

THE CORONATION OF WILLIAM AND MARY

11 APRIL 1689

The William III Coronation report by Maureen Waller

I am standing here in Tower Green, just in front of the Tower of London, watching the procession of the Master of the Jewel House, starting his long journey through the streets of London to Westminster, carrying the regalia for today's Coronation ceremony. The regalia are very precious, of course, which is why they are kept in the Tower over there. They were made by Charles II for his Coronation in 1662 and consist of the five swords of state, the sceptre, the orb, the bracelets, the golden spurs, and all the other symbols, ancient symbols, of royalty and of religion, which are going to be used in today's coronation.



Tower Green, London

Today of course is a very special event. It's a unique Coronation. We have never had a double Coronation before, whereby the King and Queen are both sovereigns in their own right. Mary has had a duplicate set of symbols made for herself. She has got her own sceptres and her own orb. The orb is symbolic of independent sovereignty and the sceptre is symbolic of kingly power. Mary being Queen in her own right has to have her own sceptre and orb. But she is apparently wearing the three crowns made for her stepmother, Queen Mary of Modena, at her Coronation in 1685.

Just as the procession is leaving the Tower the guns, the Tower's guns are now booming, marking the beginning of the day's great celebrations. And the crowds are standing here, on Tower Hill, watching the procession go by.

It's just after 10 o'clock and the Prince of Orange has elected to make the short journey from Whitehall Palace, which you can see here in the background to Westminster Hall, where today's ceremonies will begin. We can see Westminster Abbey, just over there on the right, it's a very short journey, but of course

all of London is out here on the Thames in small pleasure craft, spectators along the bank, all watching the Prince of Orange go by. In the boat is a small group of courtiers.



Royal Barge

The Princess is leaving Whitehall Palace slightly later; she is not there in the barge, with the Prince of Orange. She is going to make her journey from Whitehall to Westminster by chair. People are leaning out of the windows, thousands of spectators, are cheering her on her way, she really is a very popular Princess.



Coronation procession

The Coronation procession is beginning to wind its way out of Westminster Hall, where the Prince and Princess of Orange have received all the regalia which are to be used in the Coronation ceremony today. The procession has lined up in very strict order of precedence, for its short journey through the streets, from Westminster Hall to Westminster Abbey, where the Coronation is to take place. We see here under the golden royal canopy of state, the Prince of Orange walking on the right with a large red mantle....red

velvet mantle and a matching cap on his head. The Princess on his left hand side is wearing her large red velvet mantle, which is carried by the Duchess of Somerset, premier Lady in the land, after Princess Anne. The Princess isn't wearing a cap; she is wearing a gold circlet with pearls and diamonds, which was the circlet that belonged to her stepmother, Queen Mary of Modena, who is now in exile in France. In front of them, you see various members of the clergy, and also the nobility, each of them holding some item, which is going to be used in the Coronation later today. There we have the sceptres, the two orbs, the swords of state, there are 5 swords of state, for Royal justice, and to show mercy; one of the swords has a blunt edge, which shows that Royal justice must always be tempted by mercy. We see in the middle there, the Lord Mayor of London, he is in his red robes of office, with his chain, his golden chain round his neck. A little further on, beyond the nobility carrying the regalia, we see, the premier peer of the realm, Prince George of Denmark, the Prince and Princess of Orange's brother-in-law, he is married to Princess Anne, Princess Mary's youngest sister.

And then coming round, members of the nobility, all of whom will take their place and play their part in today's Coronation ceremony. There they are lined up, in strict order of rank, the dukes and duchesses last, nearest the future monarchs, and in front of them, the viscounts, and viscountesses, and the barons and baronesses, and then the little boys in their red mantles. Boys of the choir of the Chapel Royal and also the little boys in their surplices, who are the boys of the choir of Westminster Abbey, who today will be singing Zadok the Priest, among other anthems used at the Coronation. And then in front of them various members of the judiciary, heralds and guards. And bringing up the front of the Coronation procession of course, the clergy, who have a very important role to play in the ceremony today.

