

ROYAL FAMILY TIMELINE





ELEPHANTS IN ENGLAND

The biggest of the royal animals also proved the most difficult to keep. King Henry III, who already had a bear and three lions, was given an elephant by the King of France in 1255. Arriving by ship, it caused a sensation across the country as it was led from the coast of Kent to the capital, attracting crowds along the way. It was the first time an elephant had ever set foot in England, which explains why so many flocked to see the marvellous creature.

A writer called Matthew Paris, who noted down remarkable events of his day, described the elephant's arrival and drew pictures. From these it is possible to see that it was an African elephant. Paris even included the keeper in his drawings so his readers could understand just how large the creature was.

Londoners once again had to pay for a wild creature's keep, and a splendid wooden house was built for the elephant. But sadly there was little understanding of how to keep elephants healthy in captivity. The same was true for another elephant, given to King James centuries later in 1623. The keepers decided that it should live on wine, not water, and supplied it with a gallon a day.

It was better news for the elephants sent by the King of Oudh (an Indian kingdom) in 1835. These were placed in zoos rather than put in the Tower, where they could live a much healthier life.

Queen Victoria briefly kept an elephant at her palace of Osborne Park on the Isle of Wight. It was given to her in 1884 by King John of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) and was called Gwola. Only three years old, this little elephant was fed and bathed in a special tank in the grounds of the house, before the Queen had him sent to London Zoo.





CORGIS FOR THE CROWN

Last but not least of the royal animals is the breed of dog that is famous for its association with Queen Elizabeth II: the corgi. This cute little breed first entered Elizabeth's life in 1933 when her father gave her and her sister a corgi called Dookie. From then on the Queen was never without a pet corgi, or their close cousin, a dorgi (a cross between a dachshund and a corgi).

All the royal corgis and dorgis have lived in the lap of luxury, sleeping on special wicker beds that are raised to protect the dogs from drafts, and eating a meat-rich diet cooked by a chef. There was even a special Corgi Room in Buckingham Palace.

When Elizabeth was eighteen, she was given a corgi called Susan as a gift. Susan even went with Elizabeth and her new husband, Prince Philip, on honeymoon. All the Queen's corgis from then on were descendants of Susan.

In the 1950s, the Queen's children, Charles and Anne, were also given their own corgis, first Sugar, then Whisky and Sherry. With Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen Mother, King Charles III, Princess Anne and Princess Margaret all owning corgis, it is not surprising that they are known as the royal dog. The palaces were filled with a royal corgi pack!

Three of Queen Elizabeth II's corgis, Monty, Willow and Holly, became international stars when they appeared alongside the Queen and film spy James Bond (played by Daniel Craig) in the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony.

Besides all the corgis, Prince William and Kate have a cocker spaniel, Harry and Meghan have two dogs and King Charles III and Queen Consort Camilla own Jack Russell terriers adopted from Battersea Dogs & Cats Home in London. It is fair to say the dog is the best-loved royal animal of all!

