiress; the family interests in the lordship were later inherited by the Mortimer descendants of Lionel's daughter.

### 4 Brittany

The dukes of Brittany were ancient allies of the crown of England. Edward III intervened in the succession crisis in the duchy in 1342 to support John de Montfort and his heir. The younger John later married Edward III's daughter Mary and, after her death, a step-daughter of the Black Prince.

### 6 Castile

In 1362 Edward III made an alliance with Peter I 'the Cruel' as a result of which the Black Prince intervened against the pretender Henry of Trastámara and won the battle of Nájera (1367). After Peter's death, his two heiresses, claimants to the throne, married John of Gaunt and Edmund of Langley.





## 2 Scotland

Claimed by Edward III for one of his younger sons at various points between 1348 and 1363. John of Gaunt became the preferred candidate from the mid-1350s. John was married to the heiress to the duchy of Lancaster in 1358 and was granted the title of Earl of Moray by David II of Scotland in 1359.



A c1380 portrait of John of Gaunt, who had designs on power in Scotland

## 3 Wales

The principality had been subsumed into the English crown by Edward I. Edward III made his eldest son Prince of Wales in 1343. Edward of Woodstock (the Black Prince) ruled the principality, as an absentee, until his death in 1376.

## 5 Milan

Centre of operations of the Visconti family, rulers of Lombardy, and scene of the wedding of Lionel of Antwerp and Violante Visconti in 1368. Lionel died at nearby Alba later the same year, under what some thought were suspicious circumstances.

## 7 Aquitaine

Held by the crown of England since the marriage of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Philip VI seized the duchy in 1337, but after the treaty of Brétigny (1360) it was enlarged and restored to English control. Between 1362 and 1371 the Black Prince ruled as resident prince.



The effigy of Edward the Black Prince in Canterbury Cathedral, Kent





**EMPIRE HOPES DASHED** Spanish ships attack the Earl of Pembroke's fleet off La Rochelle, 1372 – one of the tragedies that helped ruin Edward III's dream of empire. Pembroke, who had married Edward III's daughter Margaret in 1359, was captured and imprisoned until 1375

Countries and Burgundy. Even Thomas of Woodstock, still an infant, was not forgotten, gaining rights to a series of lordships in the French county of Poitou.

How realistic was this great scheme? It rested on the idea of a loose confederation of dependent states bound together by family and feudal ties. This was very different from the highly centralised model of empire imagined by his grandfather Edward I and from the concept of national sovereignty that was gradually being adopted by rulers of England and France.

**Y**et there were also plenty of examples in contemporary and later Europe of multiple states managed by single dynasties. Nor had Edward III failed to lay the ground for these plans. John of Gaunt's marriage to the heiress to the duchy of Lancaster gave him the power base in the north of England essential to supporting a title to the kingdom of Scotland. Prince Lionel's regime in Ireland was carefully planned to continue into the next generation through the early betrothal of his only child, Philippa, to another powerful landholder in the lordship, the future Earl of March. Unlike Henry II, Edward III could also rely on the un-

compromising commitment of his sons. The idea of open revolt within the dynasty remained anathema.

And yet the scheme was fundamentally flawed. Scotland's David II and France's John II may have played along with Edward, but there was no prospect that their advisors or successors would countenance a Plantagenet takeover. Flanders proved the crucible of defeat. Faced with the implacable opposition of the new French king Charles V (who wanted Margaret de Male for his brother Philip), Edward should have made a dignified retreat. But pride got the better of him. Lionel of Antwerp was withdrawn from Ireland and sent to northern Italy in 1368 to marry the daughter of the lord of Pavia. Tub-thumping Englishmen predicted that the prince might go on to be king of the Romans and even Holy Roman Emperor. In reality, this was no more than a bungled attempt to put last-moment pressure on the pope to allow Edmund of Langley to have his Flemish bride, but eventually Charles V got his way and Margaret married Philip in 1369.

One error then bred more. Faced with a serious downturn in his fortunes in Scotland and France, Edward III allowed his sons to believe that they might now find royal titles for themselves in the war-torn kingdom of Castile.



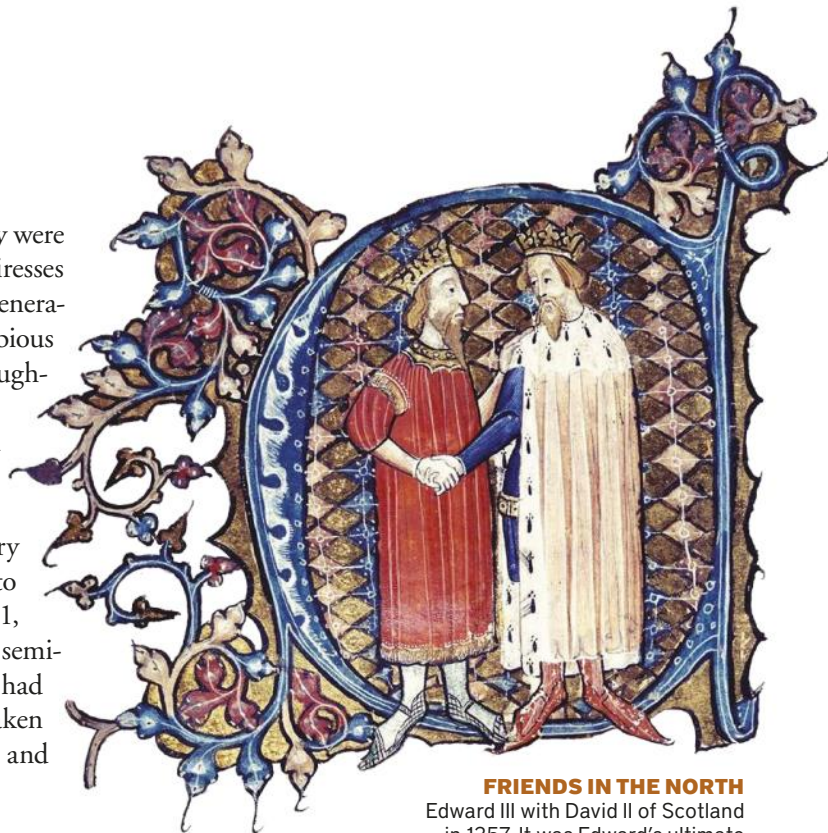
In 1371–72 John of Gaunt and Edmund of Langley were allowed to marry Constanza and Isabella, the co-heiresses to the former Castilian ruler Peter I. Thus began a generation of activity in the Iberian peninsula whose dubious benefits to England would cause controversy throughout the later reign of Richard II.

Edward III's dream of empire was finally ruined by a series of personal tragedies. In 1368, soon after starting his new career in Italy, Prince Lionel died at Alba. The Black Prince caught dysentery while fighting in Castile in 1367 and was forced to withdraw from campaigning in France after 1371, returning to England to spend his last years as a semi-invalid. In 1372, the Earl of Pembroke, who had married the now-dead Princess Margaret, was taken prisoner by the French at the battle of La Rochelle, and died shortly after his release in 1375.

**I**n the early 1360s the king had entered an ill-advised liaison with a London merchant's wife, Alice Perrers, who bore him at least three illegitimate children. After Queen Philippa's death in 1369 the aspiring royal mistress stirred up enmity at court and in the country. By the time Edward's government faced its supreme political test, in the Good Parliament of 1376 (so-called on account of the parliament's concerted efforts to clean up corruption within the royal court), the king was confined to his sick-bed; his heir the Black Prince, whom many continued to see as England's saviour, died while the assembly was in session.

Edward himself died in June 1377. It was indeed a pitiful end to a glorious reign. And yet the memory of this great family endured. In 1377 the chancellor challenged parliament to consider "if ever any Christian king or other lord in the world had so noble and gracious a lady for his wife, or such children – princes, dukes and others – as our lord the king has had".

Under the strong direction of John of Gaunt, the remaining members of the royal family drew together in support of the new heir to the throne, the 10-year-old Richard of Bordeaux (Edward's grandson, whose father



#### FRIENDS IN THE NORTH

Edward III with David II of Scotland in 1357. It was Edward's ultimate ambition to put one of his sons on the Scottish throne

was the recently deceased Black Prince), and committed itself to the impending challenge of a royal minority. There was to be no further open disaffection within the family until the adult Richard II ruined the Edwardian legacy by quarrelling with Thomas of Woodstock and with Gaunt's son, Henry of Bolingbroke.

It was only in the 16th century that Tudor historians began to consider that the size of Edward's family had been a liability to the crown, and that the intervening Wars of the Roses had been caused by the presence in England of a series of noble families all descended from the stock of Edward III.

Had Edward been able to respond to those criticisms, he would no doubt have argued that they simply proved the wisdom of a dynastic policy that had aimed to channel princely ambition into foreign wars and imperial dreams. Modern sensibilities may shy away from such aggressive models of state-building.

