**WILLIAM AND MARY**

 

**WILLIAM OF ORANGE BECOMES KING OF ENGLAND**

William III became king of Great Britain after the Glorious Revolution. William, along with his wife Mary II, was crowned after Parliament had decreed that James II had abdicated the throne and that William should succeed him.

William was born in November 1650 the only child of Prince William II of Holland. His mother, Mary Stuart, was the daughter of [Charles I](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/charles_i.htm). Therefore, William’s credibility in England was cemented by the fact that he himself had a bloodline to the Stuarts

William married Mary, daughter of James II, in 1677. This marriage in its original state was a political union but both became inseparable as their marriage progressed.

Before being asked by senior political figures in England to land with a military force to overthrow James, William had established a good reputation a competent military commander. William was seen as a main protector of the Protestant faith in Western Europe and for those in England who believed that James II was pushing the country down the road of Catholicism, William was a natural replacement. It was also useful that William had a bloodline to the Stuarts. His wife Mary had made her Protestant credentials clear, especially when her younger brother was born and a future Catholic king seemed probable.

As king of England, William wanted to continue his ‘crusade’ against [France](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/france_1610_to_1715.htm) and Louis XIV, who was Catholic However, William had to somehow understand what seemed a strange political system to him. Some members of Parliament remained suspicious of a foreign king.

William relied on the [Earl of Sunderland](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/robert_spencer_sunderland.htm) for advice – though it was usual for William to listen to himself. Sunderland was a smart man who was not tied to any set of the political beliefs and ideas in Parliament. Sunderland was seen as the senior political figure in the country and one who served the king.

William listened to his few advisors in silence, took an age to weigh up all the possibilities while his advisors waited. Contemporary accounts make it clear that William’s advisors found the whole process – especially the long periods of silence - very nerve-racking.

William himself believed that certain areas of government were too important to delegate. He took control of the Treasury, foreign matters and the armed forces. William was also the main driving force behind matters in Europe, especially the war against Louis XIV. He often worked late into the night.

There were those politicians who were very wary about such an expansion of government power, especially one based around a standing army led by the king.

William’s foreign policy was dominated by a war against Louis XIV.

Earlier, Louis XIV signed a treaty in which France agreed to recognize William as the rightful king of England with [Anne](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/queen_anne.htm) as his rightful heir. By doing this it appeared as if Louis had abandoned his previous support of the exiled Stuarts. However, war in Europe was reignited by the attempt when France tried to take regions once held by the Spanish. Louis angered William when he announced his support for the son of James II, to be king of England.

In 1702, William was riding his horse and it stumbled on a mole hill. The king was thrown from his horse and he broke a collar bone. His weakened body could not take the shock and William died later that year.

**WHO WAS MARY II?**

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Mary married [William, Prince of Orange](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/william_iii.htm), in 1677 – eleven years before the [Glorious Revolution](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/1688_revolution.htm). She was the eldest daughter of [James II](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/james_ii_stuart.htm) and his first wife Anne. They never had children – Mary miscarried twice and was incapable of having children.

While her father James showed his devotion towards the Catholic faith, Mary made it clear that she was 100% Protestant. Her marriage emphasized this.

When her younger brother, James Edward, was born in James 1688, Mary shared with many in England the concern that the [Stuart](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/stuart_england.htm) dynasty would continue under a Catholic monarch. Before the birth of James Edward, Mary was next in line to the throne on the death of her father. However, there was little doubt that the young boy would be brought up in the Catholic faith with all the issues this brought with it for Britain.

When William received his ‘Invitation’ to save Britain from Catholicism, Mary was highly supportive of her husband responding to it. Some in England viewed Mary as the sole legitimate heir to the throne but William brought with him a military reputation that for many meant that England would not be thrown into a bloody civil war again . They were both crowned together in 1689. In fact, it is almost certain that Mary would not have accepted the throne by herself.

While her husband may have appeared to be somewhat dominating and rude towards her in public, she was devoted and loyal and saw William as the more important partner in the marriage. When Mary was told she would be the true and legitimate heir to the throne, she immediately summoned William and promised the following:

*“He should always bear rule; and she asked only that he would obey the command of ‘Husbands love your wives’, as she promised to follow the commend of, “Wives, be obedient to your husband in all things.”*

Shortly after the coronation, Mary received a letter from her father, which stated bluntly that he disowned her and placed a curse on both his daughters.

Mary stopped speaking to her younger sister [Anne](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/queen_anne.htm) after 1688. Anne believed that William had come between her and the throne - which was not true. Anne made her resentment of William plain for all to see. Both sisters were never reconciled.

Mary stayed out of politics and remained in the background. Because William was so busy, she and her husband were rarely together. Yet, the simple fact that she was on the throne was very important to William. As a Stuart she gave the joint reign legitimacy and as a devoted Anglican, she helped the Church through a difficult period.  Mary died of smallpox on December 28th 1694. William kept a lock of Mary’s hair and her wedding ring with him until the day he died.

**William and Mary**

1. How was William III related to the Stuart family?
2. What characteristics did William have that made him attractive to Parliament (when they invited him to be king)?
3. What did James II do that prompted Parliament to search for another king?
4. What religion was his wife Mary?
5. What country did William fight against during his reign?
6. Who was the leader of that country?
7. What did William do to become more familiar with the political system in England?
8. How can you describe is decision-making?
9. How can you describe his work ethic?
10. What drew William into further conflict with Louis XIV?
11. How did William die?
12. How did Mary feel about her husband ruling England?
13. What happened between her and her father?
14. What happened between her and her sister?
15. How would you describe the relationship between William and Mary

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