

= William IV of the United Kingdom =

William IV (William Henry ; 21 August 1765 ? 20 June 1837) was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and King of Hanover from 26 June 1830 until his death . The third son of George III and younger brother and successor to George IV , he was the last king and penultimate monarch of Britain 's House of Hanover .

William served in the Royal Navy in his youth and was , both during his reign and afterwards , nicknamed the " Sailor King " . He served in North America and the Caribbean . In 1789 , he was created Duke of Clarence and St Andrews . Since his two older brothers died without leaving legitimate issue , he inherited the throne when he was 64 years old . His reign saw several reforms : the poor law was updated , child labour restricted , slavery abolished in nearly all the British Empire , and the British electoral system refashioned by the Reform Act 1832 . Although William did not engage in politics as much as his brother or his father , he was the last monarch to appoint a prime minister contrary to the will of Parliament . Through his brother , the Viceroy of Hanover , he granted his German kingdom a short @-@ lived liberal constitution .

At the time of his death William had no surviving legitimate children , but he was survived by eight of the ten illegitimate children he had by the actress Dorothea Jordan , with whom he cohabited for twenty years . William was succeeded in the United Kingdom by his niece , Victoria , and in Hanover by his brother , Ernest Augustus .

= = Early life = =

William was born in the early hours of the morning on 21 August 1765 at Buckingham House , the third child and son of King George III and Queen Charlotte . He had two elder brothers , George and Frederick , and was not expected to inherit the Crown . He was baptised in the Great Council Chamber of St James 's Palace on 20 September 1765 . His godparents were his paternal uncles , the Duke of Gloucester and Prince Henry (later Duke of Cumberland) , and his paternal aunt , Princess Augusta , then hereditary duchess of Brunswick @-@ Wolfenbüttel .

He spent most of his early life in Richmond and at Kew Palace , where he was educated by private tutors . At the age of thirteen , he joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman , and was present at the Battle of Cape St Vincent in 1780 . His experiences in the navy seem to have been little different from those of other midshipmen , though in contrast to other sailors he was accompanied on board ships by a tutor . He did his share of the cooking and got arrested with his shipmates after a drunken brawl in Gibraltar ; he was hastily released from custody after his identity became known .

He served in New York during the American War of Independence . While William was in America , George Washington approved a plot to kidnap him , writing : " The spirit of enterprise so conspicuous in your plan for surprising in their quarters and bringing off the Prince William Henry and Admiral Digby merits applause ; and you have my authority to make the attempt in any manner , and at such a time , as your judgment may direct . I am fully persuaded , that it is unnecessary to caution you against offering insult or indignity to the persons of the Prince or Admiral ... " The plot did not come to fruition ; the British heard of it and assigned guards to William , who had up till then walked around New York unescorted .

He became a lieutenant in 1785 and captain of HMS Pegasus the following year . In late 1786 , he was stationed in the West Indies under Horatio Nelson , who wrote of William : " In his professional line , he is superior to two @-@ thirds , I am sure , of the [Naval] list ; and in attention to orders , and respect to his superior officer , I hardly know his equal . " The two were great friends , and dined together almost nightly . At Nelson 's wedding , William insisted on giving the bride away . He was given command of the frigate HMS Andromeda in 1788 , and was promoted to rear @-@ admiral in command of HMS Valiant the following year .

William sought to be made a duke like his elder brothers , and to receive a similar parliamentary grant , but his father was reluctant . To put pressure on him , William threatened to stand for the House of Commons for the constituency of Totnes in Devon . Appalled at the prospect of his son making his case to the voters , George III created him Duke of Clarence and St Andrews and Earl of

Munster on 16 May 1789 , supposedly saying : " I well know it is another vote added to the Opposition . " William 's political record was inconsistent and , like many politicians of the time , cannot be certainly ascribed to a single party . He allied himself publicly with the Whigs as well as his elder brothers George , Prince of Wales , and Frederick , Duke of York , who were known to be in conflict with the political positions of their father .

