

## Matilda of Flanders



Born: 1031 Flanders, FRA

Married: King William I of England

Died: 2 Nov 1083 FRA

Parents: Baldwin V of Flanders & Adele

**Matilda of Flanders** (c. 1031 – 2 November 1083) was Queen consort of the Kingdom of England and the wife of William I the Conqueror.

She was the daughter of count Baldwin V of Flanders, and Adèle (1000-1078/9), daughter of Robert II of France.

Accustomed to speaking her mind and getting her way, the 4'2"-tall (Britain's smallest queen<sup>[citation needed]</sup>) Matilda (or "Maud") told the representative of William, Duke of Normandy (later king of England as William the Conqueror), who had come asking for her hand, that she was far too high-born (being descended from King Alfred the Great of England) to consider marrying a bastard. When that was repeated to him, William, all of 5'10", rode from Normandy to Bruges, found Matilda on her way to church, dragged her off her horse (some said by her long braids), threw her down in the street in front of her flabbergasted attendants, and then rode off. Another version states that William rode to Matilda's father's house in Lille, threw her to the ground in her room (again, by the braids), and hit her (or violently shook her) before leaving. Naturally Baldwin took offense to this but before they drew swords, Matilda settled the matter. <sup>[1]</sup> Regardless of the story, she decided to marry him, and even a papal ban (on the grounds of consanguinity) did not dissuade her. They were married in 1053.

There were rumours that Matilda had been in love with the English ambassador to Flanders, a Saxon named Brihtric, who declined her advances. Whatever the truth of the matter, years later when she was acting as Regent for William in England, she used her authority to confiscate Brihtric's lands and throw him into prison, where he died.

When William was preparing to invade England, Matilda outfitted a ship, the *Mora*, out of her own money and gave it to him. For many years it was thought that she had something to do with creating the Bayeux Tapestry, but historians no longer believe that; it seems to have been commissioned by William's half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and made by Saxons in Kent.

Matilda bore William eleven children, and he was believed to have been faithful to her, at least up until the time their son Robert rebelled against his father and Matilda sided with Robert against William. After she died, in 1083 at the age of 51, William became tyrannical, and people blamed it on his having lost her. Contrary to the belief that she was buried at St. Stephen's, also called l'Abbaye-aux-Hommes in Caen, Normandy, where William was eventually buried, she is intombed at l'Abbaye aux Dames, which is the Sainte-Trinité church, also in Caen. Of particular interest is the 11th century slab, a sleek black stone decorated with her epitaph, marking her grave at the rear of the church. It is of special note since the grave marker for William was replaced as recently as the beginning of the 19th century. Years later, their graves were opened and their bones measured, proving their physical statures.

## Children

Some doubt exists over how many daughters there were. This list includes some entries which are obscure.

1. Robert Curthose (c. 1054 – 1134), Duke of Normandy, married Sybil of Conversano, daughter of Geoffrey of Conversano
2. Adeliza (or Alice) (c. 1055 – ?), reportedly betrothed to Harold II of England (Her existence is in some doubt.)
3. Cecilia (or Cecily) (c. 1056 – 1126), Abbess of Holy Trinity, Caen
4. William Rufus (1056 – 1100), King of the English
5. Richard (1057 – c. 1081), killed by a stag in New Forest
6. Adela (c. 1062 – 1138), married Stephen, Count of Blois
7. Agatha (c. 1064 – c. 1080), betrothed to (1) Harold of Wessex, (2) Alfonso VI of Castile
8. Constance (c. 1066 – 1090), married Alan IV Fergent, Duke of Brittany; poisoned, possibly by her own servants
9. Matilda (very obscure, her existence is in some doubt)
10. Henry Beauclerc (1068–1135), King of England, married (1) Edith of Scotland, daughter of Malcolm III, King of Scotland, (2) Adeliza of Louvain

Information from online research at: [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)