But on the remarkable record of dynastic stability and harmony that prevailed in England from 1330 to 1380, it is surely hard to deny that Edward had a point. ■

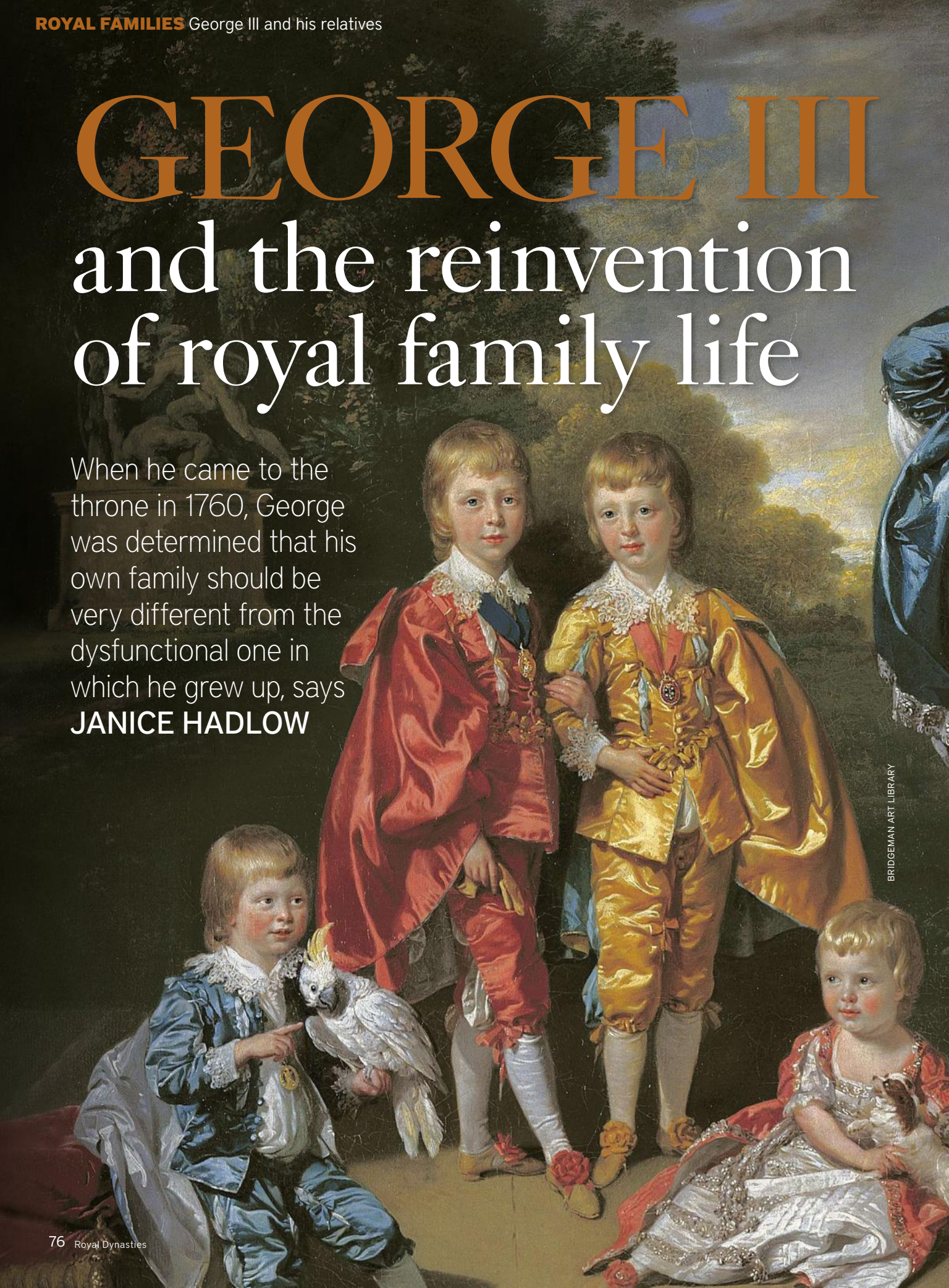
## Edward III's dream of empire was finally ruined by a series of personal tragedies



# GEORGE III

## and the reinvention of royal family life

When he came to the throne in 1760, George was determined that his own family should be very different from the dysfunctional one in which he grew up, says **JANICE HADLOW**



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**NEW MODEL FAMILY**

George III and Queen Charlotte, shown with their six eldest children, had a strong sense of moral duty and thought a stable family life was important



**G**eorge III became king of Great Britain in 1760. His reign was famously marked by a series of political and military struggles, including the loss of Britain's 13 American colonies in the American Revolutionary War (1775–83). Less well known is the story of family life in the king's household. George III's concept of what a royal family should be evolved into a pattern of respectability and duty quite unlike previous models; this trait would be further developed by succeeding monarchs, notably his granddaughter Queen Victoria. Matt Elton of *BBC History Magazine* spoke to Janice Hadlow (author of a book about the private life of George III and his family) to trace the legacy of their predecessors, and their hopes, fears and ambitions as a royal family.

### **How did George's predecessors inform his outlook on life?**

To understand King George III (1738–1820) and his direct family, it is important to know something about his predecessors in order to comprehend how he defined himself. He thought that he could make a clean break from his own family's history, and had a conscious sense that he wanted to live differently.

His grandfather, George II (1683–1760), had a very complex, passionate relationship with his wife, Caroline – he also had a well-known series of mistresses. The couple were at huge odds with their eldest son,

George III's father, Frederick Lewis, prince of Wales (1707–51). For years they quarrelled bitterly in private and in public about money, politics and family matters. The hatred that George and Caroline felt for their son Frederick is quite shocking.

George III had a sense that his grandfather's family life was somehow wrong and corrupt and that there was something damaging about it – both to the people caught within that world, and to the idea of monarchy itself.

### **What sense do we get of George as a young man?**

George III's father Frederick had died in 1751 when George himself was just 12 years old. The young George had a terror of the destiny of kingship, and a deep sense that he might not be up to the job. He retreated into an almost catatonic state, from which he was rescued by a charismatic mentor: John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, a friend of both George's father and mother, who by 1756 had become an advisor to the prince. Bute was an intellectual, handsome man, with smouldering dark eyes and legs said to be the best in London. He liked George as a young man, and I don't think that many people had liked George before. He also provided the tentative, diffident young man with a new vision of what kingship meant in a modern world in which kings were no longer called upon to lead in battle.

Part of this vision was political, with the idea that the king's job was to be above party divisions and to say something different and larger about the importance of the state. But Bute

also stressed the value of goodness – that a king's moral values are as important as cleverness and bravery. Because, although the young George often had doubts about whether he was clever or strong enough to be king, he always thought that he might be morally good enough. Bute taught him that one of the ways to show that he was worthy of the role was by the way that he lived – not just what he did as a king, but also as a father, a brother and a husband.

The hunt for a wife for George became urgent after he ascended to the throne on the death of his grandfather in October, 1760. When George and Charlotte married, there were fears about whether she was properly prepared for the role. Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744–1818), was just 17 years old, chosen from a shopping list of suitable foreign princesses. The two met just six hours before they were married, in September 1761, and two weeks later celebrated their coronation in Westminster Abbey. But George was confident, and it soon turned out that he'd picked well.

### **What was the relationship like between George and Charlotte?**

For a long time their marriage worked very well, at least superficially, as they were similar in character. Charlotte was dutiful, obedient, with a strong sense of personal duty, and happy to be guided by a more powerful man. She also shared George's desire to live a quiet domestic life and to have a retreat from the hurly-burly of society,

**“He had a sense that his grandfather's family life was somehow wrong, with something damaging about it**



John Stuart, the Earl of Bute, had a huge influence on the young George



**THE TROUBLED HEIR**

Prince George in 1754, when he was just 16. His father had died three years earlier, and as George grew up he was deeply worried about the prospect of kingship







**THE GROWING FAMILY**

Charlotte with her two eldest sons George and Frederick. She went on to have 13 more children and became fed up with her lifestyle and bored by its lack of intellectual stimulation

which felt like it was theirs and not owned by the rest of the world.

The most interesting thing about Charlotte is how clever she was, with a voracious intellect underneath a compliant exterior. Both Charlotte and George never stopped reading, and the common picture of their court as being stupid and dull is not accurate – certainly not in the early years, when they were both healthy.

There's no doubt that there was another side to Charlotte, revealed in her letters to her brother: she was very lonely. From the start, when she had first arrived in Britain, George had made it clear that she was to keep herself separate from a lot of the people at court, and was not to make close friends. He was worried about people flattering her, and about difficult alliances forming. Charlotte understood these worries, but it left her a lonely, isolated figure.

The other key thing about her is that she became pregnant very quickly, and did what, even in the 18th century, was most required of a queen: provide an heir. Not just one, either, but a positive richness of heirs. Within a year of marriage she produced the first, the future George IV (reigned 1820–30), then two more sons: Frederick followed by William (William IV, reigned 1830–37). She had 15 children in 23 years.

