

0. ALBERT FREDERICK ARTHUR GEORGE - Story  
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Queen Alexandra, the wife of Edward VII, was an avid photographer. She took lots of pictures of her family, including her grandchildren. In 1908, she had some of her photos published in a work called *Queen Alexandra's Christmas Gift Book: Photographs from My Camera*. *The Daily Telegraph* published the work, making it available in 1908. All proceeds were designated for charity.

This image depicts the Queen's husband, Edward VII (right) with his son Prince George, the Prince of Wales—who later served his country as George V—on the left. The Queen's two-oldest grandsons are also included in this image: Prince Edward of Wales, later the abdicated-Edward VIII (behind his brother) and Prince Albert of Wales, later George VI (who became the father of Queen Elizabeth II) at the front of the picture. Image online via Wikimedia Commons. Click on this picture of four kings for a better view.

Four names are a lot of names, even for a royal, so the second son of King George V and Queen Mary was known as "Bertie" to his friends and family. Where did he start his life? What was he like, as a boy?

Albert Frederick Arthur George was born on December 14, 1895 in York Cottage at Sandringham—a royal estate in Norfolk (in the mid-eastern part of Britain). Weighing in at nearly eight pounds, Bertie was named after Queen Victoria's much-loved husband, Prince Albert.

Bertie, like other children born to upper-class Brits, did not see much of his parents during his early years. He was raised, mostly, by his governess and her support staff (including nurses).

One of the nurses adored Bertie's older brother—Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David (known, simply, as "David" to his friends and family)—but had little time for Bertie. Later, John Wheeler-Bennett (who wrote an official biography of King George VI) said that the nurse had actually harmed the family's second son:

*... she largely ignored Bertie, feeding him his afternoon bottle while they were out riding in the C-spring Victoria, a carriage notorious for its bumpy ride. The practice ... was partly to blame for the chronic stomach problems that he was to suffer as a young man.*

The nurse, it is said, ultimately had a nervous breakdown.

Adding to Bertie's issues, while he was still young, were a few other significant facts. Although his father loved his children, he was a strict disciplinarian. To use the words of his biographer (Kenneth Rose), the future King George V was "an unbending Victorian." When Bertie was five, his father wrote him a letter, containing these words:

*Now that you are five years old I hope you will always try & be obedient & do at once what you are told, as you will find it will come much easier to you the sooner you begin. I always tried to do this when I was your age & found it made me much happier.* (Quoted by Sarah Bradford in *The Reluctant King: The Life and Reign of George VI*, page 18.)

In addition to poor digestion, young Bertie had knock knees. His father, who had the same condition, agreed that his son—from the age of eight—would have to wear splints on his legs. Not only did Bertie wear those splints at night, the young prince had to wear them for much of the day. It had to have been painful for him.

A born lefthander, Bertie was forced to use his right hand against his will. And ... by the time he was eight, a stammer—whether naturally caused or otherwise—impacted his speaking ability. It was hard for him to say words beginning with a hard "k" sound, such as "king" and "queen." Given his family circumstances, that was a bit awkward for him.

When George V gave his son a new title—the Duke of York (a position which called for regular public speaking)—there was little which Bertie feared more than ... public speaking.

His apprehensions nearly caused him to even lose the hand of the girl he loved—Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ALBERT-FREDERICK-ARTHUR-GEORGE-The-King-s-Speech>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ALBERT-FREDERICK-ARTHUR-GEORGE-The-King-s-Speech>

## Media Stream



### York Cottage - Birthplace of George VI

Photo of York Cottage, at the Sandringham royal estate in Norfolk, by The Giant Puffin, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Sandringham - Home of Kings and Queens

Photo of Sandringham House, at the Sandringham royal estate in Norfolk, by RXUYDC, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Prince Edward - Known as David - Son of George V

Photograph by Queen Alexandra, included in a book entitled [\*Queen Alexandra's Christmas Gift Book: Photographs from my Camera\*](#). (Scroll further up, on the link, to see the hardcover and a picture of the Queen.)

The book, "to be sold for charity," was published by "The Daily Telegraph," in 1908. It is freely available online, courtesy Google Books.

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### Prince Albert - Known as Bertie - Has a Case of "Knock Knees"

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Backrow: Queen Victoria and her son Albert (Edward VII)  
Couple in centre: Mary of Teck and George V  
surrounded by their 6 children

### Children of George V and Queen Mary

Image online, courtesy U.K. National Archives.

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