

Queen Caroline

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Two hundred years ago in June a lady arrived by ship at Dover who was to cause such a scandal that it nearly brought down the government. At Dover she received such a warm welcome that the town eventually named a street after her. But her husband was not at all pleased to know she was in England.



Queen Caroline c1820 by James Lonsdale

She was Queen Caroline (1768-1821) and her husband the unpopular George IV, who was already illegally married to Maria Fitzherbert. George, a regular womaniser, only married Caroline because he was in debt and short of money!

He later regretted marrying what he described as his “fat and ugly” new wife. He called for a glass of brandy when he first saw her! German-born Caroline arrived at Dover determined to attend the coronation of her husband, who happened to be her first cousin. George on the other hand was determined not to have her at the coronation ceremony.

She was even offered £50,000 by the government not to return to England, but she rejected the offer. One can imagine the scandal. The modern day Charles-Diana issue had nothing on this!!

George was so unpopular in Dover and that's why the ordinary “man-in-the-street” was so keen to show support for Caroline who had been living abroad for six years.

After acknowledging her Dover welcome, on 5th June in 1820 Caroline travelled to London with the aim of being crowned queen.

To prevent this George tried to persuade the government to introduce a Bill alleging Caroline had numerous lovers abroad and even having given birth to an illegitimate child. There's no doubt she acted strangely abroad. It

is alleged she danced naked above the waist in Geneva and had an affair with one of Napoleon's brothers-in-law. But Prime Minister Lord Liverpool, realising there was little chance of getting the Bill passed, dropped the idea. He feared his government would be overturned.

Caroline, against advice from many quarters, turned up at George's coronation at Westminster Abbey in April 1821 but she was locked out on his orders. She banged on the abbey doors shouting “I am the Queen of England. Let me in.”, but Pages were ordered to lock her out. So upset by this turn of events Caroline took to her bed and within 19 days had died.

But Dover still remembered Caroline and Dover Town Council decided to name a road, Caroline Place, in the Stembrook area, now the site of a Dover District Council car park at the back of St Mary's Church. Caroline Place was wrecked in the 1939-45 war and I remember the wreckage being demolished.