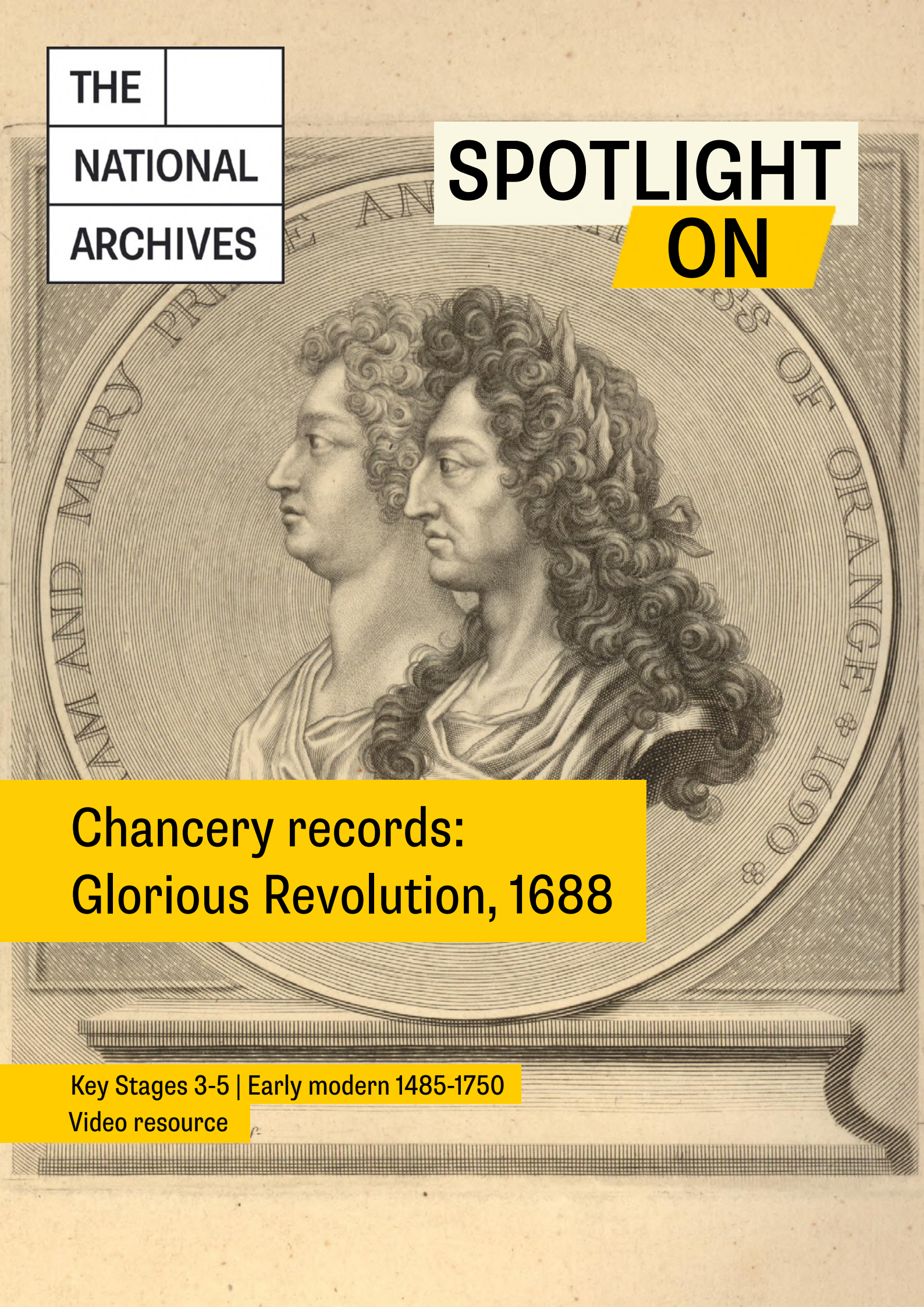


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Chancery records: Glorious Revolution, 1688

Key Stages 3-5 | Early modern 1485-1750

Video resource

Chancery records: Glorious Revolution, 1688

We hope you enjoyed watching our Education Service video with Neil Johnston, Head of Early Modern Records at The National Archives, looking at the 'Declaration of Rights' from our Chancery records, catalogue ref: C212/18.

