



HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

# COMMUNITY ACCESS SCHEME

KENSINGTON PALACE RESOURCE GUIDE

**SPACE TO STIR AND BE STIRRED**

TOWER OF LONDON · HAMPTON COURT PALACE · BANQUETING HOUSE  
KENSINGTON PALACE · KEW PALACE · HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE AND GARDENS

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	5
How CAS works .....	6
Getting to Kensington Palace .....	8
Guidelines for group visits .....	10
History of Kensington Palace .....	13
Notable people of Kensington Palace .....	20
Kensington Palace timeline .....	28
Exploring Kensington Palace, room by room .....	30
Contact information .....	47



## INTRODUCTION

Kensington Palace has a long history of being a multicultural palace. The palace was built by William III and Mary II after their arrival from the Netherlands, transformed by George I, Britain's German king, and established as a visitor attraction by Queen Victoria. For over 325 years, Kensington Palace has been a place for international visitors, as both a royal palace and now as a world famous tourist attraction.

Kensington Palace's multicultural history is reflected in its surrounding communities. Situated in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and neighboured by the City of Westminster and Hammersmith and Fulham, our local communities are some of the most diverse in the United Kingdom.

To celebrate and involve our local communities we run the 'Community Access Scheme'. This aims to enable more people to make personal connections with our palaces and help everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society, in some of the greatest palaces ever built. This resource guide aims to support group leaders to plan visits for their groups to Kensington Palace.

## COMMUNITY ACCESS SCHEME

The Community Access Scheme (CAS) at Kensington Palace is for community groups based in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, the City of Westminster, Brent, Camden and Ealing. In addition to providing free access to Kensington Palace, this programme aims to engage local people with the stories and historic spaces in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them. We do this by training up and supporting group leaders to lead visits for their groups.

Through this programme, we hope local community members gain a sense of ownership and belonging at Kensington Palace, especially those who might not normally visit the palaces or see them as places of interest for them.

CAS is a free programme. It consists of a one-day training for group leaders, free group visits, discount entry tickets for return, independent visits and staff support to help group leaders plan visits.

CAS membership enables groups to visit our other London palaces: Tower of London and Hampton Court.

Training sessions are normally available twice a year (spring and autumn).

### How CAS works

1. Group leaders attend a one-day training at Kensington Palace where they learn about the palace's history and characters, as well as practicalities for visiting with their group.
2. Group leaders sign and return the CAS service level agreement (SLA) to Kim Klug. Once Kim signs and returns a copy to group leaders, they become 'CAS leaders'.
3. CAS leaders receive unique CAS cards that gives them and their groups free entry to the palace (terms & conditions are outlined in CAS SLA).
4. Throughout the year, CAS leaders will receive email updates about relevant offers and news from the Community Partnerships team.
5. CAS leaders will be invited to events to share, celebrate and learn how other CAS leaders are using the palaces' stories and spaces with their groups.
6. Every year CAS leaders will be asked to sign a new SLA to continue being a part of the scheme. Eligibility will be subject to a review of their engagement through the year.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT TO KENSINGTON PALACE

The Community Partnerships team delivers CAS across the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace and Hillsborough Castle. Groups leaders have a 'home' palace which is based on where their organisation is located. There is dedicated staff member at each 'home' palace to support CAS group leaders.

**Kim Klug**, Community Partnerships Manager, is the contact at Kensington Palace.

Email: [kim.klug@hrp.org.uk](mailto:kim.klug@hrp.org.uk)

Tel: 020 3166 6630

Mob: 07814 452 690

To book your visit to Kensington Palace, email/phone Kim with the following information:

- Date(s) you would like to visit (Wednesdays-Fridays)
- Time you plan to arrive at / enter the palace
- Number of people visiting (including yourself, 20 people maximum)
- If you require a learning space or mobility support

**We require three-weeks minimum notice to book visits. All requests are subject to ticket availability and staff capacity to support on the day.**

## GETTING TO KENSINGTON PALACE

Kensington Palace can be reached by many forms of public transport.

### London Underground and Trains

- High Street Kensington station (*10 minute walk*) – for the District and Circle lines
- Queensway station (*10 minute walk*) – for the Central line
- Notting Hill Gate station (*20-25 minute walk*) – for Central, District and Circle lines
- Paddington station (*20 minute walk*) - for National Rail

### Bus

- Routes 70, 94 and 148 stop along Bayswater Road
- Routes 9, 49, 52, 70 and 452 stop along Kensington High Street

### Drop off/collection

Taxi drop off and collection is available at Kensington Palace on request only. Please call Kim to book this in advance of your visit.

