



BRIT POLITICS Fact Sheet – Queen Mary I

This fact sheet covers the life and reign of the Tudor Queen Mary. You can find lots more about the Tudors on www.britpolitics.co.uk

Timeline

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| 1516 | Mary is born, 18 February |
| 1525 | Mary is sent to live at Ludlow castle |
| 1533 | Declared illegitimate and removed from succession |
| 1536 | Death of Catherine of Aragon Articles of Submission |
| 1547 | Death of Henry VIII |
| 1553 | Death of Edward VI, 6 July Lady Jane Grey is proclaimed Queen Mary is proclaimed Queen Mary enters London, 3 August Mary is crowned Queen of England, 1 October First Statute of Repeal |
| 1554 | Wyatt's Rebellion, January/February Marriage to Philip of Spain, 25 July Second Statute of Repeal |
| 1555 | First executions for heresy |
| 1557 | War against France |
| 1558 | Loss of Calais Death of Queen Mary I, 17 November |

Mary's Early Life

Mary Tudor was born on the 18 February 1516 at Greenwich Palace. Her father was King Henry VIII. Her mother was Catherine of Aragon, a devout Roman Catholic. Mary would be their only child to survive and reach adulthood.

Mary was baptised in a Catholic ceremony at the Church of the Observant Friars in Greenwich. Several high ranking members of the nobility witnessed the event. Cardinal Wolsey stood as her godfather. Mary's godmothers included Katherine Courtenay, Countess of Devon who was the daughter of Edward IV. Another godmother was Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury who was the daughter of George, Duke of Clarence (brother to Edward IV and Richard III).



Henry and Catherine took a keen interest in their daughter's upbringing. Henry was very fond of her. No expense was spared in her household. One of her first governesses was Lady Margaret Bryan who was subsequently replaced by the Countess of Salisbury. The Countess would become a valued friend and supporter of both Mary and her mother.

Catherine ensured Mary had a good education. The Spaniard Juan Luis Vives was employed as one of her tutors. Vives advocated the education of women although he still emphasised the virtues of chastity and humility and the need to be a dutiful wife. Vives wrote *On a Plan of Study for Children* which outlined a course of study for Mary. Mary read from the Scriptures and also studied texts such as *Utopia* by Thomas More, the *Dialogues of Plato* and the *Education of a Christian Prince* by Erasmus. She also received lessons in Latin and French.

Mary had a talent for playing the lute and the virginals. Mary also enjoyed dancing, hunting, riding and hawking. One of her most favourite pastimes would be gambling, often running up large debts.

Ludlow Castle

In 1525, at the age of nine, Mary was sent to live at Ludlow Castle with her own Court. The heir to the throne was usually given the title of the Prince of Wales. Although never officially invested with the title 'Princess of Wales', Mary was sent to preside over the Council of Wales in the Marches and represent royal authority. Mary remained there for about 18 months.

Becoming Lady Mary

In 1527 Henry VIII announced his intention to have the Pope annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Mary chose to support her mother. The relationship with her father deteriorated. In 1531 Henry banished Catherine from Court. Henry forbade Mary from seeing her mother. During this period Mary was frequently unwell, suffering with stomach pains and headaches.

In January 1533 Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn were secretly married. Later that same year the newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer, declared Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon to be invalid. Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn was legitimised by Act of Parliament. Mary was now illegitimate and was officially removed from the line of succession. She was no longer to be called the Princess Mary but the Lady Mary.

In September 1533 Anne Boleyn gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. Mary refused to give up her title of Princess as she didn't consider herself to be illegitimate. Neither would she acknowledge Anne Boleyn as Queen. Mary's household was broken up and she was separated from some of her most trusted friends and companions, including the Countess of Salisbury. Instead, Mary was sent to live at Hatfield House in the household of her half-sister the Princess Elizabeth.