[Watch video¹](#)

Suitable for:

KS 3-5

Time period:

Early modern 1485-1750

¹ <https://youtu.be/DroG4slzUiE>

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Video transcript

Hello, my name is Neil Johnston and I'm the Head of Early Modern Records at The National Archives. Today we're going to look at a document from our Chancery collection.

Chancery is one of the oldest government departments, beginning before the arrival of William the Conqueror in 1066 but emerging as a distinct office from King John's reign early in the 13th century. The Chancery was the royal secretariat, making systematic copies of important documents on parchment membranes. As we can see here this practice went on for centuries and this one dates from the end of the 17th century. This document has a unique reference, which is C 212/18, which refers to a specific office within the Chancery where they made written copies of a whole mix of government decisions and policies. All archives need to use reference systems for their records to ensure they can be properly understood. At The National Archives the references mostly relate to the sections of the government departments that created them. In this instance we can see that there was a section of Chancery known as the pettyback, where staff started making copies of important government decisions or interactions during Henry VIII's reign in the 16th century, and continue to store records in this way until the late 19th century. This means that once researchers learn how to use this part of the collection, they can move back and forth across the centuries as the officials continued to make copies on rolled up sheets of parchment.

Now let's take a close look at our document and work out what it's about. The document is called an enrolment. Information is written onto the sheets of parchment, which are stitched at the top and the bottom of each piece and rolled up like toilet paper and stored, keeping the information safe. It's dated from February 1688, but we consider the year to be 1689. This is because in the premodern period the first day of the year was understood to be the 25th of March, Lady Day, which is 9 months before Christmas Day. So the year didn't run from January to December but instead March to March. This changed in the mid-18th century, but for records from before this time we must mentally recalculate the year.

It is a copy of a declaration made by the two houses of Parliament known as the Declaration of Rights. William of Orange, a Dutch prince, landed in Torbay, Devon, on the 5th of November 1688 at the head of an army that challenged King James II for the thrones

Video transcript (cont.)

of England, Scotland and Ireland. King James was a Roman Catholic, which was deeply problematic for many English subjects, but for a time they remained loyal. Until, that is, he started to alter political and religious policy in England to accommodate Roman Catholics in senior political and military positions. He had tried to dispense with laws that made it illegal for Roman Catholics to hold office, but he sought to do this without Parliament's consent. When James' predecessor Charles II attempted to do just this in 1672, Charles had to withdraw his declaration of indulgence. When James tried to do the same thing over a decade later, he met with ferocious opposition from the bishops in Parliament but he was adamant that he had legal authority to do so.

James' actions reinforced in many people's minds that he had little consideration for Parliament, which he was supposed to rule with, not against. James also sought to discipline several bishops who opposed his plans, putting them on trial but ultimately failing to secure prosecutions. Alongside this James also maintained a standing army, which was not usual at this time. It caused many people to fear his reasons for doing this and they were afraid he would use it against them to pursue his policies, so as time passed there was an increasing opposition to James' policies as his opponents started to fear that James was an authoritarian ruler. When James announced that his wife Queen Mary was pregnant, there was now the potential for a Catholic succession across the Stuart kingdoms. For this reason, William was invited by a group of parliamentarians to lead a Dutch Protestant army into England to take the throne by force and he set sail in October 1688. After he landed there was only minor skirmishes between James's army and Williams invading force. James appears to have lost his nerve and he fled England, leaving the throne vacant.

In advance of his invasion William had published a pamphlet where he had stated that he did not wish to conquer England, but instead announced that he would leave it to the Westminster parliament to resolve the political question of whom should rule. However, only a legitimate monarch could summon a parliament, so an equivalent body, known as a convention, was elected to determine who was the ruler of the Stuart kingdoms.

