

= Mary , Queen of Scots =

Mary , Queen of Scots ( 8 December 1542 ? 8 February 1587 ) , also known as Mary Stuart or Mary I of Scotland , was Queen of Scotland from 14 December 1542 to 24 July 1567 and Queen consort of France from 10 July 1559 to 5 December 1560 .

Mary , the only surviving legitimate child of King James V of Scotland , was six days old when her father died and she acceded to the throne . She spent most of her childhood in France while Scotland was ruled by regents , and in 1558 , she married the Dauphin of France , Francis . He ascended the French throne as King Francis II in 1559 , and Mary briefly became queen consort of France , until his death in December 1560 . Widowed , Mary returned to Scotland , arriving in Leith on 19 August 1561 . Four years later , she married her first cousin , Henry Stuart , Lord Darnley , but their union was unhappy . In February 1567 , his residence was destroyed by an explosion , and Darnley was found murdered in the garden .

James Hepburn , 4th Earl of Bothwell , was generally believed to have orchestrated Darnley 's death , but he was acquitted of the charge in April 1567 , and the following month he married Mary . Following an uprising against the couple , Mary was imprisoned in Loch Leven Castle . On 24 July 1567 , she was forced to abdicate in favour of James , her one @-@ year @-@ old son by Darnley . After an unsuccessful attempt to regain the throne , she fled southwards seeking the protection of her first cousin once removed , Queen Elizabeth I of England . Mary had previously claimed Elizabeth 's throne as her own and was considered the legitimate sovereign of England by many English Catholics , including participants in a rebellion known as the Rising of the North . Perceiving her as a threat , Elizabeth had her confined in various castles and manor houses in the interior of England . After eighteen and a half years in custody , Mary was found guilty of plotting to assassinate Elizabeth , and was subsequently beheaded .

= = Childhood and early reign = =

Mary was born on 7 or 8 December 1542 at Linlithgow , Scotland , to James V , King of Scots , and his French second wife , Mary of Guise . She was said to have been born prematurely and was the only legitimate child of James to survive him . She was the great @-@ niece of King Henry VIII of England , as her paternal grandmother , Margaret Tudor , was Henry VIII 's sister . On 14 December , six days after her birth , she became Queen of Scots when her father died , perhaps from the effects of a nervous collapse following the Battle of Solway Moss , or from drinking contaminated water while on campaign .

A popular legend , first recorded by John Knox , states that James , hearing on his deathbed that his wife had given birth to a daughter , ruefully exclaimed , " It cam wi ' a lass and it will gang wi ' a lass ! " His House of Stewart had gained the throne of Scotland by the marriage of Marjorie Bruce , daughter of Robert the Bruce , to Walter Stewart , 6th High Steward of Scotland . The crown had come to his family through a woman , and would be lost from his family through a woman . This legendary statement came true much later ? not through Mary , but through her descendant Queen Anne .

Mary was baptised at the nearby Church of St Michael shortly after she was born . Rumours spread that she was weak and frail , but an English diplomat , Ralph Sadler , saw the infant at Linlithgow Palace in March 1543 , unwrapped by her nurse , and wrote , " it is as goodly a child as I have seen of her age , and as like to live . "

As Mary was an infant when she inherited the throne , Scotland was ruled by regents until she became an adult . From the outset , there were two claims to the Regency : one from Catholic Cardinal Beaton , and the other from the Protestant Earl of Arran , who was next in line to the throne . Beaton 's claim was based on a version of the late king 's will that his opponents dismissed as a forgery . Arran , with the support of his friends and relations , became the regent until 1554 when Mary 's mother managed to remove and succeed him .

= = = Treaty of Greenwich = = =

King Henry VIII of England took the opportunity of the regency to propose marriage between Mary and his own son , Prince Edward , hoping for a union of Scotland and England . On 1 July 1543 , when Mary was six months old , the Treaty of Greenwich was signed , which promised that at the age of ten Mary would marry Edward and move to England , where Henry could oversee her upbringing . The treaty provided that the two countries would remain legally separate and that if the couple should fail to have children the temporary union would dissolve . However , Cardinal Beaton rose to power again and began to push a pro @-@ Catholic pro @-@ French agenda , which angered Henry , who wanted to break the Scottish alliance with France . Beaton wanted to move Mary away from the coast to the safety of Stirling Castle . Regent Arran resisted the move , but backed down when Beaton 's armed supporters gathered at Linlithgow . The Earl of Lennox escorted Mary and her mother to Stirling on 27 July 1543 with 3 @,@ 500 armed men . Mary was crowned in the castle chapel on 9 September 1543 , with " such solemnity as they do use in this country , which is not very costly " according to the report of Ralph Sadler and Henry Ray .