This went on to cause problems. The face she presented was that she saw this as her duty, and was proud of her large, healthy family. But after more than two decades of having babies, she wrote to her brother that she wished her “long campaign” could be over. She found life constraining: perpetually pregnant, isolated and not free to do things that she wanted, she also found the demands of appearing in public exhausting.

She wondered, in these letters, whether she could sustain that life. In the end, of course, she did, because she was a very dutiful person. But the fact that she had a much darker, bleaker perception of her role for many years is a new thing to understand about her.

### **What impact did George's moral ideals have on the running of the family?**

It went brilliantly when the children were small. There's no doubt George loved small babies, and was a loving father: there are many accounts of him carrying his naked little son around, and of him playing on the floor with his children – losing what was seen as all of the dignity of a king.

So when the children were young it was a very positive picture, and a great improvement on the situation with George's predecessors. It got far



more complicated as the children got older, though. The idea that the children might have desires or wishes that conflicted with George's vision of the future created tensions.

Boredom was also a factor, mostly for the women: there's no doubt that Charlotte was bored a lot of the time. She tried to bring clever women into the household with whom she could form relationships of the mind. This was partly for her own intellectual stimulation, but also because she wanted her daughters to see how important it was in the court world, with all its requirements and potential for dullness, to have an intellectual life for yourself.

It's interesting, though, that none of those women stayed: they all, in the end, found the pressure of life in the spotlight, the endless etiquette and ceremony, just too dull – and so they left. But Charlotte couldn't leave, and that's one of the key themes of their lives.

### **What was life like for the royal children?**

This was a period in which ideas of childhood were changing rapidly, and George and Charlotte tried to introduce many of these ideas to their own household. The children were required to have their own agricultural pursuits, for instance, and were dressed very simply, in open-necked shirts and loose clothes.

But right from the start there was a contradiction between the idea of them as free, natural children, and their formal status as princesses and princes. That's another of the fault

lines in this world – between the private, intimate life and the one on public display. It's the one that the whole family, in the end, found it most difficult to deal with.

### **At what point did George's illness first manifest itself?**

The king's later years were blighted by recurrent mental illness; his eldest son, later crowned as George IV, ruled as prince regent for the final decade of George III's life. The first serious illness came in 1788/89. Symptoms ranged from stomach pains to severe mental disturbance, and historians have speculated widely on the possible causes, with ideas ranging from the hereditary illness porphyria to psychiatric illness.

George had previously been remarkably healthy for an 18th-century man, which is why it came as such a shock to everyone. I think it was a shock from which, actually, neither he nor the family ever quite recovered. For reasons no one could understand, the illness affected his behaviour. George had previously always been very controlled, and regarded it as highly important that he mastered emotions that weren't required of his public role. To lose control, and to know that he'd lost control, was the great tragedy of the early phases of all of his illnesses.

All of this would have been bad enough for anyone to deal with in the 18th century, but the fact that his illness was regarded as shameful, and that it could not be concealed – that it was being debated, dissected and thought about in the public world –

added an extra dimension of horror for the family. The tension that always existed between their public and private lives is perhaps most apparent during his illness. By 1811 George was declared unfit to rule, and his son ruled as prince regent from then onwards, becoming king in 1820 after George died at Windsor Castle.

### **You have written a book about the family: what new impressions did you get while researching it?**

A lot of this story is about good intentions. Everyone went into this project hoping for the best, and they all wanted to make something better for themselves. The picture we have of the family is often sad: their lives were quite dull, and they lived these very limited experiences. These were genuinely thwarted lives, yet George and his family saw it as their duty to try and make the best of them.

But there's also a sense of the liveliness of the family. George is often portrayed as a stolid, uninteresting character, but I think he was more complicated and varied. He combined apparently contradictory characteristics: he was generous but unforgiving, thoughtful but obstinate, loving but sometimes not terribly sympathetic.

Charlotte was a person of contradictions, too. In later life she became a little like the negative caricatures of herself: strict, unloving, self-centred, embittered and frustrated by the experiences of her husband's illnesses. But before that there was another Charlotte: clever, lively, intellectually curious and very interested in the world around her. These aspects of her personality got more and more lost as time went on – but how interesting it is to see that they were there in the first place. ■

“These were genuinely thwarted lives, yet George and his family saw it as their duty to try and make the best of them





# WORLD OF THE WINDSORS

THE TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF A ROYAL DYNASTY





#### A DYNASTY TRIUMPHANT

Elizabeth Windsor – better known as Queen Elizabeth II – seen with members of her family at Buckingham Palace during her birthday parade in June 2015

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**+** How **GEORGE V & QUEEN MARY** modernised the monarchy

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**+** The royal family's response to **THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

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**+** A pictorial history of Britain's longest ever ruler, **ELIZABETH II**

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**+** The story of the **FALL AND RISE** of the House of Windsor

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**ARCH PRAGMATISTS**

King George V and his wife, Queen Mary, pictured during a visit to Dublin in 1911. The royal couple were deeply conservative but common sense taught them they had to adapt to the modern world



# How George and modernised the





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The British monarchy's survival into the 21st century owes an enormous debt to the reign of George V and his wife Mary, says **DENYS BLAKEWAY**

# Mary monarchy







**ROYAL FAMILY**

The future King George V and Queen Mary during a visit to Abergeldie, in Aberdeenshire, c1906. With them are Mary, Princess Royal (in front of her father), Prince John (in Queen Mary's arms), Prince Henry (seated), and (from left to right) Prince George, Prince Edward and Prince Albert

According to his eldest son, David, King George fought  
“a private war with the 20th century”



**W**hen Catherine Middleton and Prince William were married in Westminster Abbey in 2011 the mayor of London, Boris Johnson, remarked of the royal wedding: “In a weird way it cheers everyone up.” Few could doubt that the wedding was both a tonic to the nation and a boost to the royal family.

Polling at the time confirmed what was clear from the thousands cheering on the wedding route and the street parties across the country – that the monarchy, despite the setbacks of recent years, was as strong as ever. For this the institution owed much to the Queen’s grandfather King George V, a man who gave the appearance of steely inflexibility but in reality was a modernising reformer.

William and Kate’s marriage ceremony echoed that of George V’s second son, Prince Albert, Duke of York, to Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (mother of Elizabeth II) in 1923. The future George VI and Queen Elizabeth were, like William and Kate, married in April at a time of economic gloom. Then, as now, the public nuptials were hugely popular: a million people lined the streets to watch the wedding procession. In an impulsive gesture, Elizabeth placed her bridal posy of white flowers on the grave of the Unknown Warrior of the First World War in Westminster Abbey. The Duchess of Cambridge did the same in 2011. What was seen as a spontaneous tribute had become a royal tradition.

The royal wedding of 1923 was a ground-breaking departure from the old ways and symbolised the readiness of the royal family, under the stern guidance of George V, to adapt to the modern world. At the command of the king, Prince Albert was the first son of a monarch to marry in public at Westminster Abbey and it was the first royal wedding to be filmed, so that millions at home and across the empire could enjoy the spectacle. Most importantly, at the king’s behest, Albert’s marriage was the first union in modern times between a member of the royal family and a commoner, albeit an aristocratic one. No longer did the House of Windsor have to look to the narrow gene pool of German minor royals for fresh blood.

King George and his consort, Queen Mary, were the most unlikely modernisers. Both were ultra-conservative. In their dress, manner and politics they shared a deep-seated mistrust of anything that might smack of radicalism or, just as bad, fashion.

According to their eldest son, David (the future Edward VIII), King George fought “a private war with the 20th century”. A former naval officer, George held fast

to the values inculcated in him at Dartmouth Naval College, Devon: stern discipline, unquestioning obedience of superiors and, above all, doing one’s duty. He was equally conventional in his personal habits.

George detested change, was rigidly punctual, and besotted with correct dress, even reprimanding government ministers if he considered them improperly turned out. His wife, Mary, while more cultured and intelligent, shared her husband’s rigid conservatism and absolute belief in duty; this was combined with an almost religious reverence for the throne. Out of loyalty to George, Mary buried her own lively mind and curious intellect under a carapace of iron conformity.

Such a pair of stick-in-the-muds would not see themselves – and indeed were not considered as – reformers, but reformers they were and, paradoxically, the impulse to modernise the British monarchy came from the arch-conservative king himself. With his passion for game shooting and stamp collecting, he may have seemed more suited to being a squire in the countryside than a king-emperor but he was blessed with a gift that saved him and the monarchy from disaster: common sense. It was this above all that enabled him to shore up the throne at a time when, as Winston Churchill (who held various government posts throughout the reign of George V) said, other empires “were falling like rain”.