= = Service and politics = =

The newly created duke ceased his active service in the Royal Navy in 1790 . When Britain declared war on France in 1793 , he was anxious to serve his country and expected a command , but was not given a ship , perhaps at first because he had broken his arm by falling down some stairs drunk , but later because he gave a speech in the House of Lords opposing the war . The following year he spoke in favour of the war , expecting a command after his change of heart ; none came . The Admiralty did not even reply to his request . He did not lose hope of being appointed to an active post . In 1798 he was made an admiral , but the rank was purely nominal . Despite repeated petitions , he was never given a command throughout the Napoleonic Wars . In 1811 , he was appointed to the honorary position of Admiral of the Fleet . In 1813 , he came nearest to any actual fighting , when he visited the British troops fighting in the Low Countries . Watching the bombardment of Antwerp from a church steeple , he came under fire . A bullet pierced his coat .

Instead of serving at sea , he spent time in the House of Lords , where he spoke in opposition to the abolition of slavery , which although not legal in the United Kingdom still existed in the British colonies . Freedom would do the slaves little good , he argued . He had travelled widely and , in his eyes , the living standard among freemen in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland was worse than that among slaves in the West Indies . His experience in the West Indies lent weight to his position , which was perceived as well @-@ argued and just by some of his contemporaries . Others thought it " shocking that so young a man , under no bias of interest , should be earnest in continuance of the slave trade " . In his speech to the House of Lords , the Duke insulted William Wilberforce , the leading abolitionist , saying : " the proponents of the abolition are either fanatics or hypocrites , and in one of those classes I rank Mr. Wilberforce " . On other issues he was more liberal , such as supporting moves to abolish penal laws against dissenting Christians . He also opposed efforts to bar those found guilty of adultery from remarriage .

= = Relationships and marriage = =

From 1791 William lived with an Irish actress , Dorothea Bland , better known by her stage name , Mrs. Jordan , the title " Mrs. " being assumed at the start of her stage career to explain an inconvenient pregnancy and " Jordan " because she had " crossed the water " from Ireland to Britain .

William was part of the first generation to grow to maturity under the Royal Marriages Act 1772 , which forbade descendants of George II from marrying unless they either obtained the monarch 's consent or , if over the age of 25 , gave twelve months ' notice to the Privy Council . Several of George III 's sons , including William , chose to cohabit with the women they loved , rather than seek a wife . Having legitimate issue was not a primary concern for William , as he was one of the younger sons of George III , he was not expected to figure in the succession , which was considered secure once the Prince of Wales married and had a daughter , Princess Charlotte , second @-@ in @-@ line to the throne .

William appeared to enjoy the domesticity of his life with Mrs. Jordan , remarking to a friend : " Mrs. Jordan is a very good creature , very domestic and careful of her children . To be sure she is absurd sometimes and has her humours . But there are such things more or less in all families . " The couple , while living quietly , enjoyed entertaining , with Mrs. Jordan writing in late 1809 : " We shall have a full and merry house this Christmas , ' tis what the dear Duke delights in . " George III was accepting of his son 's relationship with the actress (though recommending that he halve her allowance) ; in 1797 , he created William Ranger of Bushy Park , which included a large residence ,

Bushy House , for William 's growing family . William used Bushy as his principal residence until he became king . His London residence , Clarence House , was constructed to the designs of John Nash between 1825 and 1827 .

The couple had ten illegitimate children ? five sons and five daughters ? nine of whom were named after William 's siblings ; each was given the surname " FitzClarence " . Their affair lasted for twenty years before ending in 1811 . Mrs. Jordan had no doubt as to the reason for the break @-@ up : " Money , money , my good friend , has , I am convinced made HIM at this moment the most wretched of men , " adding , " With all his excellent qualities , his domestic virtues , his love for his lovely children , what must he not at this moment suffer ? " She was given a financial settlement of £ 4 @,@ 400 (equivalent to £ 287 @,@ 900 today) per year and custody of her daughters on condition that she did not resume the stage . When she resumed acting in an effort to repay debts incurred by the husband of one of her daughters from a previous relationship , William took custody of the daughters and stopped paying the £ 1 @,@ 500 (equivalent to £ 94 @,@ 600 today) designated for their maintenance . After Mrs. Jordan 's acting career began to fail , she fled to France to escape her creditors , and died , impoverished , near Paris in 1816 .