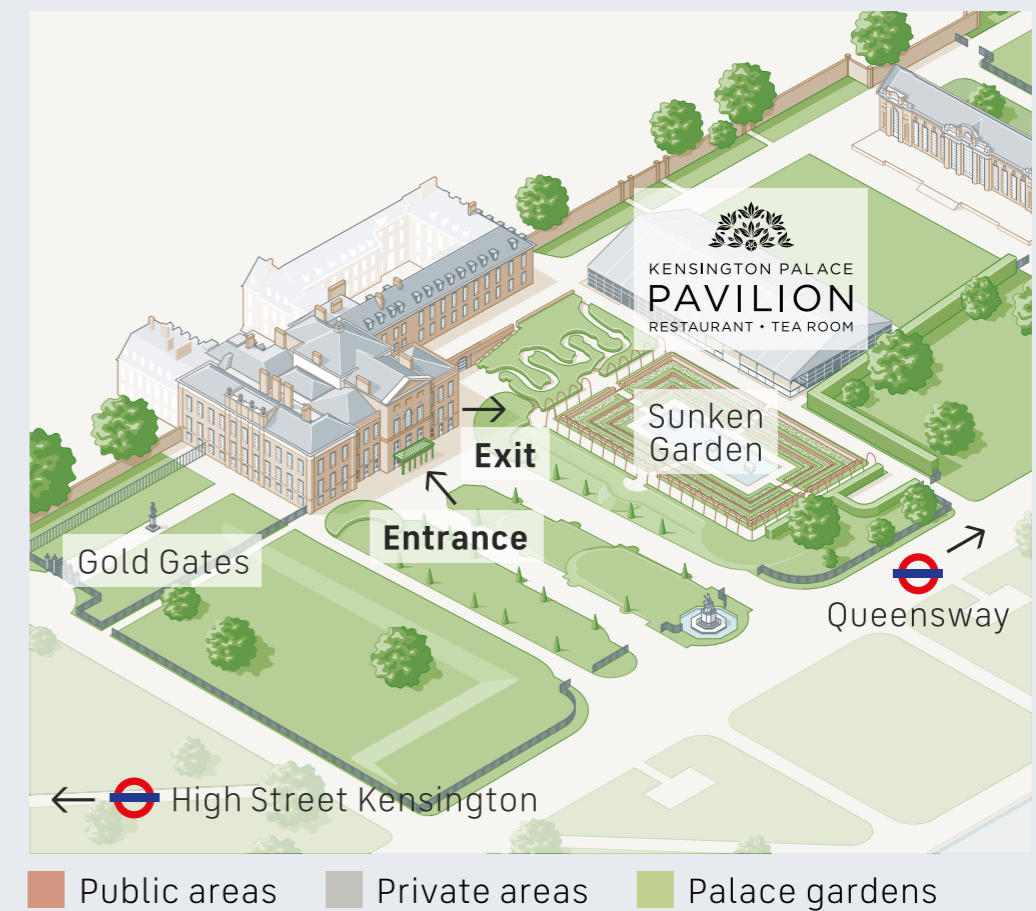
### Parking

Accessible parking is currently not available due to the building works in the Orangery area.

### Mobility support

Manual wheelchairs and portable seating are available to use free of charge, on a first come first served basis. Please ask a member of staff if you require support.

## THE PALACE AND GARDENS



## GUIDELINES FOR GROUP VISITS

Our palace interiors and collections are very precious and unique. Below are some ways you and your group can help us preserve our palaces for years to come.

### Guidelines for general behaviours:

- CAS leaders are fully responsible for their group members and their behaviour in the palace
- CAS leaders and group members must be considerate of other palace visitors and staff at all times
- CAS leaders and group members must carry their visitor ticket with them throughout their visit
- CAS leaders must ensure group members remain with the group and do not wander into restricted areas of the palace
- CAS leaders and group members must abide by instructions from HRP staff when visiting the palace (e.g. leaving the palace during fire alarm)

### Health and safety guidelines:

- CAS leaders must create their own risk assessment for their group visit and activity
- CAS leaders and group members must not plug in any electronic equipment without receiving permission from HRP staff (this includes mobile phones)
- CAS leaders and group members must take care when moving around the palaces as these historic buildings have uneven floors, awkward doorways and low lighting levels



### Conservation guidelines:

- CAS leaders and group members must not touch or lean on objects or walls
- CAS leaders and group members are only permitted to eat or drink in the designated areas
- CAS leaders and group members must leave all bulky items (e.g. bags) in learning spaces, lockers or reception storage before exploring the palace
- No objects may be moved; this includes interpretation
- No equipment or supplies can have contact with the objects on display
- No flash photography is permitted in the palace. If photography is restricted in some spaces, there are signs indicating this
- No tripods or selfie sticks are permitted in the palace
- No filming is permitted in the palace
- CAS leaders and group members must not use prohibited materials when visiting: open flame, fresh flowers, some art materials, sprays/aerosols



## THE HISTORY OF KENSINGTON PALACE

The palace was once a small and suburban villa, known as Nottingham House. New monarchs William III and Mary II chose this modest mansion in 1689 to be their country retreat. Over the years, Stuart and Georgian monarchs transformed the palace into a fashionable home for Britain's young royal families.



## WILLIAM III AND MARY II (r. 1689-1702)

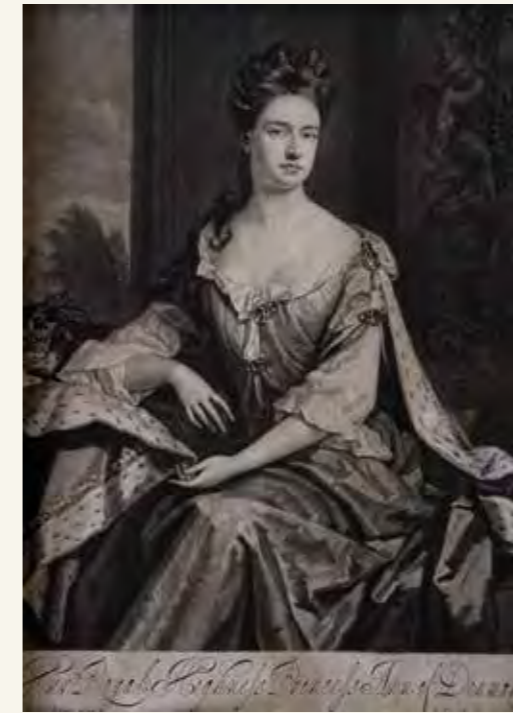
Newly crowned joint monarchs William III and Mary II first lived in Whitehall Palace, in the heart of London. However, the smoke and damp of the city, and long travelling time from their more rural home at Hampton Court spurred them to search for a new home within easy access to Parliament.

In 1689, William and Mary commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to draw up plans, but Mary, excited by the project, took charge of the project to transform this little house into a palace. She made regular visits to check on progress and to hurry the work along.

Mary's urging on the workers had disastrous consequences. In November 1689 part of a newly built wall collapsed. One man was killed and others badly injured. It happened minutes after the Queen had toured the site. A shaken Mary wrote to her husband of the incident: 'It shewed me the hand of God plainly in it, and I was truly humbled'. Despite the setback, the palace was soon finished, and William and Mary moved in on Christmas Eve 1689.