Shortly before Mary 's coronation , Scottish merchants headed for France were arrested by Henry , and their goods impounded . The arrests caused anger in Scotland , and Arran joined Beaton and became a Catholic . The Treaty of Greenwich was rejected by the Parliament of Scotland in December . The rejection of the marriage treaty and the renewal of the Auld Alliance between France and Scotland prompted Henry 's " Rough Wooing " , a military campaign designed to impose the marriage of Mary to his son . English forces mounted a series of raids on Scottish and French territory . In May 1544 , the English Earl of Hertford ( later Duke of Somerset ) raided Edinburgh , and the Scots took Mary to Dunkeld for safety .

In May 1546 , Beaton was murdered by Protestant lairds , and on 10 September 1547 , nine months after the death of Henry VIII , the Scots suffered a heavy defeat at the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh . Mary 's guardians , fearful for her safety , sent her to Inchmahome Priory for no more than three weeks , and turned to the French for help .

The French king , Henry II , proposed to unite France and Scotland by marrying the young queen to his three @-@ year @-@ old son , the Dauphin Francis . On the promise of French military help , and a French dukedom for himself , Arran agreed to the marriage . In February 1548 , Mary was moved , again for her safety , to Dumbarton Castle . The English left a trail of devastation behind once more and seized the strategic town of Haddington . In June , the much awaited French help arrived at Leith to besiege and ultimately take Haddington . On 7 July 1548 , a Scottish Parliament held at a nunnery near the town agreed to a French marriage treaty .

= = = Life in France = = =

With her marriage agreement in place , five @-@ year @-@ old Mary was sent to France to spend the next thirteen years at the French court . The French fleet sent by Henry II , commanded by Nicolas de Villegagnon , sailed with Mary from Dumbarton on 7 August 1548 and arrived a week or more later at Roscoff or Saint @-@ Pol @-@ de @-@ Léon in Brittany .

Mary was accompanied by her own court including two illegitimate half @-@ brothers , and the " four Marys " , four girls her own age , all named Mary , who were the daughters of some of the noblest families in Scotland : Beaton , Seton , Fleming , and Livingston . Janet , Lady Fleming , who was Mary Fleming 's mother and James V 's half @-@ sister , was appointed governess .

Vivacious , beautiful , and clever ( according to contemporary accounts ) , Mary had a promising childhood . At the French court , she was a favourite with everyone , except Henry II 's wife Catherine de ' Medici . Mary learned to play lute and virginals , was competent in prose , poetry , horsemanship , falconry and needlework , and was taught French , Italian , Latin , Spanish , and Greek , in addition to speaking her native Scots . Her future sister @-@ in @-@ law , Elisabeth of Valois , became a close friend of whom Mary " retained nostalgic memories in later life " . Her maternal grandmother , Antoinette de Bourbon , was another strong influence on her childhood , and acted as one of her principal advisors .

Portraits of Mary show that she had a small , oval @-@ shaped head , a long , graceful neck ,

bright auburn hair , hazel @-@ brown eyes , under heavy lowered eyelids and finely arched brows , smooth pale skin , a high forehead , and regular , firm features . She was considered a pretty child and later , as a woman , strikingly attractive . At some point in her infancy or childhood , she caught smallpox , but it did not mark her features .

Mary was eloquent and especially tall by sixteenth @-@ century standards ( she attained an adult height of 5 feet 11 inches or 1 @.@ 80 m ) , while Henry II 's son and heir , Francis , stuttered and was abnormally short . Henry commented that " from the very first day they met , my son and she got on as well together as if they had known each other for a long time " . On 4 April 1558 , Mary signed a secret agreement bequeathing Scotland and her claim to England to the French crown if she died without issue . Twenty days later , she married the Dauphin at Notre Dame de Paris , and Francis became king consort of Scotland .

= = = Claim to the English throne = = =

In November 1558 , Henry VIII 's elder daughter , Queen Mary I of England , was succeeded by her only surviving sibling , Elizabeth I. Under the Third Succession Act , passed in 1543 by the Parliament of England , Elizabeth was recognised as her sister 's heir , and Henry VIII 's last will and testament had excluded the Stuarts from succeeding to the English throne . Yet , in the eyes of many Catholics , Elizabeth was illegitimate , and Mary Stuart , as the senior descendant of Henry VIII 's elder sister , was the rightful queen of England . Henry II of France proclaimed his eldest son and daughter @-@ in @-@ law king and queen of England , and in France the royal arms of England were quartered with those of Francis and Mary . Mary 's claim to the English throne was a perennial sticking point between her and Elizabeth I.