Before he met Mrs. Jordan , William had an illegitimate son whose mother is unknown ; the son , also called William , drowned off Madagascar in HMS Blenheim in February 1807 . Caroline von Linsingen , whose father was a general in the Hanoverian infantry , claimed to have had a son , Heinrich , by William in around 1790 but William was not in Hanover at the time that she claims and the story is considered implausible by historians .

Deeply in debt , William made multiple attempts at marrying a wealthy heiress , but his suits were unsuccessful . Following the death of William 's niece Princess Charlotte of Wales , then second @-@ in @-@ line to the British throne , in 1817 , the king was left with twelve children , but no legitimate grandchildren . The race was on among the royal dukes to marry and produce an heir . William had great advantages in this race ? his two older brothers were both childless and estranged from their wives , who were both beyond childbearing age anyway , and William was the healthiest of the three . If he lived long enough , he would almost certainly ascend the British and Hanoverian thrones , and have the opportunity to sire the next monarch . William 's initial choices of potential wives either met with the disapproval of his eldest brother , the Prince of Wales , or turned him down . William 's younger brother Adolphus , the Duke of Cambridge , was sent to Germany to scout out the available Protestant princesses ; he came up with Princess Augusta of Hesse @-@ Kassel , but her father Frederick declined the match . Two months later , the Duke of Cambridge married Augusta himself . Eventually , a princess was found who was amiable , home @-@ loving , and was willing to accept , even enthusiastically welcoming William 's nine surviving children , several of whom had not yet reached adulthood . At Kew on 11 July 1818 , William married Princess Adelaide of Saxe @-@ Meiningen , the daughter of George I , Duke of Saxe @-@ Meiningen . At 25 , Adelaide was half William 's age . Their marriage , which lasted almost twenty years until William 's death , was a happy one . Adelaide took both William and his finances in hand . For their first year of marriage , the couple lived in economical fashion in Germany , and William 's debts were soon on the way to being paid , especially since Parliament had voted him an increased allowance , which he reluctantly accepted after his requests to increase it further were refused . William is not known to have had mistresses after his marriage . The couple had two short @-@ lived daughters and Adelaide suffered three miscarriages . Despite this , false rumours that Adelaide was pregnant persisted into William 's reign ? he dismissed them as " damned stuff " .

= = Lord High Admiral = =

William 's elder brother , the Prince of Wales , had been Prince Regent since 1811 because of the mental illness of their father , George III . In 1820 , the King died , leaving the Crown to the Prince Regent , who became George IV . William , Duke of Clarence , was now second in the line of succession , preceded only by his brother , Frederick , Duke of York . Reformed since his marriage , William walked for hours , ate relatively frugally , and the only drink he imbibed in quantity was barley water flavoured with lemon . Both of his older brothers were unhealthy , and it was

considered only a matter of time before he became king . When the Duke of York died in 1827 , William , then more than 60 years old , became heir presumptive . Later that year , the incoming Prime Minister , George Canning , appointed William to the office of Lord High Admiral , which had been in commission (that is , exercised by a board rather than by a single individual) since 1709 . While in office , the Duke had repeated conflicts with his Council , which was composed of Admiralty officers . Things finally came to a head in 1828 when , as Lord High Admiral , William put to sea with a squadron of ships , leaving no word of where they were going , and remaining away for ten days . The King , through the Prime Minister , by now Arthur Wellesley , 1st Duke of Wellington , requested his resignation ; the Duke of Clarence complied .

Despite the difficulties the Duke experienced , he did considerable good as Lord High Admiral . He abolished the cat o ' nine tails for most offences other than mutiny , attempted to improve the standard of naval gunnery and required regular reports of the condition and preparedness of each ship . He commissioned the first steam warship and advocated more . Holding the office permitted William to make mistakes and learn from them ? a process that might have been far more costly had he not learnt before becoming King that he should act only with the advice of his councillors .

