# Queen Victoria survived seven assassination attempts, revealing Victorian society’s instability



On the latest episode of the Mail's podcast **Queens, Kings & Dastardly Things**, royal biographer Robert Hardman and historian Kate Williams delve into the fascinating history of Queen Victoria, who survived a remarkable seven assassination attempts—more than any other monarch in history. This multitude of threats against her reign not only reveals the complexities of Victorian society but also highlights the precarious nature of royal life during a time of political turmoil.

The first attack on Queen Victoria occurred in 1840 when she was just 21 years old and pregnant with her first child. Edward Oxford, an 18-year-old waiter, emerged from the crowd in Hyde Park wielding two pistols. As Williams narrates, Oxford's intentions were crafted as much by the political fervour of the time as by personal ambition. Lacking experience as a marksman, he missed his initial shot, but his plan aimed to catch the Queen's attention, hoping that the sound of the gunfire would prompt the carriage to halt, allowing him a closer shot. Ultimately unsuccessful, Oxford was apprehended after the crowd quickly overwhelmed him.

His motivations appear intertwined with the extremist ideals espoused by a group known as Young England, which sought a greater role for the monarchy in governance. Following his arrest, the context of the trial revealed the tumultuous public attitudes towards lunacy as a legal defence. Amidst much public discourse, the court found him not guilty on grounds of insanity, a verdict that Victoria herself found deeply unsatisfactory, describing it as “very stupid” in her journal. This decision exemplified the growing public discourse on mental health and its implications for justice in the 19th century.

Oxford's life took an unexpected turn after his release from Broadmoor Hospital, where he spent three years. The court's sentence not only spared his life but also allowed him the possibility of rehabilitation. Surprisingly, he managed to rebuild his existence in Australia, where he became a church warden and pursued a career as a journalist. “Oxford flourished in later life,” Williams remarked, adding nuance to the tragic narrative of an attempted assassin who instead led a relatively normal life far from his tumultuous past.

Victoria remained a target throughout her reign, with numerous assassination attempts illustrating not only the dangerous environment in which she ruled but also the societal challenges of the time. Quickly following Oxford's attempt were further attacks from individuals like John Francis and Robert Pate, each with their unique motivations rooted in political discontent and personal ideology. Historians point to the atmosphere of unrest and calls for political reform as significant factors contributing to the growing hostility directed at the monarch.

The imperilment of Queen Victoria's life encapsulated the sweeping changes of the Victorian era—an age marked by industrial growth, social upheaval, and evolving attitudes toward monarchy. The legacy of these attempts highlights a period during which the monarchy was both revered and reviled, caught between an expanding empire and the revolutionary fervour of those within it.

The podcast serves as a captivating exploration of these episodes, inviting listeners to reflect on the fraught relationship between the throne and its subjects. With a blend of history and spirited storytelling, Hardman and Williams's discussion is a reminder of the ever-volatile intersection of power and public sentiment.

To hear more about these stories from royal history, the podcast **Queens, Kings & Dastardly Things** is available on various platforms.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14731777/assassin-Queen-Victoria-avoid-death-penalty-Australian-journalist-New-Mail-podcast.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/5m5zjvDYrBMBGFJCFNmWgcY/the-seven-men-who-tried-to-kill-queen-victoria> - This BBC article discusses the seven assassination attempts on Queen Victoria, detailing each incident and the individuals involved. It highlights the first attempt by Edward Oxford in 1840, who fired at the Queen while she was pregnant. The article also covers subsequent attempts, including those by John Francis, Robert Pate, and others, providing insights into the motives and outcomes of each case.
3. <https://www.history.com/news/eight-times-queen-victoria-survived-attempted-assassinations> - This History.com article outlines eight assassination attempts on Queen Victoria during her reign. It provides detailed accounts of each attempt, including the first by Edward Oxford in 1840, and discusses the outcomes and historical context of these events, shedding light on the challenges faced by the monarch.
4. <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Queen-Victoria-Eight-Assassination-Attempts/> - This Historic UK article provides an overview of eight assassination attempts on Queen Victoria. It details each incident, starting with Edward Oxford's attempt in 1840, and discusses the individuals involved, their motives, and the consequences of their actions, offering a comprehensive look at the threats faced by the Queen.
5. <https://www.historyanswers.co.uk/kings-queens/edward-oxford-the-maniacal-pot-boy-who-nearly-killed-queen-victoria/> - This article from History Answers delves into the life of Edward Oxford, the first person to attempt assassinating Queen Victoria in 1840. It explores his background, the details of the assassination attempt, his trial, and subsequent life, providing a detailed portrait of this historical figure.
6. <https://royalcentral.co.uk/features/regicide-how-victoria-survived-seven-assassination-attempts-part-one-24449/> - This Royal Central article is the first part of a series examining how Queen Victoria survived seven assassination attempts. It focuses on the first attempt by Edward Oxford in 1840, providing a detailed account of the incident and its aftermath, and sets the stage for the subsequent attempts.
7. <https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/queen-victoria-assassination-attempts/> - This History Extra article discusses the seven assassination attempts on Queen Victoria, providing insights into the individuals who attempted to harm her, their motives, and the outcomes of each incident. It offers a comprehensive look at the challenges faced by the Queen during her reign.