The convention started its deliberations in January 1689 and despite requests that they quickly reach a consensus, there was large divisions between and within the Houses of

Video transcript (cont.)

Commons and Lords, and it took several weeks of debates. The main question they had to decide on was whether James in fleeing had merely left the throne vacant and was still the legitimate monarch, or whether he had abdicated, meaning that William could claim it legally if William was the legitimate ruler. James's son was removed from the succession, meaning that Protestantism in the minds of many who were then alive was safe in the end. The two houses of parliament decided that James had un-kinged himself by fleeing and that the throne should be offered to both James's niece Princess Mary and her husband William, and that they were to be joint rulers with power vested in William.

This was announced in the Declaration of Rights alongside a series of requests that resolved many of the most important political questions of the day. It determined that the monarchs could not dispense with the law as they saw fit, but had to consult parliament; that parliament was to meet regularly to decide on matters of taxation; that it was illegal for a standing army to be maintained in peace time in England; and that the monarch could not marry a Roman Catholic. The declaration went on to list many grievances that had built up over the previous decades, mainly about how England was governed, and asked that William and Mary consider these matters and legislate for them through parliament. Importantly, as the convention had not been summoned by a king, the peers and MPs asked that William and Mary would summon a full parliament as soon as they could to pass legislation to resolve many of the complaints.

William accepted but was not bound by the terms of the Declaration of Rights and was declared King alongside Mary, who was Queen. Later in 1689 they did summon a full parliament, which passed legislation on many of the grievances within the Declaration of Rights and it remains one of the most important documents in the development of the English political nation. A separate political settlement was needed for Scotland, and James and William fought for control of Ireland in the subsequent years.

This is just one of many of hundreds of documents from this heated political moment in English history and it's available to view at The National Archives.

Tasks

Watch the video then try and answer the following questions:

- When does the Chancery records collection date from in The National Archives?
- What was the role of the Chancery Office?
- What is the 'petty bag' section of Chancery?
- What do you understand by a document described as an 'enrolment'?
- Why is our document considered to be dated from 1689 and not 1688?
- Give two reasons why James II faced opposition from parliament.
- Who was William of Orange?
- Which four demands were central to the 'Declaration of Rights' 1689?

Source 1

This document is a pamphlet written and circulated on behalf of James II addressed to Parliament, 1688, Catalogue ref: SP 31/4/217 f162

The King used this document to declare the legitimacy of his son, Prince James Francis Edward, born to his second wife, Mary of Modena. It was believed by many, that the baby had been smuggled into the birthing chamber to provide James II with a Catholic heir rather than Mary, his Protestant daughter from his first marriage to Anne Hyde. Mary was married to the Protestant William of Orange.

Catherine of Braganza was Queen Dowager of England, 1685–1692, the widow of Charles II, brother to James II.

- Why has James II made this address in this pamphlet?
- What techniques of persuasion are used to appeal to the Lords in the pamphlet?
- What is James II's opinion of William of Orange in this pamphlet?
- Why has James II included a statement from 'Catherine R' (Catherine of Braganza)?
- What is the purpose of including statements from other women about the birth of his son?
- What can we infer about James II's views about kingship in the pamphlet?

Tasks

- This document is printed, but it reads like a personal letter. What might this reveal about the document's audience and circulation at the time?
- How did religion become such a contentious issue in the reign of James II? How does this relate to the Declaration of Rights featured in the video?

Source 2

Pamphlet, entitled 'The Declaration of His Highness William Henry, by Grace of God, Prince of Orange'. Catalogue ref: SP 31/4/217 f186

- Why do you think William of Orange chose to publish this 'Declaration'?
- How does he justify his decision 'to appear in arms' in England?
- Who does William of Orange suggest is responsible for overturning 'the Religion, Laws, and Liberties' of the country?
- How does this document relate to Document 1, the pamphlet from James II?