William spent the remaining time during his brother 's reign in the House of Lords . He supported the Catholic Emancipation Bill against the opposition of his younger brother , Ernest Augustus , Duke of Cumberland , describing the latter 's position on the Bill as " infamous " , to the Duke of Cumberland 's outrage . George IV 's health was increasingly bad ; it was obvious by early 1830 that he was near death . The King took his leave of his younger brother at the end of May , stating , " God 's will be done . I have injured no man . It will all rest on you then . " William 's genuine affection for his older brother could not mask his rising anticipation that he would soon be king .

= = Reign = =

= = = Early reign = = =

When King George IV died on 26 June 1830 without surviving legitimate issue , the Duke of Clarence succeeded him as William IV . Aged 64 , he was the oldest person yet to assume the British throne . Unlike his extravagant brother , William was unassuming , discouraging pomp and ceremony . In contrast to George IV , who tended to spend most of his time in Windsor Castle , William was known , especially early in his reign , to walk , unaccompanied , through London or Brighton . Until the Reform Crisis eroded his standing , he was very popular among the people , who saw him as more approachable and down @-@ to @-@ earth than his brother .

The King immediately proved himself a conscientious worker . His first Prime Minister Arthur Wellesley , the Duke of Wellington , stated that he had done more business with King William in ten minutes than he had with George IV in as many days . Lord Brougham described him as an excellent man of business , asking enough questions to help him understand the matter ? whereas George IV feared to ask questions lest he display his ignorance and George III would ask too many and then not wait for a response .

The King did his best to endear himself to the people . Charlotte Williams @-@ Wynn wrote shortly after his accession : " Hitherto the King has been indefatigable in his efforts to make himself popular , and do good natured and amiable things in every possible instance . " Emily Eden noted : " He is an immense improvement on the last unforgiving animal , who died growling sulkily in his den at Windsor . This man at least wishes to make everybody happy , and everything he has done has been benevolent . "

William dismissed his brother 's French chefs and German band , replacing them with English ones to public approval . He gave much of George IV 's art collection to the nation , and halved the royal stud . George IV had begun an extensive (and expensive) renovation of Buckingham Palace ; his brother refused to reside there , and twice tried to give the palace away , once to the Army as a barracks , and once to Parliament after the Houses of Parliament burned down in 1834 . His informality could be startling : When in residence at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton , King William

used to send to the hotels for a list of their guests and invite anyone whom he knew to dinner , urging guests not to " bother about clothes . The Queen does nothing but embroider flowers after dinner . "

Upon taking the throne , William did not forget his nine surviving illegitimate children , creating his eldest son Earl of Munster and granting the other children the precedence of a younger son (or daughter) of a marquess . Despite this , his children importuned for greater opportunities , disgusting elements of the press who reported that the " impudence and rapacity of the FitzJordans is unexampled " . The relationship between William and his sons " was punctuated by a series of savage and , for the King at least , painful quarrels " over money and honours . His daughters , on the other hand , proved an ornament to his court , as , " They are all , you know , pretty and lively , and make society in a way that real princesses could not . "

= = = Reform crisis = = =

At the time , the death of the monarch required fresh elections and , in the general election of 1830 , Wellington 's Tories lost ground to the Whigs under Charles Grey , 2nd Earl Grey , though the Tories still had the largest number of seats . With the Tories bitterly divided , Wellington was defeated in the House of Commons in November , and Lord Grey formed a government . Grey pledged to reform the electoral system , which had seen few changes since the fifteenth century . The inequities in the system were great ; for example , large towns such as Manchester and Birmingham elected no members (though they were part of county constituencies) , while small boroughs ? known as rotten or pocket boroughs ? such as Old Sarum with just seven voters , elected two members of Parliament each . Often , the rotten boroughs were controlled by great aristocrats , whose nominees were invariably elected by the constituents ? who were , most often , their tenants ? especially since the secret ballot was not yet used in Parliamentary elections . Landowners who controlled seats were even able to sell them to prospective candidates .