Leading the Coronation procession, we see the King's herbs woman. This is a very ancient role, and she strews fresh sweet smelling herbs on the coronation route, two breadths of blue cloth, which you can see here, spread from the steps of the throne in Westminster Hall to the steps of the Theatre in the Choir of Westminster Abbey. And that's all the more welcome because London is still a very dirty and stinking city.

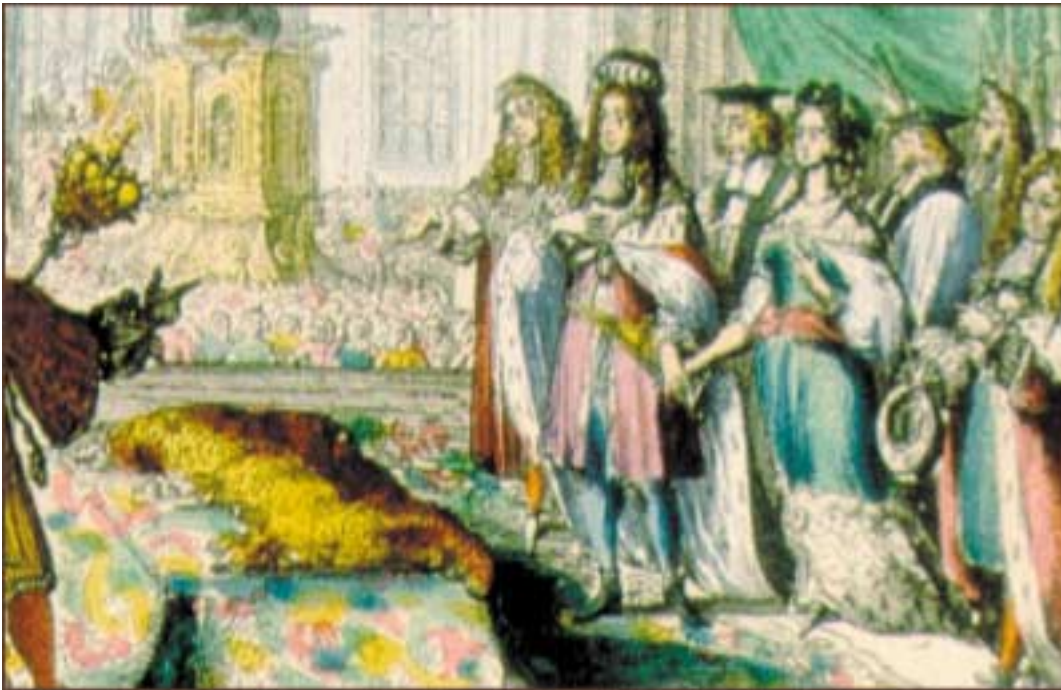


Private devotions

When William and Mary arrive at Westminster Abbey, they are taken first to the Theatre, which is the sort

of stage erected where the four transepts meet. Here they can be shown to the four points of the compass, north, south, west and east, for their recognition and for their acclamation by the people represented here by the peers of the realm. They are then taken aside to an area where they can make their private devotions. It's very important to realise that the Coronation is essentially a religious ceremony, steeped in ancient rites, which go back to the Old Testament.

Apparently, Prince William has been a little bit scathing about these ceremonies; he sort of mocked them, and called them popish ceremonies, to the burgemeester Witsen of Amsterdam, who is in London for the Coronation. And the new King apparently is also refusing to touch for the King's Evil, this is the first King that has failed to touch for the King's Evil—scrofula or bovine tuberculosis—a practice which has been carried on since Saint Edward the Confessor, whereby the monarch puts his hands on the afflicted limbs of subjects suffering from scrofula. "God give you better health and more sense!", he is believed to have told one disappointed supplicant before dismissing him. William was laughing at all these old ceremonies; nevertheless, he is going ahead with today's ceremony.



