



GLORY of the BRITISH CORONATION

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The British coronation has most often been interpreted in the twentieth Century as an unchanging rite, descended from time immemorial, by which the authority of the sovereign is ritually legitimized by representatives of the Church and State. It duly endorses the monarch's place at the apex of society. It is a regal ceremony that has mesmerized the world. The meaning of the coronation derived is necessarily a static and romanticized one: it is found to be a timeless and essentially unchanging ceremony, steadfastly immune to the forces of historical change. HRH King Charles III has been proclaimed as the King of England. That the 1661 coronation was planned according to precedent is apparent in the revival of the cavalcade from the Tower of London to Whitehall the day before the coronation. This aspect of the coronation ceremonies, first established by Richard III, was significant. The ceremony of Coronation Day began the next morning with the elevation of the King in Westminster Hall. The ceremony commenced as the nobility and members of the royal household, the judiciary and representatives of the City of London filed into the Hall, according to decree. Although it is primarily a solemn religious service, the coronation ceremony has both religious and secular significance: it is a service of election, of confirmation of the people's choice, and of consecration and dedication of the sovereign to the service of Almighty God and his people. The religious counterpart to this secular ceremony is the delivery of the regalia by the Dean of Westminster Abbey. After the presentation of The Swords, the procession bearing the regalia from the Abbey is conducted through the main entrance of the Hall. Westminster Abbey has witnessed 38 coronation ceremonies of reigning monarchs.

The Dean of Westminster, as successor to the medieval abbots of Westminster, has the right to instruct the Sovereign in matters relating to the ceremony and to assist the Archbishop at the anointing. During the investiture the Archbishop receives from the Dean the various items of Regalia, culminating in the Crown of St Edward. On the night before the coronation the Regalia is brought from the Tower of London to the Abbey and kept overnight in the Jerusalem Chamber, guarded by Yeoman Warders. The next morning the clergy of the Abbey process with the Regalia through the cloisters and into the church. Most of the Regalia is placed on the High Altar, but the Imperial State Crown is taken to the altar in St Edward's Chapel. The Yeoman Warders (affectionately known as Beefeaters) are the ceremonial guardians of the Tower of London. They have been active since 1485, and also safeguard the crown jewels. Interestingly all Yeoman Warders must be retired from the British Armed Forces with 22 years of service, in the rank of Warrant Officer.



From centuries ago the next part of the Introduction, the Recognition, consists of the proclamation and presentation of the Sovereign by the Archbishop of Canterbury, assisted by the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Lord High Constable and the Earl Marshall. The second phase of the introduction is the Oath, whereby the Sovereign commits himself to a relationship with his people through the pledging of a solemn and binding promise. Immediately following the Anointing, the Sovereign is invested with the symbols of the kingly office. The most significant piece of the regalia is St. Edward's Crown and the crowning of the Sovereign. Next the monarch is enthroned and receives the Fealty and Homage of his ecclesiastical and civil subjects accordingly. Following Holy Communion and the conclusion of the service, the newly consecrated monarch is conducted back, by procession, to Westminster Hall for the Royal Banquet. These ceremonies were chiefly feudal in origin.

The 1660-1821 period is typically interpreted to consist of a turbulent early period, followed by the gradual establishment of political stability. The adaptation of the coronation ceremony reflects the political and constitutional temper of the period because it underwent a great number of significant changes. Surprisingly for many of us outside of England, we learn that throughout the 1660-1821 period, the coronation remained a ceremony which was entirely planned and managed for the elite, by the elite. The overall supervision and coordination of the preparations was the responsibility of the Committee of the Privy Council. In regard to the preparations for the coronation, the most preeminent of the four Great Officers of State were the Earl Marshal and the Lord Great Chamberlain. Of the two, the Earl

Marshal had the greater responsibilities. In addition to the supervision of the preparations and seating arrangements in the Abbey, the Earl Marshal serves as the Committee of Council's advisor for ceremonial matters. With the help of the College of Arms, the Earl Marshal organised the ceremony for the proclamation of the coronation. The Master of the Wardrobe not only supplies the monarch and the consort's royal robes, but also provides coats for the Heralds, the habits for

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the King's Musicians and all the decorative fabric required by the coronation ceremony.

Decades ago all the preparations for the Banquet were taken care of by the Lord Steward. The Lord Chamberlain of the Household ensured that the retiring and dressing rooms in the Palace of Westminster and in the Abbey were properly furnished. Coronation medals were prepared by the Master of the Mint. The Master General of the Ordnance and Armoury readied the Champion's suit of armour and weapons and organised the artillery salute that signaled the coronation of the monarch.

In the recent coronation ceremonies the Sovereign is dressed in robes of cloth of gold and returns to the Coronation Chair to be invested with the Regalia. Some items such as the Orb, are presented symbolically and then returned to the altar. The Sovereign retains the Scepter (symbolizing kingly power) in one hand and the Rod with the Dove (symbolizing justice and mercy) in the other. Finally the Archbishop receives St Edward's Crown from the Dean of Westminster and places it on the Sovereign's head. Trumpets resonate with pride and the congregation acclaim and accept the Sovereign. Supported by the Archbishop and the Officers of State, the Sovereign is placed in the Throne and at that moment takes possession of the kingdom.

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resting on a lion, was painted on the back. The four gilt lions below were made in 1727 to replace the originals, which were themselves not added to the Chair until the early 16th Century. The Stone was originally totally enclosed under the seat but over the centuries the wooden decoration had been torn away from the front.

The grand coronation events are laced with British military regiments, whose pomp and decorum enriches the entire event. The King's Guard, British Guards, and King's Life Guard (called Queen's Guard when the reigning monarch is female) are the names given to contingents of infantry and cavalry soldiers charged with guarding the official royal residences in the United Kingdom. The British Army has regiments of both Horse Guards and Foot Guards. These army regiments have been responsible for guarding the Sovereign's palaces. The Guards are fully operational soldiers. They are under the command of the Major-General Commanding the Household Division. The divisional command is made up of the major general, his chief of staff (rank of colonel), the brigade major (rank of a lieutenant colonel), the staff captain, staff officer ceremonial, superintending clerk and the garrison sergeant major. The Household Cavalry is made up of the two most senior regiments of the British Army, the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals. These regiments are divided between the Household Cavalry Regiment stationed at Kivri Barracks in Wiltshire and the ceremonial mounted unit, the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, garrisoned at Hyde Park Barracks (Knightsbridge Barracks). The regal splendour of the coronation will captivate millions across the globe. The *Daily News* wishes HRH King Charles III success and God's blessings.

