

# History at Kensington Palace

Your short guide to the history of Kensington Palace



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# Key Kensington Characters

## William III and Mary II (r.1689-1702)



- ❖ Famous for being the only British monarchs to have ruled jointly
- ❖ Bought Nottingham House for £20,000 in 1689 and transformed it into Kensington Palace
- ❖ Mary was a great homemaker, she had a massive collection of ceramics which were arranged in her rooms at Kensington Palace
- ❖ In 1694 Mary died suddenly of smallpox at Kensington Palace
- ❖ In 1702 William dies at Kensington Palace following a riding accident at Hampton Court Palace

## Queen Anne (r.1702-1714)



- ❖ Sister to Mary II, Queen Anne ascended the throne following William III's death
- ❖ Anne's greatest achievement was the Act of Union (1707) which saw England and Scotland join to create a single Kingdom
- ❖ Anne spent £26,000 on improving the gardens at Kensington, including the construction of the Orangery
- ❖ Anne had eighteen pregnancies, most resulted in miscarriages and only one child, William, lived more than a year. William died when he was eleven years old.
- ❖ In 1714 Queen Anne died at Kensington Palace

## George I (r.1714-1727)



- ❖ George I was born in Hanover, Germany
- ❖ In October 1714 George became King of England and visited Kensington Palace for the first time
- ❖ George was an unpopular monarch and struggled to learn English
- ❖ In the spring of 1726 George I brought Peter the Wild Boy, a feral child from Germany, to the Kensington Court
- ❖ George I died on 11 June 1727 during a visit to Hanover and was succeeded by his son, George II

## George II (r.1727-1760)



- 👑 George II and his wife, Queen Caroline moved into Kensington Palace following the death of George I
- 👑 George II and Queen Caroline had 9 children
- 👑 George quarrelled constantly with his eldest son, Frederick, Prince of Wales and 1737 he banished Frederick, his wife and their family from court
- 👑 George II died on 25 October 1760 on the toilet at Kensington Palace

## Queen Victoria (r. 1837-1901)



- 👑 On 24 May 1819 Princess Victoria was born at Kensington Palace where she spent her childhood
- 👑 The young princess loved dancing, riding, drawing and her pet dog, Dash
- 👑 At Kensington Palace just weeks after her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, Victoria was told she was going to be Queen
- 👑 Victoria met her future husband, Prince Albert, at Kensington Palace

## Princess Margaret



- 👑 Princess Margaret was the younger sister of our current Queen
- 👑 Margaret was extremely stylish and fond of parties
- 👑 Margaret lived at Kensington Palace for nearly 42 years until her death in February 2002

## Diana, Princess of Wales



- 👑 Diana, Princess of Wales was married to Prince Charles and mother to Prince William and Prince Harry
- 👑 Diana's engagement ring cost £30,000 and it is estimated the her wedding to Prince Charles was watched by 750,000,000 worldwide
- 👑 She lived at Kensington Palace from the time of her wedding (29 July 1981) until her death on 31 August 1997
- 👑 Diana' tragic death in Paris in 1997 shocked the world and Kensington Palace became the focus of public mourning in London. Flowers appeared at the front of the south gates of the palace, it is estimated more than a million bouquets were left there. Kensington Palace stayed open for 24 hours to cope with the 136,000 mourners would came to sign the condolence books

# Kensington Palace: A Building History

1686	William III and Mary II bought Nottingham House to escape the grime of Whitehall. They instructed Sir Christopher Wren to improve the house and it became Kensington Palace.
1691	A fire destroyed part of the southern range of the Great Court. This led to a complete remodelling of the approach to the Royal Apartments.
1695	William added The King's Gallery.
1704-1705	Queen Anne improved the gardens of Kensington Palace and built the Orangery.
1714-1727	The core of the old Nottingham House was replaced with three new state rooms; the Privy Chamber, the Cupola Room and the Withdrawing Room. William Kent devised decoration and hung pictures in nearly all the royal apartments as well as painting the King's Grand Staircase.
1727-1760	Kensington Palace changed little structurally during this period, however following the death of Queen Caroline in 1737 large parts fell into disuse.
Early 1830s	The Duchess of Kent extended her apartments into the unused State Apartments on the second floor.
1832	The Duchess of Kent partitioned the King's Gallery into 3 rooms for the use of Princess (later Queen) Victoria.
19 <sup>th</sup> Century	The State Apartments were sadly neglected during the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century. They were used as stores for various paintings and furniture from other palaces.
1897	Queen Victoria's love for the palace she grew up in saved Kensington. Parliament was persuaded to pay for the restoration of the State Apartments on the condition that they should be opened to the public.
1899	The State Apartments were opened to the public on Queen Victoria's 80 <sup>th</sup> birthday (24 May 1899).
1911	The State Apartments were given over to the newly founded London Museum.
1914	The London Museum moved and the State Apartments were closed. During World War I (1914-1918) Kensington was used as offices by charitable organisations.
1923	The Palace re opened
1932-1933	The three rooms associated with Queen Victoria were restored and rearranged.
1939-1945	Bomb damage during World War II left the State Apartments badly affected, particularly the Queen's Apartments and the Palace was closed.
1949-1950	The Palace reopened and the London Museum returned, it remained at Kensington for a quarter of a century.
Today	Kensington continues its long history as a residence for members of the Royal Family.