

## Matilda of Scotland



Born: 1069 Dunfermline, Scotland

Married: King Henry I of England

Died: 1 May 1118

Parents: Malcolm III of Scotland & Margaret Athling

**Matilda of Scotland**<sup>[1]</sup> (born Edith; c. 1080 – 1 May 1118) was the first wife and queen consort of Henry I.

Early life

Matilda was born around 1080 in Dunfermline, the daughter of Malcolm III of Scotland and Saint Margaret. She was christened Edith, and Robert Curthose stood as godfather at her christening — the English queen Matilda of Flanders was also present at the font and may have been her godmother.

When she was about six years old, Matilda and her sister Mary were sent to Romsey, where their aunt Cristina was abbess. During her stay at Romsey and Wilton, Matilda was much sought-after as a bride; she turned down proposals from both William de Warenne, 2nd Earl of Surrey, and Alan Rufus, Lord of Richmond. Hermann of Tournai even claims that William II Rufus considered marrying her. She was out of the monastery by 1093, when Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to the Bishop of Salisbury ordering that the daughter of the king of Scotland be returned to the monastery that she had left.

Marriage

After the death of William II Rufus in August 1100, his brother Henry quickly seized the royal treasury and the royal crown. His next task was to marry, and Henry's choice fell on Matilda. Because Matilda had spent most of her life in a nunnery, there was some controversy over whether or not she had been veiled as a nun and would thus be ineligible for marriage. Henry sought permission for the marriage from Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, who returned to England in September 1100 after a long exile. Professing himself unwilling to decide so weighty a matter on his own, Anselm called a council of bishops in order to determine the legality of the proposed marriage. Matilda testified to the archbishop and the assembled bishops of the realm that she had never taken holy vows. She insisted that her parents had sent her and her sister to England for educational purposes, and that her aunt Cristina had veiled her only to protect her "from the lust of the Normans." Matilda claimed she had pulled the veil off and stamped on it, and her aunt beat and scolded her most horribly for this. The council concluded that Matilda had never been a nun, nor had her parents intended that she become one, and gave his permission for the marriage.

Matilda and Henry seem to have known one another for some time before their marriage — William of Malmesbury states that Henry had "long been attached" to her, and Orderic Vitalis says that Henry had "long adored" Edith's character. Through her mother she was descended from Edmund Ironside and thus Alfred the Great and the old line of the kings of Wessex; this was very important as Henry wanted to help make himself more popular with the English people and Matilda

represented the old English dynasty. In their children the Norman and Anglo-Saxon dynasties would be united. Another benefit of the marriage was that England and Scotland became politically closer; three of her brothers served as kings of Scotland and were unusually loyal to England during this period.

#### Queen

After Matilda and Henry were married on 11 November 1100 at Westminster Abbey by Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, she was crowned as "Matilda", a fashionable Norman name. She gave birth to a daughter, Matilda, in February 1102, and a son, William, in November 1103. As queen, she maintained her court primarily at Westminster, but accompanied her husband in his travels all across England, and, circa 1106–1107, probably visited Normandy with him. She also served in a vice-regal capacity when Henry was away from court. Her court was filled with musicians and poets; she commissioned a monk, probably Thurgot, to write a biography of her mother, Saint Margaret. She was an active queen, and like her mother was renowned for her devotion to religion and the poor. William of Malmesbury describes her as attending church barefoot at Lent, and washing the feet and kissing the hands of the sick. She also administered extensive dower properties and was known as a patron of the arts, especially music.

#### Later life

After Matilda died on 1 May 1118 at Westminster Palace, she was buried at Westminster Abbey. The death of her only son and Henry's failure to produce a legitimate son from his second marriage led to the succession crisis of The Anarchy.

#### Legacy

After her death, she was remembered by her subjects as "Matilda the Good Queen" and "Matilda of Blessed Memory", and for a time sainthood was sought for her, though she was never canonised.

#### Issue

Matilda and Henry had two children:

1. Empress Matilda, born February 1102, Holy Roman Empress consort, Countess consort of Anjou, called *Lady of the English*
2. William Adelin, born 1103, sometimes called Duke of Normandy

#### Notes and sources

1. ^ She is known to have been given the name "Edith" (the Anglo-Saxon *Eadgyth*, meaning "Fortune-Battle") at birth, and was baptised under that name. She is known to have been crowned under a name favoured by the Normans, "Matilda" (from the Germanic *Mahthilda*, meaning "Might-Battle"), and was referred to as such throughout her husband's reign. It is unclear, however, when her name was changed, or why. Accordingly, her later name is used in this article. Historians generally refer to her as "Matilda of Scotland"; in popular usage, she is referred to equally as "Matilda" or "Edith".

#### References

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Information from online research at: Ancestry.com