Source 3

Extracts 3a-3c from the Enrolment of the Declaration of the 12 February of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons [the 'Declaration of Rights'] Catalogue ref: C 212/18/1

This document is the Declaration of Rights, also known as the Bill of Rights, which was created by the English Parliament in February 1689. It established the rights of the English citizens and the responsibilities of the monarchy.

Extract 3a

Extract 3a from the Enrolment of the Declaration of the 12 February of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons [the 'Declaration of Rights'] Catalogue ref: C 212/18/1

- Why is James criticised in the first instance in this document?
- What do the terms lords 'spiritual' and lords 'temporal' mean?

Tasks

- Why is James criticised in the first instance in this document?
- What do the terms lords 'spiritual' and lords 'temporal' mean?
- Why is this Declaration made by lords 'spiritual', lords 'temporal' and Commons in Westminster?

Extract 3b

Extract 3b from the Enrolment of the Declaration of the 12 February of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons [the 'Declaration of Rights'] Catalogue ref: C 212/18/1

- Is it accurate to say that James II 'abdicated the government' according to this extract of the 'Declaration of Rights'?
- What reason is given to justify William of Orange's invasion?
- Why is parliament due to sit in January 1688 [old style date]?
- What does the following statement from the Declaration mean: 'the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament is illegal'
- Why was this considered an important right for parliament and people?

Extract 3c

Extract 3c from the Enrolment of the Declaration of the 12 February of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons [the 'Declaration of Rights'] Catalogue ref: C 212/18/1

- What issue does each right listed in the 'Declaration' here address?
- This is an extract from the 'Declaration of Rights'. Find out what other rights were included in this 'Declaration'.

Source 4

Engraving printed by James Clark showing William and Mary Prince and Princess of Orange 1690. A large medal on a pedestal with busts of William III and Mary II in Roman style. 1690.
© The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-

Tasks

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- How does this engraving aim to reveal the power and permanence of William and Mary's monarchy? [Clue: comment on the Roman style of the work.]
- How can this artwork be considered as propaganda for William of Orange's invasion and joint monarchy?
- Why is the printed material shown as documents 1, 2 & 4 helpful for historians researching the causes of the Glorious Revolution? What can be understood from these forms propaganda?

Source 1: Pamphlet written and circulated on behalf of James II addressed to Parliament, 1688. Catalogue Ref: SP 31/4/217 f162

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(5)

Have called you together upon a very extraordinary Occasion; but extraordinary Diseases must have extraordinary Remedies. The Malicious Endeavours of my Enemies have so poisoned the Minds of some of my Subjects, that by the Reports I have from all hands, I have Reason to believe, That very many do not think this Son with which God hath blessed Me to be Mine, but a Supposed Child. But I may say, that by particular Providence, scarce any Prince was ever Born where there were so many Persons present, as this Birth-day I present you. I have taken this time to have the Matter Heard and Examined here, Expecting that the Prince of

B Orange,

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(6)

Orange, with the first Eastwardly Wind, will invade this Kingdom: And as I have often ventured My Life for the Nation before I came to the Crown, so I think My Self more obliged to do the same, now I am King; and do intend to go in Person against him, whereby I may be exposed to Accidents; and therefore I thought it necessary to have this now done, in order to satisfy the minds of My Subjects, and to prevent this Kingdom's being engaged in Blood and Confusion after My Death, desiring to do always what may contribute most to the Ease and Quiet of My Subjects, which I have shewed by Securing to them their Liberty of Conscience, and the Enjoyment of their Properties, which I will always preserve.

I have desired the Queen De-wager to give Her Self the trouble to come hither, to Declare what she knows of the Birth of My Son, and most

(7)

most of the Ladies, Lords, and other Persons who were present, are ready here to Depose upon Oath their Knowledge of this Matter.

Whereupon the Queen De-wager was pleased to say,

That when the King sent for her to the Queens Labour, she came as soon as she could, and never stirred from her till she was Delivered of the Prince of 1746.

Catherina R.

