

Research Briefing

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The coronation: history and ceremonial



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Summary

A coronation ceremony for, successively, the monarchs of England and Scotland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom can be traced back more than 1,000 years. Formerly, it was often a necessary stage on an individual's journey to becoming king or queen. Nowadays, a sovereign succeeds, by law, immediately upon the death of another, although the ceremony remains an important event early in a new reign.

Coronations emerged from a European tradition of increasing church involvement in the state, as well as the need to bring stability to often volatile societies in which several individuals had a claim to the throne. Central to the ceremony is the “unction”, the act of anointing a monarch with holy oil. This signals the conferment of God's grace upon a ruler. Today, the United Kingdom is the only European monarchy to retain such a ceremony. The last one – for Queen Elizabeth II – took place on 2 June 1953.

Although British coronations have at their heart an Anglican service conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Westminster Abbey, the ceremony combines not only religion but aspects of the UK's uncoded constitution and a degree of theatre. The contemporary form of the coronation dates from 1902, when King Edward VII was crowned. They consist of a state procession from Buckingham Palace to the Abbey, another procession inside, the Recognition, the Anointing, the Coronation Oath, the Homage and finally another procession from the Abbey back to the Palace.

The Coronation Oath, in which the monarch swears to govern the peoples of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth Realms “according to their respective laws and customs” is the only aspect of the ceremony that is required by law. The wording of this oath has constantly evolved to reflect changes to the territorial composition of the UK and the wider Commonwealth.

As it is a state event, a coronation is paid for by the UK Government. Organisation involves ministers, the Royal Household, the Church of England and the Commonwealth Realms. A Privy Council “Coronation Committee” is usually formed to oversee the planning, and its Executive Committee is chaired by the Earl Marshal. This can take several months. A monarch also has significant influence on the form a coronation takes.

This paper looks at the historical development of coronations in England, Scotland and Great Britain/the UK before examining the planning and execution of the contemporary ceremony. It then looks at each stage in more detail before exploring some of the other customs associated with British coronations during the 20th century. It is not intended as a comprehensive guide to the coronation of King Charles III as no two ceremonies are the same.

1

History of the coronation

Some sort of coronation ceremony involving “unction” – the act of anointing a monarch with holy oil – can be traced back to the 7th and 8th centuries. For example, Ireland during that period was turbulent, with dozens of kings and no automatic right of succession. As the historian Roy Strong has observed, the introduction of unction “fulfilled the twofold purpose of increasing the influence of the Church and, at the same time, stabilising disputes over succession”.¹

1.1

Pre-Union coronations in England

In England, the main elements of a coronation service can be traced to the ceremony devised by Saint Dunstan for King Edgar’s crowning at Bath Abbey in 973.² This included a coronation banquet, a grand feast at which the King’s Champion would make an appearance,³ and the earliest form of an oath – an oral contract between a monarch and their people. Other early coronations took place at Kingston.⁴

The first English coronation to take place at Westminster Abbey was that of William the Conqueror in 1066.⁵ He was also the first monarch to spend the night before his coronation at Westminster, a tradition that continued until 1821.⁶ At this time, there was no immediate (or indeed automatic) right of succession, and so a coronation was an essential rite of passage. A king was referred to as “Dominus Anglorum” and his queen “Domina Anglorum” until they were anointed, after which they became “Rex et Regina Anglorum”. The English regalia (including the crown, orb and sceptre) was carried into the Abbey, “an emphatic statement that he who walked behind them was not yet king”.⁷

This act of anointing, wrote Thomas Asbridge of Richard I’s in 1189, “was the coronation’s central drama – the moment at which Richard was deemed to have been remade as a divinely ordained king: God’s chosen representative

¹ Roy Strong, *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, London: HarperCollins, 2005, p14. This book was republished as “A History of the British Monarchy” in November 2022.

² Queen Elizabeth II visited Bath Abbey in 1973 to mark a millennium since Egbert’s coronation.

³ For centuries, the King’s Champion was a member of the Dymoke family. He would ride in full armour and throw down his gauntlet three times on behalf of the monarch.

⁴ See All Saints Kingston website, [Where England Began](#). Something that purports to be the Anglo-Saxon “coronation stone” is on display outside the Guildhall in Kingston-upon-Thames.

⁵ Westminster Abbey website, [The Liber Regalis](#).

⁶ See [The family that bought the King’s bed for £100](#), BBC News online, 30 January 2023.

