

## English Monarchs

### Elizabeth I

#### *"The Virgin Queen"*

Born in 1533

Ascended in 1558

Died in 1603, aged 70

Reigned for 44 years

Unmarried

Elizabeth brought the return of Protestantism to England. She was an uncompromising, ruthless Queen and was well aware of the danger that Mary the Queen of the Scots represented with her legitimate claim to the throne of England.

Mary herself, though, had had an unlucky time: her first husband was the Dauphin, Francois II, of France who died in 1561. This made her return to Scotland where she married her cousin the earl of Darnley. Darnley, unfortunately, was implicated in a murder (Rizzio) and then murdered himself in a conspiracy organised by the earl of Bothwell. After escaping an explosion at his lodgings in Kirk 'o' Field house he ran into his enemies at the bottom of the garden's orchard where they strangled him.

Mary soon married his killer, the earl of Bothwell, and a rebellion broke out. She was imprisoned, called a whore and an adulterer and implicated in the plot to kill her husband. Alone for six weeks on the remote island fortress in Loch Leven and ill from a miscarriage she was forced to sign abdication papers, leaving the throne of Scotland to James VI - her 13-month-old son.

In a dramatic escape from the fortress, she fled to the asylum of Queen Elizabeth who suffered her until she was involved in the Babington plot (a plan to assassinate the Queen and put Mary in her place). She wanted to have Mary executed but did not want to appear to be the cause of her death. It is not certain whether or not she had ordered her secretary of state, Sir William Davidson, to have her executed. He was blamed and executed for carrying out orders *that she had not meant to send*.

Queen Elizabeth's reign was an interesting one: she encouraged adventure, trade expansion, and innovation. Sir Francis Drake's piracy and

the voyages of Sir Walter Raleigh occurred during her reign. Famous people living at the time were Shakespeare, Marlowe, Bacon and Spencer.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was successful in preventing a very real chance of Spanish occupancy. Although Elizabeth had little compassion for the poor, England remained a great power. The arts, music, literature, painting and architecture were allowed to flourish.

Queen Elizabeth I remained unmarried and this led to her being called *The Virgin Queen*. She was also known for having black teeth although it is unlikely that these two facts have any bearing on each other.