Taking the Oath

All kings and queens of England have taken an oath to defend the Christian faith and to uphold the laws of the land, but now in 1689, a new oath is being administered. The King and Queen promise to uphold and maintain the Church of England. They are taking this oath here in front of the Mace, which maybe the Mace of the House of Commons, which is symbolic. William and Mary are placed in such a way, that they can be seen by the Members of the House of Commons, and Speaker, who are attending this ceremony. Its very important that William and Mary, who have been offered the crown by Parliament and are our first constitutional monarchs, should make this promise to maintain the Protestant religion. The oath they are taking will be administered to all future kings and queens. England can never have a Catholic monarch again.

The most important aspect of the Coronation ceremony is the anointing with holy oil, a right, which goes back to the Old Testament. We can see here, Bishop Compton, he has consecrated the holy oil at the altar,

and while that has been taking place, the choir has been singing *Veni Creator Spiritus*, Come Holy Spirit. Prince William has now been divested of his velvet mantle, and his shoulders are bare, ready to receive the holy oil.



Anointing of William

Behind him is the gold canopy of state, which his men are holding up to hide him from the spectators, while this very sacred and intimate part of the ceremony is taking place. The bishop is moving forward now, and he is going to make the sign of the cross with the holy oil on the crown of William's head on his chest and on the palms of each of his hands. The same will take place for Princess Mary, who is waiting now to be anointed alongside her husband.

William and Mary are back up on the Theatre, the sort of central stage, from which everybody can observe what's going on. On the right we see William sitting on the Coronation chair. That's the chair of their ancestor the Saxon King, Saint Edward the Confessor. And embedded in this special Coronation chair is the Stone of Scone, the Stone of Destiny. Mary has had her own Coronation chair made, which is a smaller version of William's.



And here we see Bishop Compton, at the altar; Bishop Compton is the only bishop that could be prevailed on to crown William and Mary. It's normally the prerogative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but Archbishop Frankcroft is staying away from the ceremony today. He wasn't a great friend of King James, but nevertheless he took a vow to King James and he paid homage to him at his Coronation in 1685, and he feels that he cannot break that vow to crown the new monarchs. So Bishop Compton, Bishop of London, who is Princess Mary's tutor, is undertaking the ceremony assisted by the Bishop of Rochester, who is standing beside him throughout. And now the crown is just about to be placed on Prince William's head, its just four o'clock, and William's crowning will be closely followed by that of Mary, who is standing here watching him.

We don't know what Mary's thoughts are on this great occasion. We know that she has been putting a very good face on it. Apparently she feels a lot of private anguish at her father's plight.

And beside Mary, you will see the Peers of the Realm, lined up, they are just waiting for the crown to be placed on Mary's head, as the second, the co-monarch, today. And as soon as that takes place, the Peers who are here representing the people of England will loudly proclaim God save the King, God save the Queen, and at that, they will all raise their coronets and put them on their heads. And that will be the conclusion of the actual crowning part of the ceremony.

Here we see William and Mary, kneeling on the Theatre. William is now wearing his crown, the crown of Saint Edward, and holding the sceptre and the orb. And Mary is beside him, holding her sceptre and orb. She has had duplicates made for herself, because this is a double Coronation, and as a reigning monarch has to have a sceptre and an orb, just as her husband does. Standing behind her now, we see Bishop Compton, he is about to place the crown on her head. Afterwards, the King and Queen will be lifted up bodily, by the Peers of the Realm, and placed on the thrones on either side of the theatre here.