When Henry II died on 10 July 1559 from injuries sustained in a joust , fifteen @-@ year @-@ old Francis became King of France , with Mary , aged sixteen , as his queen consort . Two of Mary 's uncles , the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine , were now dominant in French politics , enjoying an ascendancy called by some historians la tyrannie Guisienne .

In Scotland , the power of the Protestant Lords of the Congregation was rising at the expense of Mary 's mother , Mary of Guise , who maintained effective control only through the use of French troops . The Protestant Lords invited English troops into Scotland in an attempt to secure Protestantism , and a Huguenot rising in France , called the Tumult of Amboise , in March 1560 made it impossible for the French to send further support . Instead , the Guise brothers sent ambassadors to negotiate a settlement . On 11 June 1560 , their sister Mary of Guise died , and so the question of future Franco @-@ Scots relations was a pressing one . Under the terms of the Treaty of Edinburgh , signed by Mary 's representatives on 6 July 1560 , France and England undertook to withdraw troops from Scotland and France recognised Elizabeth 's right to rule England . However , the seventeen @-@ year @-@ old Mary , still in France and grieving for her mother , refused to ratify the treaty .

= = Return to Scotland = =

King Francis II died on 5 December 1560 , of a middle ear infection which led to an abscess in his brain . Mary was grief @-@ stricken . Her mother @-@ in @-@ law , Catherine de ' Medici , became regent for the late king 's ten @-@ year @-@ old brother Charles IX , who inherited the French throne .

Mary returned to Scotland nine months after her husband 's death , arriving in Leith on 19 August 1561 . Having lived in France since the age of five , Mary had little direct experience of the dangerous and complex political situation in Scotland . As a devout Catholic , she was regarded with suspicion by many of her subjects , as well as by Elizabeth , her father 's cousin . Scotland was torn between Catholic and Protestant factions , and Mary 's illegitimate half @-@ brother , the Earl of Moray , was a leader of the Protestants . The Protestant reformer John Knox preached against Mary , condemning her for hearing Mass , dancing , and dressing too elaborately . She summoned him to her presence to remonstrate with him unsuccessfully , and later charged him with treason , but he

was acquitted and released .

To the disappointment of the Catholic party , however , Mary tolerated the newly established Protestant ascendancy , and kept her half @-@ brother Lord Moray as her chief advisor . Her privy council of 16 men , appointed on 6 September 1561 , retained those who already held the offices of state and was dominated by the Protestant leaders from the reformation crisis of 1559 ? 1560 : the Earls of Argyll , Glencairn , and Moray . Only four of the councillors were Catholic : the Earls of Atholl , Erroll , Montrose , and Huntly , who was Lord Chancellor . Modern historian Jenny Wormald found this remarkable , suggesting that Mary 's failure to appoint a council sympathetic to Catholic and French interests was an indication of her focus on the goal of the English throne over the internal problems of Scotland . Even the one significant later addition to the council , in December 1563 , Lord Ruthven , was another Protestant whom Mary personally disliked . In this , she was acknowledging her lack of effective military power in the face of the Protestant lords , while also following a policy which strengthened her links with England . She joined with Lord Moray in the destruction of Scotland 's leading Catholic magnate , Lord Huntly , in 1562 after he led a rebellion in the Highlands against her .

Mary sent William Maitland of Lethington as an ambassador to the English court to put the case for Mary as the heir presumptive to the English throne . Elizabeth refused to name a potential heir , fearing that to do so would invite conspiracy to displace her with the nominated successor . However , Elizabeth assured Maitland that she knew no one with a better claim than Mary . In late 1561 and early 1562 , arrangements were made for the two queens to meet in England at York or Nottingham in August or September 1562 , but Elizabeth sent Sir Henry Sidney to cancel in July because of the civil war in France .

Mary turned her attention to finding a new husband from the royalty of Europe . However , when her uncle , the Cardinal of Lorraine , began negotiations with Archduke Charles of Austria without her consent , she angrily objected and the negotiations foundered . Her own attempt to negotiate a marriage to Don Carlos , the mentally unstable heir apparent of King Philip II of Spain , was rebuffed by Philip . Elizabeth attempted to neutralise Mary by suggesting that she marry English Protestant Robert Dudley , 1st Earl of Leicester ( Sir Henry Sidney 's brother @-@ in @-@ law and the English queen 's own favourite ) , whom Elizabeth trusted and thought she could control . She sent an ambassador , Thomas Randolph , to tell Mary that if she would marry an English nobleman , Elizabeth would " proceed to the inquisition of her right and title to be our next cousin and heir " . The proposal came to nothing , not least because the intended bridegroom was unwilling .

