



Kate
Turns
40!

Her New Chapter

AS SHE MARKS HER MILESTONE BIRTHDAY ON JAN. 9, THE DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE EMBRACES CHANGE AT HOME AND AT WORK

By **SIMON PERRY** and **MONIQUE JESSEN**

Christmas was in the air, and Princess Kate was ready to celebrate. Arriving at Westminster Abbey on Dec. 8 alongside her husband, Prince William, she stopped to greet a pair of real-life reindeer before making her way inside to host her first-ever carol concert. The royal mom—in a red Catherine Walker dress and sapphire-and-diamond earrings on loan from her grandmother-in-law, Queen Elizabeth—welcomed more than 1,200 guests in the historic abbey, including many of the healthcare workers and charity leaders she and William have met during the upheavals caused by COVID-19. “We have seen how communities have come together to support those most in need,” she wrote in the program for the concert, which will be broadcast in the U.K. on Christmas Eve. “And through our separation from others, we have been reminded just how powerful human connection is to us all. Just how much we need one another.” If it was chilly outside the abbey, those inside say Kate radiated warmth.

→ **Hitting Her Stride**
Kate (at the *No Time To Die* premiere in London in September) “is flourishing,” says a royal insider. “She has really come into her own.”

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“She’s a real people person,” says guest Linda Campbell, who was invited with her friend Joan Black in recognition of their work helping the elderly during the lockdowns. “What she wrote was beautiful, and to bring everyone together like this is lovely,” says Black. “I felt she was really confident. We are doing well if that’s our future queen.”

Now, as the Duchess of Cambridge approaches her milestone 40th birthday on Jan. 9, a new chapter beckons. Her robust family life is transitioning out of the baby and toddler years, with all three children—Prince George, 8, Princess Charlotte, 6, and Prince Louis, 3—in school for the first time. Yes, the couple have help from nanny Maria Turrion Borrallo, but Kate “runs things at home with the kids and the schedules,” says a friend. “She is hugely involved in every single part of their day.” The year has also seen significant shifts within the royal family, including the 95-year-old Queen curtailing some of her public activity amid health concerns. As a result, Kate finds herself closer than ever to the inevitable historic moment when she takes her place as Queen Catherine alongside a King William. She is “more and more impressive as time goes on,” says a source close to the royal household. “She is a focused and professional woman.” Adds a family friend: “She is ready to step into those shoes with ease and is perfect for the job.”

“SHE HAS GROWN INTO HER ROLE” — PHOTOGRAPHER JILLIAN EDELSTEIN

The Family’s New Christmas Card!



Strong Team
Kate and William (on Dec. 8) “have a really calming nature,” says scout leader Eddie O’Rourke, who met them in November. Adds Peter Fonagy: “There’s a very good understanding between them.”

Happy Holiday
The couple’s holiday greeting, released Dec. 10, featured a photo from their fall vacation to Jordan—where Kate lived for two years as a toddler—with (from left) Princess Charlotte, Prince Louis and Prince George.

That natural ease has been increasingly clear in recent months. Meeting with Holocaust survivors at London’s Imperial War Museum in November, she spotted a teddy bear held by survivor John Hajdu, who had clung to the toy throughout the WWII years. “I’m going to tell my children about Teddy this evening,” Kate told Hajdu, the subject of a portrait taken by photographer Jillian Edelstein for an exhibit Kate helped organize. “She felt so utterly engaged,” says Edelstein, who first met Kate nearly a decade ago. “There was a lot of integrity. She has grown into her role.”

Although in the past Kate has battled nerves on the job, she has proven herself a more self-assured public speaker of late, delivering a powerful speech on addiction in October. The speech, which she wrote herself, “was very on point. It was knowledgeable and compassionate and summed up the issues very well,” says Mike Trace CEO of the Forward Trust. And after identifying early childhood development as her cornerstone issue with the goal of preventing problems like addiction, mental illness and homelessness later in life, she put in years of listening and fact-finding before announcing her own center, The Royal Foundation Center for Early Childhood, in June. “She completely understands that everyone needs to make the connection between your brain development and your future long-term health,” says Dr. Elizabeth Rapa, a senior scientist from Oxford University who joined Kate on a school visit in November.

Kate’s slow-and-steady approach is rooted in the example of her “stabilizing normality,” as one royal insider describes her childhood as the daughter of entrepreneur parents Carole, 66, and Mike, 72. Her understated visit to the memorial for Sarah Everard, the victim of a high-profile murder in London last March, reminded others that Kate, too, was once an ordinary member of the public who walked or took the bus home from work or nights out with friends. “That’s exactly



HER KEY PRIORITIES AT 40

Early Childhood

Kate (visiting a scout troop in Scotland in November) has explained her focus on the first five years of life as a way to “best prepare the next generation to become parents themselves.”

