



THE EDWARDIANS: AGE OF ELEGANCE

PLAIN ENGLISH TRANSCRIPT

THE KING'S GALLERY, BUCKINGHAM PALACE

THE EDWARDIANS: AGE OF ELEGANCE

The King's Gallery, Buckingham Palace

Friday 11th April 2025 – Sunday 23rd November 2025

I. WELCOME

Welcome to the King's Gallery, and to the exhibition “The Edwardians: Age of Elegance”. The exhibition explores the rich variety of royal collecting between the time of Queen Victoria and the end of the First World War in 1918.

There are 300 objects in the galleries. More than half of them are being shown for the first time. Together they tell of a time of great wealth and ceremony, of new art movements and styles, and a world opened up by travel. This world was suddenly shattered with the coming of the First World War.

The exhibition is divided into three sections. The first section looks at the royal private collection. It then moves on to the court and the ceremonial, and finally to the wider world that the royal family experienced and engaged with through their art collections.

The works on display in each of these rooms tell different stories about their origins, and the skill and craftsmanship involved in making them. Many of them took long hours of hard work to make, to produce objects of simple beauty. When used as part of royal events and ceremonies they sometimes provided a reassuring sense of continuity and stability during turbulent times at home and abroad.

This was a time of change when nothing could be taken for granted. Queen Victoria's reign ended in 1901 and there was already a sense of uncertainty in the world, due to political changes that led eventually to the turmoil of the First World War. People felt like they needed to live fast and to take advantage of the present.

2. THE ROYAL COUPLE

FRANZ XAVER WINTERHALTER (1805-73)

Queen Alexandra (1844-1925) when Princess of Wales Signed and dated 1864

Oil on canvas | 162.6 x 114.1 cm (support, canvas/panel/stretcher external)

RCIN 402351



FRANZ XAVER WINTERHALTER (1805-73)

Edward VII (1841-1910) when Prince of Wales Signed and dated 1864

Oil on canvas | 161.8 x 114.1 cm (support, canvas/panel/stretcher external)

RCIN 402352



These portraits by Franz Xaver Winterhalter show the Prince and Princess of Wales - later Edward VII and Queen Alexandra - in 1864, a year after their marriage.

Pinned to the left sleeve of Alexandra's white ball dress is a badge of the Order of Victoria and Albert. She is also wearing pearl jewellery, both earrings and necklace, given to her by her husband on their wedding day.

At Buckingham Palace the young royal couple performed various formal duties on behalf of Queen Victoria. But at their private London home, Marlborough House, in rooms decorated to their taste and filled with art which they had chosen themselves, life was a social whirl.

People would often come and call on them at Marlborough House. Even though it was not an official royal palace it became a lively venue for the royal family and their friends. They lived a very glamorous life and were known as leaders of fashion. They were very good hosts too, and enjoyed garden parties and costume balls there, to entertain the society of the day.

Edward and Alexandra also invited guests to their private country residence, Sandringham House in Norfolk, where they spent the first two months of every year. Alexandra and her daughters in particular enjoyed country pursuits there, but they also spent a lot of time on the house's interior design, filling its rooms with objects they were interested in. Many of those objects are in this exhibition, displayed away from Sandringham House for the first time.

3. NANNA

FREDERIC LEIGHTON (1830-96)

Nanna (Pavonia) Signed and dated 1859

Oil on canvas | 59.4 x 51.1 cm (support, canvas/panel/stretcher external)

RCIN 404570



This is Nanna. Her real name was Anna Risi. She was an artist's model and the wife of a shoemaker in Rome where Frederic Leighton painted her several times. In this picture he positions her against a peacock fan, which is the meaning of the Italian word "pavonia" in the work's title.

Leighton was not the only one who was enchanted by Nanna. This is the first painting bought by the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII. He saw it in the artist's studio in Rome in 1859. It had already been sold to someone else, but the person who bought it agreed to let the Prince of Wales have it. Leighton went on to paint another version.

A few years later the Prince of Wales bought another work by Leighton called "Bianca". This painting is hanging nearby. It is identical in size but offers a different idea of beauty.



Bianca has lightness and grace and is full of reflection, almost like a painting of the Madonna, Mary the mother of Jesus.

The Prince of Wales admired Leighton's paintings but, more than that, he admired his whole approach to painting. Leighton became artistic advisor to the Prince of Wales. He was given a place on the planning committee for one of the grandest royal balls held for decades - the Marlborough House ball in 1874. The decoration and the costumes are said to have been designed by Leighton.

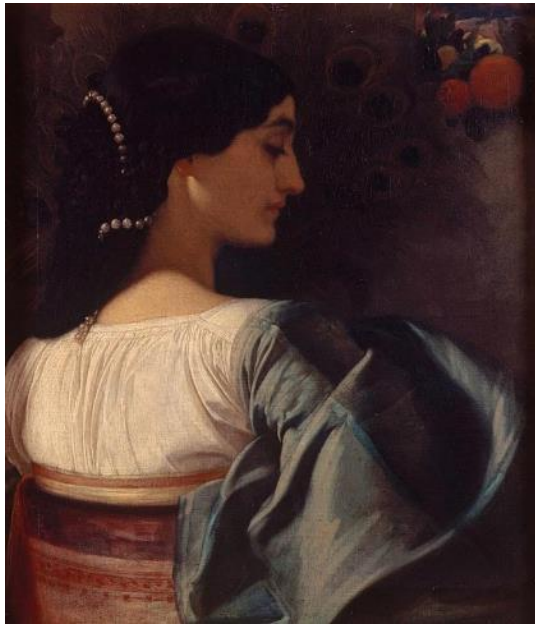
This needed a lot of hard work. The ballroom at Marlborough House was vast. The watercolour displayed nearby shows it filled with a sea of guests from London Society.