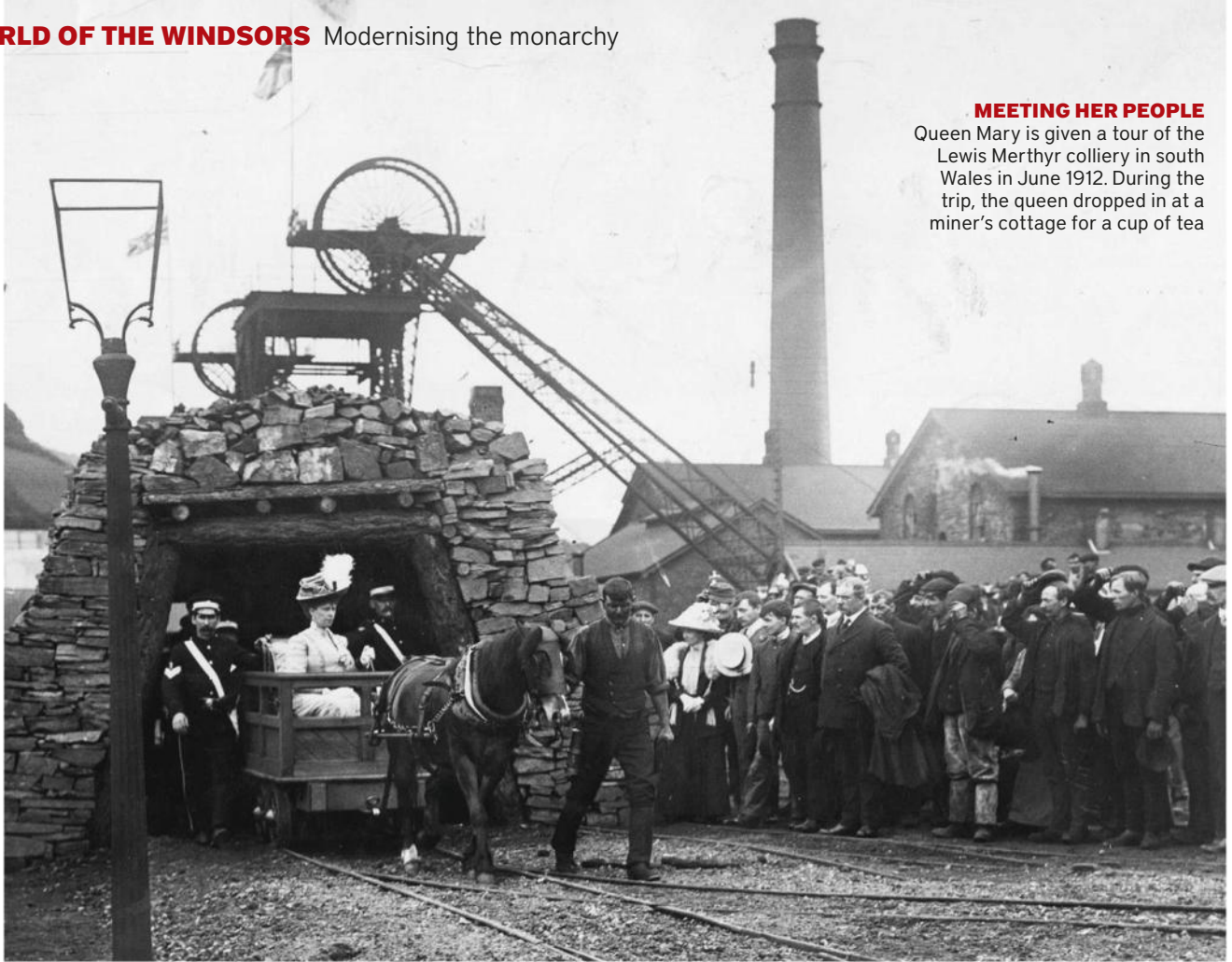
**G**eorge did not expect or want to be king. But in 1892, when he was 26, his elder brother, the reprobate Eddy, Duke of Clarence, died of complications from a bout of influenza. George, the unassuming naval officer, was thrust into direct line to the throne, after his grandmother Victoria and father, the future Edward VII.

Prince Eddy had been betrothed to Princess Mary (known to all as ‘May’), the shy and undemonstrative daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Teck. With the characteristic expediency of a dynasty bent on its own survival, May – whom Queen Victoria regarded as level-headed and sound, despite her relatively lowly royal status – was encouraged to transfer her affections to George. After a decent interval of a year, George was told to do his duty, go into the garden with May and propose to her. He was accepted.

The arranged marriage quickly developed into a bond of real affection and mutual support. Though both found it almost impossible to openly express intimate feelings, they made their love clear in touching letters to each other. →



**MEETING HER PEOPLE**  
Queen Mary is given a tour of the Lewis Merthyr colliery in south Wales in June 1912. During the trip, the queen dropped in at a miner's cottage for a cup of tea



The marriage was not an equal partnership. It could not have been, given May's reverence for her husband's status and the subordinate role of women at the time; nevertheless the couple became a team. After George acceded to the throne in 1910 on the death of his father, Edward VII, Queen Mary took on and actively developed the role of female consort. The new king and queen could not have been more different from the late monarch and his long-suffering wife, Alexandra. The court of Edward VII had been colourful, to say the least, with an aristocratic attitude to affairs (acceptable if kept quiet), but George and Mary espoused the middle-class virtues of fidelity and family.

Britain at that time was changing. While the Liberal government's reforms caused the deeply conservative King George grave concern, both he and his wife accepted that the monarchy had to be in step with a more democratic age. It was a steep learning curve. George came to the throne during suffragette agitation for women's votes, union militancy, Irish demands for home rule and a constitutional crisis over the power of the House of Lords. Alongside the classic dictum of a monarch's right "to be consulted, to encourage, to warn", (defined by Walter Bagehot in *The English Constitution*, 1867), George quickly learnt under the tutelage of his first premier, the Liberal Herbert Asquith, that the monarch's duty was to

do what he was told by the prime minister of the day, whether he approved or not.

Even more than reforming Liberals, George feared socialism. He believed – wrongly as it turned out – that the rise of the Labour party and the growth of trades unions posed a direct threat to the survival of the monarchy.

**Y**et there was a contradiction at the heart of the king's character. His reactionary side was set against the changes that were enfranchising working people and women at the time. But his common sense told him that he, and his wife, had to adapt. As a first step, in 1912 George and Mary, following the advice of the king's advisor, Lord Esher, decided on a series of novel visits to industrial regions.

Royals had been visiting the poor for many years; what made George and Mary different was that they did so as a team and that they engaged in a very public way with the trials and tribulations of the industrial workers whom they visited. On a three-day trip to south Wales in June 1912, they were photographed together visiting coalmine pit-heads. Queen Mary insisted on visiting an ordinary miner's cottage where she perched on a kitchen stool and drank a cup of tea. "Keir Hardie (the republican founder

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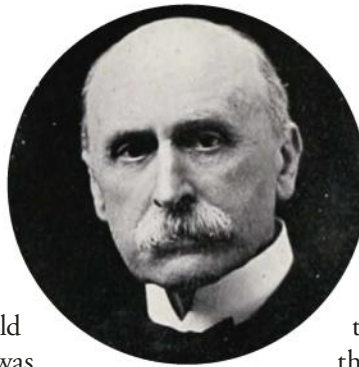
of Labour) will not have liked it!" she remarked, only half in jest, afterwards.

A month later Mary visited the scene of a mining disaster in Yorkshire and was seen to have tears streaming down her cheeks as she spoke to the bereaved – a sign of a heart beating under the outwardly cold mask of royal rectitude. Such acts, it was hoped, would serve to make the monarchy appear in tune with a more democratic society.

Royal visits, however, weren't enough to quell the concerns of the king and his advisers that the institution of monarchy was in peril. The First World War exacerbated these fears. The conflict brought about the downfall of many crowned heads in Europe; it led to revolution in Russia; and it exposed the inescapable fact that the British royal family was almost 100 per cent German by descent. There were murmurings in the press and elsewhere that the monarchy was out of touch and out of tune with the feelings of the country. In 1917, three years into the war, there was a sense of crisis at court.

In secret the king and his private secretary, Lord Stamfordham, consulted leading opinion formers of the time as to how they might modernise and adapt. Stamfordham opened a file, *Unrest in the Country* (now held in the Royal Archives), in which he collected advice on how the monarchy might better engage with the people at a time of change. The king himself was at the forefront of these moves.

When in March 1917 George's first cousin – the Russian tsar Nicholas II – abdicated, the British government agreed to requests for his asylum. At first, George went along with this. But he soon realised that it would be disastrous for the British royal family to be seen publicly to be emphasising its links with one of Europe's more antiquated and autocratic imperial dynasties. At the king's own initiative and against the advice of his ministers, the invitation was rescinded. Nicholas and his family suffered an awful death at the hands of the Bolsheviks one year later. Although George and Mary were horrified by the assassinations, they never doubted the wisdom of the decision to keep their cousin out.



George V's private secretary, Lord Stamfordham, who suggested the new dynastic name of Windsor

The same year King George boldly moved to anglicise his name and remove the Teutonic taint that was damaging the royal family at a time of rabid anti-German feeling. HG Wells had sneered that the king's court was alien and uninspiring; the king, who considered himself British to the backbone, responded robustly: "I may be uninspiring, but I'll be damned if I am alien." He ordered Lord Stamfordham to find a dynastic name more suitable than the distinctly alien Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, which some genealogists believed to be his surname. The private secretary, after much consideration, came up with Windsor. This was a masterstroke epitomising, in its association with the ancient castle, solid unchanging virtues, and with its link to a nourishing 'brown Windsor' soup popular at the time, a certain hearty dullness.

