

= Princess Sophia of the United Kingdom =

The Princess Sophia ( Sophia Matilda ; 3 November 1777 ? 27 May 1848 ) was the 12th child and 5th daughter of King George III and Charlotte of Mecklenburg @-@ Strelitz . Sophia is perhaps best known for the rumours surrounding a supposed illegitimate child to which she gave birth as a young woman .

In her youth , Sophia was closest to her father , who preferred his daughters over his sons ; however , she and her sisters lived in fear of their mother . The princesses were well @-@ educated but raised in a rigidly strict household . Though he disliked the idea of matrimony for his daughters , King George had intended to find them suitable husbands when they came of age . However , the King 's recurring bouts of madness , as well as the Queen 's desire to have her daughters live their lives as her companions , stopped would @-@ be suitors from offering for the most of the princesses . As a result , Sophia and all but one of her sisters grew up in their mother 's cloistered household , which they frequently referred to as a " Nunnery " .

Though she never wed , rumours spread that Sophia became pregnant by Thomas Garth , an equerry of her father 's , and gave birth to an illegitimate son in the summer of 1800 . Other gossip declared the child was the product of rape by her elder brother the Duke of Cumberland , who was deeply unpopular . Historians are divided on the validity of these stories , as some believe she gave birth to Garth 's child while others call them tales spread by the Royal Family 's political enemies .

The efforts of the Prince Regent to gain his sisters increased independence were further hastened along with Queen Charlotte 's death in 1818 . In her last years , Sophia resided in the household of her niece Princess Victoria of Kent ( the future Queen Victoria ) , at Kensington Palace . There , she fell under the sway of Victoria 's comptroller , Sir John Conroy , who took advantage of her senility and blindness ; rumours also circulated that Sophia was in awe of Conroy because of his ability to deal effectively with the " bullying importunities " of Sophia 's supposed illegitimate son . Sophia frequently served as his spy on the Kensington household as well as on her two elder brothers , while Conroy squandered most of her money . The princess died on 27 May 1848 at her residence in Vicarage Place , Kensington Palace .

= = Early life = =

The Princess Sophia was born at Buckingham House , London on 3 November 1777 , the twelfth child and fifth daughter of King George III and Charlotte of Mecklenburg @-@ Strelitz . The young princess was christened on 1 December 1777 in the Great Council Chamber at St James 's Palace by Frederick Cornwallis , Archbishop of Canterbury . Her godparents were Prince August of Saxe @-@ Gotha @-@ Altenburg ( her first cousin once @-@ removed ) , The Duchess of Brunswick @-@ Wolfenbüttel ( her first cousin twice @-@ removed ) and The Duchess of Mecklenburg ( wife of her first cousin once @-@ removed ) , all of whom were represented by proxies .

Upon Sophia 's birth , King George ensured his daughters and younger sons would have allowances ; through a provision of Parliament , Sophia and her elder sisters each were to receive an annual income of £ 6 @,@ 000 either upon their marriages or the king 's death . The royal household was very rigid and formal , even when only the royal family were together in private . For instance , when the King entered a room , his daughters were expected to stand up , remain silent until addressed , and not leave until given permission . Queen Charlotte made attempts to be economical where possible ; the younger princesses wore country @-@ made dresses , which were less expensive , and ate plain food .

Sophia 's early life was focused on education . Lady Charlotte Finch served as Sophia 's governess , a role she performed for all the royal children . As with the strict education and discipline received by her brothers , Lady Charlotte through the sub @-@ governesses chosen by Queen Charlotte arranged expert tutors to give the princesses lessons in English , French , music , art , and geography ; Sophia and her sisters were also allowed to play sports and boisterous games with their brothers . The queen sought to combine her daughters ' entertainments with educational benefits . Sophia and her siblings were brought up with an exposure to theatre , and were entertained with

special performances . Princess Sophia 's first appearance in public occurred when she accompanied her parents and elder siblings to a commemoration for George Frideric Handel , held at Westminster Abbey on 26 May 1784 .

Uncommon for the period , Sophia 's father was an involved parent in her early years , and preferred his daughters to his sons . When possible he attended the princesses ' birthday parties and other special events , and was kept informed on their progress in the schoolroom . A family friend once remarked , " I never saw more lovely children , nor a more pleasing sight than the King 's fondness for them . " On the other hand , Queen Charlotte invoked fear in her daughters and , according to royal historian A.W. Purdue , she was not " benignly maternal " .