3A – TRUE COLOURS

The painting of Nanna was examined closely before being Included in this exhibition. It looked like conservation work done in the 1970s had kept the structure of the painting in good condition but had left the paint surface discoloured. This was due to a combination of the varnish that had been put on the painting but also a heavy layer of dirt attracted to the varnish because it was quite waxy.

Every painting the conservation team work on needs a custom-made cleaning liquid which is applied with a cotton swab. In the case of this painting there were little fragments of original paint folded around the edge of the stretcher. The conservators were able to experiment with these fragments of paint before starting to clean the surface of the painting proper.

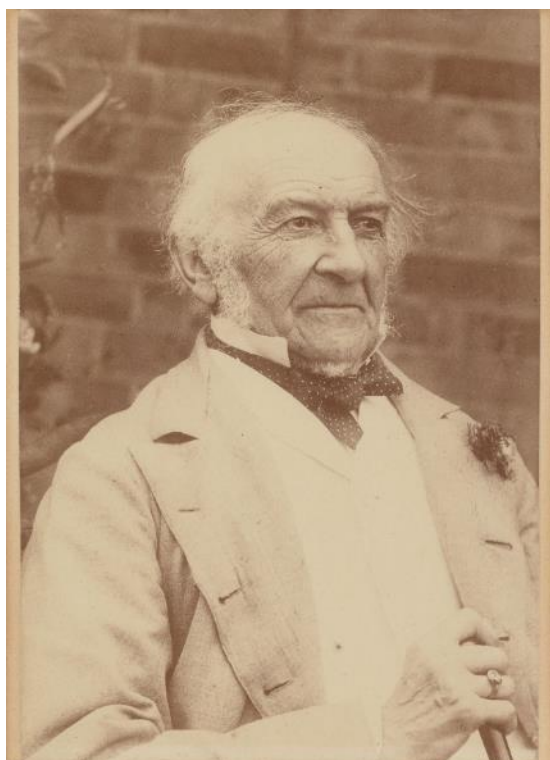


These before and after images show how the cleaning brought back the brighter tones of Nanna's flesh, her white blouse and the darker blue of the shoulder seam of her dress. Other details were made clearer too: on the right-hand side of the canvas the artist's monogram "L" with the date, the wisps of the peacock feathers in Nanna's fan and the decorative braids in her hair, studded with pearls.

The light that falls from behind the figure onto her neck catches the lovely curve of her cheek and falls onto the pearls. The three tiny arches in one of the pearls suggest that the light is coming through windows in Leighton's studio. The little touches of blue must be the blue sky reflected in the pearls.

4. **SCREEN**

SCREEN WITH PHOTOGRAPHS, CARTES DE VISITE
BYME & CO.
William Gladstone
RCIN 2868241



LONDON STEREOSCOPIC AND PHOTOGRAPHIC CO.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

RCIN 2868276



WINDOW & GROVE

Ellen Terry

RCIN 2868289/90



This screen usually stands in the White Drawing Room at Sandringham in Norfolk, which was the much-loved, private country residence of the Prince and Princess of Wales. The photographic portraits are known as 'cabinet photographs' and are just a small selection from Queen Alexandra's large collection. She arranged them in the screen herself - possibly with the help of her daughters.

The screen would have been put in a doorway, or near a window. It has four leaves, each one with space for 24 photographs. This makes 96 photographs in all. Many of the photographs are signed by the sitters, sometimes on the front, sometimes the back. Sometimes the signature is hidden by the framing.

The sections of the screen have been organised by theme. First, from the left, members of the military, statesmen and politicians, including four-time prime minister William Gladstone. Next come artists, musicians, composers and writers. The man with long hair and a long white beard is poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The final two leaves contain pictures of actors, and members of the Royal Family and their friends. Celebrated actress Ellen Terry appears three times in the third section wearing different costumes. One of her pictures is her playing Portia in 'The Merchant of Venice' in the famous courtroom scene where she is questioning Shylock, who was played by Henry Irving. He also appears on the

screen. They put on a performance of the play for Queen Victoria and Edward at Sandringham. They also came to Windsor to perform.

Queen Alexandra also collected other, smaller-sized photographs, known by their French name as “cartes-de-visite”. If a visitor went to someone’s house but the person they were hoping to see was not there, they could leave a card there with a photograph on it. This became a very popular thing to do, and millions of the cards were printed.

There is an example of a collage created from these cartes-de-visite by Queen Alexandra in the Cabinet room, through the first doorway on the right.

5. SILVER EWER

ALFRED GILBERT (1854-1934)

Rosewater ewer and dish 1894 - 1901

Silver, ivory, mother of pearl, gold, bronze, enamel | 63.0 x 30.3 x 19.5 cm (excluding base/stand)

RCIN 35435



MARTIN GUILLAUME BIENNAIS (1764–1843)

Teapot 1809-15

Silver gilt, ebony

RCIN 48395



This display is based on the interiors of Sandringham and Marlborough House where the modern trend for “decluttering” was very far from fashionable! It must have been impossible to write on Alexandra’s desk, because every inch of the surface would have been covered with a small work of art or a small sculpture. She surrounded herself completely with objects which she enjoyed.