In contrast , a French poet at Mary 's court , Pierre de Boscotel de Chastelard , was apparently besotted by Mary . In early 1563 , he was discovered during a security search hidden underneath her bed , apparently planning to surprise her when she was alone and declare his love for her . Mary was horrified and banished him from Scotland . He ignored the edict , and two days later he forced his way into her chamber as she was about to disrobe . She reacted with fury and fear , and when Moray rushed into the room , in reaction to her cries for help , she shouted , " Thrust your dagger into the villain ! " , which Moray refused to do , as Chastelard was already under restraint . Chastelard was tried for treason , and beheaded . Maitland claimed that Chastelard 's ardour was feigned , and that he was part of a Huguenot plot to discredit Mary by tarnishing her reputation .

= = Marriage to Lord Darnley = =

Mary had briefly met her English @-@ born first cousin Henry Stuart , Lord Darnley , in February 1561 when she was in mourning for Francis . Darnley 's parents , the Earl and Countess of Lennox , who were Scottish aristocrats as well as English landowners , had sent him to France ostensibly to extend their condolences while hoping for a potential match between their son and Mary . Both Mary and Darnley were grandchildren of Margaret Tudor , sister of Henry VIII of England , and patrilineal descendants of the High Stewards of Scotland . Darnley shared a more recent Stewart lineage with the Hamilton family as a descendant of Mary Stewart , Countess of Arran , a daughter of James II of Scotland . They next met on Saturday 17 February 1565 at Wemyss Castle in Scotland , after which Mary fell in love with the " long lad " ( as Queen Elizabeth called him ? he was over six feet tall ) .

They married at Holyrood Palace on 29 July 1565 , even though both were Catholic and a papal dispensation for the marriage of first cousins had not been obtained .

English statesmen William Cecil and the Earl of Leicester had worked to obtain Darnley 's licence to travel to Scotland from his home in England . Although her advisors had thus brought the couple together , Elizabeth felt threatened by the marriage , because as descendants of her aunt , both Mary and Darnley were claimants to the English throne and their children , if any , would inherit an even stronger , combined claim . However , Mary 's insistence on the marriage seems to have stemmed from passion rather than calculation . The English ambassador Nicholas Throckmorton stated " the saying is that surely she [ Queen Mary ] is bewitched " , adding that the marriage could only be averted " by violence " . The union infuriated Elizabeth , who felt the marriage should not have gone ahead without her permission , as Darnley was both her cousin and an English subject .

Mary 's marriage to a leading Catholic precipitated Mary 's half @-@ brother , the Earl of Moray , to join with other Protestant lords , including Lords Argyll and Glencairn , in open rebellion . Mary set out from Edinburgh on 26 August 1565 to confront them , and on the 30th Moray entered Edinburgh , but left soon afterward having failed to take the castle . Mary returned to Edinburgh the following month to raise more troops . In what became known as the Chaseabout Raid , Mary and her forces and Moray and the rebellious lords roamed around Scotland without ever engaging in direct combat . Mary 's numbers were boosted by the release and restoration to favour of Lord Huntly 's son , and the return of James Hepburn , 4th Earl of Bothwell , from exile in France . Unable to muster sufficient support , in October Moray left Scotland for asylum in England . Mary broadened her privy council , bringing in both Catholics ( Bishop of Ross John Lesley and provost of Edinburgh Simon Preston of Craigmillar ) and Protestants ( the new Lord Huntly , Bishop of Galloway Alexander Gordon , John Maxwell of Terregles and Sir James Balfour ) .

Before long , Darnley grew arrogant . Not content with his position as king consort , he demanded the Crown Matrimonial , which would have made him a co @-@ sovereign of Scotland with the right to keep the Scottish throne for himself if he outlived his wife . Mary refused his request , and their marriage grew strained even though they conceived by October 1565 . He was jealous of her friendship with her Catholic private secretary , David Rizzio , who was rumoured to be the father of her child . By March 1566 , Darnley had entered into a secret conspiracy with Protestant lords , including the nobles who had rebelled against Mary in the Chaseabout Raid . On 9 March , a group of the conspirators , accompanied by Darnley , murdered Rizzio in front of the pregnant Mary at a dinner party in Holyrood Palace . Over the next two days , a disillusioned Darnley switched sides , and Mary received Moray at Holyrood . On the night of 11 ? 12 March , Darnley and Mary escaped from the palace , and took temporary refuge in Dunbar Castle before returning to Edinburgh on 18 March . The former rebels Lords Moray , Argyll and Glencairn were restored to the council .