At the same time as changing his name, George created the Order of the British Empire. The new honour proved immensely popular, allowing for the first time ordinary people to be recognised for their good works. Such commitments to improving the public image of the royal family were underlined by the appointment of Buckingham Palace's first full-time press secretary, in 1918.

The end of the First World War in November that year brought further change. The franchise was extended to women and, with working people's growing sense of entitlement after the sacrifices of the war, a Labour government became inevitable. The king, who associated the Labour party with republicanism, was fearful, not least as to whether the neophyte statesmen could afford proper court dress. Jeeves-like, Lord Stamfordham had the answer: "Messrs Moss Bros, Your Majesty, which is I believe a well known and dependable firm."

More importantly, having declared his hostility to socialism, a Labour government would test King George's duty of impartiality to the limit. In the event, when the

## The new name 'Windsor' brought to the royal family a certain hearty dullness



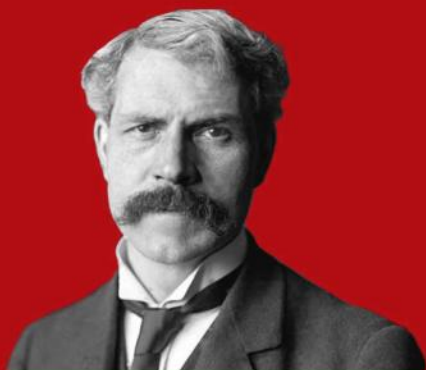
## TIMELINE

# Ten key moments in George V's reign



**Coronation of King George and Queen Mary** (shown below) after the death of Edward VII the previous year. The king's new reign begins amid a constitutional crisis.

**George implements a series of modernising reforms.** Members of the royal family can marry British commoners; the honours system is widened with the OBE (Order of the British Empire); the surname 'Windsor' is adopted.



**The first Labour government.** Despite the king's misgivings, he forms a close and lasting bond with the Labour prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald (pictured).

After direct intervention by King George, **Ramsay MacDonald forms a National government.** The Labour party is split with few supporting the new coalition.

**The first royal Christmas message is broadcast.** The king's address, written by the poet Rudyard Kipling, is heard across the British empire.

22 June 1911

The king and queen begin a series of **visits to industrial regions** to examine the living conditions of working people for themselves. It is the beginning of a subtle programme of modernisation.

June 1912

**Outbreak of the First World War.** King George and Queen Mary appear on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to rapturous crowds. In private they are incredulous and fearful.

4 August 1914

15 March 1917



**The Russian tsar Nicholas II** (above, with his family) **abdicates.** George refuses him exile in Britain, fearful his presence will embarrass the royal family.

June 1917

11 November 1918

**The end of the First World War.** Victory cements George and Mary's popularity. Behind the scenes, reforms continue with the appointment of the first royal press secretary.

22 January 1924



Only months after celebrating his silver jubilee, **King George dies, aged 70.** Millions line the streets to pay their respects (above) as his coffin is taken for burial at Windsor.

23 August 1931

25 December 1932

20 January 1936



first Labour government was elected in 1924, fears on both sides were allayed. The socialist politicians not only dressed properly but treated their monarch with, if anything, deeper respect than did the more familiar Liberal and Conservative statesmen of the time. The king responded in kind and formed a bond with the Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald, which developed into a deep friendship. MacDonald, the illegitimate son of a farm labourer and a servant girl, turned out to share many of the deep-seated conservative values of his sovereign.

**I**n 1931, when the country faced financial turmoil over a budget deficit which threatened to undermine the banking system, King George played a central role in the crisis. MacDonald's cabinet was split over the way to handle the budget crisis, refusing to implement cuts in unemployment benefits. The king twice refused his prime minister's resignation and persuaded MacDonald to remain in charge of a coalition National Government of Conservatives and Liberals, with only a token rump of Labour members.

The Labour party never forgave their leader for his betrayal, but the king's intervention was widely regarded as having steadied the ship of state with a crucial balancing act between right and left. As one historian put it, he was "possessed with a kind of sublime common sense. He knew what to do and he did it."

Four years later, on 6 May 1935, the king and queen drove to London's St Paul's Cathedral to celebrate their silver jubilee. George described the crowds as "the greatest number of people in the streets I have ever seen in my life". While he would have been personally appalled at the idea of seeking popularity, he had, under the guidance of his private secretaries, adapted the monarchy to the modern age while giving the appearance of rock-like security. In the process he had become deeply loved, to his great surprise: "I did not realise they felt like this," he said, astonished and moved by the rapturous reception.

The king's popularity was increased by the most successful innovation in his later life: the radio speech from the monarch, given at Christmas, which he first broadcast in 1932. His gravelly voice, as if pickled in whisky, was

#### RAPTUROUS RESPONSE

Thousands of people line the route during a procession through London in 1935 to celebrate the silver jubilee of George V and Queen Mary



beamed directly into the nation's homes with an intimacy previously unthinkable.

Only a few months after the jubilee celebrations, on 20 January 1936, King George died at Sandringham, the royal family's country retreat in Norfolk. He was 70 years old. His death, at a time of international uncertainty and growing threat of war, came as a terrible shock to the nation. George's reign, epitomised by unchanging routine and solid virtue, harked back to the certainties of the Victorian age. His, and his wife's, achievement had been to give the appearance of absolute solidity while flexibly responding to changing circumstances. Queen Mary, who had shared his commitment to duty and mirrored his rigid rectitude, lived on to see her granddaughter Elizabeth accede to the throne, dying in 1953.

In recognition of King George's reign, millions from all backgrounds lined the streets at his funeral to pay their respects to a simple man whose very ordinariness and adaptability had made him father of the nation. ■

He had become deeply loved, to his great surprise:  
"I did not realise they felt like this," he said





# *The Windsors* AT WAR

**STEPHEN BATES** describes how the response of George VI, his wife Elizabeth and their two young daughters during the battle against Nazi Germany helped cement the royal family's place in the British people's affections





#### LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The king and queen inspect the damage to a cinema in Baker Street. During the war, they became popular by stating their determination to remain in London and take their chances along with everyone else

#### FACING PAGE

George VI is shown on the "War Medal 1939-1945", instituted in 1945 for military personnel who served in the war



**A**

t about 11am on 13 September 1940, a week after the start of the London Blitz, a German bomber ducked under the clouds, flew deliberately low across the capital and dropped five high explosive bombs on Buckingham Palace. George VI and his wife, Elizabeth, were just taking tea. At the precise moment that they heard what she described as the “unmistakable whirr-whirr” of the plane, the queen was battling to take an eyelash out of his eye and they rushed out into the corridor to avoid the blast. Two bombs fell in the palace’s inner quadrangle a few yards from where the couple had been sitting, a third destroyed the chapel and the remainder caused deep craters at the front of the building.

It was not the first, nor the last, time that the palace was hit during the Second World War – there were two other attacks that week, one of which destroyed the swimming pool, and altogether nine direct hits in five years – but that was the moment that the royals themselves came closest to injury. It was perhaps also the point at which the monarchy finally recovered the public esteem that it had lost at the time of the abdication crisis less than four years earlier (when Edward VIII felt compelled to give up the throne because of his relationship with Wallis Simpson). They could now be seen to be sharing at least some of the privations of their bombed-out subjects. In the queen’s famous words: “I am glad we have been bombed. It makes me feel I can look the East End in the face.”

The bombing also gave George VI and Elizabeth a chance to demonstrate the dutifulness and stoicism that the king’s elder brother had so conspicuously lacked when he gave up the throne. Unlike Edward VIII they had stayed at their posts, not fleeing to Canada or seeking sanctuary as some other monarchs had (although King Leopold III of the Belgians, who chose to remain in Brussels after the Nazi occupation, was unpopular for doing so and was later forced to abdicate).

As the queen also said: “The children will not leave unless I do. I shall not leave unless their father does, and the king will not leave the country in any circumstances, whatever.” The children were of

course the Princesses Elizabeth (the current Queen, born in 1926) and Margaret (1930).

This was the royal family’s chief, symbolic, contribution to the war effort. Although the king, who had seen service at a junior level as a naval officer at the battle of Jutland in the First World War, met prime minister Winston Churchill for lunch every Tuesday, he had no military role in the conflict, beyond that of raising public morale. And although both men came to respect each other, they were not initially natural soulmates. Churchill had been a supporter of Edward VIII during the abdication, while George had publicly supported former prime minister Neville Chamberlain’s “peace with honour” Munich appeasement of Hitler, which proved so short-lived. When Chamberlain resigned in 1940 George would have preferred Lord Halifax to become prime minister instead of Churchill.

