

Royalty and Australian society

The nature of the collection

Whether we like it or not, the British monarchy has profoundly shaped Australian political and cultural life.

In its collections the National Archives holds thousands of records documenting the many ways in which the monarchy has influenced Australian life and society. For example, we hold records that document:

- Queen Victoria's assent to the birth of our nation;
- the scandal associated with the Duke of Gloucester's 1934 visit – 'When seen later the Mayor said it was the most monstrous incident of which he had ever heard';
- the sorrow expressed at the death of a monarch – 'Profoundly regret to state that his Majesty King George V passed away just before midnight. Please inform Prime Minister...';
- the deep shock of the King's abdication – 'Of his own will, he steps down from the throne of this mighty empire...With the deepest sadness in our hearts, we bid King Edward the Eighth farewell...';
- the excitement associated with the Queen's arrival in Sydney in 1954 – 'Ice cream, peanut and souvenir vendors did brisk business. One ice cream salesman said he expected to earn £1 pound an hour for the next few days'; and
- the dilemma of what to buy Princess Margaret as a wedding present.

Records documenting all of the above and more are contained among the vast collection of records relating to royalty held by the National Archives.

British monarchs of the twentieth century

This century has seen six British monarchs on the throne: Victoria (1837–1901), Edward VII (1901–10), George V (1910–36), Edward VIII (1936), George VI (1936–52) and Elizabeth II (1952 to the present).

Records of royal visits to Australia, 1901–68

The following table lists significant visits to Australia made by members of the royal family, and the principal series containing records about these tours.

Collection references

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Duke and Duchess of York</u>	1901	A6
<u>Edward, Prince of Wales</u>	1920	A2
<u>Edward, Prince of Wales</u>	1920	A6678
<u>Duke and Duchess of York</u>	1927	A6680
<u>Duke and Duchess of York</u>	1927	A6976
<u>Duke of Gloucester</u>	1934	A6683
<u>Queen Elizabeth II and Duke of Edinburgh</u>	1954	A462
<u>Queen Elizabeth II and Duke of Edinburgh</u>	1954	A1773
<u>Duke of Edinburgh</u>	1956	A463
<u>The Queen Mother</u>	1958	A463
<u>The Queen Mother</u>	1958	A1766
<u>Princess Alexandra</u>	1959	A463
<u>Princess Alexandra</u>	1959	A1765
<u>Duke of Edinburgh</u>	1962	A463
<u>Duke of Edinburgh</u>	1962	A1771
<u>Queen Elizabeth II and Duke of Edinburgh</u>	1963	A463
<u>Duchess of Kent</u>	1964	A463
<u>Duchess of Kent</u>	1964	A2757
<u>Duke of Edinburgh</u>	1965	A463
<u>Duke and Duchess of Gloucester</u>	1965	A463
<u>Duke and Duchess of Gloucester</u>	1965	A1767
<u>The Queen Mother</u>	1966	A463
<u>The Queen Mother</u>	1966	A2405
<u>The Duke of Edinburgh</u>	1967–68	A463

Most records relating to royalty held by the National Archives were created by the Prime Minister's Department, the department responsible for much official liaison with the monarchy, and for the coordination of royal visits to Australia. Many of the records from the major Prime Minister's record series have been added to the National Archives' [RecordSearch](#) database.

In addition, many other government agencies were responsible for the creation of significant records relating to royalty. For example, the Office of the Governor-General, the Department of

External Affairs and the Department of Defence have records documenting official protocol matters and general liaison with the Crown; records of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation relate to the security preparations for various royal visits; while holdings of the Australian News and Information Bureau contain thousands of photographs recording all aspects of royal tours, from the hanging of the bunting to the cleaning up at the end of the day. Details of many of these records are available from the RecordSearch database.

For more information

Research guide:

Royalty and Australian Society: Records relating to the British Monarchy held in Canberra.