Mary had a difficult relationship with the members of Elizabeth's household, including Lady Shelton, Anne Boleyn's aunt. Mary's refusal to acknowledge Elizabeth as taking precedence over her, or to refrain from calling herself the Princess Mary, led to many disagreements. Mary would be locked in her room when Henry and Anne came to visit Elizabeth and she was allowed fewer and fewer visitors. She even considered escaping abroad. Eustace Chapuys, the Ambassador to England for the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V became her most trusted advisor. Mary was frequently ill with stomach pains and rumours were spread that she was being poisoned.

In January 1536 Mary was told of the death of her mother Catherine of Aragon. Mary was forbidden to attend the funeral.

The Articles of Submission

Mary had been under increasing pressure to recognise the marriage between her mother and father as invalid. In doing this Mary would also accept that she was not the legitimate heir to the throne. As a devout Roman Catholic, Mary had also refused to acknowledge Henry as Supreme Head of the Church of England. Mary still considered the Pope in Rome to be the head of the Church.

In June 1536 a deputation of Council members led by Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, visited Mary at Hundson to persuade her to sign the Articles of Submission. A week later, Mary relented to the pressure and signed the Articles. Eustace Chapuys had advised her to sign the document for her own safety.

Mary acknowledged Henry as the Supreme Head of the Church of England and 'utterly refused' the Pope's 'pretended authority'. Mary also recognised that the marriage between her mother and father 'was by God's law and man's law incestuous and unlawful'. Eustace Chapuys reported that Mary was in a state of despair after signing the Submission as she had gone against her conscience.

Mary was given her own household again, and began to make more frequent visits to Court. By this time Henry VIII had married Jane Seymour, Anne Boleyn having been executed in May 1536. The birth of Prince Edward took some of the pressure off Mary as there was now a male heir to the throne. Mary stood as Edward's godmother and as chief mourner at Jane Seymour's funeral. Mary was often at Court in the last few years of Henry's reign. Catherine Parr, her father's sixth wife had a harmonious relationship with all of Henry's children and brought Mary, Elizabeth and Edward closer together. Catherine Parr and Mary although of different religious faiths shared common interests and got on well with each other.

Her brother, Edward VI becomes King

Henry VIII died in January 1547. In his will, Henry gave Mary several estates in East Anglia and other properties including her favoured Hundson. The will also put Mary back into the line of succession after her brother Edward VI.



As Edward was only nine years old when he succeeded to the throne, England was ruled by a Regency Council. Edward was a Protestant as were leading members of his Council. They decided to continue the Protestant Reformation begun by Henry VIII.

Mary as a devout Catholic objected to these religious changes. In defiance of the Act of Uniformity 1549 Mary continued to celebrate Mass with her household which led to increasing disagreements between her and the Regency Council. Her brother King Edward VI also began to put pressure on Mary to conform to England's new religious laws. Mary refused to change her faith as 'her soul was God's'.

Becoming Queen: Edward VI does not name Mary to take over the crown

By the beginning of 1553, King Edward was seriously ill. Edward wrote his Devise which removed Mary and Elizabeth from the line of succession on the grounds of illegitimacy. Edward did not want Mary as his heir because she was a Catholic. Instead Edward named the male heirs of his cousin, the Protestant Lady Jane Grey as his successors. When it became obvious that Edward was dying, the Devise was altered to read Lady Jane Grey and her male heirs.

On 6 July 1553 King Edward VI died. The news was initially kept secret. Mary had already been warned that her brother was critically ill and she had fled to her estates in East Anglia. Here, her supporters rallied an army. Mary believed herself to be the rightful Queen and summoned the leading nobles of England to defend her claim. Around 10,000 men joined her forces at Framlingham Castle. The Duke of Northumberland led an army out of London to meet her but they stopped at Cambridge, overwhelmed by the size of Mary's forces.