= = Adulthood = =

By 1792 Sophia and her sister Mary were being included in more family activities , and at age fourteen , Sophia debuted at court on her father 's birthday , 4 June 1792 . According to biographer Christopher Hibbert , in her young adulthood Sophia was a " delightful though moody girl , pretty , delicate and passionate . " As within her childhood , Sophia was devoted to her father , though she occasionally found him exasperating . She wrote that " the dear King is all kindness to me , and I cannot say how grateful I feel for it . " Prior to 1788 , King George had told his daughters that he would take them to Hanover and find them suitable husbands despite misgivings he had , which stemmed from his sisters ' own unhappy marriages . He remarked , " I cannot deny that I have never wished to see any of them marry : I am happy in their company , and do not in the least want a separation . " However , the King suffered his first bout of madness that year , when Sophia was aged eleven . Sophia remarked of her father 's behaviour , " He is all affection and kindness to me , but sometimes an over kindness , if you can understand that , which greatly alarms me . " Further lapses into insanity occurred in 1801 and 1804 , thus forestalling talk of marriage for his daughters . The question of matrimony was rarely raised ; Queen Charlotte feared the subject , something which had always discomforted the King , would push him back into insanity . Furthermore , the queen , strained from her husband 's illness , wanted the princesses to remain close to her .

As a result , like most of her sisters , Princess Sophia was forced to live her life as a companion of her mother . The princesses were not allowed to mix with anyone outside of the Royal Court , and rarely came into contact with men other than pages , equerries , or attendants . Constantly chaperoned , the girls frequently complained about living in a " Nunnery " . For entertainment , the queen read sermons to them and the princesses practised embroidery . On one occasion Sophia wrote their days were so " deadly dull ... I wished myself a kangaroo . "

The Princess Royal was the only daughter who was able to marry while relatively young . The rest of the princesses were not without suitors , but most of the various men 's efforts were stopped by Queen Charlotte . Most of the girls longed for families and children of their own , and often asked the Prince of Wales , to whom they remained close , for help , either in finding spouses , allowing them to marry their loves , or allowing them to live outside of Queen Charlotte 's household . A grateful Sophia once jokingly wrote to her brother , saying " I wonder you do not vote for putting us in a sack and drowning us in the Thames . " Before George became regent , he had little power to oblige his sisters . His ascension to the regency in 1811 led to Sophia and the other remaining unmarried princesses to receive increases in their allowances , from £ 10 @, @ 000 to £ 13 @, @ 000 . He also supported their desire to venture out into society . Queen Charlotte was outraged at these attempts , and the Prince @-@ Regent had to reconcile the two parties carefully so that his sisters could still enjoy some independence .

= = Illegitimate child = = =

During Sophia 's lifetime , there were various rumours about her alleged incestuous relationship with her brother , Ernest Augustus , Duke of Cumberland , who later became the King of Hanover . The Prince Regent supposedly warned his sisters not to be alone in the same room with the Duke , and Cumberland was deeply unpopular with the British people . It is unclear whether there was truth

to these rumours or whether they were circulated by the Duke 's numerous political enemies .

Limited in exposure to eligible men , Sophia and several of her sisters became involved with courtiers and equerries . Sophia entered into a relationship with her father 's chief equerry , Major @-@ General Thomas Garth , a man thirty @-@ three years her senior . He had a large purple birthmark on his face , causing Sophia 's sister Mary to refer to him as " the purple light of love " and courtier and diarist Charles Greville to call him a " hideous old devil " . Despite this , one lady @-@ in @-@ waiting noted " the princess was so violently in love with him that everyone saw it . She could not contain herself in his presence . " Greville wrote about Sophia and her sisters ' affairs in a diary entry , " women fall in love with anything ? and opportunity and the accidents of the passions are of more importance than any positive merits of mind or of body ... [ The princesses ] were secluded from the world , mixing with few people ? their passions boiling over and ready to fall into the hands of the first man whom circumstances enabled to get at them . "

Gossip soon spread of the existence of an illegitimate child . Some historians contend that , sometime before August 1800 in Weymouth , Sophia gave birth to a child fathered by Garth . Flora Fraser believes the rumours that Sophia had a child , but has questioned whether the child was fathered by Garth , or Sophia 's brother the Duke of Cumberland . Historians further write that the child , baptised Thomas Garth like his father , was raised by his father in Weymouth , where his mother would visit him occasionally . In 1828 , this child apparently tried to blackmail the royal family with certain incriminating documents from his father about his supposed parents ' relationship , though this ended in failure .