**I**f the Nazi high command thought the attack on the palace would sow defeatism and despair in Britain, they were gravely mistaken. The newsreels and newspapers of the time made no attempt to minimise or disguise the damage. Indeed, recognising its reverse propaganda potential, the Ministry of Information gave 40 reporters access to the site. Pathé News showed workmen repairing the craters, the royal couple were pictured inspecting the wreckage, while the prime minister and the associated commentaries and editorials all stressed the dastardliness of the attack on “our beloved sovereign”.

“May this planned assassination recoil a hundred-fold on the beast of Berlin,” blared the newsreel. Reginald Simpson, editor of the *Sunday Graphic*, wrote: “When this war is over the common danger which King George and Queen Elizabeth have shared with their people will be a cherished memory and an inspiration through the years.”

The concept of sharing – of being all in it together – was heavily emphasised in propaganda throughout the war and has played well in the royal family’s favour ever since: the present Queen could hardly have been so prominently and sympathetically associated with the commemoration of wartime anniversaries had that not been the case, even though her own personal military involvement was necessarily slight.

It was diligently reported that the

By targeting Buckingham Palace the Germans handed the royals a propaganda coup, boosting morale





**SHOWING SOLIDARITY**

George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who were themselves bombed, talk to the residents of a damaged area of London in September 1940

The queen famously said “I am glad we have been bombed... I can look the East End in the face”

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**HELPING TO RAISE MORALE**  
George VI and Elizabeth aimed to raise morale, sympathising with bombed out civilians and visiting the armed forces, such as these American troops stationed in England

royal family had been issued with ration books and clothing coupons like everyone else, though not that the queen received 1,277 coupons a year in excess of the standard 66. The king was pictured gazing soulfully at the pigs being fattened for the table at Windsor, just like his subjects who clubbed together to rear pigs of their own; the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret were depicted knitting for the troops; the palace rooms were lit by single light bulbs and rings were drawn around the royal tubs to limit the depth of baths to five inches like everyone else. The family, parents with two young daughters, were often photographed domestically, as a group, reading or chatting together in their drawing room or cycling in the countryside. It was not a false picture, though it was a massaged one: they could at least retreat away from the capital for the night, to Windsor Castle, when the Blitz in London got too heavy.

The king and queen were regularly shown among their people, especially when they toured bombed sites, or when visiting troops and gun installations. George VI was invariably in uniform when seen on official business – he was a stickler for military correctness – and would frequently be shown presenting medals. How far some of

their visits were really welcomed may be questioned. At the time Mass Observation, a project set up in 1937 to survey social attitudes and opinions, recorded some grumbling and sullenness because of unnecessary fuss – but there was clearly also an appreciation that the royal visits showed the monarchy's concern for their people and demonstrated that they were still with them.

The queen wrote: "It does affect me, seeing this terrible and senseless destruction – I think that really I mind it much more than being bombed myself. The people are marvellous, and full of fight. One could not imagine that life could become so terrible. We must win in the end." Her ostentatious charm, what playwright Noel Coward described as "an exhibition of unqualified niceness", made up for her husband's stiff nervousness and periodic bouts of bad temper and loss of nerve.

These quirks tended to be forgiven as the king was so obviously, painfully, striving to do his duty. His stammer was widely known about – it could scarcely be hidden – and previously, at the time of his accession, it had been seen in some quarters as a sign of his mental and physical fragility. "It need cause no sort of embarrassment," declared Archbishop Cosmo Lang unnecessarily in a

CORBIS

## George VI was in uniform when on official business... and would be shown presenting medals



# Four royal brothers at war

*While George VI's reputation soared, his brothers faced danger or dishonour*



## **KING GEORGE VI** (1895–1952)

George VI (christened Albert) was the second son of George V. He trained at Osborne Naval College and saw action in the First World War at Jutland. In 1918 he transferred to the Royal Air Force, the first royal to qualify as a pilot. In the Second World War he became a figurehead, visiting factories, hospitals and bombed-out areas and making morale-boosting visits to British forces abroad, including at Normandy in France after D-Day in 1944 (seen above with General – later Field Marshal – Montgomery).



## **EDWARD, Duke of Windsor** (1894–1972)

George V's heir abdicated as Edward VIII in 1936 to marry Wallis Simpson. He trained at Osborne Naval College, serving with the Grenadier Guards in the First World War. He was living in France in 1939, but fled to Portugal where the Nazis unsuccessfully attempted to abduct him. Two years before he had met Hitler (above) and was suspected of Nazi sympathies, but denied it. In 1940 he was appointed governor of the Bahamas – “a third-class colony”, he believed – to keep him out of trouble.



## **PRINCE HENRY, Duke of Gloucester** (1900–74)

George V's third son (above, on the right) was a career soldier, though he had retired from the 10th Hussars in 1937. He was appointed chief liaison officer to the British Expeditionary Force in France and was wounded during the retreat to Dunkirk. He then served as second in command of 20th Armoured Brigade. He was not risked in combat after the Duke of Kent was killed (see right).

## **PRINCE GEORGE, Duke of Kent** (1902–42)

The fourth son of George V became the first English royal to die on active service since King Richard III fell at the battle of Bosworth in 1485. George had been in the navy and worked as a civil servant (another royal first). He had a louche reputation, with talk of affairs with both men and women and drug taking. An air commodore in the RAF, he was killed when a plane taking him to inspect air bases in Iceland crashed into a hillside in Caithness in Scotland.

The Duke of Kent, George VI's youngest brother, was killed while on active service in 1942







**DOING THEIR BIT**

In 1940, the two princesses made their first radio broadcast, aimed at cheering up the British children who had been evacuated to North America



**ABDICATED** The activities of George VI and his family contrasted favourably with the Duke of Windsor (above), whose abdication and easy war in the Bahamas were seen as a dereliction of duty



**ON ACTIVE SERVICE** Princess Elizabeth insisted on joining an auxiliary service like the rest of the nation's young women, despite her father's misgivings, and was seen to be helping the war effort

GETTY IMAGES / IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM



broadcast. But now it became a symbol of integrity and of decent ordinariness.

George was indeed very different from his flashy brother. Edward VIII, the playboy king, a man who, his friend Walter Monckton said, believed that God had dealt him trumps all the time, had precipitously fallen from public favour within days of abdicating in December 1936 and was perceived to be having a cushy war as governor of the Bahamas. He had given up the throne rather than Wallis Simpson, the American divorcee he loved – a dereliction of duty and birthright in the eyes of the public, whose letters to Stanley Baldwin's government (preserved in government archives) fizz with indignation and contempt – leaving his brother to pick up the pieces.

George VI may not have been an intellectual or original in thought or outlook, but he was obviously sincere and dedicated and that was precisely what was required from a public figurehead. "His making was, of course, the war," noted Martin Charteris, who would later be a private secretary to Queen Elizabeth II.

**A**ppearances by the royal family in cinema newsreels – the only form of pictorial broadcasting operating during the war, as the nascent BBC television service closed down for the duration – rose dramatically. Mass Observation estimated that stories featuring members of the royal family rose from them being covered in 23 per cent of bulletins to 80 per cent at the height of the crisis, while spontaneous clapping when they came on screen trebled. One man told researchers after watching the palace bombing sequence: "Now the king is clapped not so much as a man but as a symbol of the country."

At the heart of these public appearances were the young princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, who made their first radio broadcast in October 1940, a month after the bombing of Buckingham Palace. Two years earlier royal officials had contemptuously rejected a request from Helen Reid, the owner of the *New York Herald Tribune*, for the princesses to make a radio broadcast to the US to open national children's week – "there is of course no ques-

tion... nor is it likely to be considered for many years to come". Now, times had changed and the broadcast, ostensibly to British children evacuated to North America, was heard across the world. The evocative words: "We know from experience what it means to be away from those we love most of all... come on Margaret... Good night and good luck to you all" were sentimental, but effective as an example of British stoicism.

As both princesses grew up, their progress was closely observed by the public in wartime: from performing in annual Windsor Castle plays to, in Elizabeth's case, launching HMS *Vanguard*, the largest battleship ever built in Britain, in 1944. By the following year, the 19-year-old princess had been allowed, not without some misgivings by her father, to join the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the ATS, where she went on a six-week training course in driving and vehicle maintenance at the major garrison of Aldershot.

Young women had been conscripted in 1941, with the choice of working in industry or joining one of the auxiliary services – the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS, the women's branch of the British Army), the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) or the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), with the aim of freeing up men from these services for frontline duties.

Elizabeth's attendance was somewhat circumscribed – she was driven home to Windsor Castle every night and was taken to the officers' mess for meals – but it was at least an opportunity to test herself against less privileged contemporaries for the first time in her life. And, more importantly, the pictures of her fiddling with an engine and the newsreel of her driving a truck showed her doing her bit. She qualified just as the war ended.