William and Mary began an era of magnificent balls in a golden three-year period, beginning in 1691. Guests ate, drank, gambled and flirted until dawn. Once or twice a week the King and Queen held Drawing Rooms, where they mingled with distinguished visitors such as ambassadors or foreign princes.

When Mary died from smallpox at Christmas 1694, William lost his enthusiasm for these grand entertainments and instead held more sedate evenings and concerts. Despite his grief, William finished the building with a grand gallery range to the south of the palace, enlarging Sir Christopher Wren's original plan. It was here that the King caught a fatal chill, exacerbated by injuries after a horse riding accident days earlier at Hampton Court. His death in 1702 was followed by the reign of Queen Anne.



## QUEEN ANNE (r. 1702-1714)

Queen Anne moved from palace to palace, in between bouts of ill health and 17 pregnancies. Sadly, none of her children lived to succeed her.

As reigning queen, Anne used the King's Apartments at Kensington, while her husband Prince George of Denmark used the Queen's Apartments. The Queen spent little time at Kensington, preferring Hampton Court Palace, as she enjoyed hunting there in the extensive palace grounds.

Queen Anne was not a great builder, but she contributed much to the design of the gardens. At Kensington in the summer of 1704, Anne came up with the idea for a new 'greenhouse' with a terrace where she could grow trees and exotic plants in ceramic pots. This idea became the Orangery, completed in 1705. The Queen loved her Orangery and used it to host summer parties at Kensington.





## GEORGE I (r. 1714-1727)

George I succeeded to the throne when Queen Anne died in 1714. He found Kensington 'very agreeable'. Despite the palace only being 25 years old, it suffered from structural damage and was in need of major repairs. George I took this opportunity to work with William Kent, an upcoming artist designer and architect, to enlarge and redecorate the staterooms. He wanted to create grand interiors that would reflect his majestic tastes and impress his new British court.

Unfortunately for George I, he died in 1727, shortly after the renovations were completed, so he never fully enjoyed his apartments.



## GEORGE II (r. 1727-1760)

The King's State Apartments were much loved and used by George II and Queen Caroline, George I's son and daughter-in-law. They invigorated court life at Kensington, hosting lavish receptions and leading society life with sparkle. Caroline held intellectual salons, where the brightest minds in arts and sciences gathered. She also helped shape the design of the palace gardens.

After Queen Caroline's death in 1737, the glittering age of Kensington Palace came to an end with large parts of palace falling into disuse. When George II died in 1760, no reigning monarch then slept within the palace walls for almost 70 years. His grandson, George III, disliked the palace and never stayed there.



## VICTORIA (r. 1837-1901)

Since George III did not want to live at Kensington Palace, he granted apartments to other family members of the royal family. Among them was his fourth son Edward, Duke of Kent. His wife German duchess, Victoire, gave birth to a baby girl in 1819 at Kensington Palace. She was christened Alexandrina Victoria (later Queen Victoria), and baptised in the splendour of the Cupola Room. Edward died eight months later, leaving the Duchess to raise Victoria alone.

The Duchess of Kent did her best to educate and protect Victoria, the girl who might one day become queen. Victoria was educated almost entirely within the confines of the palace. Her daily programme of lessons, known as the 'Kensington System' was judged by some to be harsh.

Frequent trips to the theatre, daily rides in the gardens and her favourite dog Dash punctuated Victoria's early days. However, Victoria saw virtually no other children and was kept away from life at court. Later in her life, the Queen recalled a childhood full of 'painful and disagreeable' scenes, but she also enjoyed life at Kensington.

On the morning of 20 June 1837, Princess Victoria woke up to be told that her uncle King William IV had died and that she was now queen. She held her first Privy Council meeting that day in the Red Saloon and a few weeks later departed for Buckingham Palace, admitting she would miss the 'poor old palace'.



## THE 'AUNT HEAP'

After Victoria left for Buckingham Palace, Kensington took on a new quiet life as a royal 'dormitory'. It was home to several minor members of the royal family.

As well as her eccentric uncle, the Duke of Sussex, Queen Victoria lodged two of her daughters here - Princess Beatrice and Princess Louise, a talented sculptor. Louise designed the iconic statue of Queen Victoria on the East Front and it was unveiled in 1893 to celebrate Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

In 1899, Queen Victoria opened the State Apartments to the public. This pattern continued through the 1900s as parts of the palace remained open to the public while members of the royal family and loyal staff occupied the numerous private apartments. As the royal inhabitants aged, the palace became known as the 'Aunt Heap'.

## MODERN ROYALS

After World War II, with the old Victorian princesses long departed, a new generation came to Kensington Palace. Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon lived at Kensington with their young family in the 1960s. The couple created fashionable interiors, in which they hosted many parties for celebrity guests, pop stars and artists.

Prince Charles and Diana, Princess of Wales lived at Kensington after their wedding in 1981. Their sons, Prince William and Prince Harry, grew up there.

## TODAY

The palace remains home to members of the royal family, including TRH The Prince and Princess of Wales and their children.

In 2012, Historic Royal Palaces completed major refurbishments at Kensington. With a grand new entrance and new gardens that echo 18th-century designs, Kensington Palace has been restored to the prominence of its heyday.



## NOTABLE PEOPLE AT KENSINGTON PALACE

Not everyone who left their mark at Kensington Palace was royal. Some of the most interesting personalities were courtiers, servants or friends. Below are some of the palace's most notable personalities.

### SARAH CHURCHILL, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH: QUEEN ANNE'S FAVOURITE

Sarah, the daughter of an impoverished gentry family, was Queen Anne's 'favourite', her closest friend and political advisor. She wielded power on Anne's behalf whilst accruing money and influence for herself and her husband, John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough. Their close friendship is said to have caused a rift between Anne and her sister, Queen Mary II.

After decades of friendship, Anne and Sarah had their final, terrible argument on 6 April 1710 at Kensington Palace. This was down to a new 'favourite' at court, Abigail Masham, who was gaining political influence and allying Anne with the Marlborough's rivals.