Mary's popularity persuaded many of the Council in London to change their minds and declare their loyalty to Mary instead of Lady Jane Grey. Mary was proclaimed Queen on the 19 July 1553. On 3 August 1553 the thirty seven year old Mary entered London to cheering crowds. The royal procession included her sister Elizabeth.

Despite being guilty of Treason, only a few of the conspirators were executed, among those beheaded was the Duke of Northumberland. Lady Jane Grey was imprisoned in the Tower.

Queen Mary I is crowned

Mary was crowned Queen at Westminster Abbey on the 1 October 1553 in a magnificent ceremony. The coronation ceremony followed many of the same rituals as those of previous Kings of England. Mary was crowned wearing crimson robes. She received the sword, orb, spurs and sceptre that represented the powers of Kingship. Mary was anointed with holy oil, although she had consecrated oil sent from Catholic Flanders as Mary refused to use the 'tainted' oil that had anointed the Protestant Edward.



The Archbishop of Winchester Stephen Gardiner performed the ceremony rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury. Thomas Cranmer had been imprisoned in the Tower for supporting Lady Jane Grey. Mary chose as her personal motto, Veritas Temporis Filia, Truth the Daughter of Time.

Putting her government together

One of Mary's first tasks as Queen was to establish a Council. While some of her trusted household servants were given positions in her government, Mary also chose to retain some of Edward's councillors. Despite them having previously supported the attempt to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, Mary valued their experience in running the country. The Archbishop of Winchester Stephen Gardiner, who had spent most of Edward's reign in the Tower, was appointed Lord Chancellor.

Mary was England's first crowned Queen Regnant that is a Queen who rules in her own right and not just through marriage to a King. At this time it was generally believed that women were unfit to rule. The radical Protestant reformer John Knox argued in First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women (1558) that a female Monarch went against the teachings of the Bible. Mary had to overcome the prejudices of her government and people and prove that a woman was capable of ruling England.

One of the first pieces of legislation passed by Parliament was to formally state that the marriage between Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon was legal and valid. This meant that legally Mary was no longer illegitimate.

Parliament was most concerned with the issue of Mary's marriage. They assumed that Mary would marry and it was generally thought that she would need a husband to help her govern successfully. However, women were expected to be dutiful wives and obey their husbands. Upon marriage a husband also acquired all of his wife's property and titles. England had no legal precedent for the marriage of a reigning female Monarch.

Negotiations start to find Queen Mary a husband

As a young princess Mary had been an important political tool in forming alliances with foreign nations. At two years old Mary had been betrothed to the Dauphin of France. At the age of six, there were negotiations for Mary to marry her cousin the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Other potential marriages were proposed as the political situation in Europe changed and new alliances were needed. Although marriage negotiations were entered into, Mary's illegitimate status and the uncertainty of her place in the succession hindered any serious marriage proposals.

Mary felt that it was her duty to marry and provide a Catholic heir to the throne. Parliament tried to persuade Mary that she should marry an Englishman. Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon was proposed as a candidate. Mary rebuked Parliament for daring to interfere in her choice of husband declaring that they were 'not accustomed to use such language to the Kings of England'. Mary could not consent to marry one of her own subjects.



Mary turned to Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor for advice. Mary showed an interest in marrying Charles V himself, but he was suffering with ill health. Instead, Charles V proposed that Mary should marry his son, Prince Philip of Spain. Philip was already ruling Spain on behalf of his father and he was a Roman Catholic. Spain was one of the most powerful countries in Europe and so would be a useful ally. Henry VIII had sought the same political alliance when he married Mary's mother Catherine of Aragon.

Parliament and the people of England were opposed to Mary's plans to marry Philip. They did not want England subject to foreign rule. They were worried that the Habsburgs would have too much political influence and that England would be dragged into their European wars. If a son was born he would be heir to the throne of England as well as being a Spanish prince, leading to fears that England would become a province in the Spanish Empire.

