



Buckingham Palace

The Reign of Queen Elizabeth II

The longest of any British monarch

It's difficult to believe, when you look at Queen Elizabeth, that she will celebrate her 95th birthday on April 21st this year, while her husband, Prince Philip, will be 100 in June. This makes our monarch Britain's longest-living sovereign in history. She also became our longest-reigning monarch in 2015, surpassing the record of 63 years, seven months and two days, previously held by her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria.



Queen Elizabeth II, 1929

Never born to be Queen

In spite of her long reign, the young Princess Elizabeth was never originally expected to be a queen. When she was one year old, the family moved to a house in Piccadilly. Although it wasn't your *average* residence, with its 25 bedrooms, a *lift* and a ballroom, it was small compared to a palace and Elizabeth and her sister led a fairly *carefree* life, mixing with local children. Her father was Prince Albert, Duke of York, the younger son of King George V. His older brother Edward was the *heir* to the throne and, as such, became king when their father died in January 1936. However, events took a rather dramatic turn when Edward abdicated from the throne before his coronation, because as king, he wouldn't be allowed to marry the woman he loved, an American divorcée called Wallis Simpson. The *shy* Prince Albert, who suffered from a *stammer*, was therefore *thrust into*



Queen Mary with Princess Elizabeth and Margaret, 1939

the limelight and crowned as King George VI on May 12th 1937, making the young Elizabeth first in line to the throne.

in spite of **malgré, en dépit de**
average **moyen, normal**
a lift **un ascenseur**

carefree **insouciant**
an heir **un héritier**
shy **timide**

stammer **un bégaiement**
to be thrust into **se retrouver sous**
the limelight **les feux de la rampe**

Royal training

Elizabeth and her family then moved into Buckingham Palace, where she and her sister Margaret continued schooling at home. Whereas their education had been quite free and easy before their move to the palace, Elizabeth now also received lessons on constitutional history. According to her teachers she was a serious and *diligent* student, while her sister was more *wayward* and playful. In 1939 World War II *broke out*, resulting in the sisters' evacuation to Windsor Castle, while their parents stayed on at Buckingham Palace. However, Elizabeth still did her bit for the war effort, making her first royal radio broadcast at the age of just 14, giving a speech aimed at British children who had been evacuated from Britain to North America and were missing home. At the age of 18 she began to take on royal duties and in early 1945 she joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a *trainee* ambulance driver.



Princess Elizabeth, April 1945



Elizabeth and Philip, 1950

Carefree early years of marriage

When Elizabeth was only 13 she was introduced to the 18-year-old Prince Philip of Greece, who *made an impression* on her even at that age. Their next meeting was to be when she was 17 and he had come to spend Christmas with her family. This time she obviously made an impression on him, as his cousin George approached King George VI to suggest Philip's marriage to her. The king was shocked, thinking her far too young, and *turned the proposal down*. However, once Elizabeth was 21, their engagement was announced and they married in Westminster Abbey on November 20th 1947. It was reported that her parents were *dubious* about the marriage, but the couple were determined, and in fact a royal wedding was just what Britain needed after the austerity of the war years. In a letter sent home while she was on *honeymoon*, Elizabeth described Philip as "an angel" and her time spent with him in Malta while he was serving in the navy was a brief interlude of happy and 'normal' married life for them. ▶

Did you know?

- ✓ The Queen was known to her family as Lilibet, because her sister Margaret couldn't pronounce the name Elizabeth when she was young.
- ✓ She has two birthdays: her real birthday on April 21st and her official birthday, which is celebrated on a Saturday in June with the Trooping of the Colour ceremony*.
- ✓ The Queen and Prince Philip are actually third cousins, as both are descendants of Queen Victoria.
- ✓ Most Brits don't remember any other monarch than the Queen, as 81% of UK residents weren't alive when she *ascended the throne*.
- ✓ She has served under 14 different UK prime ministers, from Winston Churchill to Boris Johnson.
- ✓ She learned how to drive in the army in 1945. She never took a driving test and is the only person in the UK who is allowed on the roads without a driving licence.

*La Parade des Drapeaux

to ascend the throne monter sur le trône

diligent appliqué, méticuleux
wayward rebelle, indiscipliné
to break out (ici) éclater
 (broke, broken)
a trainee un apprenti, un stagiaire

to make an impression faire de l'effet,
 marquer les esprits
to turn down décliner, refuser
dubious douteux, suspect
a honeymoon une lune de miel



Elizabeth coronation and Philip, 1953

► **Accession to the throne**

Life changed suddenly for the young couple when Elizabeth’s father died at the age of only 56 in 1952 and she acceded to the throne of Great Britain as Queen Elizabeth II. Philip had *to give up* his naval career and become her consort, which can’t have been easy, and Elizabeth had to take on all the royal duties she had been training for, combining work with *motherhood*. She and Prince Philip *eventually* had four children, Prince Charles, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward. Queen Victoria did beat her in that respect with her large *brood of* nine kids!