Upon leaving Anne's court, Sarah attempted to blackmail the Queen, threatening to publish their private correspondence. Sarah's political

allies spread rumours that Anne and Abigail's relationship was physical, talking of 'dark deeds at night'. In doing so, Sarah ensured her own notoriety and influenced history's view of Anne forever.



### WILLIAM KENT: GEORGE I'S ARTIST

William Kent was a man of many talents. As well as an architect, interior designer and painter, he was also an innovative designer of furniture and particularly of gardens. Kent was introduced to George I just as the King was embarking on an ambitious plan to rebuild Kensington Palace's King's State Apartments. The King needed an artist to decorate his new Cupola Room. William Kent won the project after submitting the lowest estimate for the work and subsequently went on to decorate all the rooms within the King's State Apartments. He also provided much inspiration for the layout of the gardens at Kensington. William Kent was also known as Kentino or the Signior to his many friends.



*You can spot William Kent wearing a brown turban on the ceiling of the King's Staircase, which he himself designed! You can find out more about the King's Staircase on page 39 of this resource.*

### MOHAMMED AND MUSTAPHA: GEORGE I'S SERVANTS

Mohammed and Mustapha were two of George I's closest servants. Both originated from Turkey (Mustapha was captured in battle against the Ottoman Empire). They served the King in Hanover and traveled with him to Great Britain. Their high status within the court sparked jealousy from British noblemen, often fueling prejudices, unfounded gossip and rumours.



### PETER THE WILD BOY: GEORGIAN CELEBRITY

Peter the Wild Boy was a teenage boy found naked and completely silent living in the woods near Hanover in summer 1725. At the time, people described Peter's actions as ape-like, walking on all fours and climbing trees at great speed. He was brought to London in the spring of 1726 and spent time at the courts of George I and the Prince and Princess of Wales, George Augustus and Caroline, for amusement. Peter became a celebrity in London. Daniel Defoe wrote a book about him, a wax figure of him was exhibited in the Strand and his portrait was included as one of the members of George I's court on the King's Staircase at Kensington Palace.

After George I's death 1727, Peter was passed into the care of a yeoman

farmer in Hertfordshire who was awarded a pension to care for the boy. At this time, it was said Peter apparently understood what was said to him quite well but could only say the words 'Peter' and 'King George'. Peter was in the habit of wandering off and was fitted with a collar, which is still preserved in the collection of Berkhamstead Collegiate School.

Peter's gravestone can still be seen in the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Northchurch in Hertfordshire.

### QUEEN CAROLINE: GEORGE II'S CONSORT

Born in 1683 in Anspach, a German state, Caroline was orphaned at an early age and moved from court to minor court by relations throughout Germany. Caroline met George Augustus (later George II) when he was disguised as a private gentleman. He fell in love with her instantly and declared his hand. They married in 1705.

Caroline was well known for her intellect, humour and beauty. She was interested in radical religion, art, science, and mathematics. She spoke three languages: German, French and English. As Queen, she often stitched up political business behind the scenes and entertained in the Privy Chamber at Kensington Palace. She famously mediated an argument between her two 'pet' philosophers Sir Isaac Newton and Gottfried Leibniz about which one of them discovered calculus. She also publicly placed her faith in medicine by having her children inoculated against smallpox causing uproar.





### **HENRIETTA HOWARD:** GEORGE II'S MISTRESS

When Henrietta Howard was 16 years old, her father was killed in a duel. She believed that a marriage to the 30-year-old Charles Howard, younger brother of the Earl of Suffolk, would provide security. This was a terrible mistake. Howard proved to be a 'drunken, extravagant, brutal' scoundrel, wasting their money in gaming houses and brothels.

Trapped in an abusive marriage and plunged into poverty, Henrietta refused to accept her circumstances. She sold her long brown hair to a wig-maker in exchange for the money to fund a journey to the Hanoverian court. She hoped to curry favour with the dynasty which would inherit the throne of Great Britain on Queen Anne's death. Her plan was a success. She accepted two roles within the royal court: Caroline's personal servant and George Augustus' mistress. Her dual roles of mistress and servant were not always easy to reconcile, requiring great tact and diplomacy. Henrietta Howard was described by her contemporaries as handsome, witty and intelligent.

In 1731, Henrietta's fortune changed. She inherited a considerable sum of money from the Earl of Suffolk, her husband's older brother, and gained the title Countess of Suffolk. She was widowed in 1733 and, after 20 years of court service, she retired from her roles as Caroline's Mistress of the Robes and George II's mistress. For the first time in her life, Henrietta had plenty of money and a little leisure time. She built Marble Hill, a villa along the Thames in West London. In 1735, she remarried for love.

### **SIR JOHN CONROY:** AN AMBITIOUS ADVISOR

Sir John Conroy was equerry or personal assistant to Edward, Duke of Kent (Victoria's father). When the Duke of Kent died shortly after Victoria was born, Sir John Conroy became comptroller to Duchess of Kent (Victoria's mother). The ambitious Conroy appointed himself Victoria's personal secretary. He aimed to gain influence and power by asserting control over the future queen.

Conroy developed a close relationship with the Duchess, and together they developed the 'Kensington System', a rigid set of rules Victoria lived by when growing up at Kensington Palace. These rules were a method for protecting and enhancing their power by keeping Victoria under their control. Despite this, Victoria immediately dismissed him from her household when she ascended to the throne.



## BARONESS LOUISE LEHZEN: VICTORIA'S GOVERNESS

Baroness Louise Lehzen was Victoria's governess of early childhood. One of the rules in the 'Kensington System' was that Victoria was never allowed out of the sight of an adult. Therefore, Victoria spent a lot of time with Baroness Lehzen who became a close and trusted confidante to the young princess. Lehzen retained a profound influence over the Queen even after her marriage in 1840. Their close relationship sparked arguments



between Victoria and Albert – he viewed Lehzen as an interfering, manipulative gossip. Eventually the Queen released her from service in 1842. They continued to correspond until the Baroness' death in 1870.

