

Isabella of France (1295-1358)

Isabella was the daughter of King Philip IV of France and became Queen of England when she married King Edward II of England in February 1308.

She was smart and influential using her position as sister to the King of France (Charles IV) to make demands on Edward II, who she began to grow tired of. Edward II preferred to spend his time with his male courtiers/favourites like Piers Gaveston and eventually Hugh Despenser, who he made a powerful baron. Despenser was pushing Isabella out of favour in her husband's court and when she was in France gathered a small army and removed Edward II from the throne.

She used her wealth to pay for the army that invaded England and also owned lands in France from her family, which gave her wealth.

She is remembered through her son, Edward III, who took power after her husband was killed at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire. She ruled the country as regent from 1327 until 1330 until her son was old enough. It would be Edward III though who eventually seized power back from his mother and her companion, Roger Mortimer.

Margaret of Anjou (1430-1482)



Margaret was the daughter of the Duke of Anjou and King of Naples and Isabella, Duchess of Lorraine. She was married in 1444 to English King Henry VI as part of a negotiated peace treaty between England and France. She was a powerful leader of the House of Lancaster during the Wars of the Roses. Her husband Henry VI became mentally ill in 1453 and instead of being a bystander in royal affairs, she became a key figure in shaping the future of England. She became an influential leader fighting against Henry's enemies, even leading the king's army in some battles against the House of York.

She was politically important from birth and her important French family had relationships with lots of courtiers across France and England. When Richard of York became protector of the realm and reduced the money and power of her court she attacked, as Richard had a claim to the throne.

She is remembered for defeating Richard of York in battle at Towton 1461 and then losing her son at the later battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, where she was captured and ransomed to the King of France. She died in Anjou as a poor relation to the king in 1482.

Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204)



The elder daughter of William Duke of Aquitaine, she was raised in a highly cultured European court and given an excellent education. She married Louis VI of France at the age of 15 and in 1147 accompanied her husband on the Second Crusade to the Holy land of Jerusalem to attack the Ottoman forces there. She was divorced in 1152 when her relationship with her husband deteriorated and she failed to produce a son for him. Two months later she married Henry of Anjou who would later be Henry II of England in 1154.

Eleanor's influence came through her marriages and access to vast regions of land in France. She worked with her sons to try to take control of England against her husband. Although she failed and was imprisoned, after Henry's death her eldest son released her, and she continued to help him and her youngest son John rule.

She inherited vast sums of money after the death of her only brother and her father in 1137 and owned great tracts of land in Aquitaine, which were included with England and Normandy to make her incredibly wealthy across Europe.

She was buried in an abbey church in France next to her husband Henry II and was remembered at the time through the help she gave to her sons Richard and John. Today she is well known in films like *The Lion in Winter* and books which talk about her great success as a strong ruler.

Matilda of Scotland (1080-1118)



A Scottish princess by birth, Matilda was a descendent of Anglo-Saxon kings of England (her great-uncle was Edward the Confessor), making her an important bride to Henry I, son of William the Conqueror. She was raised at Romsey Abbey and Wilton Abbey into a religious upbringing. Her aunt was abbess of Romsey and wanted her to become a nun. In 1100, when Henry I took over the throne, he married Matilda, making her Queen of England.

As a royal princess she had money, but used it wisely by applying it to commissioning it to art and architecture projects.

Matilda had two children and when Henry was away in Normandy, Matilda acted as regent of England. She issued her own charters and administered justice as ruler. Matilda also commissioned books

about the history of her mother and family and oversaw architectural projects.

She was remembered for her charity work with calls for her to be made a canon (an important religious figure) in 1118. Her legacy lived on through her daughter, who would have become England's first reigning queen. Upon her daughter's partial success in the years that would follow, Matilda supported her grandson Henry II's rule of England.