At the back of this display is a tall silver vase. It was a wedding gift for the future George V and Queen Mary. It was made by sculptor Alfred Gilbert who designed the statue of Eros in London's Piccadilly Circus. Alfred Gilbert was well known for the unusual way he used his materials. This piece includes mother-of-pearl, ivory, elements of gilt metal and enamel alongside straightforward silver. Its design is strong evidence of art nouveau style, with curves and a metal service surface which almost appears to melt. Close inspection of the object reveals small masks among the scrolls and even some full-size figures. The decoration is very detailed and beautifully done. Gilbert was very boldly experimenting with different techniques.

As well as collecting modern decorative arts, Edward VII and Queen Alexandra - and later George V and Queen Mary - collected historic objects. This display includes a silver gilt teapot with an ebony wooden handle. It is engraved with the letter “N”, the initial of its

original owner. Edward had a real passion for objects with a connection to Napoleon, and he even created a Napoleon room at Marlborough House.

6. CHRISTIANSBORG PALACE

HEINRICH HANSEN (1821-90)

Christiansborg Palace from Højbro Plads, Copenhagen Signed and dated 1863

Oil on canvas | 192.7 x 292.1 cm (support, canvas/panel/stretcher external)

RCIN 405125



In the foreground of this painting by Heinrich Hansen market traders display fish on wide circular wicker trays. Towards the right-hand side of the canvas, a woman is passing the time sitting on a wooden bench reading a newspaper. A man uses hanging scales to weigh a fish and work out its price.

The painting provides a view of one of the most historic parts of Copenhagen in Denmark, which would have been familiar to Princess Alexandra. On the right-hand side just beyond the building with a portico and columns is Christiansburg Palace. The Palace shown here was destroyed by fire in October 1884. The building that replaced it today houses the

Danish Parliament, the Royal Reception Rooms, the Supreme Court and the Prime Minister's office.

The painting was given to Edward and Alexandra by the city of Copenhagen on their marriage in 1863, together with a painting of another Danish palace, Bernstorff Palace. These two paintings hung in the saloon at Sandringham House for the whole of Edward's and Alexandra's lifetimes.

Here is a picture of the room.



Edward and Alexandra's marriage strengthened another link in the complicated network of connections between the British and Danish royal families and the Russian imperial family. Until the First World War ended these relationships, members of the different families often came together for weddings and christenings when they exchanged works of art as gifts. There are examples in the Cabinet Room, through the doorway to the right at the end. This explains how some of the Danish silver and Russian decorative arts and paintings came to be in the Royal Collection and in this exhibition. Alexandra and her sister, Dagmar,

were very close. And it was through her sister that she was introduced to Fabergé, for example.

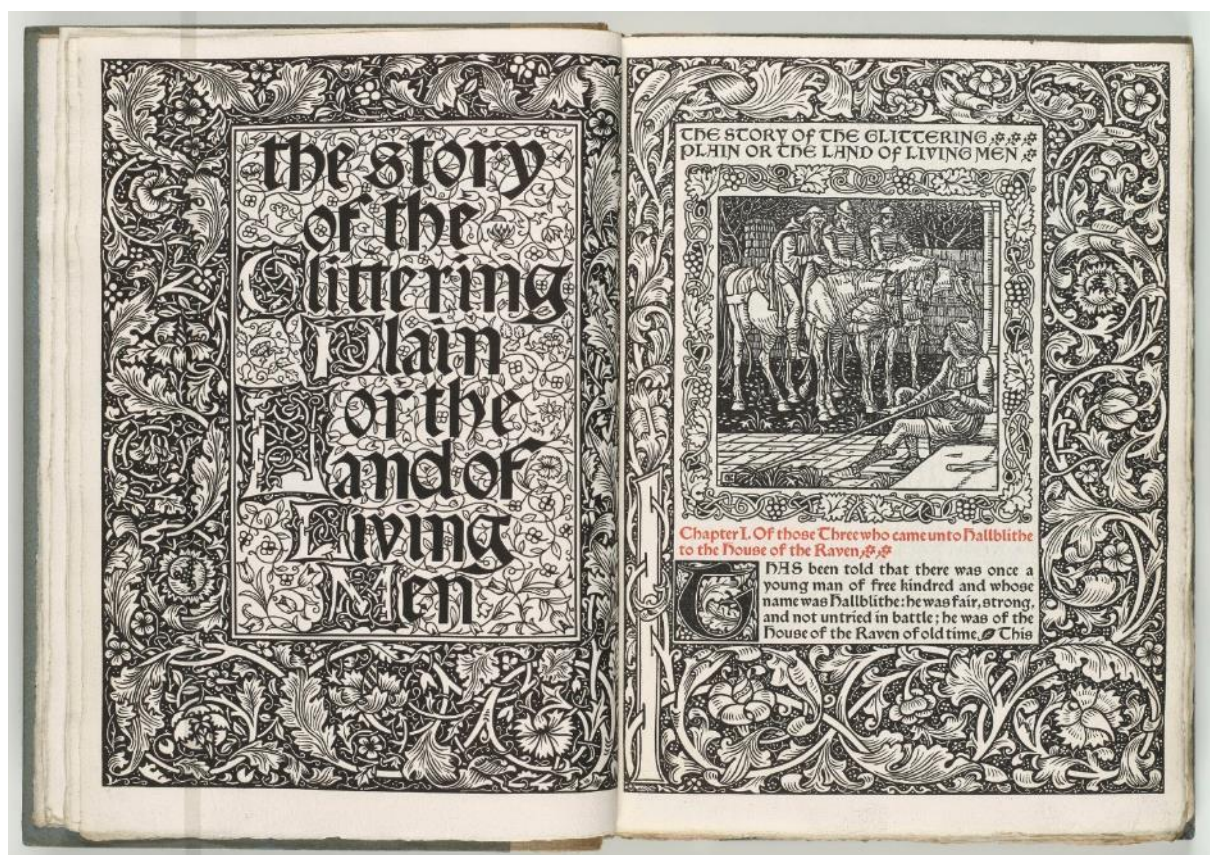
7. WILLIAM MORRIS

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834-96)