And

PLANTINOT OFFICE

(9)

Anne Countess of Aran Deposeeth,

That she went to the Queen from Whitehall, to St. James's as soon as she heard that her Majesty was in Labour: When she came, she found the Queen in Bed, complaining of little Pains: The Lady Swagers, Lady, Lady, Lady, Lady, and the Midwife, were on that side of the Bed where the Queen lay; and this Deponent, with a great many others, stood on the other side all the time till the Queen was Delivered: As soon as her Majesty was delivered, she said, O Lord, I don't hear the Child Cry, and immediately upon that, this Deponent did bear it up, and gave the Midwife, who carried it into the little Bed-Chamber, where she, this Deponent, followed her, and saw that it was a Son, and that likewise she, the Deponent, bathed several times, seen Milk run out upon the Queens Smock during her being with Child.

A. Aran.

Penelope Countess of Peterborough Deposeeth,

That she was often with the Queen, while her Majesty was laid with Child, and saw the Milk often upon her Majesties Smock, when she, the Deponent, took it off from the Queen; and often saw her Majesties Belly so as it could not be otherwise but that she was with Child. That the said Deponent stood by the Bedside on the 10th of June last in the Morning, while the Queen was Delivered of the Prince of 1746.

P. Peterborow.

C Anne

Source 1: Transcript

To whom His Majesty Spake to this effect.

My Lords

I have called you together upon a very extraordinary Occasion; but extraordinary Diseases must have extraordinary Remedies. The Malicious Endeavours of my Enemies have so poisoned the Minds of some of my Subjects, that by the Reports I have from all hands, I have Reason to believe, That very many do not think this Son with which God hath blessed ME, to be Mine, but a Supposed Child. But I may say that by particular Providence, scarce any Prince was ever Born where there were so many Persons present.

I have taken this time to have the matter Heard and Examined here, Expecting that the Prince of Orange, with the first Eastwardly Wind will Invade this Kingdom: And as I have often ventured My life for the Nation before I came to the Crown, So I think My Self more obliged to do the same, now I am KING, and do intend to go in person against him, whereby I may be exposed to Accidents and therefore I thought it necessary to have this now done in order to satisfy the minds of My Subjects and to prevent this Kingdom being engaged in confusion after My Death, desiring to do always what may contribute most to the Ease and Quiet of My Subjects which I have shewed by securing to them their Liberty of Conscience and the Enjoyment of their properties, which I will always preserve.

I have desired the Queen Dowager to give Her Self the trouble to give Herself the trouble to come hither, to declare what she knows of the Birth of My Son, and most of the Ladies, Lords and other Persons who were present are ready here to Depose upon Oath their Knowledge of this Matter.

Whereupon the Queen Dowager was pleased to say,

That when the King sent for her to the Queens Labour, she came as soon as she could, and never stirred from her till she was Delivered of the Prince of Wales.

Catherine R.

Source 1: Transcript (cont.)

...

Anne Countess of Aran Deposeth [person making a statement under oath]

That she went to the Queen from Whitehall to St James's as soon as she heard that her Majesty was in Labour; When she came, she found the Queen in Bed, complaining of little Pains: The Lady Sunderland, Lady Roscommon, Mrs Labadie, and the Midwife, were on the side of the bed where the Queen lay; and this Deponent, with a great many others, stood on the other side all the time till the Queen was Delivered; As soon as her Majesty was delivered, she said O Lord, I don't hear the Child cry, and immediately upon that, this Deponent did hear it Cry, and saw the Midwife take the Child out of the Bed, and give it to Mrs Labadie, who carried it into the little Bed-Chamber, where she, this Deponent, followed her, and saw that it was a Son, and that likewise she, the Deponent, hath several times seen milk run upon the Queen's Smock during her being with Child.

A. Aran

Penelope Countess of Peterborow, Deposeth

That she was often with the Queen, while her Majesty was last with child, and saw the Milk often upon her Majesties Smock, when she, the Deponent, took it off from the Queen; and often saw her Majesties Belly so as it could not be otherwise but that she was with child. That the said Deponent stood by the Bedside on the 10th June of last in the Morning while the Queen was Delivered of the Prince of Wales.

