

## This Day in History... June 2, 1953

# Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

On June 2, 1953, the coronation ceremony for Queen Elizabeth II attracted worldwide attention.

Born in 1926 to King George V's second son and his wife, Princess Elizabeth was never expected to rule England. She was third in line behind her uncle Edward and her father Albert.

On her grandfather George V's death in 1936, her uncle ascended to the throne as anticipated. But King Edward VIII, as he was known, abdicated before the year was out to marry an American divorcee. Elizabeth's parents, Albert and Elizabeth, then the Duke and Duchess of York, suddenly became King George VI and the queen consort. And ten-year-old Princess Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor became the heir.

On February 6, 1952, Princess Elizabeth received word that her father, King George VI, had passed away, making her the country's new queen. She immediately proclaimed herself queen, head of the Commonwealth, and defender of the Faith. Planning immediately began for her coronation, which wouldn't be held for over a year due to extensive preparations and the desire for a sunny day.



*Issued for Elizabeth's coronation in 1953.*



*1953 celebrating the queen's coronation.*

On June 2, 1953, the United Kingdom was buzzing with excitement over the new queen's coronation. The ceremony took place at London's Westminster Abbey. Over 8,000 guests attended the ceremony, with another three million filling the streets hoping to see the new queen traveling in her golden stagecoach. Many had camped overnight to ensure a good spot. The queen promised her subjects in a radio address that "Throughout all my life and with all my heart I shall strive to be worthy of your trust."

An estimated 20 million people watched the coronation on television. Many people at the time didn't have televisions of their own – in fact, many had never even seen a television before – so they crowded around their neighbor's TVs. The airing of the coronation led to a dramatic increase of television sales in the United Kingdom.

Acorns from the oak trees surrounding Windsor Castle were mailed to nations in the Commonwealth and planted in parks, schools, and private lawns. The trees became known as royal oaks or coronation oaks.

In 2003, the queen celebrated the 50th anniversary of her coronation with a religious ceremony at the Westminster Cathedral. The congregation of about 1,000 guests included 240 people who'd attended the coronation 50 years earlier. There were also 340 "coronation babies" in attendance – people who were born on June 2, 1953.

On September 9, 2015, Elizabeth II became England's longest reigning monarch, surpassing her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria. While guiding her country through 70 years of social and political change, she remained a symbol of national stability for decades. As UN President Ban Ki-moon put it, Queen Elizabeth II truly was "an anchor of our age" in Britain, and throughout the world. Upon her passing in 2022, her reign of 70 years, 214 days came to an end. It's the longest reign for any British monarch or female monarch.



*This stamp includes the coronation date.*



*From a set of definitives that were some of the first Great Britain stamps to honor Elizabeth as queen.*



*Issued for the 70th anniversary of Elizabeth's accession to the throne.*

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