= = = Murder of Darnley = = =

Mary 's son by Darnley , James , was born on 19 June 1566 in Edinburgh Castle , but the murder of Rizzio led inevitably to the breakdown of her marriage . In October 1566 , while staying at Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders , Mary made a journey on horseback of at least four hours each way to visit the Earl of Bothwell at Hermitage Castle , where he lay ill from wounds sustained in a skirmish with border reivers . The ride was later used as evidence by Mary 's enemies that the two were lovers , though no suspicions were voiced at the time and Mary had been accompanied by her councillors and guards . Immediately after her return to Jedburgh , she suffered a serious illness that included frequent vomiting , loss of sight , loss of speech , convulsions and periods of unconsciousness . She was thought to be near death or dying . Her recovery from 25 October onwards was credited to the skill of her French physicians . The cause of her illness is unknown ; diagnoses include physical exhaustion and mental stress , haemorrhage of a gastric ulcer , and porphyria .

At Craigmillar Castle , near Edinburgh , at the end of November 1566 , Mary and leading nobles held a meeting to discuss the " problem of Darnley " . Divorce was discussed , but then a bond was probably sworn between the lords present to remove Darnley by other means : " It was thought expedient and most profitable for the common wealth ... that such a young fool and proud tyrant

should not reign or bear rule over them ; ... that he should be put off by one way or another ; and whosoever should take the deed in hand or do it , they should defend . " Darnley feared for his safety and after the baptism of his son at Stirling shortly before Christmas , he went to Glasgow to stay on his father 's estates . At the start of the journey , he was afflicted by a fever , possibly smallpox , syphilis , or the result of poison , and he remained ill for some weeks .

In late January 1567 , Mary prompted her husband to return to Edinburgh . He recuperated from his illness in a house belonging to the brother of Sir James Balfour at the former abbey of Kirk o ' Field , just within the city wall . Mary visited him daily , so that it appeared a reconciliation was in progress . On the night of 9 ? 10 February 1567 , Mary visited her husband in the early evening and then attended the wedding celebrations of a member of her household , Bastian Pagez . In the early hours of the morning , an explosion devastated Kirk o ' Field , and Darnley was found dead in the garden , apparently smothered . There were no visible marks of strangulation or violence on the body . Bothwell , Moray , Secretary Maitland , the Earl of Morton and Mary herself were among those who came under suspicion . Elizabeth wrote to Mary of the rumours , " I should ill fulfil the office of a faithful cousin or an affectionate friend if I did not ... tell you what all the world is thinking . Men say that , instead of seizing the murderers , you are looking through your fingers while they escape ; that you will not seek revenge on those who have done you so much pleasure , as though the deed would never have taken place had not the doers of it been assured of impunity . For myself , I beg you to believe that I would not harbour such a thought . "

By the end of February , Bothwell was generally believed to be guilty of Darnley 's assassination . Lennox , Darnley 's father , demanded that Bothwell be tried before the Estates of Parliament , to which Mary agreed , but Lennox 's request for a delay to gather evidence was denied . In the absence of Lennox , and with no evidence presented , Bothwell was acquitted after a seven @-@ hour trial on 12 April . A week later , Bothwell managed to convince more than two dozen lords and bishops to sign the Ainslie Tavern Bond , in which they agreed to support his aim to marry the queen .

= = Imprisonment in Scotland and abdication = =

Between 21 and 23 April 1567 , Mary visited her son at Stirling for the last time . On her way back to Edinburgh on 24 April , Mary was abducted , willingly or not , by Lord Bothwell and his men and taken to Dunbar Castle , where he may have raped her . On 6 May , Mary and Bothwell returned to Edinburgh and on 15 May , at either Holyrood Palace or Holyrood Abbey , they were married according to Protestant rites . Bothwell and his first wife , Jean Gordon , who was the sister of Lord Huntly , had divorced twelve days previously .

Originally Mary believed that many nobles supported her marriage , but things soon turned sour between the newly elevated Bothwell ( created Duke of Orkney and consort of the Queen ) and his former peers , and the marriage proved to be deeply unpopular . Catholics considered the marriage unlawful , since they did not recognise Bothwell 's divorce or the validity of the Protestant service . Both Protestants and Catholics were shocked that Mary should marry the man accused of murdering her husband . The marriage was tempestuous , and Mary became despondent . Twenty @-@ six Scottish peers , known as the confederate lords , turned against Mary and Bothwell , raising an army against them . Mary and Bothwell confronted the lords at Carberry Hill on 15 June , but there was no battle as Mary 's forces dwindled away through desertion during negotiations . Bothwell was given safe passage from the field , and the lords took Mary to Edinburgh , where crowds of spectators denounced her as an adulteress and murderer . The following night , she was imprisoned in Loch Leven Castle , on an island in the middle of Loch Leven . Between 20 and 23 July , Mary miscarried twins . On 24 July , she was forced to abdicate in favour of her one @-@ year @-@ old son James . Moray was made regent , while Bothwell was driven into exile . He was imprisoned in Denmark , became insane and died in 1578 .