When the House of Commons defeated the First Reform Bill in 1831 , Grey 's ministry urged William to dissolve Parliament , which would lead to a new general election . At first , William hesitated to exercise his prerogative to dissolve Parliament because elections had just been held the year before and the country was in a state of high excitement which might boil over into violence . He was , however , irritated by the conduct of the Opposition , which announced its intention to move the passage of an Address , or resolution , in the House of Lords , against dissolution . Regarding the Opposition 's motion as an attack on his prerogative , and at the urgent request of Lord Grey and his ministers , William IV prepared to go in person to the House of Lords and prorogue Parliament . The monarch 's arrival would stop all debate and prevent passage of the Address . When initially told that his horses could not be ready at such short notice , William is supposed to have said , " Then I will go in a hackney cab ! " Coach and horses were assembled quickly and William immediately proceeded to Parliament . Said The Times of the scene before William 's arrival , " It is utterly impossible to describe the scene ... The violent tones and gestures of noble Lords ... astonished the spectators , and affected the ladies who were present with visible alarm . " Lord Londonderry brandished a whip , threatening to thrash the Government supporters , and was held back by four of his colleagues . William hastily put on the crown , entered the Chamber , and dissolved Parliament . This forced new elections for the House of Commons , which yielded a great victory for the reformers . But although the House of Commons was clearly in favour of parliamentary reform , the House of Lords remained implacably opposed to it .

The crisis saw a brief interlude for the celebration of the King 's Coronation on 8 September 1831 . At first , William wished to dispense with the coronation entirely , feeling that his wearing the crown while proroguing Parliament answered any need . He was persuaded otherwise by traditionalists . He refused , however , to celebrate the coronation in the expensive way his brother had ? the 1821 coronation had cost £ 240 @,@ 000 , of which £ 16 @,@ 000 was merely to hire the jewels . At William 's instructions , the Privy Council budgeted less than £ 30 @,@ 000 for the coronation . When traditionalist Tories threatened to boycott what they called the " Half Crown @-@ nation " , the King retorted that they should go ahead , and that he anticipated " greater convenience of room

and less heat " .

After the rejection of the Second Reform Bill by the Upper House in October 1831 , agitation for reform grew across the country ; demonstrations grew violent in so @-@ called " Reform Riots " . In the face of popular excitement , the Grey ministry refused to accept defeat in the House of Lords , and re @-@ introduced the Bill , which still faced difficulties in the House of Lords . Frustrated by the Lords ' recalcitrance , Grey suggested that the King create a sufficient number of new peers to ensure the passage of the Reform Bill . The King objected ? though he had the power to create an unlimited number of peers , he had already created 22 new peers in his Coronation Honours . William reluctantly agreed to the creation of the number of peers sufficient " to secure the success of the bill " . However , the King , citing the difficulties with a permanent expansion of the peerage , told Grey that the creations must be restricted as much as possible to the eldest sons and collateral heirs of existing peers , so that the created peerages would eventually be absorbed as subsidiary titles . This time , the Lords did not reject the bill outright , but began preparing to change its basic character through amendments . Grey and his fellow ministers decided to resign if the King did not agree to an immediate and large creation to force the bill through in its entirety . The King refused , and accepted their resignations . The King attempted to restore the Duke of Wellington to office , but Wellington had insufficient support to form a ministry and the King 's popularity sank to an all @-@ time low . Mud was slung at his carriage and he was publicly hissed . The King agreed to reappoint Grey 's ministry , and to create new peers if the House of Lords continued to pose difficulties . Concerned by the threat of the creations , most of the bill 's opponents abstained and the Reform Act 1832 was passed . The mob blamed William 's actions on the influence of his wife and brother , and his popularity recovered .