P. Peterbrow.

...

(1)

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THE
DECLARATION
OF HIS HIGHNESS

William Henry,

By the Grace of GOD,
PRINCE of ORANGE, &c.

Of the REASONS inducing Him,

To appear in Arms, in the Kingdom of *England*, for
Preserving of the Protestant Religion, and for
Restoring the Laws and Liberties of *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*.

IT is both certain and Evident, to all men, that the Publick Peace and Happiness of any State or Kingdom, cannot be preserved, where the Laws, Liberties, and Customs established, by the Lawful authority in it, are openly Transgressed and Annulled: More especially where the alteration of *Religion* is endeavoured, and that a *Religion* which is contrary to Law is endeavoured to be introduced: Upon which those who are most Immediately Concerned in it, are Indispensably bound, to endeavour to Preserve and maintain the established Laws, Liberties and Customs: and above all the *Religion* and Worship of God, that is Established among them: And to take such an effectual care, that the Inhabitants of the said State or Kingdom, may neither be deprived of their *Religion*, nor of their Civil Rights. Which is so much the more Necessary, because the Greatness and Security both of Kings, Royal Families, and of all such as are in Authority, as well as the Happiness of their Subjects and People, depend, in a most especial manner, upon the exact observation, and maintenance of these their Laws, Liberties, and Customs.

Upon these grounds it is, that we cannot any longer forbear, to Declare that to our great regret, we see that those Councillours, who have now the chief credit with the King, have overturned the *Religion*, Laws, and Liberties of those Realms: and subjected them in all things relating to their Consciences, Liberties, and Properties, to Arbitrary Government: and that not only by secret and indirect ways, but in open and undisguised manner.

Those Evil Counsellours, for the advancing and colouring this, with some plausible pretexs, did Invent and set on foot, the Kings *Dispensing Power*, by vertue of which, they

Source 2: Transcript

THE DECLARATION

OF HIS HIGHNESS

William Henry

by the Grace of GOD,

PRINCE of ORANGE, &c.

Of the REASONS inducing Him,

To appear in Arms, in the Kingdom of England, for

Preserving of the Protestant Religion, and for

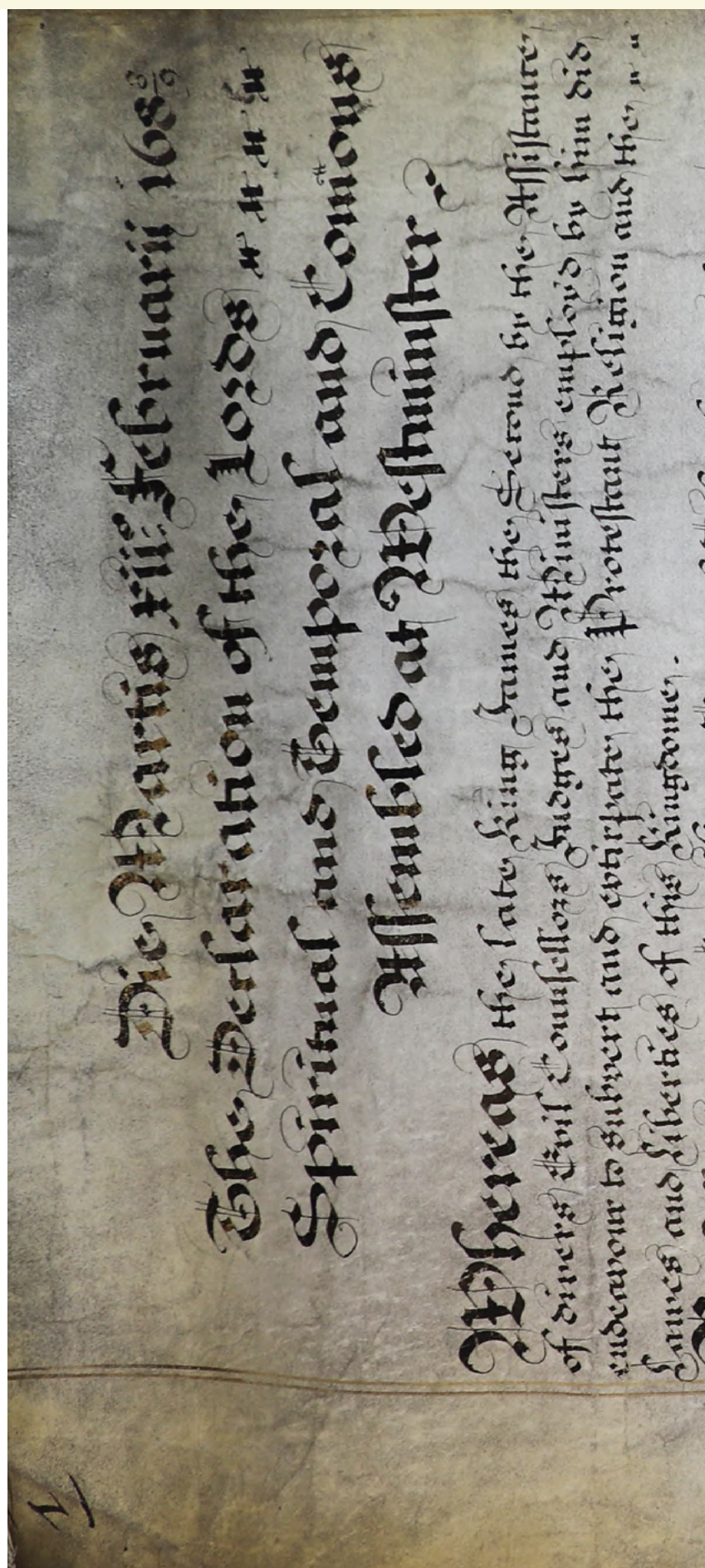
Restoring the Laws and Liberties of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

