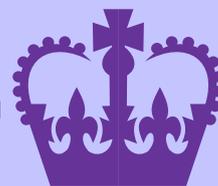


# DUNSTABLE

Royal  
Connections



## One of twelve resting places for Queen Eleanor's funeral procession in 1290.

Henry I established a town around the crossroads in Dunstable around 1109 and by 1123 had built a royal residence, to take advantage of the hunting grounds. The site is now occupied by the Old Palace Lodge Hotel, Kingsbury Court and the Norman King pub (which was sadly burned down in August 2011). On the wall outside the Norman King was the following inscription: "On the site of this inn and the adjoining ground, Henry I had a palace built where he regularly stayed from 1109, and which was known as Kingsbury."

Henry founded a priory (a small monastery) in Dunstable in 1131. He granted the prior control of the town. However he had already promised the townspeople the same freedoms as the citizens of London. As a result there were endless arguments over who ran Dunstable, the prior or the merchants.

King Stephen entertained his nephew the future Henry II at Kingsbury in 1153 when he made him his heir. In 1204 King John gave the Palace to Dunstable Priory and from then on the royal family stayed at the Priory and his courtiers at the Palace.



Edward I and Eleanor

In November 1290, King Edward I's queen, Eleanor, was taken ill on the journey to meet him in Scotland. She was taken to a manor house near Lincoln, where she died. The King wanted her to be buried in Westminster Abbey, so her body had to be taken back to London. This journey took thirteen days and followed a route that stopped at

several important religious houses including the Priory at Dunstable. When it arrived at Dunstable, the coffin was placed near the crossroads so the local people could mourn the dead Queen. The coffin was then guarded inside the Priory by the Canons overnight before continuing on to St Albans.



Dunstable Priory - founded 1131 : Chris Smith

In 1291 the King ordered crosses to be erected to mark the twelve sites where her body had rested. The original Eleanor Cross in Dunstable is long gone; the Puritans demolished it in 1643 as they disapproved of all crosses, but a modern statue in Eleanor's honour now stands in the shopping centre in High Street North.



Modern statue of Eleanor :  
Chris Smith

On 23rd May 1533 Archbishop Cranmer made the announcement of the divorce of Henry VIII from Katherine of Aragon in the church of Dunstable Priory. Henry VIII closed the Priory in 1539 and all that remains is the Church of St Peter which dates from 1150.

### Further information

[www.dunstablehistory.co.uk](http://www.dunstablehistory.co.uk)

[www.qecw.net](http://www.qecw.net)