= = = Foreign policy = = =

William distrusted foreigners , particularly anyone French , which he acknowledged as a " prejudice " . He also felt strongly that Britain should not interfere in the internal affairs of other nations , which brought him into conflict with the interventionist Foreign Secretary , Lord Palmerston . William supported Belgian independence and , after unacceptable Dutch and French candidates were put forward , favoured Prince Leopold of Saxe @-@ Coburg and Gotha , the widower of his niece , Charlotte , as a candidate for the newly created Belgian throne .

Though he had a reputation for tactlessness and buffoonery , William could be shrewd and diplomatic . He foresaw that the potential construction of a canal at Suez would make good relations with Egypt vital to Britain . Later in his reign , he flattered the American ambassador at a dinner by announcing that he regretted not being " born a free , independent American , so much did he respect that nation , which had given birth to George Washington , the greatest man that ever lived " . By exercising his personal charm , William assisted in the repair of Anglo @-@ American relations , which had been so deeply damaged during the reign of his father .

= = = King of Hanover = = =

William never visited Hanover as its king . His brother , Prince Adolphus , Duke of Cambridge , acted as viceroy there throughout William 's reign as he had throughout George IV 's reign .

Public perception in Germany was that Britain dictated Hanoverian policy . This was not the case . In 1832 , Metternich introduced laws that curbed fledgling liberal movements in Germany . Britain 's Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston opposed this , and sought William 's influence to cause the Hanoverian government to take the same position . The Hanoverian government instead agreed with Metternich , much to Palmerston 's dismay , and William declined to intervene . The conflict between William and Palmerston over Hanover was renewed the following year when Metternich called a conference of the German states , to be held in Vienna , and Palmerston wanted Hanover to decline the invitation . Instead , the Viceroy accepted , backed fully by William .

In 1833 , William signed a new constitution for Hanover , which empowered the middle class , gave limited power to the lower classes , and expanded the role of the parliament of Hanover . The

constitution was revoked after William 's death by the new king , William 's brother , Ernest Augustus

= = = Later life = = =

For the remainder of his reign , William interfered actively in politics only once , in 1834 , when he became the last British sovereign to choose a prime minister contrary to the will of Parliament . In 1834 , the ministry was facing increasing unpopularity and Lord Grey retired ; the Home Secretary , William Lamb , 2nd Viscount Melbourne , replaced him . Lord Melbourne retained most Cabinet members , and his ministry retained an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons . Some members of the Government , however , were anathema to the King , and increasingly left @-@ wing policies concerned him . The previous year Grey had already pushed through a bill reforming the Protestant Church of Ireland . The Church collected tithes throughout Ireland , supported multiple bishoprics and was wealthy . However , barely an eighth of the Irish population belonged to the Church of Ireland . In some parishes , there were no Church of Ireland members at all , but there was still a priest paid for by tithes collected from the local Catholics and Presbyterians , leading to charges that idle priests were living in luxury at the expense of the Irish living at the level of subsistence . Grey 's bill had reduced the number of bishoprics by half , abolished some of the sinecures and overhauled the tithe system . Further measures to appropriate the surplus revenues of the Church of Ireland were mooted by the more radical members of the Government , including Lord John Russell . The King had an especial dislike for Russell , calling him " a dangerous little Radical . "

In November 1834 , the Leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer , John Charles Spencer , Viscount Althorp , inherited a peerage , thus removing him from the House of Commons to the Lords . Melbourne had to appoint a new Commons leader and a new Chancellor (who by long custom , must be drawn from the Commons) , but the only candidate whom Melbourne felt suitable to replace Althorp as Commons leader was Lord John Russell , whom William (and many others) found unacceptable due to his radical politics . William claimed that the ministry had been weakened beyond repair and used the removal of Lord Althorp ? who had previously indicated that he would retire from politics upon becoming a peer ? as the pretext for the dismissal of the entire ministry . With Lord Melbourne gone , William chose to entrust power to a Tory , Sir Robert Peel . Since Peel was then in Italy , the Duke of Wellington was provisionally appointed Prime Minister . When Peel returned and assumed leadership of the ministry for himself , he saw the impossibility of governing because of the Whig majority in the House of Commons . Consequently , Parliament was dissolved to force fresh elections . Although the Tories won more seats than in the previous election , they were still in the minority . Peel remained in office for a few months , but resigned after a series of parliamentary defeats . Lord Melbourne was restored to the Prime Minister 's office , remaining there for the rest of William 's reign , and the King was forced to accept Russell as Commons leader .