The Story of the glittering plain which has been also called the land of living men or the acre of the undying 1894

30.2 x 22 x 2.5 cm (book measurement (conservation))

RCIN 1050449



This copy of 'The Glittering Plain' was bought by Edward VII in 1906 along with two other works from the Kelmscott Press. It is very likely that they were acquired because of Edward VII's and Alexandra's existing interest in publishing – someone realised that they were interested in this very new area of business,

The Kelmscott Press was a printing and publishing house established in Hammersmith, west London, by the designer William Morris. He thought that everything should be beautiful or useful and preferably both.

He wanted to re-create the quality of work produced at the beginning of printing in the 15th century, He was rebelling against the poor quality mass-production that was very common at the end of the 19th century.

Morris wanted his books to be a pleasure to look at. He created his own fonts (the one used here is called Troy) and printed chapter titles in red. Just as early printers had done, he placed blocks of type close to the spine of the book, leaving a wider margin at the other side. The wood cut illustrations in this book were made from drawings by Walter Crane. They highlight the efforts of the hero Hallblithe, of the House of Raven, to rescue his lady love. He journeys to the Isle of Ransom, a fictional location that looks a lot like Iceland.

The story was written by Morris himself. Earlier in his life, Morris had visited Iceland, and he learned the Icelandic language so that he could translate the ancient Icelandic sagas into English. He used these translations as inspiration for his poetry and prose romances like this one. Later on, Morris's blend of fantasy and the supernatural influenced J.R.R. Tolkien when he was writing 'The Hobbit' and 'The Lord of the Rings'.

8. CORONATION DRESS

Queen Alexandra's coronation dress
RCIN 74728



This gorgeous dress is very rarely shown to the public. It was worn by Queen Alexandra at King Edward VII's Coronation on 9th August 1902. In honour of the occasion, electric light had been installed in Westminster Abbey for the first time. Newspapers included descriptions of certain moments in the coronation ceremony where the Queen appeared in this extraordinary blaze of golden light.

The tradition always was that a Coronation dress would be a plain design, either white or cream-coloured. But Alexandra was a setter of new fashion trends. She chose a very dramatic dress for the coronation – a shimmering gold object made from a heavy silk gauze overlaid with a fine silk net. The net was sewn with thousands of tiny gold spangles and was embroidered with the national emblems of Britain: the rose, the thistle and the shamrock. No outfit before Queen Alexandra's had included the national emblems. The net forms remarkably long oversleeves, which almost fall to the ground.

The portrait by Sir Luke Fildes hanging nearby captures the full effect of the dress.



The net had been made in Delhi, India, where a team of forty needleworkers took five months to complete the embroidery. It was then sent to the fashion house Morin Blossier in Paris to be made up into the final dress. Queen Alexandra's velvet mantle - her cloak - was made in England. It also broke with tradition. Rather than violet or crimson it was a shade described by her sister-in-law Princess Louise as 'petunia' and it was embroidered with crowns. For Queens Consort – the wives of Kings - this was not at all in keeping with the British tradition. Rather it was following the Danish tradition. To have the crowns scattered across the fabric was something very new.

8A LAYER – CONSERVATION

Queen Alexandra's coronation dress

RCIN 74728

To prepare Queen Alexandra's dress for this exhibition a mannequin was made in a shape which fitted it perfectly. It was padded very carefully to support the dress and protect the fabric from the surface of the mannequin. Petticoats and nets were used to create a kind of bustle so that it looked like there was a body underneath. The dress was made from cloth of gold with a lot of metal thread woven into it. Some of the metal thread had tarnished quite badly, making the fabric much darker than it had been originally. In certain places, however, the original colour was still visible, for example where a fold or a crease had protected the fabric and preserved its colour. Also, some of the spangles are brighter than others, which gives an idea of the original colour.

The silver thread in particular had tarnished quite badly, and it was almost impossible to bring it back to its original state. The net of the overdress was incredibly fragile and there were small holes in it. There were some places where the threads had been pulled and broken, and here the fabric needed attention.

The net was so fine that the conservation team working on it needed to be extremely precise, and incredibly cautious, applying each individual stitch very carefully. For that reason the conservation work was very time consuming, The repairs were done using synthetic fibres, which is the modern technique. This means that in the future if there is further work done on the dress it will be possible to see which parts are original, and which parts are the result of later conservation work. It also protects the fabric from damage caused by moths. They are always a problem for textiles, but they are not attracted to synthetic fibres.