The Queen’s duties

The Queen holds many titles, including Head of State, Head of the Nation, Head of the Commonwealth, Head

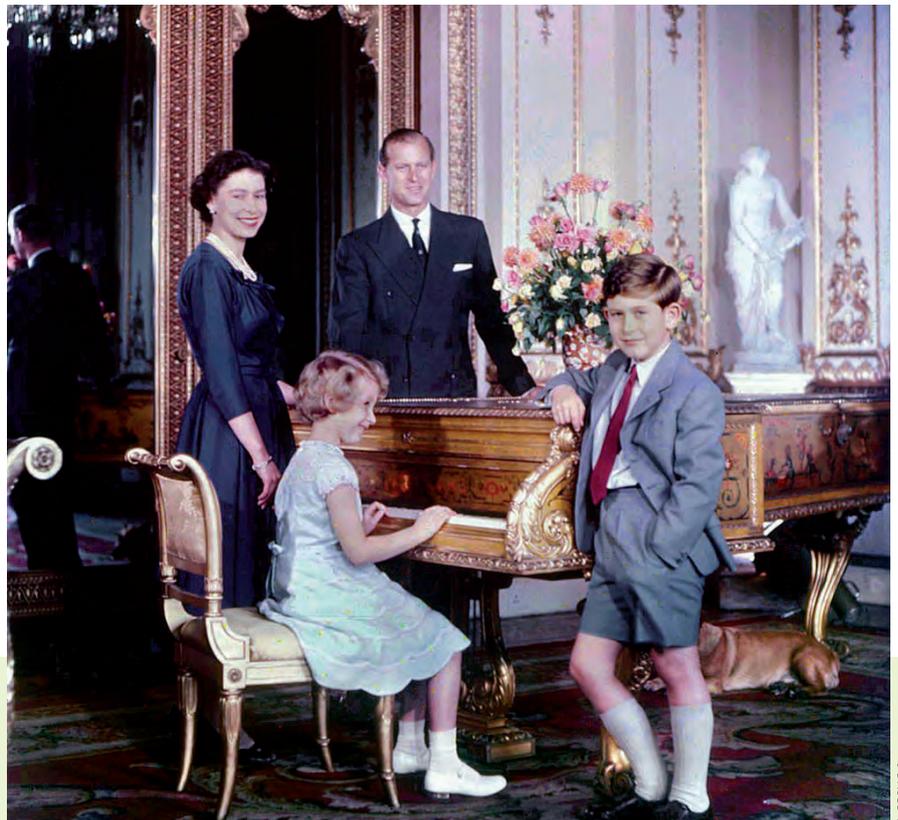
of the Armed Forces, Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England. She is also the patron of many charities. As Head of State she goes on official visits abroad, entertains foreign Heads of State in Britain, represents the nation at various ceremonies and events and conducts visits in the UK. She also has governmental duties. Every day red boxes full of reports and documents are delivered to her desk and she must read through them and, if necessary, sign them. She is, however, what is called a ‘constitutional monarch’, which means that her role is effectively ceremonial and she acts only *on the advice of* her government. She does not voice an opinion on political subjects, which is why we don’t really know what she thinks about things like Brexit, for example. Rumours printed in a newspaper *alleged* that before the referendum she had told people at a private lunch that she thought that Britain should just go ahead and leave the EU, but these *remain* unconfirmed.



Unusual gifts given to the Queen

- ✓ 500 tins of pineapple from Australia in 1947
- ✓ A 100-foot totem pole from Canada in 1958
- ✓ A *grasshopper*-shaped wine cooler from France in 1972
- ✓ A pair of cowboy boots from the USA in 1991
- ✓ A bag of salt from the British Virgin Islands in 2015

a grasshopper **une sauterelle**



Elizabeth, Philip, Charles and Anne, 1957

to give up renoncer à
motherhood la maternité
eventually finalement
a brood of une progéniture
on the advice of sur les conseils de
alleged présumé
to remain rester, demeurer



Elizabeth II in Berlin, 2015

The global pandemic has of course limited the Queen's duties, as she and Prince Philip have been self-isolating, firstly at their estate in Sandringham, Norfolk, and more recently in Windsor Castle. She has *handed over* some of her royal duties to her son, Prince Charles, and her grandson, Prince William, who, together with their families, have been keeping things going. She has made a couple of appearances – at a socially distanced version of the Trooping of the Colour ceremony in June and at the small wedding of her granddaughter, Princess Beatrice,



Windsor Castle

in July, both of which were held at Windsor Castle. She also made two *television broadcasts* in 2020: the first a speech of encouragement to the UK and Commonwealth in April and the second her usual Christmas broadcast. What the future will bring when the pandemic ends is anyone's guess, but this remarkable woman has always given the impression that she won't abdicate in favour of her son. In her own words, spoken at the age of 21, "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong." ■



Elizabeth II in Birmingham, 2012

“ I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong. ”

Elizabeth II



The Queen's Birthday Party at the Royal Albert Hall in London (2018)

to hand over a television broadcast passer la main, remettre une émission de télévision