The King had a mixed relationship with Lord Melbourne . Melbourne 's government mooted more ideas to introduce greater democracy , such as the devolution of powers to the Legislative Council of Lower Canada , which greatly alarmed the King , who feared it would eventually lead to the loss of the colony . At first , the King bitterly opposed these proposals . William exclaimed to Lord Gosford , Governor General @-@ designate of Canada : " Mind what you are about in Canada ... mind me , my Lord , the Cabinet is not my Cabinet ; they had better take care or by God , I will have them impeached . " When William 's son Augustus FitzClarence enquired of his father whether the King would be entertaining during Ascot week , William gloomily replied , " I cannot give any dinners without inviting the ministers , and I would rather see the devil than any one of them in my house . " Nevertheless , William approved the Cabinet 's recommendations for reform . Despite his disagreements with Lord Melbourne , the King wrote warmly to congratulate the Prime Minister when he triumphed in the adultery case brought against him concerning Lady Caroline Norton ? he had refused to permit Melbourne to resign when the case was first brought . The King and Prime Minister eventually found a modus vivendi ; Melbourne applying tact and firmness when called for ;

while William realised that his First Minister was far less radical in his politics than the King had feared .

Both the King and Queen were fond of their niece , Princess Victoria of Kent . Their attempts to forge a close relationship with the girl were frustrated by the conflict between the King and the Duchess of Kent , the young princess 's widowed mother . The King , angered at what he took to be disrespect from the Duchess to his wife , took the opportunity at what proved to be his final birthday banquet in August 1836 to settle the score . Speaking to those assembled at the banquet , who included the Duchess and Princess Victoria , William expressed his hope that he would survive until Princess Victoria was 18 so that the Duchess of Kent would never be regent . He said , " I trust to God that my life may be spared for nine months longer ... I should then have the satisfaction of leaving the exercise of the Royal authority to the personal authority of that young lady , heiress presumptive to the Crown , and not in the hands of a person now near me , who is surrounded by evil advisers and is herself incompetent to act with propriety in the situation in which she would be placed . " The speech was so shocking that Victoria burst into tears , while her mother sat in silence and was only with difficulty persuaded not to leave immediately after dinner (the two left the next day) . William 's outburst undoubtedly contributed to Victoria 's tempered view of him as " a good old man , though eccentric and singular " . William survived , though mortally ill , to the month after Victoria 's coming of age . " Poor old man ! " , Victoria wrote as he was dying , " I feel sorry for him ; he was always personally kind to me . "

William was " very much shaken and affected " by the death of his eldest daughter , Sophia , Lady de L 'Isle and Dudley , in childbirth in April 1837 . A watercolour sketch made by her during her pregnancy in early 1837 shows how frail he had become .

William and his eldest son , George , Earl of Munster , were estranged at the time , but William hoped that a letter of condolence from Munster signalled a reconciliation . His hopes were not fulfilled and Munster , still thinking he had not been given sufficient money or patronage , remained bitter to the end .

Queen Adelaide attended the dying William devotedly , not going to bed herself for more than ten days . William IV died in the early hours of the morning of 20 June 1837 at Windsor Castle , where he was buried . As he had no living legitimate issue , the Crown of the United Kingdom passed to Princess Victoria of Kent , the only child of Edward Augustus , Duke of Kent , George III 's fourth son . Under Salic Law , a woman could not rule Hanover , and so the Hanoverian Crown went to George III 's fifth son , Ernest Augustus , Duke of Cumberland . William 's death thus ended the personal union of Britain and Hanover , which had persisted since 1714 . The main beneficiaries of his will were his eight surviving children by Mrs. Jordan . Although William IV is not the direct ancestor of the later monarchs of the United Kingdom , he has many notable descendants through his illegitimate family with Mrs. Jordan , including Prime Minister David Cameron , TV presenter Adam Hart @-@ Davis , author and statesman Duff Cooper , and the first Duke of Fife , who married Queen Victoria 's granddaughter Louise .