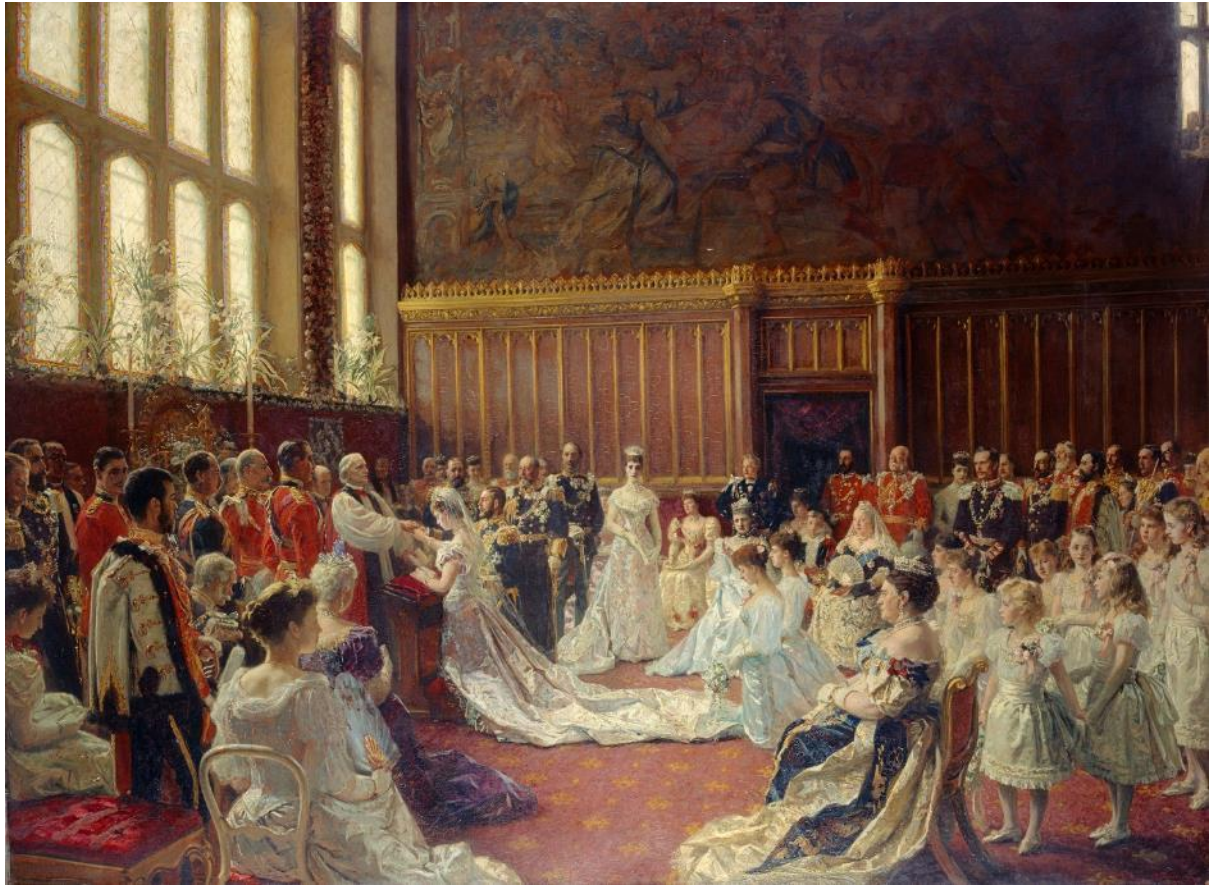
9. ROYAL WEDDING

LAURITS REGNER TUXEN (1853-1927)

The Marriage of George, Duke of York, with Princess Mary of Teck, 6 July 1893 Signed and dated 1894

Oil on canvas | 169.5 x 229.9 cm (support, canvas/panel/stretcher external)

RCIN 402437



This is a scene from the marriage of George, Duke of York and Princess Mary of Teck in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace. Queen Victoria, the groom's grandmother, is seated just to the right of centre, wearing lace over her black dress. The lace was from her own wedding to Prince Albert in the same chapel. More than fifty years later she is surrounded by their descendants.

The ten bridesmaids were grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Queen Victoria. Many of them themselves married into European royal families, which is why Queen Victoria was described as the 'Grandmother of Europe'.

The Prince of Wales stands by his son as his supporter, a role similar to the modern day best man. Princess Alexandra is next to him, almost at the centre of the painting, looking directly out at the viewer and towards the Danish artist, Laurits Tuxen who painted the scene. She had introduced him to the British Royal Family. He made a series of paintings of grand ceremonial events. His art brought a new naturalness and realism to these important depictions of grand royal events and ceremonies.

Tuxen's painting of light in this picture shows the influence of his studies in Paris. This was around the time that the group of artists later known as the Impressionists were putting on their early exhibitions.

The soft north light coming through the large windows lights up the standing figure of Nicholas II on the left-hand side and the seated figure of Princess Louise of Battenberg. The way the light catches the nape of her neck, dress and fan is particularly beautiful.

Tuxen was less gentle with his portrayal of the bride's mother, The Duchess of Teck, the formidable-looking woman in the foreground. She later described the portrait as recognisable but not flattering!

10. SOCIETY PORTRAITS

JOHN SINGER SARGENT (1856-1925)
Louise, Duchess of Connaught 1908
Oil on canvas



John Singer Sargent's portraits of fashionably dressed society women are often thought to represent perfectly "the Age of Elegance". Here Louise, Duchess of Connaught, sister-in-law

to Edward VII, wears a glamorous black evening dress, with see-through white chiffon sleeves. The artist uses energetic brushstrokes and a variety of paint, sometimes thick, sometimes thin and fluid, to describe different textures, like the fur stole on the left-hand side, the dark satin dress, the silk sash and the jewellery.

The two long strands of the Duchess's necklace are not made up of perfectly round pearls. Instead, Sargent uses irregular dabs of thick paint—known as impasto—to suggest their shiny surfaces. He uses loose brushstrokes to give the viewer an impression of the soft fur stole beneath the Duchess's right hand. On close examination this technique does not work but from a certain distance it is clear what the artist is painting.