## PRINCE ALBERT: VICTORIA'S CONSORT

Prince Albert (1819-1861) was Victoria's husband. As an eligible young royal, Victoria drew suitors from across Europe. Her uncle Leopold favoured her cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg and Gotha. After his visit to Kensington Palace in 1836, Victoria wrote to her uncle of Albert's kindness and goodness, as well as his 'pleasing and delightful exterior.' They played piano duets, attended the opera and even shared singing lessons. Victoria's one criticism seems to have been of Albert's lack of stamina for late-night socialising. By the time Victoria and Albert met again in October 1839, these initial feelings of admiration had blossomed into love. Albert was 'perfection; perfection in every way.'



Five days after his arrival in England, Victoria proposed to him, and he accepted. Throughout their marriage, the intensity of their love seems never to have diminished. When Albert died in 1861, Victoria was dealt an emotional blow from which she never truly recovered. She had lost her 'guardian angel, the best of husbands and the most noble of men.'

## PRINCESS LOUISE: THE REBELLIOUS DAUGHTER

Princess Louise (1848-1939) was Victoria and Albert's sixth child. Princess Louise was considered the most intelligent children and had a sparky personality. Victoria attributed this to her being born in the year of revolution, 'She was born in the most eventful times and ought to be something peculiar in consequence.'

Princess Louise was one of the few women sculptors of the 19th century. By the age of 20 she had exhibited at the Royal Academy. She moved to Kensington Palace with her husband, the Marquis of Lorne, in 1873. Queen Victoria was delighted that one of her children should be living in her old home. Almost immediately after her arrival at Kensington, Princess Louise built her first studio. Her most famous work, a marble statue of Queen Victoria at the time of her accession, stands outside the East Front of the palace.



