

THE FIRST



On Duty
Princess Mary
(then known as
Princess Royal)
in her ATS
uniform,
inspecting
troops in 1939.

MODERN

FROM LEFT: ANUSHUTTERSTOCK; REPRODUCED BY COURTESY OF THE EARL AND COUNTESS OF HAREWOOD AND HAREWOOD HOUSE TRUST



**Regal
Glamour**
Princess Mary
at Chesterfield
House in the
early 1920s.

PRINCESS MARY
BLAZED TRAILS AS A
PIONEERING ROYAL
LARGELY FORGOTTEN BY
HISTORY—UNTIL NOW

by MONIQUE JESSEN

PRINCESS

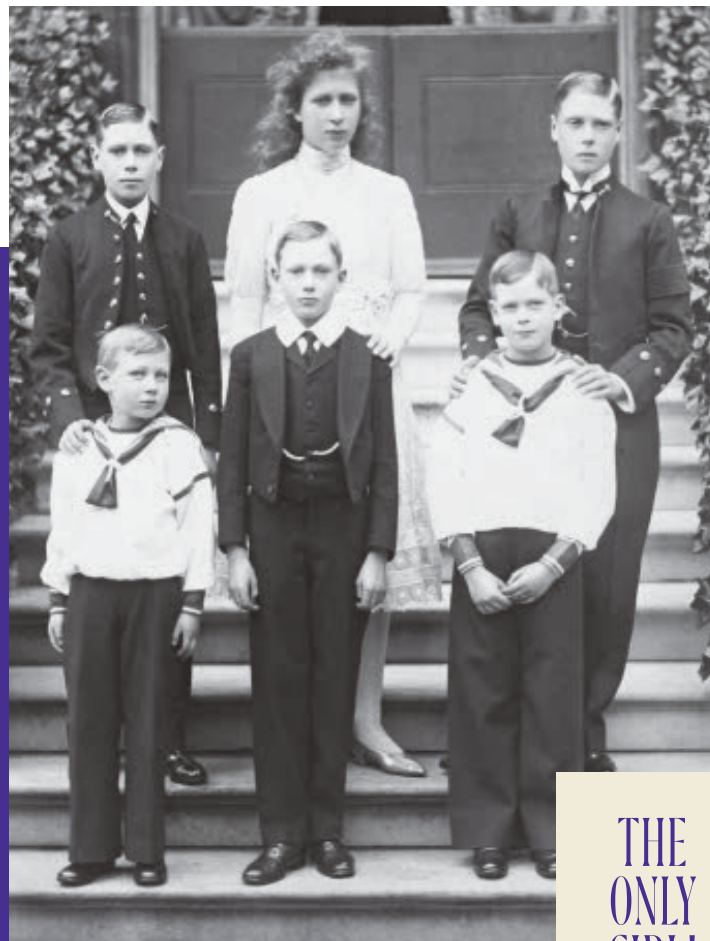
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ore than a half-century before Princess Diana challenged the stigma surrounding AIDS, Princess Kate championed early childhood development and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex campaigned for girls' education, another pioneering royal paved the way. Princess Mary—the only daughter of King George V and Queen Mary and the sister of King Edward VIII and King George VI—was an early 20th-century trailblazer in the fields of academia, medicine and the military. Yet despite her many achievements, very little has

ever been written about her—until now. In *Princess Mary: The First Modern Princess*, author Elisabeth Basford delves deep into the royal archives to discover fascinating details about the late aunt of Queen Elizabeth. “Mary’s diaries were quite bland because she was very aware that people would read them later, and she came from that era of ‘never complain, never explain,’” says Basford. “But I found a huge amount of letters that she had written to one of her friends, and it started to reveal somebody who was very different than the person I had read about.” Far from the subservient, unhappily married woman

BROTHERLY LOVE

Mary and her brothers in 1910. Back row, left to right: Prince Albert (“Bertie”), Princess Mary, Prince Edward (“David”). Front row: Prince John, Prince Henry, Prince George.