Sargent felt more restricted when it came to faces. He resented painting his sitters as they wanted to be seen in a specific way, as if through a filter. In 1907 he frustratedly declared to a friend, "I abhor and abjure them and hope never to do another especially of the Upper Classes." His hope was short-lived. This portrait of the Duchess of Connaught was painted the following year. However, not long afterwards he made a change, switching from painting in oils to watercolours, or drawing in charcoal. These quicker portraits needed just a single two-hour sitting. His charcoal portrait of Edward VIII when Prince of Wales is in this room.



II. A NEW FAÇADE

CECIL KING (1881-1942)

Scaffolding at Buckingham Palace. 1913. drawn 1913

Watercolour and bodycolour

RCIN 923723



The building completely covered by scaffolding in this picture is Buckingham Palace. A crane is hoisting up a block of pale Portland stone to one of its high-level platforms, where tiny figures are at work. Their silhouettes appear against the London sky, providing a sense of the scale of the building. The work that they were carrying out was truly monumental. The original creamy-yellow front of Buckingham Palace, made of Caen stone, had turned a dirty grey and was crumbling. Like the lungs of Londoners, it was suffering from the effects of pollution.

Nowadays there is a kind of romance associated with the old fogs, with London streets that were a bit misty and mysterious. But the fog was thick, yellow and brown and people were breathing in tiny particles of coal.

The new front of Buckingham Palace was designed by the architect of the V&A museum, Aston Webb. He had recently redeveloped the area in front of the Palace for the Queen

Victoria Memorial. He estimated that replacing the stone would take six months and suggested completing it over two summers, but after consultation with the royal family, and discussions with different builders' firms, it was agreed that it would be done in one 13-week period. 800 builders worked day and night - every day except Sundays. Keeping to this schedule was very hard for the men - at least two of them died in accidents on the site. The palace was nicknamed Cinderella, because it had been covered in sooty grime but looked now as if it was dressed in a gleaming white gown.

12. **THRONE CHAIR**

INVESTITURE

MORRIS & CO [LONDON]

Throne chair 1910-11

Oak, velvet, gold and silver thread | 121.0 x 75.0 x 78.5 cm (whole object)

RCIN 29958



On a warm July day in 1911 crowds gathered at Caernarfon Castle in Wales for the investiture of Prince Edward, the future Edward VIII, as Prince of Wales. It was the first time the ceremony had been held in public and in Wales. This is one of the pair of throne chairs used by King George V and Queen Mary on that day. They were handcrafted by the firm Morris & Co, founded by William Morris, which was known for including British themes in its designs.

Each chair is carved with Celtic knotwork, across the curved X-frame of its body. The arms are formed as fantastic dragons with wings fanning out to provide the supports. They are intended to be very strongly Welsh in character. The 17-year-old Prince had learned Welsh in honour of the occasion.

Kneeling in front of the thrones, Edward was presented with different elements of regalia by his father the King. Some of them - the coronet, sword and ring designed by Welsh sculptor William Goscombe John - are displayed nearby. Dragons, the emblem of Wales, feature on the sword's hilt and support the large, rounded amethyst in the ring. The coronet is decorated with amethysts and pearls. It includes another Welsh national symbol - the fleurs-de-lis forming the rim of the coronet are made up from daffodil blossoms.

13. THE AMBASSADOR

JOHN SEYMOUR LUCAS (1849-1923)

The Reception of the Moorish Ambassador by King Edward VII at St James's Palace
Signed and dated 1902

RCIN 405999



This is a painting of a scene in June 1901, six months after the death of Queen Victoria. The black dresses worn by Queen Alexandra and her ladies-in-waiting show a court still in mourning as a new reign starts. The event takes place in the Throne Room at St James's Palace. The new King Edward VII would have been keen to have a record of the first of his diplomatic receptions, known as levées.

King Edward is listening to an address from the Sultan of Morocco congratulating him on becoming king. It is being read by the Moroccan ambassador. The man standing just behind him, with a white beard and dressed in red, is acting as interpreter. He was Sir Harry Maclean, a commander in the Sultan's army who had actually been born in Scotland.

The artist, John Seymour Lucas, also designed stage sets and costumes. His love of dramatic scenes is clear in the way he paints the King and Queen on their ornate thrones under the rich burgundy and gold canopy of state. The Moroccan party in white robes line up beside the ambassador, as the British courtiers in their military uniforms take their places beside the King. They look like the supporting cast in a play.

However, composing the figures in the painting in this way meant that one of the main players in the scene, the Moroccan Ambassador, has his back to the audience. The artist came up with a clever solution to this problem. He painted a miniature profile portrait of the Moroccan Ambassador which was set into the lower edge of the frame. This was unusual, but it is known that Seymour Lucas drew the Ambassador in profile around the time of his visit to London and it is reasonable to assume that he used these drawings to make this rather small miniature.

14. ALBUM

QUEEN ALEXANDRA OF THE UNITED KINGDOM (1844-1925)

Norwegian Cruise, 1893

Leather album containing gelatin silver prints and watercolours | 28.2 x 38.6 cm (page dimensions)

RCIN 2923436



This leather-bound album was put together by Queen Alexandra when she was Princess of Wales. It is a record of images and opinions from her first trip to Norway on board the Royal Yacht Osborne. She found the landscape enchanting. The fact that she got up so early,

with the dawn, at six in the morning, makes it clear how impressed she was by her surroundings. She really wanted to capture the colours and the majesty of the landscape.