Wyatt's Rebellion

In February 1554 around 3000 men led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, marched on London. Their intention was to remove Mary from the throne and replace her with her sister Elizabeth who would marry Edward Courtenay. Mary refused to leave London. Instead Mary gave a rousing speech at the Guildhall in which she pledged her dedication to the realm saying that she would not enter into a marriage that did not benefit England. Mary declared that her coronation ring, signifying her marriage to the kingdom, never left her finger. She urged her subjects to stand with her against the rebels. Wyatt's Rebellion failed. Around ninety of the rebels, including Thomas Wyatt were executed. Elizabeth and Edward Courtenay were imprisoned in the Tower. Mary also realised that Lady Jane Grey would continue to be a threat to her throne and had her beheaded.

Queen Mary gets married to Philip II of Spain

Philip sent many expensive betrothal gifts to Mary, one of which was a magnificent pearl known as La Peregrina. Mary can be seen wearing this in her portrait by Hans Eworth, now hanging in the National Portrait Gallery. It was said that Mary treasured this gift above all others.

Mary and Philip were married in Winchester Cathedral on the 25 July 1554, the feast day of St James, patron saint of Spain. Mary was eleven years older than the twenty seven year old Philip. They had only met in person a few days before and Philip didn't speak English, so they communicated in a mixture of Spanish, French and Latin.

The marriage treaty laid down many stipulations to try and limit Philip's powers as King. While Philip could call himself King of England and help Mary govern he would have limited royal powers. Mary was to rule England and if she predeceased him Philip would have no claims to the throne. England was not to be involved in any Habsburg wars.



By the autumn, Mary's doctors confirmed that she was pregnant. Mary went into confinement at Hampton Court Palace to await the birth of her child. Despite Mary showing several signs of pregnancy, by July 1555 it was obvious that they had been mistaken. Philip left for Flanders in August 1555 and didn't return for eighteen months.

Restoring the Catholic faith

Once Mary became Queen she stopped the Protestant Reformation and began to convert England back to a Roman Catholic nation.

The First Statute of Repeal was passed by Parliament in 1553. The Church in England was to be restored to the same position it had in the last year of Henry VIII's reign. All the religious legislation passed during the reign of Edward VI was repealed. The Church in England was now governed by the doctrine set out in the Act of the Six Articles 1539. Priests were forbidden to marry. Any priests who were already married had to leave their families if they wanted to continue in their roles. The Latin Mass was restored.

Cardinal Reginald Pole had returned to England in November 1554. Pole, a devout Roman Catholic, had been outspoken against Henry VIII and his marriage to Anne Boleyn. As Pole had fled to the continent, Henry VIII had persecuted his family instead. This included the imprisonment and then brutal execution at the age of 70 of Mary's friend and supporter, Lady Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury. Reginald Pole became one of Mary's chief advisors and was tasked with helping to re-instate Roman Catholicism in England. Mary appointed him Archbishop of Canterbury.

Cardinal Pole believed that the education of priests was necessary to fully restore Catholicism to England. He instructed the Catholic Bishops to regularly supervise their parish priests. Pole wanted to build more seminaries and provide better training for the clergy. A lack of church finances hindered Pole's efforts.

During Mary's third Parliament, November 1554 to January 1555, the Second Statute of Repeal was passed. This abolished all Protestant religious legislation from 1529. The Pope in Rome was re-instated as Head of the Church. However, there was now a precedent for the Monarch and Parliament to have a greater control over the Church in England. While the Pope was restored as Head of the Church, Mary did not allow the Pope to dictate how the Church of England would be run. Pope Paul IV removed Cardinal Pole as Papal Legate to England and ordered his return to Rome to face charges of heresy. Mary refused the Pope's demands.

England's aristocracy were unwilling to return the land they had acquired after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Mary did not wish to lose the support of the nobility and gentry which made up her government, as this might jeopardise the implementation of her religious reforms. Only those monastic lands held by the Crown were restored to the Church.



