



Queen Elizabeth II: Seven Decades of Regal Excellence

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The world is mourning for a grand lady whose magnificent life was a blessing and inspiration to millions of people. She so gracefully fulfilled her duties as a daughter, sister, soldier, wife, mother, grandmother and queen. As most British people reminisced about their dear departed queen it was obvious that she was a beloved lady to many generations in so many unique ways. She was a true champion who witnessed the victories and vicissitude of life. The royal funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II takes place today at the Westminster Abbey, amidst a gathering of the royal family, visiting Heads of State from the Commonwealth and other countries and senior clergy representing the Church of England. Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe will also attend the royal funeral, expressing his deep condolence on behalf of the people of Sri Lanka. The funeral laden with Anglican traditions and military pomp will be watched by the entire world.

The amiable Queen progressed through her life with her dynamic charisma, patience and faith in God. When Elizabeth Alexandra Mary, the elder daughter of Prince Albert - Duke of York, and his wife, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, was born on April 21, 1926, she apparently had little chance of becoming the Queen of England. Her father was a younger son of King George V. But in late 1936, her uncle, King Edward VIII, surprisingly abdicated to marry an American named, Wallis Simpson. Subsequently, her father became King George VI, and a cute 10-year-old Elizabeth became the heir presumptive to the British throne. From then on she was duly groomed to take up her regal position someday.

During her childhood the young princess loved horses and horse riding. Her love and care towards animals shows her attachment to nature. As queen, she kept many thoroughbred racehorses and frequently attended racing events. It is said Queen Elizabeth's keen attachment to Pembroke Welsh Corgis - a sheep herding dog breed - also began in childhood.

World events would soon impact this loving teenager, and forced her to witness the realities of war. On September 13, 1940, shortly after the start of Germany's destructive bombing campaign on the towns and cities of Britain, five high explosive bombs were dropped on Buckingham Palace. The Royal Chapel and inner quadrangle were hit, by the Nazi aerial assault. Rather than flee the city under attack, King George VI and his wife Queen Elizabeth, courageously remained at Buckingham Palace in solidarity with the British people living through the horrifying Blitz. This is the hallmark of leadership. We can assume the young Princess Elizabeth learnt many lessons of leadership, which would assist her as the future Queen. Princess Elizabeth was just 13-years-old when war broke out. Like many children living in London, Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret were evacuated to avoid the dangers of bombing raids.

When Princess Elizabeth turned 18 in 1944, she insisted upon joining the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). She put her patriotic feelings into solid action. Military history reveals the women's branch of the British Army was the ATS. Unmarried robust women under 30 had to join the Armed Forces or work in industry to support the Allied counter offensive. King George made sure that his daughter was not given a special rank in the Army. Again, a display of kingship and humility. Young Princess Elizabeth started as a second subaltern in the ATS. Princess Elizabeth began her training as a mechanic in March 1945. She undertook a driving and vehicle maintenance course at Aldershot. She worked alongside other young British women. She was later promoted to Junior Commander - the equivalent rank of Captain. The jobs were dangerous, and during the course of the war, 335 ATS women were killed. The young princess survived, she was destined to sit on the throne.

Years later Queen Elizabeth was colonel-in-chief of 16 British Army regiments and corps, and many Commonwealth units. As a member of the Auxiliary Territorial Service, she was the first female member of the Royal family to be an active duty member of the British Armed Forces.

In 1947, soon after the royal family returned from an official visit to South Africa and Rhodesia, they announced Elizabeth's engagement to Prince Philip of Greece. He was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. Princess Elizabeth and Philip wed on November 20, 1947, at Westminster Abbey. The nation rejoiced as the couple entered the bliss of holy matrimony. The royal wedding made global headlines.

They were in Kenya on February 6, 1952, when King George VI succumbed to illness at the age of 56. Now his 25-year-old daughter Princess Elizabeth became the sixth woman in history to ascend to the British throne. Her formal coronation as Queen Elizabeth II took place on June 2, 1953, in Westminster Abbey amidst glorious celebrations. Her life would change forever and she diligently changed and impacted the lives of so many. The dynamic monarch would proceed to transform a nation. Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee was celebrated in 1977, marking her 25 years on the throne. The year 2002 marked Queen Elizabeth's

Golden Jubilee—50 years on the throne, a splendid journey where she overcame challenges and emerged victorious. However she remained humble and approachable to her people.

In the final years of her reign, she continued many of her official duties, empowered with her charming grace. The gentle queen spent plenty of time outside with her beloved dogs and horses. We now realize that horses were one of Queen Elizabeth's true passions. The British monarch received her first riding lesson at age three and was given her first pony when she turned four. The Queen loved to go to the stables to see horses on gallops in the morning.

Queen Elizabeth II brought her horseback riding skills into her role as monarch. Throughout her reign as Queen until 1986, she rode on horseback during the annual Trooping the Colour ceremony, a world famous military ceremony involving hundreds of horses and members of cavalry regiments. After Burmese - the beloved black mare the Queen rode during the ceremony from 1969 to 1986 - retired, she decided to stop riding horseback in the Trooping of the Colour.

Their first son, Charles (Prince of Wales) was born in 1948; a daughter, Anne (Princess Royal) arrived two years later. Elizabeth and Phillip were married for an extraordinary 73 years, until the Prince died in April 2021 at the age of 99. She was a faithful wife and good mother. Amidst the demanding expectations of a Queen, she balanced her family life with dignity and Christian zeal. She was said to be a woman of prayer.

Elizabeth II inherited a monarchy whose political power had been somewhat challenged since the 18th Century but whose role in the public life of the nation seemed to have grown ever more important. Monarchs in the 20th Century were expected both to perform ceremonial duties with appropriate gravity and to lighten up enough to share and enjoy the tastes and interests of ordinary people. Queen Elizabeth kept the crown above party politics, but she was always fully engaged with the political world. A firm believer in the Commonwealth, she mediated disputes between member states and provided support and guidance even to Commonwealth leaders when so required. This remarkable lady leaves behind a lasting legacy. Farewell Queen Elizabeth II, may the angels carry you gently to your eternal rest.



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