

Throughout its history Canongate has maintained links to royalty.

1. King David I (1124 - 1153) and the stag. At the top of the church are a gilded stag's head and cross, the arms of the Burgh of Canongate.

Tradition holds that during a hunt in the area now called Holyrood Park, King David became separated from his companions and met a large stag that seemed destined to kill him. When the King seized the stag's antlers they miraculously fell off and turned into a cross. The beast then ran off leaving the King unharmed. That night the King dreamt of a great religious house on the site of his escape. He subsequently established Holyrood Abbey ("rood" means cross). The walk between the Abbey and the walled town of Edinburgh became known as "Canons' Gait" or Canongate.

2. Changing fortunes of a Scottish Count in Sweden. As a young man, John, Lord Macleod was a Jacobite, a supporter of the deposed House of Stuart. In 1745, Charles Edward Stuart ("Bonnie Prince Charlie") landed in Scotland to reclaim the Stuart throne. John, then aged 18, joined him. After the Jacobites were defeated in 1746 John was punished for treason. His family's estates were confiscated and he was exiled. John became Aide-de-Camp to the Swedish King, who made him Count of Cromarty in honour of his birthplace. He returned to Scotland in 1777. With Britain involved in new wars, there was a desperate need for more soldiers and, like other former Jacobites, John became an officer in the British Army. By the time he was a Major General and in 1784 he finally regained his family estates.

3. A bloody episode in Scottish history. David Riccio (or Rizzio), an Italian born around 1533, came to Scotland on a diplomatic mission. A good musician, he caught the attention of Mary Queen of Scots. Taken into her court, it looked as though Riccio was set on a glittering career, yet it all ended suddenly and violently. The Queen's husband, Lord Darnley, grew jealous of Riccio. On 9th February 1566, Darnley and a group of armed men attacked Riccio as he dined with the Queen dragged him from the room and stabbed him to death. He was buried in Holyrood Abbey but legend says Riccio's body was later moved to Canongate Kirkyard.

4. A royal horse whisperer. James Clark was a farrier - someone who fitted horseshoes and practiced "horse doctoring". In 1776, he was appointed Farrier to his Majesty in Scotland but as no British monarch visited Scotland during his lifetime, the post was honorary.

5. Painter of royal portraits. Limner is an old term for an illuminator of manuscripts or more generally a painter. John Watson Gordon was "Limner to Her Majesty Queen Victoria for Scotland". The post of Limner has been held by a number of prominent Scottish artists starting with Sir Henry Raeburn in 1823. The current post holder is Dame Elizabeth Blackadder, probably best known for her paintings of flowers and cats.

6. A royal surgeon with a hot temper. George III appointed James Gregory as his physician in Scotland in 1799. An honour continued by George IV in 1820. Gregory became Professor of Medicine at Edinburgh University at just 23 years old. He was popular with his students but fell out with many of his colleagues. He was taken to court and fined £100, around £6,000 today, for beating James Hamilton, Professor of Midwifery with his cane. When paying the fine, Gregory said he would be happy to pay another £100 for the chance to beat Hamilton again.

7. A royal chaplain. Dr John Jardine is described on his memorial as "Dean of the most ancient Order of the Thistle and one of his Majesty's Chaplains for Scotland". These posts still exist and the Minister of the Canongate Church is one of the two domestic chaplains to Her Majesty in Scotland. A strong anti-Jacobite, Jardine was a prominent figure in Scottish church and political life. His life ended dramatically on 30 May 1766, when he collapsed in the general assembly of the Church of Scotland.



Make the stories of those buried in the Kirkyard come alive by following in their footsteps and exploring the Canongate.

8. The King and the church. A plaque above the church door notes that "In 1688 King James VII ordained that the mortification of Thos Moodie ... should be applied to the erection of this structure". "Mortification" is an old Scottish term for lands given for charitable uses. Previously local people had worshipped in Holyrood Abbey but when James VII decided that he wanted to turn this into a private chapel Canongate Church was built. Among things to see inside the church are a painting of King David's encounter with the stag and the Royal Pew where the Queen sits when she attends services here.



9. A royal round of golf. Golfer's Land, which stood on this site, was built in the 17th century by John Paterson, a shoemaker in the Canongate. He is said to have met the cost from money he won in a golf match in which he partnered the future King James VII of Scotland (James II of England).

10. Royalty leaves Edinburgh. Set into the wall of the Scottish Parliament building are several quotations. The one closest to the bottom of the hill comes from Sir Walter Scott's Heart of Midlothian, set in Edinburgh in 1736. This was a period when many Scottish people looked back to the time before their kings and parliament moved to London. Scott's character Mrs Howden says "When we had a king, and a chancellor, and parliament-men o' our ain, we could aye pebble them wi' stanes when they werena gude bairns - But naebody's nails can reach the length o' Lunnon". In other words, Scots people could bring pressure to bear when the king and parliament were in Edinburgh, but not once they moved to London.

11. The royal home. The oldest surviving part of the Palace of Holyrood House is the tower on the left, built for James IV in the early 1500s. Mary Queen of Scot's apartments were in this tower and this is where David Riccio was murdered.

12. A royal refuge. Three brass letters "S" are set into the cobbles where the Abbey Strand joins the Canongate. Until 1880, debtors (known 'Abbey Lairds'), could shelter from their creditors within the historic abbey boundaries. The brass letters marked the boundary and as long as debtors stayed within this area they could not be arrested. Debtors included the Comte d'Artois, younger brother of Louis XVI of France. He went into exile at the start of the French Revolution and led an army against the revolutionaries. Defeated and unable to pay his soldiers, he gained refuge in Britain and arrived at Holyrood in 1796. He left in 1803 but was back again in 1830-32 after being deposed as Charles X of France.



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Check it out: From Canongate Kirkyard (1) to:

- > New Calton Burial Ground (2) - 1 mile: 0.3811 kg of CO₂
- > Old Calton Burial Ground (3) - 0.7 miles: 0.2156 kg of CO₂
- > Greyfriars Kirkyard (4) - 0.8 mile: 0.2464 kg of CO₂
- > St Cuthbert's Kirkyard (5) - 1.3 miles: 0.4005 kg of CO₂



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