“Bloody Mary” and dealing with people who did not want to change (Heresy)

Parliament had also re-instated the heresy laws. The penalty for being found guilty of heresy was to be burnt at the stake. Mary believed that it was her duty as a Catholic Queen to punish heretics and to safeguard the spiritual wellbeing of her subjects. The first executions began in February 1555. Most of those executed were from London and the South-East.

There were a few high profile victims including the former Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer. Of the approximately 280 individuals burnt at the stake, most were ordinary people. The burnings did not stop committed Protestants from practising their faith. Instead, many of those executed were regarded as martyrs or heroes to the Protestant cause.

Several hundred wealthy Protestants chose to go into exile on the continent rather than face persecution in England. Europe was a source of Protestant propaganda. Pamphlets were distributed promoting the Protestant faith and denouncing Mary’s religious policies and the Catholic Church. Mary’s persecution of the Protestants would be dramatically recorded in John Foxe’s Actes and Monuments or Book of Martyrs. The book was widely read and helped influence popular opinion against Catholicism. It also contributed to Mary’s image as ‘Bloody Mary’, although she wasn’t called this until long after her death.

What England was like during Mary’s reign

Mary inherited a Treasury that was in debt and a country facing severe economic difficulties. Successive debasements of the coinage during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI had resulted in devaluation and a loss of confidence in the English currency. Plans were drawn up to reform the currency and withdraw the debased coins although these were not implemented during Mary’s reign. The Book of Rates was revised and a new edition published in 1558. This detailed the customs duties that were to be levied on imports and exports, the revenue from which went to the Crown.

During Mary’s reign there was a move to open up new trade routes and find new markets for English goods. The Muscovy Company was granted a Royal Charter in 1555 to establish a trading monopoly with Russia. It was one of the first major joint-stock companies to be granted a charter.

English merchants tried to break the Portuguese monopoly in the West African gold trade. In 1555 a London merchant, John Lok, brought a group of Africans (from modern day Ghana) to England to learn English so that they could return to West Africa and work as interpreters.

The Tudor era was a time of increasing population. There was economic depression with rising prices and rising unemployment. In 1555 persistent rainfall led to flooding which was then followed by a drought in the spring of 1556. This caused harvests to fail leading to a sharp rise in the price of wheat and starvation and famine. In 1558 a flu epidemic struck England leaving thousands dead.



Later years and the end of Mary's reign

Philip returned to England in March 1557. He left at the beginning of July having persuaded Mary to commit English forces to a war against France. Many on Mary's Council had advised against it. War was expensive, trade with France would be disrupted and the marriage treaty had specified England was not to involve itself in any Habsburg wars. In January 1558 Calais, the last English possession in France was captured by the French. It was a humiliating defeat for England and added to the popular discontent that now surrounded Mary's reign. Philip never returned to England.

Mary believed herself to be pregnant again. As childbirth was a potentially life threatening event, Mary wrote her will in March 1558. In it she named her unborn child as her heir with Philip to rule as Regent. However, once again the signs of pregnancy had been false. Mary frequently suffered from ill health but by the autumn of 1558 it was clear that the Queen was seriously ill. On the 28 October Mary amended her will stating that her successor should be according to the 'Laws and Statutes of the Realm', although no name was given.

At the beginning of November, knowing that she would never have her longed for Catholic heir, Mary named her sister Elizabeth as successor. Mary asked that Elizabeth would maintain the Catholic religion.

Queen Mary dies

On the 17 November 1558, at the age of forty two, Queen Mary I died at St James' Palace. Despite her wish to be buried next to her mother, Mary was buried on 14 December in Westminster Abbey, in Henry VII's Lady Chapel.

The coffin of Elizabeth I was later placed on top of Mary's. King James I of England commissioned a monument above the grave although it only shows an effigy of Elizabeth.

One of the Latin inscriptions reads "Partners both in throne and grave, here rest we two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, in the hope of the Resurrection".