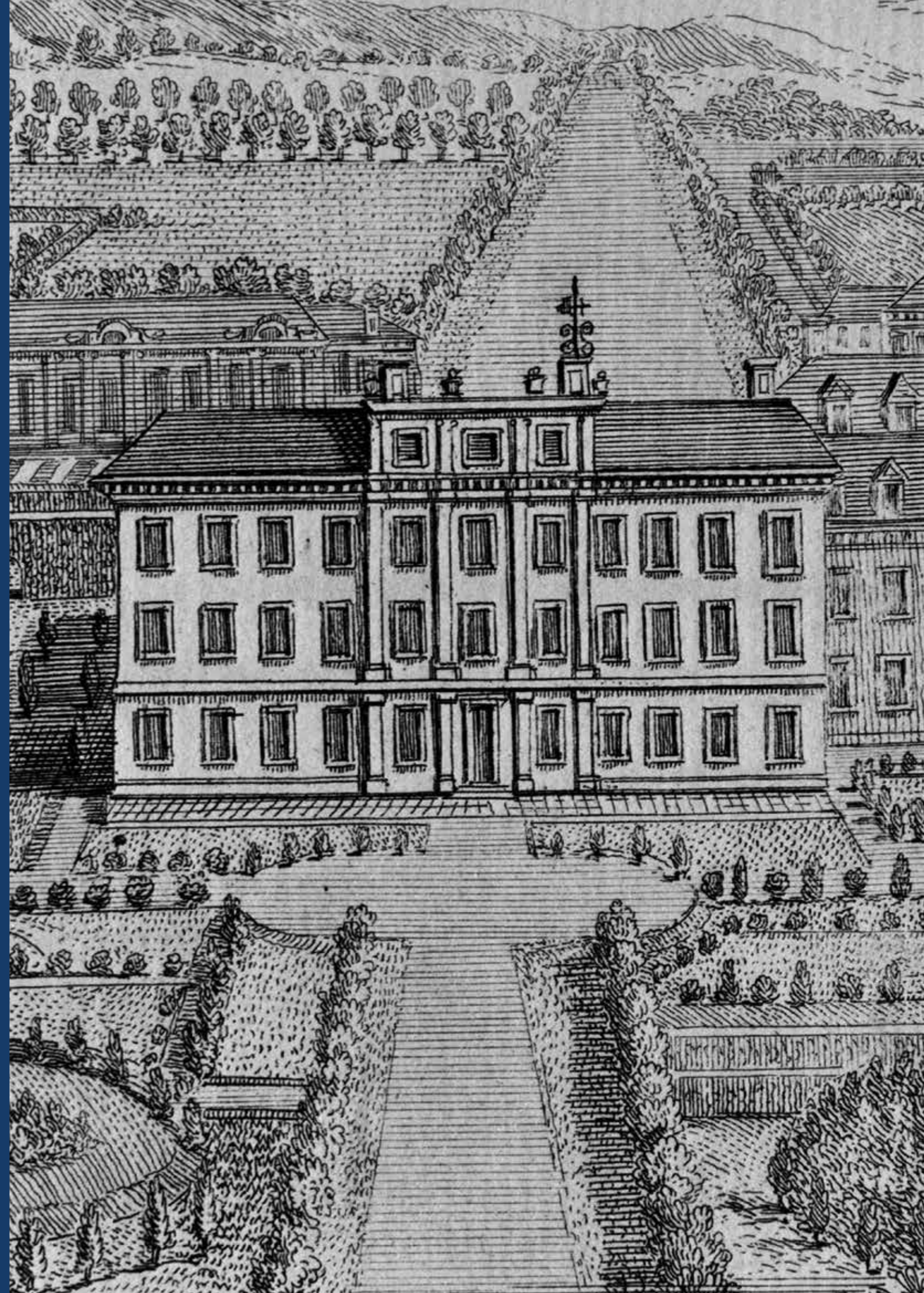
## KENSINGTON PALACE TIMELINE

- 1689** 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.
- 1694** Mary II dies from smallpox at Kensington Palace. William III continues to reign.
- 1702** William III dies, leaving Anne, Mary's younger sister, to become queen.
- 1705** Queen Anne improved the gardens of Kensington Palace and built the Orangery.
- 1714** Queen Anne dies, leaving no heirs. The crown passes to George, Elector of Hanover.
- 1714–1727** George I redecorates the King's State Apartments making them very grand. This includes the addition of three new staterooms: the Privy Chamber, the Cupola Room and the Drawing Room.
- 1727** George I dies, leaving his son, George Augustus to become King George II.
- 1727–1737** George II and his wife, Queen Caroline, have big parties at Kensington Palace. This is known as the 'golden age' of court at the palace, which ends when Caroline dies in 1737.
- 1727–1760** Kensington Palace changed little structurally during this period, however following the death of Queen Caroline in 1737, large parts fell into disuse.
- 1760** George II dies. The new king, his grandson George III, does not want to live at Kensington Palace. It becomes the home of minor royals.
- 1819** Princess Victoria, later Queen Victoria, is born at Kensington Palace.
- 1837** Victoria becomes queen at Kensington Palace. She moves to Buckingham Palace shortly after. The palace becomes home to minor royals, including some of her children.
- 1897** The State Apartments were neglected during the 19th century and in need of major repair. Queen Victoria persuaded Parliament to save her childhood home. They agreed 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 80th 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.
- 1960s** Princess Margaret resided at Kensington Palace for nearly 42 years.
- 1981** Kensington Palace is home to Prince Charles and Princess Diana when they are married. It was the childhood home of Prince William and Prince Harry.
- 1997** Diana, Princess of Wales, continued to live at the palace until her death in 1997. Kensington Palace became the focus of public mourning in London.
- Today** Kensington continues its long history as a residence for members of the Royal Family.

# EXPLORING KENSINGTON PALACE, ROOM BY ROOM

Kensington Palace became a royal home in 1689 when King William III and Queen Mary II bought what was then known as Nottingham House and transformed it into a grand residence.

Over the following centuries many other kings and queens, princes and princesses have lived here, extending it and enhancing it to suit their own tastes. Today it is a palace of two halves - one private and still lived in by members of the Royal Family, and the other open to the public since 1899, which you can explore today.







## THINGS TO SEE:

There are three permanent visitor routes:

**QUEEN'S STATE APARTMENTS:**  
LATE STUARTS (WILLIAM III, MARY II AND QUEEN ANNE)

**KING'S STATE APARTMENTS:**  
GEORGIANS (GEORGE I, GEORGE II AND QUEEN CAROLINE)

**VICTORIA: A ROYAL CHILDHOOD**

Additional things to see:

**THE JEWEL ROOM**

1ST FLOOR

## GETTING AROUND THE PALACE

Currently there is a one-way route through the palace to support government health guidance. This may change in the future. The Palace Hosts will help guide all visitors through the palace easily.

*These room guide notes are ordered as you would experience the palace room by room (July 2022). This is not the chronology history of the palace.*

## THE JEWEL ROOM

Throughout history, jewellery has played an important role in shaping the image of the monarchy. Dazzling gemstones and precious metals have been used by monarchs to reinforce royal power and prestige thanks to their rarity, monetary value and the craftsmanship of their manipulation and setting.

In this room, are examples of jewellery that carry personal messages and intimate meanings, given as a gifts and worn on significant occasions.

## VICTORIA: A ROYAL CHILDHOOD

Discover the story of Princess Victoria, the young girl destined to be queen, in the rooms where she was born, grew up and experienced her first moments as monarch.

### YOUNG VICTORIA

It was a sad royal party who arrived at Kensington Palace in January 1820.

The Duke and Duchess of Kent were living happily by the seaside with their baby daughter Alexandrina Victoria. Out walking one day, the Duke got soaked, caught a chill and died within days. The Duchess, knowing their baby might one day become Queen, returned to Kensington Palace to make their home.

In this room you will find the miniature Kensington Palace showing the rooms featured in this exhibition and the key characters as figurines: Victoria, the Duchess of Kent, Lehzen, and Dash. They feature in the exhibition rooms and add a layer of interpretation to Victoria's story.



## THE PRINCESS AT PLAY

Victoria enjoyed her home at Kensington Palace. She was a happy and imaginative child and spent much of her time playing with toys, pets, dressing up and sketching people who surrounded her. Victoria was spoiled and developed a strong will and fiery temper. At five years old, she was placed in the care of a strict and devoted governess, Louise Lehzen. She brought structure and discipline to Victoria's life.

Another person came into Victoria's life in this time, John Conroy. Conroy acted as her father's personal secretary. The Duchess of Kent, Victoria's mother, was grief-stricken, isolated from her family and burdened by debt. She turned to Conroy for support.

Victoria made dolls for her own dolls' house with Lehzen's help. Many of them were based on real people she met.

## EDUCATING VICTORIA

The Duchess took educating the heir to the throne very seriously. This is the room where Victoria began her demanding timetables of studies at the age of four.

The 'Kensington System' rules are outlined on the wall. These are a set of strict rules that governed all aspects of Victoria's life. The 'System' was designed to prepare Victoria for her role as Queen, but suspicions grew that they were actually a way to keep her under Conroy's control.

## A ROYAL PERFORMANCE

Victoria loved theatre and went to concerts, the ballet and the opera as often as she could. She found they provided her an escape to the gloomy restraints of Kensington Palace.

Despite attempts to shape Victoria's mind and temperament, she developed a wild imagination. She wrote melodramatic stories and enjoyed reading wild Gothic romance novels.



## FAMILY FEUDS

Victoria's teenage years brought conflict. The death of George IV and the coronation of elderly King William IV meant Victoria was now officially heir.

With Conroy's encouragement, the Duchess insisted that parliament make her Regent if the King died before Victoria's 18th birthday. As a child, she could not rule alone.

They organised 'Royal Progresses' – tours of England and Wales – to firmly establish the Princess and her mother in the public eye. Tensions ran high due to Conroy's bullying and manipulation. This culminated in a dramatic confrontation between Conroy and the Duchess against Victoria and Lehzen. Victoria's relationship with her mother never fully recovered.