Addiction

“No one chooses to become an addict,” Kate said in an October speech (right). She recognizes that “adults who are still dealing with bad experiences they had as children are very susceptible to addiction,” says Mike Trace of the Forward Trust.



Mental Health
She shares her work in this area with William (in May). “There’s a very good understanding between them and a shared interest in it,” says Peter Fonagy, CEO of the Anna Freud Centre.

KATE’S TOP 3 MOM RULES

1. Encourage kids to be outside.

Promoting gardens to foster active play is the public face of a role Kate also takes seriously at home, where she gets her kids out rain or shine. “It makes a huge difference,” she told the BBC.

2. Make time for family fun.

The couple often take their kids on bike rides and excursions to the sand dunes of Norfolk’s beaches near their country home. “They are playful,” says scout leader Eddie O’Rourke.

3. Be a “present parent.”

The couple are hands-on, friends say, both in the morning (when the kids argue over songs to play at breakfast) and at school pickup. “Kate likes to keep an ordinary life,” a source adds.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: VICTORIA STEWART/GETTY IMAGES; RALPH GROVER/AP/GETTY IMAGES; PHIL NOBLE/AP/GETTY IMAGES; THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE/SAMIR HUSSEIN/WIREIMAGE



HER CHIC NEW STYLE

Timeless—never trendy!—Kate has elevated her look in recent months



Tailored Pantsuits

In a purple design from Emilia Wickstead in Northern Ireland on Sept. 29, Kate—who rarely wears a suit—displayed a newfound style confidence.



Monochrome

Choosing one color “is exactly what the Queen does, and now Kate [on Oct. 19] is making it her own,” says Bethan Holt, author of *The Duchess of Cambridge: A Decade of Modern Royal Style*.



Wide-Legged Pants

Wearing more pants than ever, this wide-legged design was a sophisticated choice from budget-friendly U.K. retailer Jigsaw for a September outing.



Ultra-Glam

For the Bond premiere on Sept. 28, Kate wore a glittering gold Jenny Packham gown inspired by the film *Goldfinger*. “It was so glamorous—she really went all out,” says Holt.



Sustainable

Hitting the “green carpet” for the Earthshot Prize ceremony on Oct. 17, Kate rewore an Alexander McQueen dress (from 2011) styled with a different belt.



Bold

In November at the Royal Variety Performance, Kate chose an emerald green sequined Jenny Packham dress, originally made for her 2019 tour of Pakistan.

FROM LEFT: CHRIS JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES; SAMIR HUSSEIN/WIREIMAGE; STEVE PARSONS/GETTY IMAGES; CHRIS JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES; DOUG PETERS/PANZUMA

FROM TOP: RICHARD POHLE/GETTY IMAGES; CHRIS JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES

Looking ahead, the holidays will likely see Kate and William—who also turns 40 in June—and their children join the Queen at Sandringham as she observes her first Christmas without her beloved Prince Philip. As for how Kate will mark her birthday, she usually celebrates with her tight inner circle, including sister Pippa and financier husband James Matthews; brother James and his new wife Alizee; and close friends including Emilia Jardine-Paterson and her husband David; Thomas van Straubenzee and his wife Lucy Lanigan-O’Keefe and James and Laura Meade.

As the world tentatively opens up, the year ahead will see both and William travel more again, including a possible visit to the U.S. for the Earthshot Prize ceremony next fall. “There’s no, “This is my public persona and this is me behind the scenes,” says the family friend of the woman entering her fifth decade. “She is certainly a strong personality and a great mother and definitely fit for being Queen one day.” ●



Two Future Queens

With Queen Elizabeth sidelined by a sprained back, the U.K.’s annual Remembrance Sunday carried on without her—and with all eyes on Kate and her mother-in-law Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, 74, in November.

what the modern royal family should be doing,” says the insider of her tribute.

At home—either Kensington Palace or the family’s country retreat, Anmer Hall—Kate and William prioritize the kids while juggling their increasing public workload. Carrying their children through the past 20 months of the pandemic, there was plenty of “home learning, the same as everyone else,” says the family friend. When the couple winds down each night after putting their kids to bed, “William will bring Kate a gin-and-tonic,” says the friend. “They look after each other, but in different ways.”

They have also supported each other throughout the royal family’s ongoing estrangement from Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of


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— F R I E N D

Sussex, and the Sussexs’ claims of mistreatment and racism during their time as working royals. Kate has been “really, really upset about it all,” says one close insider. Adds the friend: “Everything with Harry and Meghan has been hugely stressful, but if anything, it’s pulled [her and William] closer together. She was upset about it because [William] was so upset. Seeing her husband so distraught was tough.” But she may have shown a glimpse of her feelings in a rare candid moment during a London school visit in November. When one of the students asked about Meghan and Harry, she responded, “What else?” and quickly changed the subject. Says the friend: “She’s no pushover. She has an inner strength for sure.”




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