It is both certain and Evident, to all men, that the Publick Peace and Happiness of any State or Kingdom, cannot be preserved, where the Laws, Liberties, and Customs established, by the Lawful authority in it, are openly Transgressed [violated] and Annulled [cancelled]: More especially where the alteration of Religion is endeavoured, and that a Religion which is contrary to Law is endeavoured to be traduced [disgraced]: Upon which those who are most Immediately Concerned in it, are Indispensably bound to endeavour to Preserve and maintain the established Laws, Liberties and Customs; and above all the Religion and Worship of God, that is Established among them; And to take such an effectual care, that the Inhabitants of the said State or Kingdom, may neither be deprived of their Religion, nor of their Civil Rights. Which is so much the more Necessary, because the Greatness and Security both of Kings, Royal Families, and all such as are in Authority, as well as the Happiness of their Subjects and People, depend, in a most especial manner, upon the exact observation, and maintenance of these their Laws, Liberties, and Customs.

Upon these grounds it is, that we cannot any longer forbear, to Declare that to our great regret, we see that those Councillours, who have row the chief credit with the King, have overturned the Religion, Laws, and Liberties of those Realms: and subjected them in all things relating to their Consciences, Liberties, and Properties, to Arbitrary Government; and that not only by secret and indirect ways, but in open and undisguised manner. Those Evil Councillours, for the advancing and colouring this, with some plausible pretexts, did Invent and set on foot, the Kings Dispensing Power, by virtue of which they pretend...

Source 3a: Extract from the Enrolment of the 'Declaration of Rights'.

Catalogue Ref: C 212/18/1



Source 3a: Transcript

Die Martis xii Februarii 1689 [On Tuesday 12th February 1689]

The Declaration of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons Assembled at Westminster

Whereas the late King James the Second, by the assistance of divers [several] evil counsellors, judges and ministers employed by him, did endeavour to subvert and extirpate [destroy] the Protestant religion and the laws and liberties of this Kingdom:

...

Source 3b: Extract from the Enrolment of the 'Declaration of Rights'.