= = Legacy = =

William 's reign was short , but eventful . The ascendancy of the House of Commons and the corresponding decline of the House of Lords were marked by the Reform Crisis , and the King 's unsuccessful attempt to remove the Melbourne ministry indicated a reduction in the political influence of the Crown and the King 's influence with the people . During the reign of George III , the King could have dismissed one ministry , appointed another , dissolved Parliament , and expected the people to vote in favour of the new administration . Such was the result of a dissolution in 1784 , after the dismissal of the Fox @-@ North Coalition , and 1807 , after the dismissal of Lord Grenville . But when William IV dismissed the Melbourne ministry , the Tories under Sir Robert Peel were not able to win the ensuing elections . The King 's ability to influence the opinion of the people , and therefore national policy , had been reduced . None of William 's successors has attempted to remove a government or appoint another against the wishes of Parliament . William understood that as a constitutional monarch he was powerless to act against the opinion of Parliament . He said , " I

have my view of things , and I tell them to my ministers . If they do not adopt them , I cannot help it . I have done my duty . "

During his reign great reforms were enacted by Parliament including the Factory Act , preventing child labour , the Abolition Act , emancipating slaves in the colonies , and the Poor Law , standardising provision for the destitute . He attracted criticism from reformers , who felt that reform did not go far enough , and from reactionaries , who felt that reform went too far . The modern interpretation is that he failed to satisfy either political extreme by trying to find compromise between two bitterly opposed factions , but in the process proved himself more capable as a constitutional monarch than many had supposed .

= = Titles , styles , honours , and arms = =

= = = Titles and styles = = =

21 August 1765 ? 16 May 1789 : His Royal Highness The Prince William Henry

16 May 1789 ? 26 June 1830 : His Royal Highness The Duke of Clarence and St Andrews

26 June 1830 ? 20 June 1837 : His Majesty The King

William 's official style as King of the United Kingdom was " William the Fourth , by the Grace of God , of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland , King , Defender of the Faith " . He was the first king of the United Kingdom named William , though there were three previous kings of England called William and two of Scotland .

His style in Hanover was " William the Fourth , by the Grace of God , King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland , etc . , and also King of Hanover , Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg , etc . "

= = = Honours = = =

British honours

5 April 1770 : Knight of the Thistle

19 April 1782 : Knight of the Garter

23 June 1789 : Member of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom

2 January 1815 : Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath

12 August 1815 : Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Guelphic Order

26 April 1827 : Royal Fellow of the Royal Society

Foreign honours

24 April 1814 : Knight of the Holy Spirit of France

Knight of Saint Andrew of Russia

Knight of the Black Eagle of Prussia

15 July 1830 : Knight of the Elephant of Denmark

= = = Arms = = =

As a son of the sovereign , William was granted the use of the royal arms (without the electoral inescutcheon in the Hanoverian quarter) in 1781 , differenced by a label of three points argent , the centre point bearing a cross gules , the outer points each bearing an anchor azure . In 1801 his arms altered with the royal arms , however the marks of difference remained the same .

As king his arms were those of his two kingdoms , the United Kingdom and Hanover , superimposed : Quarterly , I and IV Gules three lions passant guardant in pale Or (for England) ; II Or a lion rampant within a tressure flory @-@ counter @-@ flory Gules (for Scotland) ; III Azure a harp Or stringed Argent (for Ireland) ; overall an escutcheon tierced per pale and per chevron (for Hanover) , I Gules two lions passant guardant Or (for Brunswick) , II Or a semy of hearts Gules a lion rampant Azure (for Lüneburg) , III Gules a horse courant Argent (for Westphalia) , overall an

in escutcheon Gules charged with the crown of Charlemagne Or , the whole escutcheon surmounted by a crown .

== Issue ==

== Ancestry ==