= = Escape and imprisonment in England = =

On 2 May 1568 , Mary escaped from Loch Leven Castle with the aid of George Douglas , brother of Sir William Douglas , the castle 's owner . Managing to raise an army of 6 @, @ 000 men , she met Moray 's smaller forces at the Battle of Langside on 13 May . Defeated , she fled south ; after spending the night at Dundrennan Abbey , she crossed the Solway Firth into England by fishing boat on 16 May . She landed at Workington in Cumberland in the north of England and stayed overnight at Workington Hall . On 18 May , local officials took her into protective custody at Carlisle Castle .

Mary apparently expected Elizabeth to help her regain her throne . Elizabeth was cautious , ordering an inquiry into the conduct of the confederate lords and the question of whether Mary was guilty of Darnley 's murder . In mid @-@ July 1568 , English authorities moved Mary to Bolton Castle , because it was further from the Scottish border but not too close to London . A commission of inquiry , or conference as it was known , was held in York and later Westminster between October 1568 and January 1569 . In Scotland , her supporters fought a civil war against Regent Moray and his successors .

= = = Casket letters = = =

As an anointed queen , Mary refused to acknowledge the power of any court to try her and refused to attend the inquiry at York personally ( she sent representatives ) , but Elizabeth forbade her attendance anyway . As evidence against Mary , Moray presented the so @-@ called casket letters ? eight unsigned letters purportedly from Mary to Bothwell , two marriage contracts , and a love sonnet or sonnets said to have been found in a silver @-@ gilt casket just less than one foot ( 30 cm ) long , decorated with the monogram of King Francis II . Mary denied writing them , arguing that her handwriting was not difficult to imitate , and insisted they were forgeries . They are widely believed to be crucial as to whether Mary shares the guilt for Darnley 's murder . The chair of the commission of inquiry , the Duke of Norfolk , described them as horrible letters and diverse fond ballads , and sent copies to Elizabeth , saying that if they were genuine they might prove Mary 's guilt .

The authenticity of the casket letters has been the source of much controversy among historians . It is impossible now to prove either way . The originals , written in French , were probably destroyed in 1584 by Mary 's son . The surviving copies , in French or translated into English , do not form a complete set . There are incomplete printed transcriptions in English , Scots , French , and Latin from the 1570s . Other documents scrutinised included Bothwell 's divorce from Jean Gordon . Moray had sent a messenger in September to Dunbar to get a copy of the proceedings from the town 's registers .

Mary 's biographers , such as Antonia Fraser , Alison Weir , and John Guy , have come to the conclusion that either the documents were complete forgeries , or incriminating passages were inserted into genuine letters , or that the letters were written to Bothwell by some other person or by Mary to some other person . Guy points out that the letters are disjointed , and that the French language and grammar employed in the sonnets are too poor for a writer with Mary 's education . However , certain phrases of the letters ( including verses in the style of Ronsard ) and certain characteristics of style would be compatible with known writings of Mary .

The casket letters did not appear publicly until the Conference of 1568 , although the Scottish privy council had seen them by December 1567 . Mary had been forced to abdicate and held captive for the best part of a year in Scotland . The letters were never made public to support her imprisonment and forced abdication . Historian Jenny Wormald believes this reluctance on the part of the Scots to produce the letters , and their destruction in 1584 , whatever their content , constitute proof that they contained real evidence against Mary , whereas Weir thinks it demonstrates the lords required time to fabricate them . At least some of Mary 's contemporaries who saw the letters had no doubt that they were genuine . Among them was the Duke of Norfolk , who secretly conspired to marry Mary in the course of the commission , although he denied it when Elizabeth alluded to his marriage plans , saying " he meant never to marry with a person , where he could not be sure of his pillow " .

The majority of the commissioners accepted the casket letters as genuine after a study of their contents and comparison of the penmanship with examples of Mary 's handwriting . Elizabeth , as

she had wished , concluded the inquiry with a verdict that nothing was proven , either against the confederate lords or Mary . For overriding political reasons , Elizabeth wished neither to convict nor acquit Mary of murder , and there was never any intention to proceed judicially ; the conference was intended as a political exercise . In the end , Moray returned to Scotland as its regent , and Mary remained in custody in England . Elizabeth had succeeded in maintaining a Protestant government in Scotland , without either condemning or releasing her fellow sovereign . In Fraser 's opinion , it was one of the strangest " trials " in legal history , ending with no finding of guilt against either party with one let home to Scotland while the other remained in custody .