THE ONLY GIRL!

portrayed by actress Kate Phillips in the 2019 *Downton Abbey* film, Princess Mary was much adored by her husband, Viscount Lascelles, with whom she had two sons, George and Gerald. She was also one of the most hard-working and grounded members of the family. “She was very aware that she had to do her duty as a member of the royal family, and there was nobody more diligent and dutiful than Mary.” A patron of more than 50 charities during her lifetime, Basford says that without Mary’s groundwork, “it is doubtful that the public life of the monarchy would have evolved to the extent to which it has now.”

Here, from the biography, new details of Mary’s royal life and legacy.

Born on April 25, 1897, at York Cottage on the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk, Princess Victoria Alexandra Alice Mary—known as Princess Mary—was one of six children and the only daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York, who would later become George V and Queen Mary.

May [her mother] was ahead of her time in establishing an innovative curriculum for Mary that exposed her to an extensive and broad range of subjects. She was taught all aspects of domestic life along with academic and creative subjects; in short “her education was versatility itself.” This education, coupled with the ubiquitous horseplay involved in having five brothers inevitably ensured that Mary was brought up to be far more resilient and less delicate than previous princesses, such as Princesses Victoria and Louise, the sisters of her father. It proved to be ideal training for her future life spent in public service.

When King Edward died in 1910 and her father ascended to the throne as King George V, Princess Mary found herself suddenly in the spotlight.

The newspapers were fascinated by the relatively young family of the new king and queen and articles often focused on Mary and her upbringing. According to *Tatler* in September 1910, Mary’s ambition was to become her mother’s private secretary, since her typing and shorthand skills were exceptional, and she spoke French fluently. The *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* related how “Mary is a real young sportswoman. Her Royal Highness is a fine rider, loves horses and dogs, is a tennis player, and shows a decided taste for golf ... is already an angler in aspiration, and loves trout-fishing in reality.”



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: WARD DOWNE/HUTTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY; REPRODUCED BY COURTESY OF THE EARL AND COUNTESS OF HAREWOOD AND HAREWOOD HOUSE TRUST; WARD DOWNE/HUTTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

FOLLOWING HER HEART

Above: Princess Mary, then working as a nurse at Great Ormond Street Hospital in 1918, with her mother Queen Mary. Right: King George V and Queen Mary at the wedding of their daughter to Viscount Harry Lascelles on February 28, 1922.

When World War I broke out in 1914, Mary began working with the Red Cross, volunteered at a munitions factory canteen and put her name to a book of short stories for Queen Mary’s Work for Women Fund, which saw a million more women employed by the end of the conflict. It was also her idea to send every soldier and those serving in the war effort (2.5 million of them) a Princess Mary Gift Tin, for which she made a heartfelt plea.

“I wish you all now to help me to send a Christmas present from the whole nation to every sailor afloat and every soldier at the front. On Christmas-eve when, like the shepherds of old, they keep

Her Famous Firsts!

Princess Mary wasn’t afraid to take on challenges or tweak tradition. From her late teens until her death in 1965, she set new standards for women and royals

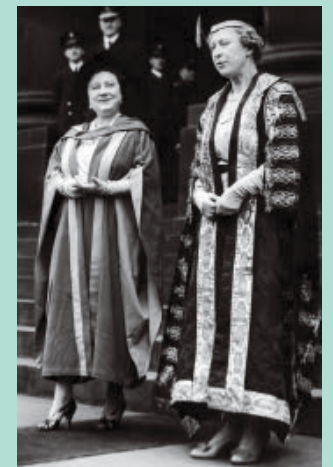
Sign of Respect

After her wedding in 1922, Mary placed her bouquet at the Cenotaph to honor fallen soldiers, a custom for royal brides that continues at Westminster Abbey today.



Star Student

In 1951, Mary (with the Queen Mother in 1954) became the first female chancellor of a university in Britain.



Her Big Day

Mary was the first royal bride to be featured in *British Vogue*, and hers was the first royal wedding to allow cameras inside the ceremony.





