

## ROYAL PORTRAITS AT WINDSOR CASTLE

There are many royal portraits on display at Windsor Castle. One of the earliest, used to promote the image and status of the king, shows Henry VIII.



King Henry VIII

This picture would have hung high on the wall so that, as you approached, you would see Henry's dagger right in your eye-line – this was to warn people of his immense power and potential danger. Today a life-size version hangs at Hampton Court Palace, which was taken from a famous, but now lost, mural.

The Whitehall Mural, by Henry VIII's court artist Hans Holbein the Younger, was displayed in King Henry VIII's Privy Chamber in Whitehall Palace. The original was destroyed in a fire in 1698, but fortunately King Charles II had a smaller version painted and copied in the 17th Century. The huge painting shows Henry VIII's father, Henry VII, standing behind his son. Opposite the two kings are their wives – Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII, and Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's favourite wife and the mother of his only son. This famous painting of Henry VIII shows him with no crown on his head, and this served to emphasise how immensely powerful he was in his own right.



A copy of the Whitehall Mural

### **State Portraits:**

State portraits were the way kings and queens used to convey their regal messages, and to present an official image of themselves.



State portrait of King Charles I

Anthony van Dyck was King Charles I's court artist. He was paid handsomely for his royal masterpieces. Columns and sumptuous drapes form a majestic backdrop to many state portraits – the columns depict strong and powerful leadership, and the drapes represent regal status.

State portraits are different to formal portraits. This formal portrait of James I was commissioned by his son, Charles I, after his death, so it was not intended to promote an official image of the king during his reign. James I was a protestant king who thought of himself as the 'Peacemaker'. The son of the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, he was expected to treat his Catholic subjects better than his protestant predecessor Elizabeth I. James I was the first king to reign over Scotland, England, Ireland and the British Islands.



King James I

King Charles II, the son of Charles I, commissioned this state portrait (below), which hangs in the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, The Queen's official residence in Scotland. Charles II was making a bold statement about monarchy with this grand state portrait, following the end of the Commonwealth period when there was no king.



Charles II

Portraits of William III (grandson of Charles I) and Mary II (daughter of James II) hang in St George's Hall in Windsor Castle. The King was not blessed with good looks – he was 5 feet 6 inches tall with a slightly hunched back and a large nose.



William III

William and Mary enjoyed a very happy marriage before Mary's premature death in 1694 from smallpox.



Mary II

King George IV can be seen in this painting where he poses flamboyantly in his Knights of the Garter robes. It is thought that the artist was instructed to make the King look slimmer in the painting than he really was!



George IV

This painting of Queen Elizabeth II commemorates her Coronation in 1953. She is shown wearing the Diamond Diadem with the Imperial State Crown and sceptre on the table beside her.



Queen Elizabeth II

Her Majesty's dress, made of white satin, is embroidered with Commonwealth emblems.

### **Formal Portraits:**

Whilst state portraits were meant to present the monarch to their people, formal portraits were often more personal, showing off the monarchs' personality. There are also many formal portraits on display at Windsor Castle. This huge painting known as 'The Great Piece' depicts Charles I and his queen Henrietta Maria seated and surrounded by their children and dogs.



Charles I and Henrietta Maria with their two eldest children

This painting had been sold off by Oliver Cromwell during the Commonwealth period before being reclaimed during the Restoration. The painting now hangs in The Queen's Gallery at Windsor Castle.

A portrait of Frederick, Prince of Wales (the elder son of King George II), surrounded by his large family, adorns the State Dining Room at Windsor Castle.



The Family of Frederick, Prince of Wales

The painting was completed after Prince Frederick had died after being struck by a cricket ball in 1751. He is depicted in a portrait within the

painting, on the wall to the far left, pointing down towards his family. The royal couple had nine children (including the future King George III) who are seen playing with a boat, surrounded by their dogs, and strumming a lute in the picture. The baby Caroline was born after her father's death.

### **Royal Children:**

There are also portraits of royal children on display in Windsor Castle. As with the monarchs' portraits, they also display signs and symbols indicating their royal status. The young Tudor Princess Elizabeth (the future Queen Elizabeth I) is shown in a rich crimson gown woven with golden thread which was reserved for royalty. She poses beside two Bibles – the New and Old Testaments, which present her as a pious and learned princess.



Princess Elizabeth

A young Prince Edward (the future King Edward VI) is shrouded in a large cloak and sports a dagger at his hip, while posing in the manner of his father, Henry VIII, before him.





Prince Edward

Charles I's children are surrounded by rich velvet drapes and the girls wear strings of pearls in Van Dyck's famous painting of the king's five eldest children, with two of their dogs.



The Five Eldest Children of Charles I

If the dog, a Mastiff, were to stand up in the picture, it would fill the whole canvas!