⁷ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p63.

on Earth.”⁸ Once crowned, there could occur second coronations (but not unctions), for example when a king married or upon his return from an overseas battle. In 1308, King Edward II was compelled to accept a recast oath which bound the monarch “to observe the future laws made by the community of the realm”.⁹ A custom also emerged of (the English) Parliament being summoned to meet after a coronation had taken place, its first business being the “confirmation” of a new monarch’s right to the Throne.

1 The Stone of Destiny

King Alexander III of Scotland was crowned while sitting on the Stone of Scone in 1249. In 1296 it was then taken by Edward I (of England) during his Scottish campaign and presented, along with the Scottish crown and sceptre, to the shrine of Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey. According to Scottish myth, the Stone had been brought to Scotland by Pharaoh’s daughter Scota. In the English version, it was the stone on which the patriarch Jacob had laid his head at Bethel and dreamt of a ladder of angels stretching from earth to heaven (Genesis 28: 10-22). Edward I commissioned the Coronation Chair (or St Edward’s Chair) to house the Stone and, since the 13th century, all English and British sovereigns have been crowned while seated above it. Scone Abbey unsuccessfully requested its return in 1324, while in 1328 Edward III ordered the Abbey to return it but the abbot at Westminster refused. In 1996, the Stone was returned to Scotland and housed in Edinburgh Castle. It will be moved to London for the coronation of Charles III before being taken back to Scotland.

In around 1382, the Liber Regalis (or Royal Book, a highly decorated manuscript) was created as a guide to organising a coronation. Its basic running order was still being followed more than 600 years later.¹⁰

After the Union of the Crowns in 1603 (when King James VI of Scotland also became King James I of England), Stuart monarchs were crowned twice (and separately) as King of Scots and King of England. Most Stuart coronations took place on 23 April (St George’s Day).¹¹ They were also very long.¹²

Most of England’s ancient regalia was destroyed on the orders of Oliver Cromwell in 1649, but the Spoon (with which the anointing oil was dispensed)

⁸ Thomas Asbridge, *Richard I: The Crusader King*, London: Allen Lane, 2018, p16. This coronation is the first for which a detailed account exists, describing the ritual and giving the names of those who attended (see Westminster Abbey website, [Richard I](#)).

⁹ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p92.

¹⁰ János M. Bak, *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, University of California Press, 2022.

¹¹ Those of Charles II, James VII & II and Queen Anne.

¹² Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p303. The diarist Samuel Pepys had to leave the coronation of Charles II as he needed to use a lavatory. He had arrived at Westminster Abbey at 4am and the King did not appear until 11am.

survived. For his second investiture as Lord Protector in 1657, Cromwell sat in the Coronation Chair at Westminster Abbey and was even offered a crown.¹³

1.2

Pre-Union coronations in Scotland

Between the Union of the Crowns (a personal union) and the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707, England and Scotland remained separate kingdoms with their own parliaments. As in England, there was an elective element to early Scottish kings, although it lingered for much longer in Scotland. The first Stuart monarch, Robert II, was “elected” (or rather selected) from among eligible royal males at Linlithgow in 1370 by the “Three Estates” (groupings within the Scottish Parliament).¹⁴ Afterwards he was crowned at the Abbey of Scone, from which the Stone of Destiny had been taken almost a century before.¹⁵

The infant James VI was crowned at Stirling in 1567. Later Scottish coronations took place at the Abbey Church of Holyrood.¹⁶ In 1603 James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English Throne as King James I.¹⁷ His son, Charles I, was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey on 2 February 1626, but his Scottish coronation was deferred until his first visit to Scotland on 18 June 1633. That morning, a deputation from the Three Estates waited on the king to offer him the Crown. Having accepted, Charles I took his (Scottish) Coronation Oath and was then crowned.

The [National Covenant](#) of 1638 stated that the 1633 Coronation Oath taken by Charles I compelled him to maintain the presbyterian Church of Scotland “according to the laws, constitutions and customs of this your kingdom”. When the King disagreed with this interpretation, the Kirk’s General Assembly and the Parliament of Scotland demanded that the future King Charles II indicate his “concurrence with the covenants and the terms of the Scottish coronation oath before being allowed to enter Scotland and act as king”.¹⁸

The coronation of Charles II took place at Scone in 1651. There was no unction or communion, and the ceremony was conducted by laymen acting in a civil capacity. After prayers, both the National Covenant and the [Solemn League and Covenant](#) were read to Charles II, to which he replied:

¹³ The Stuart Successions Project website, [Oliver Cromwell](#).

¹⁴ Only after 1329 did the Pope allow Scottish kings to be crowned and anointed; prior to that date they were “inaugurated” (James Wilkinson, *The Coronation Chair*, London: Tudbury Press, 2014, pp5-6).