= = = Plots = = =

On 26 January 1569 , Mary was moved to Tutbury Castle and placed in the custody of the Earl of Shrewsbury and his formidable wife Bess of Hardwick . Elizabeth considered Mary 's designs on the English throne to be a serious threat and so confined her to Shrewsbury 's properties , including Tutbury , Sheffield Castle , Wingfield Manor and Chatsworth House , all located in the interior of England halfway between Scotland and London , and distant from the sea . Mary was permitted her own domestic staff , which never numbered less than 16 , and needed 30 carts to transport her belongings from house to house . Her chambers were decorated with fine tapestries and carpets , as well as her cloth of state on which she had the French phrase *En ma fin est mon commencement* ( " In my end lies my beginning " ) embroidered . Her bedlinen was changed daily , and her own chefs prepared meals with a choice of 32 dishes served on silver plates . She was occasionally allowed outside under strict supervision , spent seven summers at the spa town of Buxton , and spent much of her time doing embroidery . Her health declined , perhaps through porphyria or lack of exercise , and by the 1580s , she had severe rheumatism in her limbs , rendering her lame .

In May 1569 , Elizabeth attempted to mediate the restoration of Mary in return for guarantees of the Protestant religion , but a convention held at Perth rejected the deal overwhelmingly . Norfolk continued to scheme for a marriage with Mary , and Elizabeth imprisoned him in the Tower of London between October 1569 and August 1570 . Early in the following year , Moray was assassinated . Moray 's death coincided with a rebellion in the North of England , led by Catholic earls , which persuaded Elizabeth that Mary was a threat . English troops intervened in the Scottish civil war , consolidating the power of the anti @-@ Marian forces . Elizabeth 's principal secretaries Sir Francis Walsingham and William Cecil , Lord Burghley , watched Mary carefully with the aid of spies placed in Mary 's household .

In 1571 , Cecil and Walsingham uncovered the Ridolfi Plot , which was a plan to replace Elizabeth with Mary with the help of Spanish troops and the Duke of Norfolk . Norfolk was executed , and the English Parliament introduced a bill barring Mary from the throne , to which Elizabeth refused to give royal assent . To discredit Mary , the casket letters were published in London . Plots centred on Mary continued . Pope Gregory XIII endorsed one plan in the latter half of the 1570s to marry her to the governor of the Low Countries and half @-@ brother of Philip II of Spain , Don John of Austria , who was supposed to organise the invasion of England from the Spanish Netherlands . After the Throckmorton Plot of 1583 , Walsingham introduced the Bond of Association and the Act for the Queen 's Safety , which sanctioned the killing of anyone who plotted against Elizabeth and aimed to prevent a putative successor from profiting from her murder . In February 1585 , William Parry was convicted of plotting to assassinate Elizabeth , without Mary 's knowledge , though her agent Thomas Morgan was implicated . In April , Mary was placed in the stricter custody of Sir Amias Paulet , and at Christmas she was moved to a moated manor house at Chartley .

= = Death = =

= = = Trial = = =

On 11 August 1586 , after being implicated in the Babington Plot , Mary was arrested while out



riding and taken to Tixall . In a successful attempt to entrap her , Walsingham had deliberately arranged for Mary 's letters to be smuggled out of Chartley . Mary was misled into thinking her letters were secure , while in reality they were deciphered and read by Walsingham . From these letters it was clear that Mary had sanctioned the attempted assassination of Elizabeth . She was moved to Fotheringhay Castle in a four @-@ day journey ending on 25 September , and in October was put on trial for treason under the Act for the Queen 's Safety before a court of 36 noblemen , including Cecil , Shrewsbury , and Walsingham . Spirited in her defence , Mary denied the charges . She told her triers , " Look to your consciences and remember that the theatre of the whole world is wider than the kingdom of England " . She drew attention to the facts that she was denied the opportunity to review the evidence , that her papers had been removed from her , that she was denied access to legal counsel and that as a foreign anointed queen she had never been an English subject and thus could not be convicted of treason .

Mary was convicted on 25 October and sentenced to death with only one commissioner , Lord Zouche , expressing any form of dissent . Despite this , Elizabeth hesitated to order her execution , even in the face of pressure from the English Parliament to carry out the sentence . She was concerned that the killing of a queen set a discreditable precedent , and was fearful of the consequences , especially if , in retaliation , Mary 's son James formed an alliance with the Catholic powers and invaded England . Elizabeth asked Paulet , Mary 's final custodian , if he would contrive a clandestine way to " shorten the life " of Mary , which he refused to do on the grounds that he would not make " a shipwreck of my conscience , or leave so great a blot on my poor posterity " . On 1 February 1587 , Elizabeth signed the death warrant , and entrusted it to William Davison , a privy councillor . On the 3rd , ten members of the Privy Council of England , having been summoned by Cecil without Elizabeth 's knowledge , decided to carry out the sentence at once .