The royal family did not escape unscathed from the war. George VI was exhausted and worn down by the unrelenting tension and emotional strain created by the conflict, in a role that as second son he had never anticipated or been trained for. By the war's end however he was, in Churchill's words: "more beloved by all classes and conditions than any of the princes of the past". The royal family's wartime example and reputation have stood it in good stead now for three-quarters of a century. ■

He was sincere and dedicated and that was precisely  
what was required from a figurehead



# Elizabeth II

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## *A life in pictures*

Ever since Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, both her public role and her personal life have been in the spotlight. Turn the page for the pictorial story of Britain's longest reigning monarch, through six eventful decades





**THE CORONATION, 1953**

Elizabeth was crowned in Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953. The coronation ceremony has largely remained the same for a thousand years, but for Elizabeth there was one crucial difference: broadcast on radio and TV, it was witnessed by millions of people around the world





**A BABY IS BORN, 1926** Elizabeth, shown in the late 1920s, was born on 21 April 1926. There was no expectation that the young child would one day become a princess and a queen



**THE YOUNG PRINCESS, 1937** George VI and family appear on the balcony at Buckingham Palace after his coronation – he succeeded to the throne following the abdication of his older brother Edward VIII. Now that the 11-year-old Princess Elizabeth – seen waving – was the next royal heir, her life was to change dramatically



**WARTIME DUTIES, 1942** In the Second World War, Princess Elizabeth played an important symbolic role. On her 16th birthday, in 1942, she inspected the Grenadier Guards at a special parade at Windsor Castle. As their new colonel she wore the regimental badge on her hat. A reporter at the time described it as “the first official occasion in the life of England’s future queen”

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**COMING OF AGE, 1947** Elizabeth seen on a tour to South Africa in 1947. In her 21st birthday radio broadcast, she said: "I welcome the opportunity to speak to all the peoples of the British Commonwealth and empire... my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service." She was as good as her word: the Commonwealth has 53 members, and she has made hundreds of visits to member nations →





**POSTWAR WEDDING, 1947** On 20 November 1947, the princess married Prince Philip. It was a modest affair, with rationing still in place after the war. Fifty years on, the Queen would say of her husband: "He has... been my strength and stay all these years"



**YOUNG MOTHER, 1951** At their home at Clarence House in London, the royal couple show off their young family: Charles, born in 1948 and sister, Anne, born two years later. Elizabeth now had to juggle her personal life with the demands of her public duties



**RELAXING ON VACATION, 1972** The Queen and Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, on the family's annual summer break at Balmoral Castle, with the young princes Andrew (behind) and Edward, and Princess Anne and Prince Charles. With the birth of Andrew in 1960, the Queen had become the first reigning sovereign to have a child since Queen Victoria in 1857





**ROYAL WALKABOUT, 1977** In Hobart, Tasmania during her silver jubilee tour of Australia, the Queen went on a walkabout – designed to meet as many people as possible, not simply dignitaries. Her first Commonwealth tour had been in 1953, when she visited Canada, Bermuda, Jamaica, Panama, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, the Cocos Islands, Ceylon, Aden, Uganda, Libya and Gibraltar, covering 43,618 miles



GETTY IMAGES / PA

**MEETING MR PRESIDENT, 1982** There have been 12 US presidents during the Queen's reign, starting with Harry S Truman (elected in 1945). Here the Queen and President Ronald Reagan indulge a shared interest in riding during his state visit, on horses given to the Queen by the Canadian mounted police. She has a keen interest in breeding thoroughbred horses and often visits race meetings to watch them run →





**DEATH OF DIANA, 1997** Diana Spencer married Prince Charles in 1981. They separated in 1992 and Diana died after a car crash in Paris on 31 August 1997. The Queen was criticised for not showing grief, finally tapping into the public mood by viewing the floral tributes on the eve of the funeral. She said: "It is not easy to express a sense of loss... what I say to you now... I say from my heart... I admired and respected her"



**DIAMOND JUBILEE, 2012** The Queen and Prince Philip smile gamely through the rain during a pageant of 1,000 boats along the river Thames on 3 June to mark the Queen's diamond jubilee. Around a million people braved the cold to watch, lining the river banks



**GREAT GRANDMOTHER, 2015** The Queen and Prince Philip with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (William and Catherine) at the christening of their daughter Charlotte. She and her brother George, above, are two of the Queen's five great-grandchildren

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**LONG TO REIGN OVER US, 2015** Queen Victoria famously reigned for 63 years and seven months (1837–1901), but on 9 September, 2015, Elizabeth II surpassed that record. She appeared in public wearing a diamond-studded bow brooch originally owned by Victoria, saying of her achievement: “It is not one to which I have ever aspired.” In April 2016 she will celebrate her 90th birthday ■



**RIDING HIGH** Elizabeth II and family members shown greeting the crowds gathered to celebrate her 60 years on the throne during the 2012 diamond jubilee celebrations

**FACING PAGE**  
Windsor Castle takes pride of place on the heraldic badge of the House of Windsor, as approved by George VI in 1938







# THE FALL AND RISE OF THE **WINDSORS**

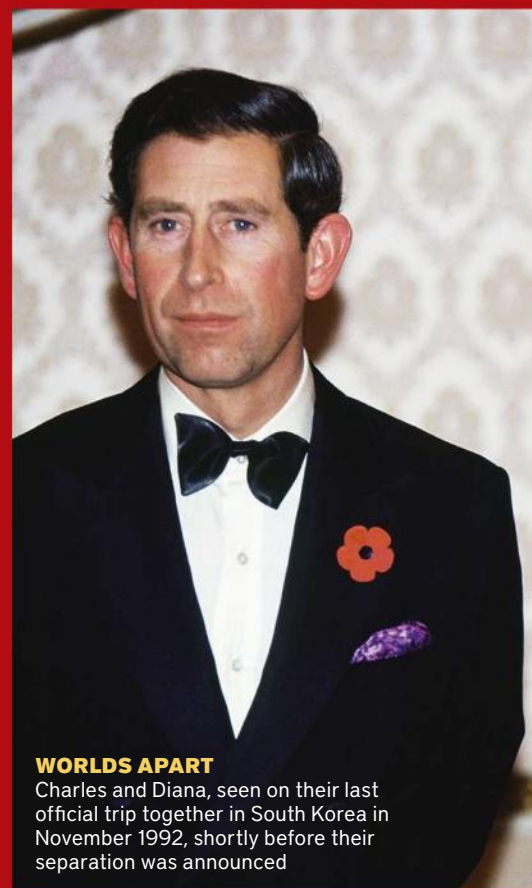
Royal events today are celebrated with enthusiasm in the UK, a turnaround from the 1990s when the monarchy was beset by tragedy and its future was questioned. **SARAH GRISTWOOD** charts the changing fortunes of the Windsors in recent years





#### REALITY TELEVISION

A camera films the royals at lunch for a TV documentary in 1969, part of an attempt to reinvent the monarchy



#### WORLDS APART

Charles and Diana, seen on their last official trip together in South Korea in November 1992, shortly before their separation was announced

**O**f all the things that can be said about Queen Elizabeth II, perhaps the most surprising is this – that the small, conservative woman with her air of doughty resolution and her dowdy handbags, has presided over a new era of British monarchy.

Elizabeth's reign has seen the House of Windsor fall to a point where many questioned whether it could survive into the next century. But then it saw the royal family rise again, coasting into the future on a whole new wave of popularity.

In the postwar climate of 1952, Queen Elizabeth came to the throne on a cloud of adulation, amid talk of a new Elizabethan era. But the first surprise in charting this journey is just

how quickly that began to die away. By the end of the 1960s, polls suggested the monarchy was an out-of-touch anachronism. The royals reacted surprisingly readily (Prince Philip, the moderniser, said that they were fighting an election every day) and the result was a 1969 fly-on-the-wall television documentary film called *Royal Family*.

Opinion was divided about, to paraphrase the 19th-century British journalist Walter Bagehot, letting in “daylight upon magic”. But in fact the royals had already consciously reinvented themselves several times in recent history, from Prince Albert's presentation of Queen Victoria's as a family monarchy, to the early 20th-century reconstruction of The Mall, the road leading to Buckingham Palace, as an arena for huge public ceremony. And from

George V's 1917 declaration that the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha would henceforth be known by the name of ‘Windsor’, to the family's mid-century image as an ideal of middle-class morality.

But by the late 20th century, that very ideal had begun to look irrelevant. The royal family was being assessed in the cold, hard terms of

By the late 20th century, the royal family was being assessed in **the cold, hard terms of value for money**





**FIRE AT WINDSOR CASTLE** In November 1992 a fire at the castle was a low point for the Queen. The question of who should pay for repairs – which took five years and cost £37m – raised serious issues about the funding of the monarchy

value for money. The marriages of the Queen's children were supposed to reignite the spark and indeed, when Charles, Prince of Wales (heir to the throne), and Lady Diana Spencer announced their engagement on 24 February 1981 – then were married in July – it was seen (in Diana's words) as a fairytale.

When Prince William was born less than a year later, Diana said later that she had “felt the whole country was in labour with me”. But her burgeoning celebrity status would prove a double-edged sword when her interests started to diverge from those of the wider royal family.