Alexandra painted watercolours of mountains, glaciers and the clear icy waters of the fjords. She took her own photographs and bought others made by commercial photographers, as well as postcards. Later she pasted the images into this album and added handwritten accounts of the places and people she visited.

Alexandra's commentary on what she was seeing was written in English, although she continued to write to her family in Danish. Perhaps by this time she was so immersed in the British way of life that she adopted English as her native tongue.

Every millimetre of every page is filled with different types of souvenirs. Conservation of an item like this is complicated because some of its parts are more stable than others. Light and humidity levels must be closely monitored and controlled. To protect the delicate spine of its leather binding the album is displayed resting in a cradle.

The album will be opened at different pages during the exhibition, to reduce exposure of the photographs to light, and to help preserve the book.

15. THE SPHINX

FRANCIS BEDFORD (1815-94)

The Sphinx, the Great Pyramid and two lesser Pyramids, Ghizeh, Egypt 4 March 1862
Albumen print | 23.1 x 29.5 cm (image)

[RCIN 2700866](#)



Shortly before his marriage, Edward visited Egypt for the first time. It made a huge impression on him. He took the photographer, Francis Bedford, with him who was the one who captured these extraordinary images of the visit.

The two people sitting on the Sphinx's neck and the three leaning against the top part of its chest give a sense of its size. In fact, the Sphinx's head is four metres wide. At this time the rest of its body and its paws were still submerged in the desert - they were not excavated until the late 1930s.

The Great Pyramid is in the background. It looks enormous, but actually is about 800 metres away - ten minutes' walk.

The camel in the photograph was one used by the royal party. The Prince described camel riding as 'not at all an unpleasant mode of conveyance'. Bedford perhaps found it rather more difficult. He had bulky cameras with him and wooden boxes containing the large, heavy and fragile glass plates used to create the negatives for prints like this one. He took nearly 200 plates.

Bedford was paid about £394, which in today's money is about £40,000 for a four-month job. He was allowed to exhibit the plates, and to publish them.

Other souvenirs from the Prince's trip are displayed nearby, including a pale green scarab beetle set between two gold pythons. See the image below.



He later gave it to Princess Alexandra, the bride that his mother had chosen for him while he had been away on his travels.

16. EMBROIDERY

ADELAIDE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

Portière 1901

Silk on silk moire | 233.0 x 178.0 cm (whole object)

RCIN 21415



This beautiful embroidery of a young eucalyptus tree is a piece of cloth designed to hang over a doorway, known as a portiere. It was designed by H.P. Gill, artist, curator and teacher at the Adelaide School of Design and displays the fantastic skill of the artists who made it.

Close inspection shows the different stitches, as well as the way different shades of colours have been used. The leaves of the tree are being tossed by the wind, so the embroiderer uses both dark and light shades of green. The blossoms are bright scarlet. At the foot of the tree are plants native to South Australia - runners, orchids and small purple irises, all native to the area around Adelaide.

The coloured embroidery silks were sent to Australia from Britain and were paid for by a group of women from Adelaide. Four of them stitched the detailed design. The Duchess of York was herself a keen embroiderer and the finished portière was presented to her when she was visiting Adelaide with her husband, the Duke of York. Later they became King George V and Queen Mary.

Mary's initials, 'VM' for Victoria Mary, are in the centre of the branches of the tree. At the bottom is the date, representing 1901, the year of the visit. The royal couple had travelled south from Melbourne where the Duke of York had opened the first Parliament of the new Commonwealth of Australia. In the embroidery the six interwoven branches of the tree represent the six colonies that had combined to form the one country, Australia, earlier that year.

The Adelaide School of Design wrote a lovely article about how this symbol depicted the togetherness of the colonies - even if the winds of change come and blow the tree about, they still hold on to their unity.

The visit to Australia was part of a tour of the empire by the Duke and Duchess of York.

16A THE ROYAL TOUR

Following the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the new King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra were no longer able to make the tour of what was then the British Empire as had been planned. Instead, their younger son George and his wife Mary, who later became King George V and Queen Mary, stepped in for them and found themselves boarding the royal yacht at Portsmouth.

It was a very long tour, taking about seven and a half months. They went to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and other territories, and spent more time at sea than they did on land. The two main aims of the tour were to open the new Australian Federal Parliament in Melbourne, and to show British gratitude for the troops drawn from across the empire who had served during the Anglo-Boer War. After the tour, George worked out that he had shaken hands with something like 35,000 people, presenting 4,300

medals and laying 21 foundation stones. Many public events were included as part of the tour, as well as meetings with native communities in the colonies.

The Duke and Duchess met with Māori in New Zealand, Indigenous Australians and First Nations people in Canada. These native communities saw themselves as sovereign peoples with very separate identities from the settler or colonial governments. The royal visit offered them the possibility of communication directly with representatives of the British Crown.

Often this was an opportunity to express complaints. They also provided opportunities for the colonial government to try to put on a show of what they thought were native traditions. These meetings could be problematic, but they were also very interesting interactions. They were often very highly valued by the native communities, who gave gifts which are now some of the finest and most interesting in the royal collection.

When the royal couple returned, they quickly arranged for the presents they had received from all over the world to be put on display at the Imperial Institute in South Kensington. This helped ordinary people to have a better understanding of the wider world and Britain's place in it at that moment.

17. **DHAL (shield)**

1800-75

Silver gilt, brass, enamel and diamonds

RCIN 11278



Ranbir Singh, Maharaja of Kashmir (1830-85) 1875-6

Albumen print [RCIN 2114153](#)



This enamelled shield, called a 'dhal' is encrusted with 1,294 unpolished, flat-cut diamonds, known as 'polki diamonds'.

