

# Queen Victoria's reign

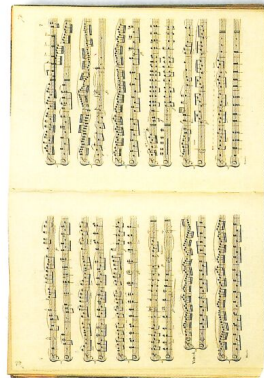


**QUEEN VICTORIA CAME TO THE** throne in 1837. She ruled for more than 63 years and is the longest-reigning British monarch. Her two immediate predecessors had been something of a disgrace and Victoria was determined to restore dignity to the throne. She was active in state affairs and her family life, with her beloved husband Albert, provided a model for the nation. Her reign spanned a period of enormous change: Britain

had the world's biggest empire, the largest navy, and the most modern industries. When Victoria died in 1901, she was a symbol of British greatness and much loved. Her reign is known as the Victorian Age and British people of the time as Victorians.

## A princess's life

The young Princess Victoria grew up in Kensington Palace, London. Her mother was over-protective, and her upbringing was strict. She was constantly supervised, and had few companions. Later, she described her childhood as "rather melancholy".



Princess Victoria's music book

### HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

Throughout her early and married life Victoria loved music, dancing, sketching, and later took up horse riding. When she was 13 years old she began to keep a diary, which she continued until her death.

## Becoming Queen

When she was 10 years old, Victoria learned that she was heir to the throne. She said "I will be good". She was only 18 years old when she became Queen, but took to her duties with enthusiasm and determination. Within hours, she attended her first official meeting with leading politicians.

### DUTIES AS QUEEN

Victoria was a constitutional monarch. This means she was not allowed to decide affairs of state. Real political power lay with Parliament, and much of her work was ceremonial. But Victoria worked closely with her ministers, and was particularly interested in the progress of the British Empire.



Queen Victoria (1838) by Sir George Hayter

The sceptre is a symbol of authority

Victoria, was only 1.5 m tall, but had an imposing personality



Victoria sketched people and places from memory

Sketch of the Scottish Highlands

### MARRIAGE TO ALBERT

In 1840 Victoria married her German cousin, Albert. She was devoted to him, describing him as her "dear Angel". For 21 years, until he died, he was her closest companion and adviser, and taught her much about political matters.



### 1837 QUEEN

**20th June:** Victoria becomes Queen following the death of her uncle, William IV. She is his only heir. A year later, aged 19, Victoria is crowned at Westminster Abbey, in London.



### 1840 MARRIAGE

**10th February:** Victoria marries her German cousin Albert, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. They are happily married for 21 years.

### 1861 WIDOWHOOD

Albert dies from typhoid. Victoria is heartbroken and retires from public life for 13 years. The British people resent her absence. She wears black for the rest of her life.

### 1876 EMPRESS OF INDIA

From the early 1870s Victoria resumes public duties, encouraged by Prime Minister Disraeli. He involves her in foreign affairs, and, in 1876, Parliament gives Victoria the title "Empress of India".



### 1897 DIAMOND JUBILEE

Queen Victoria, now in a wheelchair and suffering from rheumatism, celebrates 60 years on the throne. She is at the height of her popularity, and connected to every royal house in Europe.

### 1901 DEATH

**22nd January:** Victoria dies at Osborne House, aged 81. She is buried, next to Albert, at Windsor Castle, Berkshire. Britain and the Empire mourn her death.

### FAMILY LIFE

Victoria and Albert had nine children – five daughters and four sons. Victoria disliked pregnancy but saw it as her duty to produce heirs to the throne. She valued family life and, royal duties allowing, she and Albert spent as much time as possible with their children. Their close-knit home life impressed the British public. Victoria had 37 grandchildren, many of whom married into royal houses across Europe.

Of Victoria's nine children, three died before their mother: Alice, Leopold, and Alfred.

### Crown

### Crown jewels

Victoria in her coronation robes, aged 19

### Prince Albert



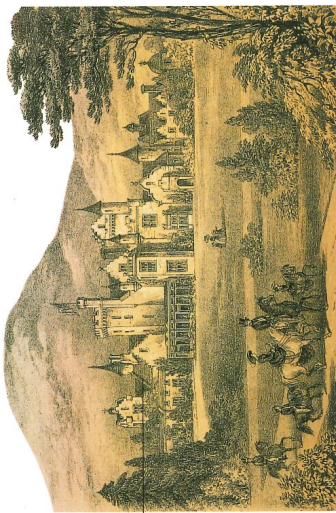
Queen Victoria and Prince Albert with their nine children



Victoria held her first Privy Council only a few hours after becoming Queen

### Balmoral Castle

was Queen Victoria's favourite home



### CASTLE RETREAT

When Victoria became Queen, she moved into Buckingham Palace, but never there. Albert bought and restored two family homes: Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, and Balmoral Castle in the Scottish Highlands. After Albert's death, Victoria spent much time at Balmoral, grieving in the company of her closest servant, the Scotsman John Brown.

## QUEEN VICTORIA 1819–1901

### 1819 BIRTH

Victoria is born at Kensington Palace, London. When her father, the Duke of Kent, dies, her mother, and adviser Sir John Conroy, supervise her upbringing.

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