

“THE PRINCESSES ROYAL”

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There have been 6 Princess Royals before Princess Anne.

The title style has no constitutional significance, for it is neither exactly a rank or really a title. It was created by Charles I for his eldest daughter Mary, who married William II of Orange and became the mother of William III. It was devised to distinguish Mary Stuart from the “ordinary” foreign princesses who were not necessarily of Royal blood etc. There is no date specified for the transition of a British Princess to being the Princess Royal. It does not carry any extra monetary grant. It is a purely royal prerogative. In practice they are the eldest daughters of the monarch, whether born before or after her parents accession to the throne. There is no prescriptive right to the honour. But the monarchs eldest, elder or only daughter is not created Princess Royal if she is likely to succeed to the crown. For example James II daughters Mary and Anne became Queens of England. George I’s daughter was Sophia, but she had married the Crown Prince of Prussia, who became Frederick William II, before George came to the British throne. Frederick, Prince of Wales, died before his father George II, so his daughter Augusta was excluded. The Prince Regent’s daughter Charlotte who died in childbirth was his only legitimate offspring and would have been Queen. William IV’s daughter Elizabeth died in infancy. Queen Victoria’s father, the Duke of Kent, died before he could become King, and Princess Victoria was heir presumptive while Queen Adelaide was trying for children.

The first two of the six married Dutchmen, the second two chose Germans, the fifth a Scot and the last an English Earl with Irish connections. The first four lived abroad all their married lives. Only the last closely identified herself with the activities of the Royal Family, especially after the Abdication of Edward VIII in 1936.

MARY OF ORANGE

In the spring of 1641, William, the heir of Orange-Nassau, aged 14, arrived to marry Charles I’s daughter, on the 2nd May. Charles I was 40, his wife Henrietta, daughter of the Bourbon Henry of Navarre and Henry IV of France, married at 15, now in her mid 20’s, had had 7 of their 8 children, and was notably very short. Her mother had been Marie de’ Medici. The Prince of Wales, later to be Charles II, was then aged 11. Mary was 10 (born on the 4th November 1631), and was 17 months younger. After the marriage Mary was sent to Holland with her mother to escape the English problems in February 1642. They were also with the exiled Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, Charles’ sister, whose son Prince Rupert supported Charles. Her father-in-law died in March 1647 and William became the Stadtholder and Captain-General of the Dutch States (United Provinces) at age of 20, Mary was not yet 16. By July 1648 the Prince of Wales (the future Charles II) left Paris and was with his sister at Helvoetsluys. At the Hague he met Lucy Walter, and the future Duke of Monmouth was born in Zeeland. Next June they went to France and then wintered in Jersey. William died aged 24 of smallpox. His son William Henry was born 10 days later. Mary visited London after the Restoration. Mary died of smallpox at the end of 1660 in London.

ref: Carey, M C - “Princess Royal”, Nisbet & Co, 1922.

ANNE OF ORANGE

Born on the 9th Oct 1709 in Hanover, Anne, first daughter and third child of Electoral Prince of Hanover, George (the future George II) and Caroline of Ansbach, who were married in 1705, was named after her godmother Queen Anne of England. Her elder brothers were Frederick Lewis, who became Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Cumberland (later called the butcher of Culloden). Anne was 18 at her father’s accession. George I locked his wife Sophia Dorothea up in a fortress at Ahlden. His son never spoke of her, or of his father if he could avoid it. Queen Caroline was amiable and very indulgent, and subordinated her inclinations to her husband. Anne was one of first persons ever to be inoculated against smallpox. She

married William IV of Orange, a grand-nephew of William III, when she was 24, on the 24st March 1734, but was already running to fat. She left for Holland on the 22nd April. When she was found pregnant she returned to England by the 2nd June. There were several attempts made for her to return to Holland, but she did not get there till the 6th December. William became Stadtholder of the United Provinces at the age of 36 in 1747. The Prince of Wales died in 1751, aged 44, through drink and perhaps a blow on the head from a cricket ball. William died in the autumn of 1751. She died on the 2nd January 1759, 21 months before her father.

ref : Robb Dr Desca, "William of Orange" Vol 1, Heinemann, 1962

CHARLOTTE OF WÜRTTEMBERG

She was Anne's great niece, the eldest of 6 daughters with 9 brothers, of George III and Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. She was born on the 29th September 1766. Her first 31 years were spent in Britain and the last 30 years in the German state of Württemberg, which has the source of the Danube, for which her husband Frederick William became Elector in 1803 and King in 1806, both in Napoleon's time. Frederick had married Augusta of Brunswick in 1780, a cousin of the Princess Royal and sister of Caroline who was to be the unwanted Queen of George IV, and had three children. Charlotte married on the 18th May 1797. They left for Harwich on 2nd June. She was isolated from Britain during the Napoleonic wars till 1813. She had no children. Her step-daughter Princess Catherine was married to Napoleon's youngest brother Jerome. Frederick died on the 30th October 1816. She died on the 6th October 1828.

ref: Stuart, Dorothy "The Daughters of George III", Macmillan, 1939

VICTORIA, THE EMPRESS FREDERICK III

She was known as "Pussy" by her parents and "Vicky" by the family, and was born about 1841. Her husband was Prince Frederick William of Prussia, they had met in 1851 when he was 19 and visiting England, Osborne and the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. Frederick was the eldest son of William, who was the Prince Consort's cousin, and Augusta of Saxe-Weimar. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visited Paris and Napoleon III in August 1855. Napoleon and Eugénie came to London in 1857, when the Crimean War was over, by which time Vicky was her father's little secretary and companion. Victoria and Frederick married on the 25th January 1858. Between January 1859 and April 1872 they had 4 sons and 3 daughters. King Frederick William II died on the 2nd January 1861 and they became the Crown Prince and Princess. He became Emperor on the 9th March 1888, and died on the 15th June 1888. She died on the 5th August 1901.

LOUISE, DUCHESS OF FIFE

She was born on the 20th February 1867 and married on the 27th July 1889. She became Princess Royal on the 9th November 1905 (then aged 38). She was in the wreck of the SS Dehli in December 1911 and her husband died consequently later on the 29th January 1912. She died on the 4th January 1931.

MARY, COUNTESS OF HAREWOOD

She was born at Sandringham on 25th April 1897, to the then Duke and Duchess of York. The Duke of York became the Prince of Wales in 1901, following Queen Victoria's death. Harry Lascelles, 35 years old in 1916, wanted to marry when he was 40, and chose the Princess then 24, and married on 28th February 1922. He became 6th Earl of Harewood in 1929 and died in 1947. She became Princess Royal, following the death of her aunt, on 1st January 1932. She died 28th March 1965.