Queen Victoria’s Journal Entries

Queen Victoria maintained a detailed diary, her famous Journal, which is contained in 111 large manuscript volumes. These volumes constitute about a third of the original, as her diaries were edited after her death by her youngest daughter Princess Beatrice, at Queen Victoria's request. The extracts below cover some of the more momentous events of Queen Victoria's reign, from her accession in 1832 to her Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

On William IV’s death, and her accession aged 18 years: Tuesday, 20 June 1837 at Kensington Palace

I was awoke at 6 o'clock by Mamma, who told me that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were here, and wished to see me. I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing-gown), and alone, and saw them. Lord Conyngham (the Lord Chamberlain) then acquainted me that my poor Uncle, the King, was no more, and had expired at 12 minutes past 2 this morning, and consequently that I am Queen. Lord Conyngham knelt down and kissed my hand, at the same time delivering to me the official announcement of the poor King's demise. The Archbishop then told me that the Queen was desirous that he should come and tell me the details of the last moments of my poor, good Uncle; he said that he had directed his mind to religion, and had died in a perfectly happy, quiet state of mind, and was quite prepared for his death. He added that the King's sufferings at the last were not very great but that there was a good deal of uneasiness. Lord Conyngham, whom I charged to express my feelings of condolence and sorrow to the poor Queen, returned directly to Windsor. I then went to my room and dressed. Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country; I am very young and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure that very few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have ...

At 9 came Lord Melbourne, whom I saw in my room, and of COURSE quite ALONE as I shall always do all my Ministers. He kissed my hand and I then acquainted him that it had long been my intention to retain him and the rest of the present Ministry at the head of affairs, and that it could not be in better hands than his ... He then read to me the Declaration which I was to read to the Council, which he wrote himself and which is a very fine one. I then talked with him some little longer time after which he left me ... I like him very much and feel confidence in him. He is a very straightforward, honest, clever and good man. I then wrote a letter to the Queen ... At about half past 11 I went downstairs and held a Council in the red saloon. I went in of course quite alone, and remained seated the whole time. My two Uncles, the Dukes of Cumberland (who now succeeded William IV as King of Hanover) and Sussex, and Lord Melbourne conducted me. The declaration, the various forms, the swearing in of the Privy Councillors of which there were a great number present, and the reception of some of the Lords of Council, previous to the Council in an adjacent room (likewise alone) I subjoin here. I was not at all nervous and had the satisfaction of hearing that people were satisfied with what I had done and how I had done it.

Receiving after this, Audiences of Lord Melbourne, Lord John Russell, Lord Albemarle (Master of the Horse), and the Archbishop of Canterbury, all in my room and alone. Saw Stockmar
friend and counsellor to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert). Saw Clark, whom I named my Physician ... Saw Ernest Hohenlohe who brought me a kind and very feeling letter from the poor Queen. I feel very much for her, and really feel that the poor good King was always so kind personally to me, that I should be ungrateful were I not to recollect it and feel grieved at his death. The poor Queen is wonderfully composed now, I hear.

Wrote my journal. Took my dinner upstairs alone. Went downstairs. Saw Stockmar. At about 20 minutes to 9 came Lord Melbourne and remained till near 10. I had a very important and very comfortable conversation with him ...

Great Exhibition: 1 May 1851
This day is one of the greatest and most glorious days of our lives, with which, to my pride and joy the name of my dearly beloved Albert is forever associated! It is a day which makes my heart swell with thankfulness ... The Park presented a wonderful spectacle, crowds streaming though it – carriages and troops passing, quite like the Coronation Day, and for me, the same anxiety. The day was bright, and all bustle and excitement. At half past 11, the whole procession in 9 state carriages was set in motion. Vicky and Bertie (her two eldest children, the Princess Royal and the Prince of Wales) were in our carriage. Vicky was dressed in lace over white satin, with a small wreath of pink wild roses, in her hair, and looked very nice. Bertie was in full Highland dress. The Green Park and Hyde Park were one mass of densely crowded human beings, in the highest good humour and most enthusiastic. I never saw Hyde Park look as it did, being filled with crowds as far as the eye could reach. A little rain fell, just as we started; but before we neared the Crystal Palace, the sun shone and gleamed upon the gigantic edifice, upon which the flags of every nation were flying.

We drove up Rotten Row and got out of our carriages at the entrance on that side. The glimpse through the iron gates of the Transept, the moving palms and flowers, the myriads of people filling the galleries and seats around, together with the flourish of trumpets, as we entered the building, gave a sensation I shall never forget, and I felt much moved ... In a few seconds we proceeded, Albert leading me having Vicky at his hand, and Bertie holding mine. The sight as we came to the centre where the steps and chair (on which I did not sit) was placed, facing the beautiful crystal fountain was magic and impressive. The tremendous cheering, the joy expressed in every face, the vastness of the building, with all its decorations and exhibits, the sound of the organ (with 200 instruments and 600 voices, which seemed nothing), and my beloved Husband the creator of this great "Peace Festival", uniting the industry and arts of all nations of the earth, all this, was indeed moving, and a day to live forever. God bless my dearest Albert, and my dear Country which has shown itself so great today ...

Every face was bright, and smiling, and many even had tears in their eyes ... One could of course see nothing, but what was high up in the Nave, and nothing in the Courts. The organs were but little heard, but the Military Band, at one end, had a very fine effect ... We returned to our place and Albert told Lord Breadalbane to declare the Exhibition opened, which he did in a loud voice saying "Her Majesty commands me to declare the Exhibition opened", when there was a flourish
of trumpets, followed by immense cheering. Everyone was astounded and delighted. The return was equally satisfactory - the crowd most enthusiastic and perfect order kept. We reached the Palace at 20 minutes past 1 and went out on the balcony, being loudly cheered. That we felt happy and thankful, - I need not say - proud of all that had passed and of my beloved one's success. Dearest Albert's name is for ever immortalized and the absurd reports of dangers of every kind and sort, set about by a set of people, - the 'soi-disant' fashionables and the most violent protectionists - are silenced. It is therefore doubly satisfactory that all should have gone off so well, and without the slightest accident or mishap.¹

¹ https://www.royal.uk/sites/default/files/media/victoria.pdf