The medicine cabinet (replica) and exercise clubs illustrate the story of Victoria's illness in Ramsgate. Despite her illness, Victoria refused to make Conroy her official advisor.

## EDUCATING VICTORIA

A lavish birthday ball was held in this room to celebrate Victoria's 17th birthday on 24 May 1836. Fireworks lit up the garden and Victoria's favourite performers played and sang long into the night.

Several potential husbands were invited to the ball, as the question of who she would marry had been hotly debated since she was eleven years old. The King wanted a prince from the Netherlands, a politically advantageous match. However, her German family preferred her first cousin, Albert. From the moment Victoria and Albert met, they made a lasting impression on each other.

Meanwhile, the King's health was failing and the independence Victoria craved was in sight.

## THE KENT APARTMENTS

When the Duke and Duchess of Kent arrived at Kensington Palace, this room was a dining room. They realised it was the best room for the Duchess to give birth in – the kitchens were directly underneath for hot water and officials could gather next door to witness the birth.

On 24 May 1819, Victoria was born in this room. Childbirth was dangerous, the Duke was by the Duchess's side. Victoria was safely delivered by two doctors, including Germany's first female gynaecologist Charlotte Heidenreich von Siebold. She also delivered Albert three months later.

On the day she was born, Victoria was fifth in line to the throne.



## BECOMING QUEEN

On 20 June 1837, just weeks after turning 18 years old, Victoria awoke to find out that her uncle, King William IV, died. She was now Queen.

Victoria was old enough to rule alone and later that morning, she held her first Privy Council in this room. Victoria delighted in her independence. She moved to Buckingham Palace, dismissed Conroy, banished her mother to the opposite side of the palace and appointed Lehzen as her Lady Attendant.

A year later Victoria's coronation took place at Westminster Abbey. She was met with immense cheering and crowds lining the streets. She felt secure in herself and in popularity. She was finally free.

## STONE HALL

Stone Hall is the centre of Kensington Palace. There is an overview of all the routes in this room, alongside portraits of royal palace residents on the walls.

You can access the toilets and lifts easily from the Stone Hall.

*There is always a Palace Host in this space. They are happy to help any questions or provide extra support if needed.*

## KING'S STATE APARTMENTS

The King's State Apartments were built for William III, but were expanded and enhanced during the reign of George I, who became king in 1714. Both George I and his son, George II, used Kensington as one of their main homes.

The King's State Apartments are surprisingly empty because, unlike domestic rooms, they were used for audiences and meetings. Courtiers and visitors stood in the presence of Royalty so there was no need for the sort of furniture you normally find in a home.

It may be useful to imagine these rooms filled with people - ladies in huge mantua dresses and gentlemen in well-tailored suits, all talking, laughing, whispering, bowing, curtsying, dancing and indulging in the pleasures of the Georgian court.

In these rooms you can explore the story of the Georgians at Kensington Palace: George I, George II and Queen Caroline.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1714, Queen Anne died without leaving an heir to the throne, ending the Stuart dynasty. On 1 August 1714, Georg Ludwig, the ruler of Hanover and the closest Protestant relative, became King George I of Great Britain. He was the first of four kings named George to rule Britain for the following 116 years.

George I (r. 1714-1727) was born in Hanover, Germany. Until becoming king at 54 years of age, he had never visited Great Britain. George I was a shy man, which people often misinterpreted for rudeness. He struggled to learn to speak English well and often conversed with his ministers in French or Latin. George I missed his native Hanover and returned there frequently throughout his reign. This didn't make him very popular with his new subjects.

George I had a troubled personal life; he left his wife, Sophia Dorothea, imprisoned in Germany as she had been unfaithful. He prevented his young son Prince George Augustus (later George II) from ever seeing her again. The prince resented his father for this and as his reign continued, the relationship deteriorated into an open feud. George I made sure that his son had very little power of his own, deepening the Prince's resentment.

As Prince and Princess of Wales, George Augustus and Caroline were thrown out of the court of George I and even, for a time, kept from their own children. In retaliation, they set up their own rival court filled with opposition politicians.

When George I died in 1727, George II (r. 1727-1760) and Queen Caroline (r. 1727-1737) made Kensington Palace the glittering centre of court life where politicians, intellectuals and fashionable people vied for favour.

George II and Queen Caroline could not have been more different, but they made a good team, hosting lavish receptions and leading society with sparkle. Queen Caroline kept tigers in the gardens while the King remained content with snails and tortoises. George II loved all things military and was the last monarch to lead his troops into battle in 1743 at the Battle of Dettingen. Queen Caroline was glamorous and engaging. While the King was off campaigning, she reorganised the gardens, created a 'cabinet of curiosities' and discovered rare and precious treasures in secret closets.

George II had many mistresses, but was devoted to his wife and was devastated by her death in 1737. After Queen Caroline's death, the bright and fashionable crowd was gradually replaced by a homely, ageing court. Kensington Palace was by now half shut up.

Despite Kensington's decline, it remained one of George's favourite palaces right up until his death in 1760.



## THE KING'S STAIRCASE

This stunning staircase was painted by William Kent in 1724 and features paintings of real people who attended the court of King George I. This was the grand route that all the great and the good of Georgian London would have taken if they wanted to visit the King.

William Kent (1685-1748) is located in the centre of the ceiling, wearing a brown turban. By his side, Kent painted his mistress, actress Elizabeth Butler, whispering in his ear!

Mohammed and Mustapha are located in the fourth archway. Mohammed is wearing a beret and blue cape. Mustapha has a white beard and wearing a white turban.

Peter the Wild Boy (c.1712-1785) is located in the first archway on the left. He is wearing a green coat and has brown curly hair.

## THE KING'S GALLERY

The King's Gallery is the largest and longest of the State Apartments at Kensington Palace. It was built for William III, but today, it looks almost exactly as it did when it was transformed for King George I in 1725.