Conversely , Anthony Camp challenges the belief that Sophia had a child and provides a detailed summary of the available evidence . In his book *Royal Babylon : the Alarming History of European Royalty* , author Karl Shaw writes of the possibility that the Duke raped his sister , citing evidence from Charles Greville 's diaries , as well as other factors . Historian Gillian Gill believes that Sophia secretly gave birth to the child and that this is the reason Sophia never married . Alison Weir and others , however , write of a possible marriage between Sophia and Garth the same year as the child 's birth , but there is no evidence to back this assertion other than the presence of a wedding ring in a portrait of an aged Sophia .

= = Later life = =

Sophia was a favourite of her niece , Princess Charlotte of Wales , as the young princess liked her gentle character and had a certain fascination for the gossip surrounding Sophia 's past . Charlotte detested her other aunts , and once wrote , " I can hardly believe [ Sophia ] belongs to them- so wholly different is she in thoughts , opinions , matters . Her nobleness and rectitude of mind renders her no favourite here . The constant scenes of intrigue , of tracasseries , she can but ill support . " The Prince Regent 's efforts to help his sisters led to the marriages of Mary and Elizabeth , and Queen Charlotte 's death in 1818 allowed Augusta and Sophia their domestic freedom , though it was too late for them to marry . From her mother Sophia inherited Lower Lodge at Windsor Great Park , which she in turn gave to the Prince Regent . The death of Princess Augusta in 1840 resulted in Sophia inheriting Clarence House and Frogmore .

After the queen 's death , Sophia lived in Kensington Palace during her final years , next to her niece Princess Victoria of Kent , the future Queen Victoria . As a result , Princess Sophia was one of the few paternal relatives that Victoria saw often . Like her sister @-@ in @-@ law the Duchess of Kent , Sophia fell under the spell of Victoria 's comptroller Sir John Conroy and let him manage her money . The princess became a part of the Duchess of Kent 's social circle and , in return , Sophia spied for Conroy when he was absent from Kensington Palace . Sophia also reported to Conroy on what she heard at St. James 's Palace , as she had privileged access to courtiers as well as to her two elder brothers . Gossipmongers speculated that Conroy 's successful ability to deal with the " bullying inopportunities " of Sophia 's illegitimate son endeared her to him , while some historians write that Conroy took advantage of Sophia , who in her last years had become " dizzy , easily muddled ... mourning her fading looks " and a " confused , nearly blind aunt . " Sophia often dined with the household , but the Duchess of Kent despised her . Princess Victoria was aware her aunt

was a spy and the two never became close . Sophia 's wealth allowed Conroy to live a rich lifestyle , acquiring for himself a house in Kensington for £ 4000 , as well as two other estates for £ 18 @,@ 000 . Sophia was also responsible for certain members of Victoria 's household gaining higher statuses ; Victoria 's governess Louise Lehzen , for instance , was made a Hanoverian baroness on the orders of George IV , and Conroy was named a Knight Commander of the Hanoverian Order .

== Death ==

After having been blind for over ten years , on the morning of 27 May 1848 , Princess Sophia became ill at her residence at Vicarage Place , Kensington ; she was visited by her sister Mary , sister @-@ in @-@ law Queen Adelaide , and nephew @-@ in @-@ law Prince Albert . Sophia 's death occurred at 6 : 30 later that day , when Mary , the Duchesses of Kent and Cambridge were present .

The princess was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery in London , immediately in front of ( east of ) the central chapel rather than at Windsor Castle , as she wished to be near her brother , Prince Augustus Frederick , Duke of Sussex ( who lies on the opposite side of the path ) . After her death , it was discovered that Conroy had squandered most of her money and that the princess had virtually no estate to bequeath . Charles Greville wrote an entry in his diary on 31 May :

" The Princess Sophia died a few days ago , while the Queen [ Victoria ] was holding the Drawing @-@ room for her Birthday . She was blind , helpless , and suffered martyrdom ; a very clever , well @-@ informed woman , but who never lived in the world . "

== Titles , styles , honours and arms ==

== Titles and styles ==

3 November 1777 ? 27 May 1848 : Her Royal Highness The Princess Sophia

== Arms ==

As of 1789 , as a daughter of the sovereign , Sophia had use of the arms of the kingdom , differenced by a label of three points argent , the centre point bearing a heart gules , the outer points each bearing a rose gules .

== Ancestors ==