Catalogue Ref: C 212/18/1

And whereas the said late King James the Second having
abdicated the Government and the Throne, being thereby vacant.
His Highness the Prince of Orange (whom it has
pleased Almighty God ~~to~~ to make the glorious Instrument of delivering
this Kingdom from Popery and Arbitrary Power) did by the Advice of
the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and divers principal Persons of the
Commons cause Letters to be written to the Lords Spiritual and Temporal
being Protestants and other Letters to the several Counties Cities Universities
Burroughs and Cinque Ports for the choosing of such Persons to represent
them as were of Right to be sent to Parliament to meet and sit at Westminster
upon the One and Twentieth day of January in this year One Thousand
six hundred eighty eight in order to such an Establishment as that their
Religion Lives and Liberties might not again be in danger of being subverted
Upon which Letters Elections having been accordingly made.
And hereupon the said Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons
pursuant to their respective Letters and Elections being now assembled in a
full and free Representative of this Nation taking into their most serious
Consideration the best means for attaining the Ends aforesaid Do in the
first place (as their Ancestors in like case have usually done) for the
vindicting and Asserting their ancient Rights and Liberties Declare.
That the pretended Power of Suspending of Laws or the Execution of
Laws by Regal Authority without Consent of Parliament is illegal.

Source 3b: Transcript

...

And whereas the said late King James the Second having abdicated the government and the throne being thereby vacant, his Highness the Prince of Orange (whom it hath pleased Almighty God to make the glorious instrument of delivering this kingdom from popery and arbitrary [unrestrained] power) did (by the advice of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and divers principal persons of the Commons) cause letters to be written to the Lords Spiritual and Temporal being Protestants, and other letters to the several counties, cities, universities, boroughs and cinque ports, for the choosing of such persons to represent them as were of right to be sent to Parliament, to meet and sit at Westminster upon the two and twentieth day of January in this year one thousand six hundred eighty and eight [old style date], in order to such an establishment as that their religion, laws and liberties might not again be in danger of being subverted, upon which letters elections having been accordingly made.

And thereupon the said Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, pursuant [following] to their respective letters and elections, being now assembled in a full and free representative of this nation, taking into their most serious consideration the best means for attaining the ends aforesaid, do in the first place (as their ancestors in like case have usually done) for the vindicating and asserting their ancient rights and liberties declare

That the pretended [false] power of suspending the laws or the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament is illegal.

...

Source 3c: Extract from the Enrolment of the 'Declaration of Rights'.

Catalogue Ref: C 212/18/1

That levying of money for or to the use of the Crown by pretence of
Prerogative without Grant of Parliament for longer time or in other
manner than the same is or shall be granted is illegal.
That it is the Right of the Subjects to Petition the King and all
Commitments and Prosecutions for such Petitioning are illegal.
That the raising or keeping a standing Army within the Kingdom in time
of Peace unlesse it be with Consent of Parliament is against Law.

Source 3c: Transcript

...

That levying money [raising taxes] for or to the use of the Crown by pretence of prerogative [right], without grant of Parliament, for longer time, or in other manner than the same is or shall be granted, is illegal.

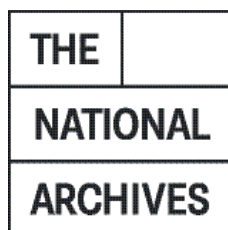
That it is the Right of the Subjects to Petition the King and ask Commitments and Pretension for such Petitioning are illegal.

That the raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with consent of Parliament, is against law.

...

Source 4: Engraving by James Clark showing William and Mary Prince and Princess of Orange 1690. © The Trustees of the British Museum.





Why do our hyperlinks come with footnotes?

Our resources are designed to be printed and used in classrooms, which means hyperlinks aren't always accessible digitally. We include the full link at the bottom of the page so that you can type in the address without distracting from the main text of the lesson materials.

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Our [Onsite Workshops](#) are available for free here at The National Archives and allow students to experience genuine original documents reflecting over 1000 years of history. From Elizabeth I's signature to the telegrams of the sinking Titanic, students love the wow-factor of being able to see real history on the desk in front of them.

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