

Triumphs and Tragedies

Stories of the Stuarts



Portraits have the ability to tell a story. Facial expressions, dress and posture capture a sitter's mood and personality. Their clothing can reflect their status and wealth at the time and accessories can allude to hobbies. As a form of propaganda, a painting was a popular tool.



James Francis Stuart

James Francis Stuart is portrayed wearing a breastplate, emphasising his military prowess. He is posed as if in mid-action, about to go into battle. He appears confident and monarch-like despite never actually succeeding to the throne.

This is most likely a copy after Alexis-Simon Belle commissioned by a Jacobite supporter, with the belief that James was the true monarch of the three kingdoms. The accompanying plaque entitled *James III* supports this theory. He is depicted wearing the Garter Sash, an accessory that is present in every portrait of the Stuart. His supporters encouraged the distribution of his portraits to highlight the Jacobite cause.



Charles Edward Stuart

It is possible that this portrait is based on a painting that originated from the studio of Antonio David. Similar to the themes present in the portrait of James Francis Stuart, Charles, despite his youthfulness, appears prepared for battle in his armour.

The direction of his body suggests he is ready to move forward and has stopped only for a moment. He appears gallant and regal, his existence igniting renewed hope for the accession of a Stuart king.



Louise of Stolberg

The portrait of Louise of Stolberg was commissioned as a pair alongside a portrait of her companion, Vittorio Alfieri. It is believed that Louise was delighted with the likeness of the painting. Despite being described as unregal by Horace Walpole, she appears to have embraced this relaxed appearance.

Alfieri had written a sonnet for Louise on the reverse of the original portrait. He added the following words to the bottom of the poem, 'Completed...after I saved [Louise] from the slaves, cannibals and assassins [of Paris] 18 August 1794.'

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Henry Benedict Stuart

Dressed in Cardinal robes, Henry Benedict appears to be content in this portrait. Despite Jacobite expectations, Henry followed his own desires and led a happy life as a member of the College of Cardinals. The half smile is suggestive of this happiness.

There are no visible references to the Jacobite cause or to Henry's lineage. Indeed, the presence of St Peter's Basilica in the background suggests that his duty to God took precedence over his duties as a Stuart.



Charles I

This portrait is likely to be a copy of Edward Bower's *Charles I at his Trial (1649)*. Prior to Charles's execution Bower was given the task of painting the last life portrait of the King in order to record the historic occasion. Numerous copies were made by Charles's supporters who saw his execution as martyrdom.

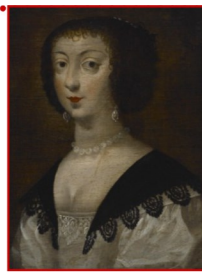
The blue ribbon of the Order of the Garter is just visible. Founded in 1348, The Order of the Garter is the highest accolade a person can be honoured with.



Charles II

Charles II is depicted wearing the Coronation Robes and Garter Collar with the figure of St George on horseback. Though not visible in this portrait- the portrait of Queen Anne includes a complete image of the garter collar- the original Garter Collar is decorated with over 100 diamonds and oak leaves This may allude to the Boscobel Oak tree that Charles II hid to escape from Cromwell's forces in 1651.

The word *SOIT* is just visible on Charles's shoulder, forming part of the French motto, translated as '*Shame on him who thinks this evil*'.



Henrietta Maria

The paintings of Henrietta Maria portray her at two very different stages of her life. The earlier portrait depicts her rosy cheeked and bejewelled in the simple set of pearls that her husband, Charles I, favoured. This is in contrast to the later, dour portrait of the former Queen Consort in mourning. So distraught was she by the death of her husband, it is thought she wore the same black dress for the remainder of her life.



Henrietta Maria after Charles I's execution

The only decoration in the later painting is the thumb ring. Between the 16th and 17th centuries it was common for ladies to wear their wedding rings on either the 4th finger of the left hand, or the thumb. The lack of other jewels and the sombre clothes highlight the presence of the ring and the book. It is possible to make out the cipher *CR* on the cover of the book, which may stand for *Charles Rex*. Rex is translated as King in English. The portrait is an indication of Henrietta Maria's devotion to her husband and sadness at his loss.



Queen Anne

This portrait is after Sir Godfrey Kneller's *Queen Anne*. Due to Anne's crippling illnesses, it is probable that this particular portrait had been imagined by the artist. It is unlikely that Anne would have been able to stand comfortably for the duration of any portrait.

The deep reds, luxurious furnishings, and extravagant clothing emphasise her role as ruling monarch. It is no coincidence that Anne chose the same regal motto as Elizabeth I- '*Always the same*'



Mary of Modena and Queen Mary II

The portraits of Mary of Modena and Queen Mary II appear to be quite similar. They are both depicted from the waist up, wearing Coronation robes and a set of pearls. During the research and comparison of these paintings Inverness Museum discovered that the portrait listed as Mary II bears an uncanny resemblance to a portrait of Mary of Modena by Godfrey Kneller (viewable on the BBC *Your Paintings* website).

Unfortunately, there is little evidence to prove the true identity of the sitters. This highlights the general uncertainty that surrounds the origins of paintings, their artists and subjects from this era.