



Kate and little sister, Pippa at Wimbledon



Kate's school pal Emilia Jardine-Paterson and her husband David



William and Eddie Redmayne studied at Eton together

# The Wales's CLOSE CIRCLE

As heir to the throne, Prince William and his wife Catherine keep a select group of friends when it comes to their social lives, but there's more than one famous face inside the Prince and Princess of Wales' inner circle.

William and Kate first met back in 2001, when both were attending St Andrews University in Scotland – Kate was studying art history, with William doing the same before switching to Geography.

The notoriously private pair – who

## The Prince and Princess have a tight-knit group of friends – and prefer it that way

celebrated their 13th wedding anniversary in April – have kept in touch with many of their old school pals. Kate's best friends are a close-knit group of ladies she met while attending Marlborough College in Wiltshire – with whom she still keeps in touch to this day.

Kate, 42, met Emilia Jardine-

Paterson, 42, while studying at the £9000-per-term secondary school, and the two quickly bonded – in fact, it was Emilia who packed up Kate's bags and sent her on a girls' trip to Ibiza following the royal couple's brief split in 2007. Emilia was made one of Prince George's seven godparents back in

October 2013. She runs a successful interior design business, and is said to have helped Kate decorate more than one of her royal residences.

Also from Marlborough are best friends Trini Foyle, who acted as an assistant for Jeremy Hunt MP, and Alicia Fox-Pitt, the younger

sister of Olympic event rider William Fox-Pitt. Talking about her days on the famous Sisterhood rowing team with the future Queen, Alicia revealed, '[Kate's] a gifted sportswoman, and we played a lot of sport together at school.'

Kate's close friends rallied around her after her shock cancer diagnosis earlier this year, which she shared in a public video announcement in March 2024. As she took a step back from royal engagements and underwent abdominal surgery and preventative chemotherapy, her close circle of friends will no doubt have been a source of support. Royal expert Jennie Bond said, 'Sometimes your oldest friends are just the ticket. Kate has maintained deep friendships with several of her school mates, who will know just how to help.'

One of Kate's newest confidantes is Lucy Lanigan-O'Keeffe. A teacher at Thomas's Battersea, the

London private school previously attended by George and Charlotte, Lacy is married to Prince William's best friend Thomas van Straubenzee, meaning the two ladies have plenty of opportunities to meet up.

It's often said the Princess of Wales enjoys a simpler life, and no doubt part of this is keeping in touch with those friends who knew her before the term royal was ever attached to her name. A friend close to Kate said, 'Public life is full of extroverts – and she isn't one of them. There's no way Catherine would be doing anything in public life if she hadn't fallen in love with William. She is very open about that.'

Prince William, 42, also has many friends from his younger days – among his inner circle is William van Cutsem, 45, whose father is one of Prince Charles's best friends from Cambridge, as well as Guy Pelly, who was tasked with planning the future king's bachelor party. A nightclub owner, Guy, 42, is famously tight-lipped about his princely pal – whom he met back in 2001, when both men were on a fox hunt. A somewhat surprising friend to the Prince is actor Eddie Redmayne. Frequently crossing paths at various events

**'Kate isn't an extrovert'**





The prince and best friend Thomas van Straubenzee in 2005



William and David Beckham have been pals for years



Kate and Zara at Royal Ascot



Wills and Mike Tindall with their kids

over the years, the famous pair go way back, having studied at Eton together and also played on the same rugby team.

Joining the Prince and Princess on double-date dinner parties are Lady Laura Meade and James Meade. Close friends to the royal couple, James is Princess Charlotte's godfather, while Lady Laura is Prince Louis' godmother. Having met during their days at Eton, James co-delivered Will's best man's speech at the royal

wedding, while Wills was an usher on his best friend's big day.

The royal couple also have some close friends they look forward to seeing at family reunions. Prince William enjoys a close bond with ex-England rugby star Mike Tindall, who is married to his cousin and daughter of Princess Anne, Zara. The pair are both hands-on

fathers – with William being dad to Prince George, 11, Princess Charlotte, nine, and Prince Louis, six, while Mike shares Mia, ten, Lena, six, and three-year-old Lucas with Zara – and they are often seen together with their families at sporting events. Kate has also developed a close relationship with Zara since becoming mothers with children of a similar

age, and are often spotted enjoying playdates together. The Tindalls' close relationship with Kate and William has been more important than ever during Kate's recent health concerns. A royal source said, 'While some family members can be very 'royal', Mike is just himself and is relaxed and playful with George, Charlotte and Louis. It helps that they all have children around the same age that they can fool around together privately and bring a sense of normality to a

stressful situation.'

While many of their close circle go way back, there are some newer and glamorous additions. Roger Federer has been a close family friend of the Middleton family for years, after growing close to Kate's younger sister Pippa, 40. The 43-year-old retired tennis pro watched Wimbledon with Kate in 2023 and said, 'I know her quite well. She is an avid tennis fan, and she plays by herself.' He was even rumoured to have given a 11-year-

old Prince George a private tennis lesson at his grandparents' home, saying the future king was a 'sweet boy' and a very talented tennis player.

Sir Elton John, 77, and husband David Furnish, 61 have a firm bond with the pair, too. Having grown close to William's mother, the late Princess Diana, Elton remained a close figure in both Harry and William's lives after her passing. And the *Rocket Man* singer has grown close to Kate, admitting in an interview with *Good Morning America* in 2011

that he 'admired' the way Kate deals with the media, saying, 'Let's face it, we know what that kind of marriage entails.'

The Waleses are also close friends with another royal couple – showbiz royalty, that is. Kate and William have been pals with David and Victoria Beckham for over a decade, with Posh and Becks attending the royal couple's wedding back in 2011. William first struck up a relationship with the former England footballer, 49, after the duo worked together on the London Olympic bid in 2007.

## 'Sir Elton admires Kate'



Kate and Roger Federer at Wimbledon 2023

Getting on like a house on fire, the couples grew even closer after David and Victoria returned to England from LA. Talking about his friendship with William and his brother Harry, David said, 'They're very easy to get along with. They love their sport. William loves Aston Villa, unfortunately, which obviously I give him a bit of stick about.'

Kate and Posh, 50, have a lovely friendship, too, with a source sharing, 'They have a lot in common, as they both adore art and interior design. William and David enjoy discussing sport and bonding over being dads, and Kate and Victoria talk about fashion design and parenting.'



William and Rosie van Cutsem at Prince George's christening