Mary's crowning

After the crowning of William and Mary, comes the Homage of the Peers. They represent the people of England, and they have come to give their approval to the new monarchs. First of all, the Spiritual Peers come forward, that is the bishops and they kiss the monarchs on the left cheek. Then the Temporal Peers come forward, led by the Premier Peer, Prince George of Denmark, the King and Queen's brother-in-law and here he is kneeling before William. The Temporal Peers kiss the monarch on the left cheek, they touch the crown, and they kneel before them and they take an oath. And Prince George is here making his oath now: "I George, do become your liege man of life and limb and of earthly worship, and faith and truth I will bear on to you, to live and die against all manner of folks, so help me god".



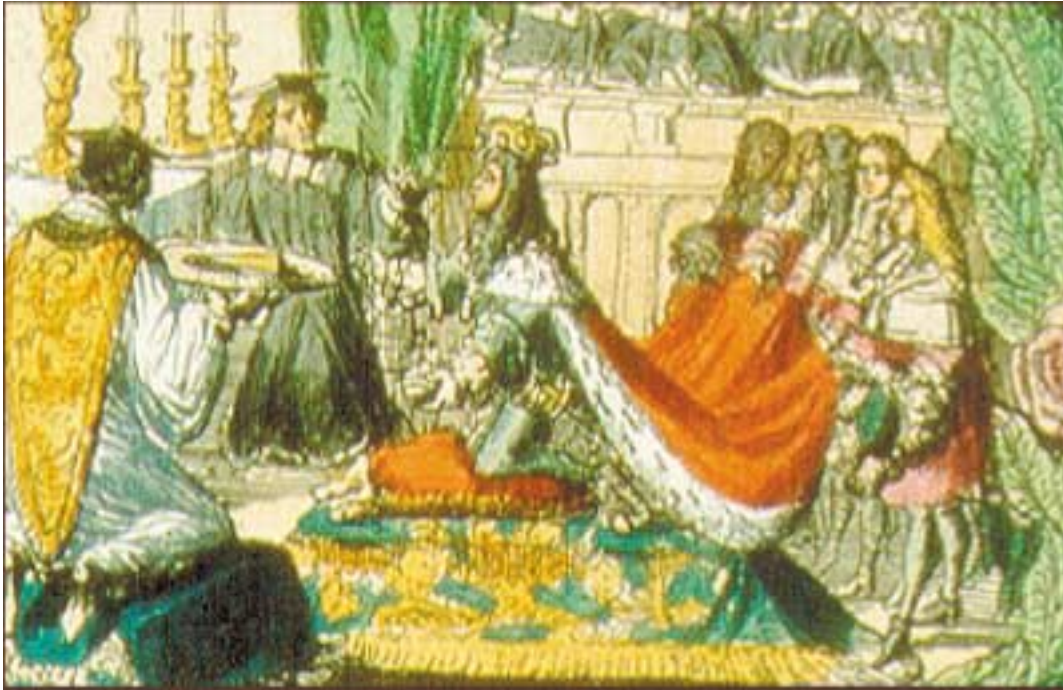
Homage to William

It's interesting of course that this is an oath that George had already made to his father-in-law, the exiled King James. However, he is now making it to his brother-in-law, Prince William, Prince of Orange, now King William 111 and Queen Mary 11. And the rest of the selected peers are lining up behind him to pay homage. While this is going on, you will note in the background, the Treasurer to the Royal Household, carrying a large tray full of silver and gold Coronation medals, which he is throwing into the congregation. This is part of the ancient Coronation ceremony; they are little memorials of the Coronation and they have the names of William and Mary, King and Queen written on one side of them.

During the Coronation ceremony the monarch makes two oblations or offerings to God. The first one is an altar cloth, a cloth of gold or a roll of silk, which is given to the bishop who will place it on the altar for God. The second oblation is an ingot of gold or gold pieces, which are given to the bishop in that basin, which Bishop Compton is holding there, and that will then be placed on the altar.

Unfortunately there is a certain embarrassed interruption at this part of the ceremony because it seems that neither William nor Mary have remembered to bring the gold to the Abbey. It maybe that they forgot about it, or it maybe that they didn't know about this part of the ceremony. A rumour is already going around

that King William did have the money, but it was stolen by a London pick pocket as he made his way from Whitehall to Westminster or from Westminster Hall to the Abbey.