The King's Gallery has had many uses. It was where William III would meet with his spies and plan military campaigns. It was also where he played soldiers with his little nephew and intended heir, the Duke of Gloucester. It was a place for the royals to exercise as well as display artworks.

One of the most unusual features is the dial positioned over the gallery's fireplace. It is connected to a wind vane on the roof. This enabled King William to see which way the wind was blowing, where his navy was likely to be heading and when the posts were likely to arrive. Incredibly, it is still in working order today.

## QUEEN CAROLINE'S CLOSET

This small room has been many things over the years, but in the 18th century Queen Caroline turned it into a small gallery to display a range of art, including sketches by the great Tudor artist Hans Holbein. Today you can see two of these sketches and a display of miniature portraits from the Georgian period relating to Queen Caroline.

## THE KING'S DRAWING ROOM

This room is where courtiers would have come in search of power and patronage. They would spend their time gambling and gossiping.

Visitors can also see George II's favourite painting 'Venus and Cupid' by Vasari, hanging on the wall. Queen Caroline tried to have the painting moved while her husband was away in Hanover, but when he returned he furiously insisted it be put back. It was promptly returned and continues to hang there today.

## THE CUPOLA ROOM

The Cupola Room is currently undergoing restoration works. It is considered the most magnificent room in the palace and will shortly return to its full glory.

It was the first room decorated by William Kent, for a mere £350! This spectacular room is meant to have the look of a baroque Roman palace. The huge star of the Order of the Garter, the oldest English order of chivalry, was placed in the centre of the ceiling to send the message that even though he was German, King George I was the rightful British monarch!

The ceiling is an optical illusion - it looks like a high dome, but in fact from roughly where the white feathers are painted in each corner, it is flat!



## THE PRIVY CHAMBER

This was one of Queen Caroline's favourite entertaining spaces. It was where she would have hosted salons to discuss scientific theories, literature and philosophy with great thinkers of the day.

The busts around the room are some of the men who would have visited this room for that very purpose. There are also portraits on the walls of Charles I, his wife Henrietta Maria, Queen Mary II and Queen Anne. These are meant to support the Hanoverian legitimacy to the throne, proving the links between them and the Stuart monarchs that preceded them.

The ceiling painting shows Mars, the god of war, and Minerva, goddess of wisdom - this could be read to represent George II, the last British monarch to lead his troops into battle, and Queen Caroline, who was famous for her shrewd intellect.

## THE PRESENCE CHAMBER

It is in this room where the monarch received courtiers, ministers and foreign ambassadors. The fireplace is surrounded by limewood carvings by Grinling Gibbons, including cherubs that were originally painted white.

## QUEEN'S STATE APARTMENTS

The Queen's State Apartments are the oldest part of Kensington Palace. These intimate rooms were created for Mary II, who ruled jointly with her husband William III.

In these rooms you can explore the story of the late Stuart family: William III, Mary II and her sister, Queen Anne.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

William and Mary came to the throne through the Glorious Revolution, which took place in 1688-1689 in England. This involved overthrowing the Catholic King James II and replacing him with Britain's first and only joint monarch: James II's Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband, William of Orange.

William and Mary lived at Whitehall Palace, close to Parliament in damp, dirty and polluted central London. William has asthma and suffered greatly in these conditions, so the couple lived in Hampton Court Palace. They wanted a closer commute to work which is why they sought out Nottingham House in the village of Kensington as a suburban home.

Christopher Wren transformed the mansion to palace with grand state rooms to host audiences and ceremonies. It also included kitchens, barracks, and stables - everything royals would need.

### THE QUEEN'S DRAWING ROOM

This room would have served as a place for the Queen to relax or possibly hold meetings. It would have been decorated with Mary's extensive blue and white porcelain collection. There are reminders that this room was decorated for William and Mary - their entwined emblem is carved in the decorative moulding.

Unlike other rooms in the Queen's State Apartments, this room has wallpaper instead of wooden panelling. This is because this room was badly damaged by a bomb during World War II.



### THE QUEEN'S BEDROOM

This room was originally Mary II's State Bedchamber, but in 1691 she commissioned a new bedroom next to this one, making this a private room for resting and socialising.

The bed in this room is not Mary II's. It belonged to her stepmother, Mary of Modena, and was originally at St. James' Palace. It is thought to be the bed in which James Edward Stuart, son of King James II was born in 1688. The baby was a threat to the Protestant establishment, which eventually led to the Glorious Revolution.

### THE QUEEN'S DINING ROOM

The Queen's Dining Room has beautiful panelling from the 17th century. It was a space where Mary and William could dine together, out of the public eye. They enjoyed dining modestly, on fish and beer.

## THE QUEEN'S CLOSET

It was in this room that Queen Anne, Mary's younger sister, and her childhood friend and confidante, Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, had a terrible argument in 1711.

Sarah was very domineering, and eventually Anne tired of this. When Anne became friends with Sarah's cousin and kept secrets from her, the Duchess became angry and decided to confront the Queen. After this argument they never spoke again.

Sarah and her husband were stripped of their high-rank positions and dismissed from court, which caused a shift of power between parliamentary factions.

## THE QUEEN'S GALLERY

Built in 1693, the Queen's Gallery was once filled with sumptuous artefacts from her extensive art collection, which included paintings, silk hangings, Turkish rugs and wonderful pieces of blue and white Chinese and Japanese porcelain (she had 150 pieces of it in this room alone!).

It was designed as a light and airy space for Mary to enjoy simple pastimes such as walking, reading and needlework. There would have been birds tweeting in cages by the windows and dogs sleeping on velvet cushions on the floor.



## THE QUEEN'S STAIRCASE

Little changed since its construction in 1690, the Queen's Staircase is deliberately plainer than the King's Staircase.

Mary would have glided down its steps to reach her beloved gardens, created in the Dutch style, through the door at its foot.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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For more information about learning at Historic Royal Palaces, visit:

[www.hrp.org.uk/learning](http://www.hrp.org.uk/learning)