= = = Execution = = =

At Fotheringhay on the evening of 7 February 1587 , Mary was told that she was to be executed the next morning . She spent the last hours of her life in prayer , distributing her belongings to her household , and writing her will and a letter to the King of France . The scaffold that was erected in the Great Hall was two feet high and draped in black . It was reached by two or three steps and furnished with the block , a cushion for her to kneel on and three stools , for her and the earls of Shrewsbury and Kent , who were there to witness the execution . The executioners ( one named Bull and his assistant ) knelt before her and asked forgiveness . She replied , " I forgive you with all my heart , for now , I hope , you shall make an end of all my troubles . " Her servants , Jane Kennedy and Elizabeth Curle , and the executioners helped Mary to remove her outer garments , revealing a velvet petticoat and a pair of sleeves in crimson @-@ brown , the liturgical colour of martyrdom in the Catholic Church , with a black satin bodice and black trimmings . As she disrobed she smiled and said that she " never had such grooms before ... nor ever put off her clothes before such a company " . She was blindfolded by Kennedy with a white veil embroidered in gold , knelt down on the cushion in front of the block , on which she positioned her head , and stretched out her arms . Her last words were , " In manus tuas , Domine , commendo spiritum meum " ( " Into thy hands , O Lord , I commend my spirit " ) .

Mary was not beheaded with a single strike . The first blow missed her neck and struck the back of her head . The second blow severed the neck , except for a small bit of sinew , which the executioner cut through using the axe . Afterward , he held her head aloft and declared , " God save the Queen . " At that moment , the auburn tresses in his hand turned out to be a wig and the head fell to the ground , revealing that Mary had very short , grey hair . A small dog owned by the queen , a Skye terrier , is said to have been hiding among her skirts , unseen by the spectators . Following the beheading , it refused to be parted from its owner 's body and was covered in her blood , until it was forcibly taken away and washed . Items supposedly worn or carried by Mary at her execution are of doubtful provenance ; contemporary accounts state that all her clothing , the block , and everything touched by her blood was burnt in the fireplace of the Great Hall to obstruct relic @-@ hunters .

= = = Legacy = = =

When the news of the execution reached Elizabeth , she became indignant and asserted that Davison had disobeyed her instructions not to part with the warrant and that the Privy Council had acted without her authority . Elizabeth 's vacillation and deliberately vague instructions gave her plausible deniability , to attempt to avoid the direct stain of Mary 's blood . Davison was arrested , thrown into the Tower of London , and found guilty of misprision . He was released 19 months later after Cecil and Walsingham interceded on his behalf .

Mary 's request to be buried in France was refused by Elizabeth . Her body was embalmed and left unburied in a secure lead coffin until her burial , in a Protestant service , at Peterborough Cathedral in late July 1587 . Her entrails , removed as part of the embalming process , were buried secretly within Fotheringhay Castle . Her body was exhumed in 1612 when her son , King James VI and I , ordered that she be reinterred in Westminster Abbey , in a chapel opposite the tomb of Elizabeth I. In 1867 , her tomb was opened to try to ascertain the resting place of James I ; he was ultimately found with Henry VII , but many of her other descendants , including Elizabeth of Bohemia , Prince Rupert of the Rhine and the children of Anne , Queen of Great Britain , were interred in her vault .

Assessments of Mary in the sixteenth century divided between Protestant reformers such as George Buchanan and John Knox , who vilified her mercilessly , and Catholic apologists such as Adam Blackwood , who praised , defended and eulogised her . After the accession of James I in England , historian William Camden wrote an officially sanctioned biography that drew from original documents . It condemned Buchanan 's work as an invention , and " emphasized Mary 's evil fortunes rather than her evil character " . Differing interpretations persisted into the eighteenth century : William Robertson and David Hume argued that the casket letters were genuine and that Mary was guilty of adultery and murder , while William Tytler argued the reverse . In the latter half of the twentieth century , the work of Antonia Fraser was acclaimed as " more objective ... free from the excesses of adulation or attack " that had characterised older biographies , and her contemporaries Gordon Donaldson and Ian B. Cowan also produced more balanced works . Historian Jenny Wormald concluded that Mary was a tragic failure , who was unable to cope with the demands placed on her , but hers was a rare dissenting view in a post @-@ Fraser tradition that Mary was a pawn in the hands of scheming noblemen . There is no concrete proof of her complicity in Darnley 's murder or of a conspiracy with Bothwell . Such accusations rest on assumptions , and Buchanan 's biography is today discredited as " almost complete fantasy " . Mary 's courage at her execution helped establish her popular image as the heroic victim in a dramatic tragedy .

= = Family tree = =

= = = Ancestry = = =