Offering gold at the altar

Sources close to the Royal couple say that this morning there was a certain amount of disturbance just before they left for the Abbey. News came that King James landed in Ireland with a French army. Moreover, sources close to the couple say that Mary received a letter from her father, in which he cursed her for taking the crown while he and her brother, the Prince of Wales, are still living.

The embarrassed moment has been overcome, because Lord Danby, standing there on the right, seems to have come forward with pieces of gold and enabled William and Mary to place this gold in the basin, which will be placed now on the altar. Lord Danby, of course, has been a very good friend to the couple. He arranged their marriage and has always been supportive, although apparently he was a little less supportive of William actually taking the crown.

Here we see King William in all his Coronation regalia. He is wearing the crown of Saint Edward the Confessor on his head. Of course this isn't the original crown; that was broken up by Oliver Cromwell and sold. This is the crown that King Charles II had made by Sir Robert Vyner, the court jeweller in 1662. And it bears many precious stones, sapphires, rubies, diamonds, and weighs 7 pounds. A considerable weight. The King is holding the sceptre, which is the ancient symbol of kingly power and the orb in his left hand, which is the symbol of independent sovereignty. On the right hand side, that maybe his friend Hans Willem Bentinck, who he has created Earl of Portland; he is an old childhood friend and a Dutchman and it was his role in the ceremony to retrieve the sword from the altar, where it had been laid for God's blessing. It may, on the other hand, be the Duke of Newcastle, who gives the King the glove to wear on his right hand, when he is holding the sceptre.



The sceptre and orb

Understandably the crown is very heavy; Queen Mary's crown seems to have been very heavy and at one moment, she looked as if it was unbearably so and her sister, Princess Anne, stepped forward to commiserate but she received a rather short slap down from her sister, who said a crown sister is not so heavy as it seems.

The Coronation ceremony is over and the whole Coronation procession, in the same order as it arrived, returns through the streets on the blue cloth, from Westminster Abbey, back into Westminster Hall for the Coronation banquet. You will see King William and Queen Mary, sitting on the dais at the end of Westminster Hall. One of the innovations of this banquet is the massive silver salt cellar, the Salt of State, a gift from the people of Exeter to King Charles 11, which will be used at all subsequent Coronation banquets in future.

Between the first and second courses of the banquet, the King's Champion rides into the hall. And here he is, Charles Dymoke. Traditionally the role is always held by a member of the Dymoke family. And he is riding into the Hall dressed in his armour, with the Lord High Constable on one side, and the Earl Marshall, the Duke of Norfolk on the other. He throws down his gauntlet as a challenge, three times as he progresses up the hall towards the royal dais. He challenges anybody, who denies the title of William and Mary, as rightful King and Queen, of England, France and Ireland, to meet him in single combat. As he nears the royal dais, you can see there the King's cupbearer, who is standing waiting to offer him a cup. The King's Champion will toast the King and Queen, and the King and Queen will in turn toast him. Then he will be able to take the cup or the goblet with its lid away as part of his fee.



The Banquet

The coronation banquet breaks up at eight o'clock and the King and Queen retire to Whitehall Palace. It does seem rather early to retire, but they have had a very long and exhausting day and William is usually in bed by ten o'clock and perhaps this night is no exception.



Fireworks

However, the rest of London gives itself up to celebrating. Londoners love to light bonfires and tonight is no exception. There is also the most magnificent firework display. Its interesting that this firework display is going to be mirrored in various European cities and that's probably symbolic of the fact that William is a great European and the various cities in the Netherlands and in Germany, and his allies on the continent, are equally delighted that William has now taken the crown of England and that they know that England is now firmly on their side in the great war against Louis XIV.

Script by Maureen Waller, author of *Ungrateful Daughters*