As the 1980s turned to the 1990s, courtiers spoke of “QVS” – Queen Victoria Syndrome – whereby a population could tire of an ageing monarch and an apparently parasitic extended royal family seemingly

divorced from reality. A poll in early 1990 suggested nearly half the population supporting the idea of an “eventual” abdication. By now the ‘War of the Waleses’ – the public breakdown of the heir to the throne's marriage – was well under way.

**T**hen came 1992: what the Queen called her *annus horribilis* (her horrible year – and arguably the fact that she used Latin displayed the problem all too clearly). January saw embarrassing photographs of the Duchess of York (married to Prince Andrew, Duke of York, since 1986) with Steve Wyatt, a Texas oilman; February saw Diana photographed ostentatiously alone in front of the Taj Mahal in India. In March it was announced

the Yorks would separate; in April Princess Anne divorced Captain Mark Phillips; in June, Andrew Morton published the biography *Diana: Her True Story*.

In August came the embarrassing ‘Squidgygate’ tapes – recorded phone conversations between Diana and a close friend James Gilbey; in December Buckingham Palace announced that “with regret, the Prince and Princess of Wales have decided to separate”.

The left-wing member of parliament Dennis Skinner declared: “The royal family has just pressed the self-destruct button.” A poll showed that three out of four Britons believed the royal family was crumbling.

Not the least telling event of that year was the November fire that seriously damaged Windsor Castle







**STIFF UPPER LIP** The Queen's restraint was unpopular during the period of public mourning after the death of Diana in 1997. The *Daily Express* was not alone in demanding some display of grief



**ROYAL STALWART** Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, on her 100th birthday in 2000, one of the anniversaries that was celebrated across the nation, helping to boost the popularity of the royals

and which saw a sullen nation in the grip of recession reject Prime Minister John Major's declaration that they would pay for the repairs.

The Queen agreed to pay income tax; that fewer members of the royal family would receive public funding; and that some of the palaces should open to the public. Yet within weeks came 'Camillagate' – publication of an all too private conversation between Charles and his mistress Camilla Parker Bowles.

In June 1994 Prince Charles, in a televised interview, admitted infidelity. An ever more gravely wounded monarchy was described by *The Economist* magazine as "an idea whose time has passed". Diana's subsequent interview on *Panorama* in November the following year saw her assert that Charles was temperamentally unsuitable for "the top job" – and

many seemed to agree. The Wales's divorce was finalised the following August.

**A** leading academic declared that "Something has died – the enchantment of the British people for the monarchy." But in its history of more than a thousand years the crown has seen a lot of deaths, and a lot of phoenixes rise from the flames. "The king is dead, long live the king," represents not just the tradition, but the mutability of the monarchy.

If a divorced Princess of Wales was a loose cannon, then her shocking death on 31 August 1997 looked like being infinitely more damaging. As the royal family remained incommunicado at their family retreat of

Balmoral in Scotland, in London the extraordinary outpouring of public grief was fueled by a flood of hostile headlines – "Show us you care," begged the *Daily Express* newspaper. The Queen's lifelong policy of a restrained, hands-off style of queenship seemed now to be serving her very badly.

But the family's popularity began to climb again almost from the moment of its return to London – seen inspecting the mounds of flowers left by the public and breaking with tradition and protocol to have a flag flown at half mast over Buckingham Palace. The Queen broadcasted her regret "as a grandmother" and spontaneously bowed her head as Diana's coffin passed by.

In the longer run, Diana's death ended the divisive taking of sides and allowed the royal family to appear





**POMP AND CEREMONY** A triumphant image of the Queen and her family, on the occasion of William's marriage to Catherine in 2011. It depicts a confident monarchy at the height of its popularity

once more as a united entity. The public had vented their dissatisfaction and the royals had taken it meekly. They promised to do better, effectively. So, have they? Yes, essentially.

It has helped that there have been a huge number of events in the years since Diana's death (and the palace, with newly sharpened sensibilities, has taken full advantage). Autumn 1997 saw the Queen and Prince Philip's golden wedding anniversary; 1999 saw endorsement for retaining the monarchy in the Australian republican referendum; the millennium saw a milestone passed and August 2000 was the Queen Mother's 100th birthday.

Events can be either the excuse for colourful ceremony, or a trigger for sympathy. The year 2002 – just a decade after the annus horribilis –

saw the deaths of Princess Margaret and then Elizabeth the Queen Mother. The Queen invited Camilla Parker Bowles along to that year's golden jubilee celebrations; the Prince of Wales married his long-time love in 2005, in a quiet ceremony. Though she took the lesser title of Duchess of Cornwall, there was, as would once have seemed unthinkable, no public outburst of hostility.

The royals seem set on an upward path. The Queen's longevity, once seen as a problem, has proved her strength. "Suddenly people got the

point of the Queen, who had been doing her job for 50 years," said her former press secretary Charles Anson after the golden jubilee. She is firmly established as national treasure number one – and many are even learning to view the sometimes-controversial Prince Philip differently.

The 2006 film *The Queen* was more blessing than curse. The public enjoyed tabloid newspaper disclosures that she stores her breakfast cereal in a humble Tupperware container as much as her readiness to be filmed with Daniel Craig – as James Bond –

The public enjoyed tabloid newspaper disclosures that the Queen stores her breakfast cereal in **a humble Tupperware container**





**SECOND TIME AROUND** Prince Charles with his second wife Camilla Parker Bowles in 2015 during a visit to Northern Ireland that was an important symbol of reconciliation



**THE NEXT GENERATION** Royal babies, including George and Charlotte (third and fourth respectively in succession to the throne) have helped make the monarchy more popular than ever

for the Olympic opening ceremony in London in 2012. She has after all never resisted change (although she has never sought it), and has encouraged the signs of change in her grandchildren – very successfully.

**T**he current warmth towards the monarchy must in part be down to Diana's sons, William and Henry (Harry), who are seen as carrying on her legacy. William and Catherine Middleton's 2011 royal wedding was an extraordinary high point of not just national but international interest, as have been the births of their two babies, George and Charlotte.

Has the popularity of grandparents and grandchildren left Prince Charles out in the cold? Some say

that it is only respect for the Queen herself that is keeping the royal show on the road – and that the next in line for the throne (and there is no precedent for skipping a generation) represents an insuperable problem for the monarchy. There are undoubtedly queries as to what will happen when the iconic figure of Elizabeth II is gone – not least to the Commonwealth, of which Charles will not automatically become head.

But even the Prince of Wales, secure in a happy second marriage, is perhaps more popular than he used to be. The recent release of 'black spider memos' – messages that Charles sent to government ministers – raised doubts as to whether he would be able to sustain the impartial position of a constitutional monarchy. But soon afterwards his visit of reconciliation to Northern

Ireland helped reclaim that moral high ground which is a traditional justification for a royal family and which, in the 1990s, they seemed to have lost.

The Queen's diamond jubilee, and the moment in 2015 that she became the longest-reigning monarch in British history, felt like national victories. The year 2016 should see another feel-good moment, with her 90th birthday. It was once said that, "the English like queens", and the new legislation allowing royal sons and daughters to inherit on equal terms may mean we see more of them – albeit not immediately.

The House of Windsor is well on the way to reinventing itself again and, even with its feathers clipped, the phoenix that is the British monarchy will surely continue to fly well into the 21st century. ■



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**Denys Blakeway** is an award-winning producer of historical documentaries. Recent productions include *Victoria's Children: Royal Cousins at War* and *Prince Philip: The Plot to Make a King*. On page 84 he examines the important role of George V in modernising the monarchy.

**Tracy Borman** is an author and historian. Her latest book is *Thomas Cromwell* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2014). She is also co-author of *The Ring and the Crown: A History of Royal Weddings 1066–2011* (Hutchinson, 2011). She writes about William and Matilda on page 8; discusses Elizabeth I's great love on page 24; compiles an A–Z of royal weddings on page 40; and offers tips on how to raise a royal on page 50.

**Sarah Gristwood** is a broadcaster and writer. Her books include *Blood Sisters: The Women Behind the Wars of the Roses* (Harper Press, 2013). She chronicles the fall and rise of the royal house of Windsor on page 108.

**Janice Hadlow** is author of *The Strangest Family: The Private Lives of George III, Queen Charlotte and the Hanoverians* (William Collins, 2014). She is controller, seasons and special projects at BBC television. On page 76 she explores George III's relationship with his family.

**Don Jordan and Michael Walsh** have written a number of history books together, including *The King's Revenge: Charles II and the Greatest Manhunt in British History* (Little, Brown, 2012) and *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* (Mainstream Digital, 2011). They discuss Charles II and his many mistresses on page 32.

**Mark Ormrod** is a professor in history at the University of York. His research interests lie in the political structures and ideas of later medieval England and his books include *Edward III* (Yale University Press, 2011). He analyses the significance of Edward III's family on page 68.



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# ROYAL DYNASTIES



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