GIRL POWER

After tireless fundraising on behalf of the Girl Guides, Mary (here, visiting a troop in Yorkshire in 1925) became president of the scouting organization in 1919.

their watch, doubtless their thoughts will turn to home and to the loved ones left behind ... I am sure that we should all be the happier to feel we had helped to send our little token of love and sympathy on Christmas morning, something that would be useful and of permanent value and the making of which may be the means of providing employment in trades adversely affected by the war. Could there be anything more likely to hearten them in their struggle than a present received straight from home on Christmas Day. Please, will you help me? Mary"

In addition to her royal duties, Mary always wanted to be a nurse. In 1918, at a dinner party at Windsor Castle to celebrate her 21st birthday, she asked her father for permission to begin her training.

This was not an easy request, since daughters of the reigning monarch were not expected to work

or learn a profession. There had been royal nurses before, but usually it was the domain of lesser-known members of the royal family. Mary was unique as the daughter of the king; and yet what better way was there for George to show that he identified with his people than for him to permit his only daughter to train as a nurse?

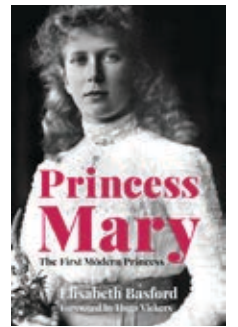
In 1922, Mary married Henry (known as Harry) Lascelles, a former soldier and the heir to the Earldom of Harewood. The couple lived most of their life at Harewood House in Leeds. Harry was her biggest supporter and gave a speech in 1932 when Mary was honored in their home city.

In recognition of her contribution to Yorkshire, in July 1932 Mary became the first woman, as well as the first royal, to receive the freedom of the city of Leeds. The mayor stated that the award was "symbolic of the charm and capacity a woman can carry into public life." In her acceptance speech, Mary expressed her pride at being the first woman to receive this honour.

Mary became a familiar sight during World War II, always wearing her Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) uniform. Her tireless work earned her the prestigious honorary rank of general in the British Army in 1956. Fifteen years prior, she was the first royal to undergo a medical procedure in front of the press.

On 3 February, Mary broadcast a speech on the radio promoting the importance of giving blood for both servicemen and women and citizens, who could be injured in air raids, road, industrial and mining accidents or even just for routine operations. A week later, few donors came forward owing to a lack of understanding of the process. Mary realized that something more substantial needed to be done to promote the campaign. She thus agreed to give a donation at the Leeds School of Medicine in front of invited members of the press. While she gave blood, she expressed delight at how painless the procedure was and spoke of the importance in the Leeds and West Riding areas of donating. Mary's campaign was so successful in breaking down concerns the public had over donating blood that over 10,000 people in the local area signed up within a week. •

Excerpted from Princess Mary: The First Modern Princess by Elisabeth Basford, published by The History Press ©2021



How She Inspired Diana, Kate & Meghan



Helping the Sick

Mary—preparing to donate blood in 1941—visited hundreds of hospitals during her lifetime. Below: Diana with an AIDS patient in Brazil in 1991.



Working with Children

At Great Ormond Street, Mary trained as a nurse. Her picture still hangs in the children's hospital. Below: Kate visiting a hospital in Liverpool in 2012.



Advocating For Women

Mary championed equal opportunity for women. Below: Meghan visited a home for teenage girls in Morocco in 2019.



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM RIGHT: SERGE LEMOINE/GETTY IMAGES; TIM P. WHITE/GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK; TIM GRAHAM/GETTY IMAGES; ANU/SHUTTERSTOCK; THOMPSON/DAILY MAIL/SHUTTERSTOCK; ANU/SHUTTERSTOCK; DAILY MAIL/SHUTTERSTOCK



SHE WAS ELIZABETH'S AUNT!

STRONG WOMEN

The Queen (center) at the Badminton Horse Trials with the Queen Mother (left) and Mary (right) in 1956, wrote to Basford after reading the book, calling Mary "her much-beloved aunt."