

Cecil Beaton captured this iconic image of Queen Elizabeth on the day of her coronation.



WINDSOR FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

Queen's Coronation Day

As the Queen celebrates seven decades on the throne, we look back at June 2, 1953

by **MONIQUE JESSEN**

It was the royal celebration the world had been waiting for, and it did not disappoint. On June 2, 1953, at Westminster Abbey, Princess Elizabeth was crowned Queen in an elaborate ceremony full of pomp and pageantry, steeped in tradition that dated back hundreds of years.

Although a 25-year-old Elizabeth had actually been proclaimed Queen immediately after the death of her father, King George VI, in February 1952, the actual coronation didn't take

place until 16 months later. Tradition required an appropriate mourning period for the death of the King, and the coronation festivities took months of planning. The 8,251 guests included then-Prime Minister Winston Churchill and representatives from 129 countries. Prince Charles, just 4 years old, was the first heir apparent of a Queen to attend a coronation. (He even received his own illustrated invitation!)

Wearing a bespoke gown by her trusted couturier Norman Hartnell, the Queen took her oath. After she was handed the

FROM LEFT: CECIL BEATON/CAMERA PRESS/REDFUX; TOPICAL PRESS AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES



Queen Elizabeth arrived at Westminster Abbey with Prince Philip (right) and her six maids of honor.

four symbols of authority—the orb, the scepter, the rod of mercy and the royal ring of sapphire and rubies—the Archbishop of Canterbury placed the historic St Edward’s Crown on her head to a shout of “God save the Queen” and cheers from outside the cathedral.

Elizabeth’s coronation dress, made of the finest white duchess satin, paid tribute to the Commonwealth in its design, with the Queen requesting that not only the emblems of the U.K.

be embroidered into the intricate design but also those of the Commonwealth countries. “The dress expresses both tradition and modernity in its design, with colored embroideries incorporating the realms of which Her Majesty was Queen,” Caroline de Guitaut, deputy surveyor of the Queen’s Works of Art, tells *People*.

The event was the first coronation to be televised. In the weeks leading up to it, sales of television sets rocketed, and the

THE CEREMONY

A Private Moment

One part of the three-hour-long ceremony was off-limits from the cameras—the Act of Consecration, during which the Queen was blessed with holy anointing oil.

The Queen was seated under a canopy of gold cloth held up by four Knights of the Garter.

During the investiture, the Archbishop of Canterbury raised the St Edward’s crown high before placing it on the Queen’s head.



The Crowning Glory

The St Edward’s crown, made in 1661 from solid gold and set with rubies, amethysts, sapphires, garnet, topazes and tourmalines, weighs 4 lbs. 12 oz.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE; GETTY IMAGES (2); ALAMY (2); CAMERA PRESS/REDUX; ALAMY



It was Elizabeth’s idea to add color to the dress—which she later rewore at several official occasions.

The Royal School of Needlework spent 3,500 hours hand embroidering the majestic 21-ft. Robe of Estate bearing the Queen’s cipher.

About the gown

Designed by Norman Hartnell, Elizabeth’s dress was embroidered with the emblems of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, including a Canadian maple leaf, an Australian wattle and a New Zealand silver fern. De Guitaut says the dress is known as “one of the most iconic pieces of 20th-century design.”

The robe features embroidered ears of wheat and olive branches symbolizing prosperity and peace.



Encrusted with gold bugle beads, diamonds and pearls, the dress will be on display at Windsor Castle from July 7 to Sept. 26.

three-hour ceremony was watched by 27 million people in the U.K., with millions more around the world tuning in. Following the Archbishop, Prince Philip was the first to pay homage to the Queen. He knelt down and declared: "I, Philip, do become your liege man of life and limb and of earthly worship; and faith and truth I will bear unto you, to live and die, against all manner of folks. So help me God."



An Official Portrait

A smiling Elizabeth was surrounded by her family, including 4-year-old Prince Charles and 2-year-old Princess Anne.

A Carriage Fit for a Queen

The Queen and Prince Philip rode from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey in the Gold State Coach, pulled by eight gray gelding horses.

The newly crowned Queen smiled as she waved to the crowds from the balcony of Buckingham Palace.



The Royal Wave

Some three million people lined the streets of London to witness the historic occasion, with some camping out overnight to secure a prime viewing spot. Total cost for the celebration? An estimated \$1.9 million.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES