

Queens and Queens Consort of Great Britain

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Boadicea was a warrior queen of great courage. She drove her chariots against the barbarian hordes, determined to rid her country of these invaders. Whipping up her horses, she swept across the only bit of the country known to her, sacking Verulam (St Albans) in 61 AD.

Katherine of Aragon was one of the wives of Henry VIII. He would probably not have divorced her, had she produced a male heir. But she was a devout Catholic and submitted to her fate.

Lady Jane Grey, Queen of England for so short a time, was a pathetic figure. She gave birth to a baby boy but he died shortly afterwards. She was a good girl, young and pretty, but not tough enough for those hard times.

Henry VIII, more at ease now that the succession was assured, looked around for another bride. He had heard of Anne of Cleves and sent one of his minions to bring the lady to Britain. The result was a disaster. Henry disliked her on sight, calling her the Flanders Mare. The unfortunate go-between paid dearly for his mistake! This marriage too ended in divorce.



Meantime, Elizabeth, one of Henry's daughters and her half sister Mary had grown up. On the death of Mary, Elizabeth succeeded to the throne, to become one of Britain's most illustrious queens. In early life she lived at Hatfield House, the family home of the Cecils. Lord Cecil became her chancellor and she relied heavily on his judgement.

She became known as the Virgin Queen, and this she was determined to remain. This did not mean that she saw any need to curb her sexual appetites. Her name was linked with that of the Earl of Derby. His wife

Amy died in suspicious circumstances by falling downstairs. This mystery has never been cleared up - the classic case of did she fall, or was she pushed!

Elizabeth ruled on, going from strength to strength. Philip of Spain was a claimant for her hand. Instead she defeated his Armada as it sailed up the Solent. Notable figures flocked to her court, among them Sir Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh. She made stirring speeches, one of the most famous being: 'I may have the body of a woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king'. She must have been the original spin doctor, in knowing how to arouse the enthusiasm of the crowd!

Hers was an outstanding court, but Elizabeth had one anxiety. Over the border, in Scotland, was her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots who had an equal claim to the throne. All her life Elizabeth saw Mary as a rival and worried accordingly.

Eventually, after a long and glorious reign, she died. Her reign was one of the most renowned of all famous queens.



She had been preceded by her half sister, Mary Tudor. Elizabeth was Protestant, but Mary Tudor was a different kettle of fish. She was a fanatical Catholic. Without mercy, she sent to the stake those whom she considered heretics. Cranmer and John Ridley were among those whom she murdered. As the flames enveloped him, Hugh Latimer spoke these immortal words: "Be of good comfort Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle as by God's grace in England as shall never be put out". And the flames consumed him.

Mary became known to all as Bloody Mary and few mourned her when she died.



The life story of Mary Queen of Scots, which began with so much promise, is one of tragedy. When young she had been sent to the French Court to complete her education. Here she married the Dauphin, only a boy, but he died shortly afterwards. Mary returned

to Scotland.

She was young, she was beautiful, she was fun loving. She was an easy target for the rogues of the day. One of these was De Rizzio, an Italian dancing master. He was shot in her presence. Terrified, Mary fled to Fotheringay Castle in the English midlands. She thought of it as a haven but it turned out to be a prison. The day came when Elizabeth I put aside her scruples and signed the death warrant. Mary Queen of Scots was laid to rest in Peterborough Cathedral. Not a moment in British history to be proud of. One can only say 'God rest her soul.'

The reign of the Plantaganets had come to an end, and there was no obvious successor to the British throne. Over in Holland, a friendly nation, were William of Orange and his wife Mary. The British government decided he was an innocuous choice and placed him on the throne.



The years passed, and Victoria, that icon among British monarchs, became queen, after the death of her Uncle William. She had been brought up by her mother, a German matriarch, and the German Comptroller of the Household. It is said that

when she was roused in the early hours of the morning, and told that she was now queen, she said 'I will be good'.

This doesn't ring true. Surely Victoria was never so meek! In fact she became more than a match for her mother and the toady of a chancellor.

She came to the throne at the heyday of the British Empire. Britannia truly ruled the waves. Her statue still stands in Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi. Wearing her widow's weeds she gazed imperiously at the dust and dirt surrounding her. She was the first, and last, Empress of India.

Elizabeth I had had much influence on the times she lived in, but Victoria was to surpass her. She disliked Gladstone's sort and showed more favour to that of Benjamin Disraeli. He was not slow to take advantage of this, and Victoria was frequently an honoured guest at Hughenden his country home. She was, after all a woman, and probably liked his elegant whiskers! If Mrs Disraeli was jealous, as a good Victorian wife she kept her feelings to herself.

Victoria married off her large family to all the ruling heads of a divided Europe, thus becoming kin to all important personages on that continent. Even her arrogant nephew, Willie, later known as Kaiser Bill, was subservient to her. Who knows - had she lived, she might have prevented the First World War.



Victoria was always at odds with her eldest son, Edward. She blamed him for carrying typhoid to his father, bringing about her beloved Albert's death. For this, she never forgave him. However, no doubt thinking of the succession, she arranged his marriage to the beautiful Danish princess, Alexandra. The nation loved her. A popular jingle of the day was, 'We are all of us Danes, in honour of thee, Alexandra'. She was not only lovely; she was also immensely kind, always considerate of other people. Edward must have been bowled over by her beauty, but this did not prevent him having mistresses. When he was on his death bed Alexandra brought Mrs Kepple, his favourite, to his bedside. As always, she thought of others, not herself.

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