The shield was presented by Ranbir Singh, the Maharaja of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. He became Maharaja in 1856, a year before the Indian Rebellion of 1857-58. He provided extremely important military and financial help to the British during the rebellion. After the rebellion power was handed over from the East India Company to the British Crown.

The Maharaja had a difficult relationship with the British government. On the one hand he was an ally. He saw himself as a princely ruler who was part of the British Indian system. The privileges he had, and the right to rule over his kingdom, came from agreements made with the British. On the other hand, the papers in the colonial archive show that there was a real concern on the British side about giving away too much power and independence to him. This is a time when the British government knew how fragile colonial power in India was. They were very afraid of another uprising, which led to imposing British rule by force. But some people understood that there were other ways of ruling based on fair treatment and respect for the people in the colonies. They believed that this approach would strengthen British rule and make it more solid in the long term. The tour is probably part of their plan. It showed off imperial power but also connected with ordinary people. It made the British monarchy more real in the lives of Indians.

18. DELHI DURBAR

GEORGE PERCY JACOMB-HOOD (1857-1929)

King George V and Queen Mary at the Delhi Durbar signed and dated 1912

52.7 x 80.8 cm (sight) [RCIN 452381](#)



Hundreds of local VIPs took part in a ceremony to proclaim George V the King-Emperor. This was the central event of the 1911 Delhi Durbar. In this watercolour an elegantly dressed man is about to lay down his sword in front of the King and Queen Mary who are sitting underneath a canopy known as a shamiana.

Building the structures for the pageant required the moving of several villages. Pictures like this give no indication whatsoever of the clearances of local people that had to take place.

The 1911 Durbar, the first that the British sovereign had attended in person, was a ceremony with a political purpose. Bengal was divided into two parts by the British government in 1905, in the face of enormous opposition. An announcement to reverse the partition of Bengal was made at the Durbar. It was also announced there that the capital of India would be moved from Calcutta in Bengal to a brand-new city to be built in Delhi. Today it is known as New Delhi.

The cost of the Durbar was estimated to be £1,500,000. The bill was paid by Indian taxpayers. This added to anti-British sentiment and boosted Indian nationalism. Some local rulers chose to express their grievances. One of those attending the Durbar, the Gaekwar of Baroda, refused to bow three times and turned his back on the King. This was seen as a hugely defiant gesture and an expression of discontent. In some ways the Durbar

accelerated debate about anti-colonialism, and the role and future of the British Raj. Even so, during the First World War there was a huge outpouring of loyalty and enthusiasm for the British Empire and many British-Indian troops were involved in the fighting. Change was not a quick or simple process, but already there were clear rumblings at the Durbar of Indian discontent, leading to the end of Empire in India 36 years later.

18A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

A lot of research has been done trying to identify the figure bowing to the King and Queen in this watercolour. One very strong possibility is that the figure is a Rajput maharaja. There are written records of their coming and laying down jewelled swords before the King and the Queen. The photographs of the Durbar include portraits of all the different maharajas. Looking at details of dress, none of the images match exactly the figure in the painting. But the painting is not capturing a real moment as a photograph does, it comes from the imagination of the artist, painting an elegantly dressed Indian prince who is a symbol for all the Indian princes. For the artist the identity of the prince is not as important as the act of homage itself before the King and Queen, the new Emperor and Empress of India. The Durbar was a show of British power and authority, but only the people who were present at it saw it. Images were needed to show people what it looked like and what happened there. They were propaganda, telling the world how stable, how secure and how harmonious the British relationship was with India.

19. **FRANK O. SALISBURY (1874-1962)**

The Passing of the Unknown Warrior, King George V as Chief Mourner, Whitehall, 11 November 1920 Signed and dated 1920
Oil on canvas | 71.7 x 147.8 cm (support, canvas/panel/stretcher external)

RCIN 404458



In this quieter space, the glamour of the earlier galleries changes to a sense of duty and remembering. This scene shows Armistice Day 1920, the day of national remembrance held on 11th November. The canvas's unusual shape draws attention to the Cenotaph - the name means 'empty tomb' - which is a stone monument dedicated to those who died in the First World War. It has just been unveiled by King George V who pressed a button releasing two Union flags.

The soldier on the right-hand side is gathering up the flags that had been released. The Last Post was played, and the King laid a wreath at the Cenotaph. The procession continued down Whitehall towards Westminster Abbey.

On the gun carriage, draped in another Union flag, is the coffin of an unidentified British serviceman. He would soon be buried in a grave inside the Abbey.

George V has become the chief mourner for the whole of Britain. Taking on this role is a sign of a major change in what is expected from the monarch. He is now driven by a sense of duty, very different from the pleasure-seeking lifestyle of Edward and Alexandra in the late 19th century.

George V and Queen Mary began a different life of service, reflecting the new national mood. Earlier that year, during a walkabout in Swansea, they had been presented with the

clock displayed in this gallery. It is a touching object that demonstrates a change in Royal collecting.

This object is a symbol for supporting war veterans who are looking for new ways of expressing themselves, taking on new roles and new crafts. This is a very different world that we have entered.

This is the last stop on the tour. We hope you have enjoyed *The Edwardians: Age of Elegance*.

To find out more about works of art in the Royal Collection please visit our website at www.rct.uk. There you can find out about future exhibitions and keep in touch by signing up to our e-Newsletter or by following us on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube . Please remember that you can return to The King's Gallery, free of charge, for a year, using your ticket from today's exhibition.

Please hand this back to a member of staff. Thank you.