



Four Royal Marriages: Unions that Shaped the Monarchy

Plantagenets: Edward III and Philippa of Hainault

Edward: Born 13 November 1312, son of Edward II and Isabella of France, became King of England 25 January 1327 at age 14

Philippa: Probably born February or March 1314, daughter of Willem Count of Hainault and Jeanne de Valois

The marriage likely arranged by Isabella and Willem: Willem provided ships and mercenaries for Isabella's plan to invade England and gain crown for her son, and in return her son married Willem's daughter.

Edward and Philippa had 12 children. Five sons survived infancy: Edward the Black Prince, Lionel of Antwerp (Duke of Clarence), John of Gaunt (Duke of Lancaster), Edmund of Langley (Duke of York), Thomas of Woodstock (Duke of Gloucester). Four daughters survived to adulthood: Isabella of England, Joan of England, Mary of Waltham, and Margaret Countess of Pembroke.

The marriage lasted until Philippa's death in 1369.

Tudors/Stuarts: Henry VII and Elizabeth of York

Henry: Born 28 January 1457, son of Edmund Tudor and Margaret Beaufort, went into exile in 1471, became King of England after defeating Richard III in August 1485.

Elizabeth: Born 11 February 1466, daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, sister of "Princes in the Tower," and niece of Richard III.

The marriage was reportedly worked out by their mothers during the reign of Richard III. He had declared Elizabeth illegitimate and was trying to arrest Henry. Henry promised to marry Elizabeth on Christmas 1483, and they were married 18 January 1486. Henry took the red rose as his emblem to represent Lancaster, and Elizabeth used the white rose associated with the house of York. The union created the two-colored Tudor rose. After their first child was born, Elizabeth was crowned Queen 25 November 1487.

Henry and Elizabeth had four children who survived young childhood: Arthur (died 2 April 1502), Margaret (later Queen of Scotland), Henry (later King of England), and Mary (later Queen of France).

The marriage lasted until Elizabeth's death in 1503.

Hanoverians: Victoria and Albert

Victoria: Born 24 May 1819, daughter of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent and Strathearn and Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. Became Queen 20 June 1837.

Albert: Born 26 August 1819, son of Ernest III, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld and Louise of Saxe-Coburg-Altenbugh. He and Victoria were first cousins.

Victoria was in no hurry to be married when she first became Queen in 1837. Victoria and Albert's first meeting did not go that well, but when Albert returned to England in 1839 Victoria was smitten. Victoria and Albert were married on 10 February 1840.

The royal couple had nine children, all of whom survived to adulthood: Victoria (later Empress of Germany and Queen of Prussia), Edward (later King of England), Alice (later Grand Duchess of Hesse), Alfred (later Duke of Edinburgh and Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha), Helena (later Princess of Schleswig-Holstein), Louise (later Duchess of Argyll), Arthur (later Duke of Connaught and Strathearn and Governor General of Canada), Leopold (later Duke of Albany, Earl of Clarence, and Baron Arklow), and Beatrice (later Princess of Battenberg).

The marriage lasted until Albert's death in 1861.

Windsors: George VI and Elizabeth

George (known earlier as Bertie): Born 14 December 1895, son of George V and Mary of Teck. Became King 11 December 1936 upon the abdication of Edward VIII.

Elizabeth: Born 4 August 1900, daughter of Claude Bowes-Lyon, Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne and Cecilia Cavendish-Bentinck.

After the Royal Family's deliberate attempt to distance themselves from their Germanic background, King George and Queen Mary encouraged their children to marry English nobility rather than European royals. Bertie proposed to Elizabeth first in 1921, but she turned him down. He didn't give up, and she eventually agreed and they were married 26 April 1923. They were known as the Duke and Duchess of York after their marriage.

The couple lived in London. Their first child, Elizabeth, was born in 1926, and their second child, Margaret Rose, was born in 1930. The Duke and Duchess took their children on official engagements whenever possible. When George V died in January 1936, Bertie's older brother became Edward VIII. As the new king had no children, Bertie was heir to the throne. After negotiations about the King's wish to marry Wallis Simpson, he abdicated the throne. Bertie took the throne as George VI. He and Elizabeth were crowned King and Queen on 12 May 1937. Elizabeth was the first English Queen Consort since Henry VIII's wives.

The marriage lasted until George VI's death 6 February 1952.