¹⁵ See Lucinda Hazel Stewart Dean, [Crowns, Wedding Rings, and Processions: Continuity and Change in the Representations of Scottish Royal Authority in State Ceremony, c. 1214 – c. 1603](#), PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2013.

¹⁶ The ruins of the Abbey now form part of the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the King’s official residence in Edinburgh.

¹⁷ The coronation of James VI/I appeared to confirm an ancient myth about the Stone of Scone, “that wherever the Stone was, there a Scot would rule” (James Wilkinson, *The Coronation Chair*, p17).

¹⁸ Karin Bowie, ‘A legal limited monarchy’: Scottish Constitutionalism in the Union of Crowns, 1603-1707, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 35:2, November 2015, p143.

I do esteem the affections of my good people more than the crowns of many kingdoms, and shall be ready by God's assistance to bestow my life in their defence, wishing to live no longer than I may see religion and this kingdom flourish in happiness.

Charles II then:

ascended the stage, sat upon the Chair of State; was shown to the people, as his father had been, and was hailed with acclamations. From the stage he returned to the chair in which he had heard sermon, and Mr. Douglas [Robert Douglas, the then Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland] ministered to him the Coronation Oath according to the Act of the first year of King James VI, including the clause from the Papal Bull to "root out all hereticks convict by the true kirk".¹⁹

1.3

Restoration and Glorious Revolution

The coronation of Charles II in 1651 was the last to take place in Scotland. It was overshadowed by the subsequent Restoration and Charles' crowning as King of England at Westminster Abbey in 1661.²⁰ His "royal entry" into London – a procession a mile and a half long – set out to "dazzle, and to obliterate, if it could, all memory either of the Commonwealth or of the Protectorship".²¹ Scaffolds were also built inside and outside the Abbey to accommodate a growing number of spectators, some of whom had to pay.²²

Charles II died in 1685 and was succeeded as King of Scotland and England by James VII and II. He and his second wife Mary were crowned at Westminster Abbey on 23 April 1685.²³ The service omitted the communion as James was a Catholic.²⁴ James and Mary did not have a separate coronation in Scotland and therefore the King of Scots did not take the Scottish Coronation Oath.

By 1688, many in the Church of England had become increasingly alarmed by James' religious policies and Mary's production of a Catholic male heir. In June 1688, the Protestant William, Prince of Orange, was invited to take the English Throne. James fled England in December, and in January 1689 a Convention Parliament summoned by William declared that James had

¹⁹ Rev Prof Cooper, *Four Scottish Coronations*, Aberdeen: The Two Societies, 1902, p39.

²⁰ See also G. W. C. Gross, [1651: The Last Coronation in Scotland – An Anomaly](#), *Court Historian*, 26:3, 2021, pp229-45.

²¹ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p299.

²² Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p323. Scaffolds erected inside the Abbey were the preserve of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster; those outside were built on the instructions of the Privy Council. For the coronation of an unpopular king, like George IV, seats often went unsold.

²³ Westminster Abbey website, [James II](#). James II's coronation was the first to have a printed directive, distributed to those taking part in the ceremonial. Since the coronation of King George II and Queen Caroline in 1727, the official Order of Service has been printed by the King's Printer and published in advance of the service.

²⁴ He had been anointed and crowned following the Catholic rite in the chapel at Whitehall the previous day.

effectively abdicated. It invited William and Mary (the Prince's Stuart wife, elder daughter of James II and VII) to jointly fill the vacant English Throne.²⁵

1.4

Coronation Oath Act 1689

The Parliament of England wasted little time in formally limiting the authority of their new sovereigns. The preamble to the [Coronation Oath Act 1689](#) noted that “by the Law and Ancient Usage of this Realm” (England), monarchs had taken a solemn oath at their coronation to maintain the laws and customs of England and its people. However, this oath was “framed in doubtful Words and Expressions with relation to ancient Laws and Constitutions at this time unknown”.

The Act sought to rectify this by providing for a single uniform coronation oath to be taken by William and Mary and all future monarchs. It differed from earlier oaths in binding a monarch to rule according to laws as agreed in parliament. It also included more explicit provision for the maintenance of “the Protestant Reformed Religion Established by Law”. Section III provides the form of the Oath and its Administration:

The Arch-Bishop or Bishop shall say,

Will You solemnly Promise and Sweare to Governe the People of this Kingdome of England and the Dominions thereto belonging according to the Statutes in Parlyament Agreed on and the Laws and Customs of the same?

The King and Queene shall say,

I solemnly Promise soe to doe.

Arch Bishop or Bishop,

Will You to Your power cause Law and Justice in Mercy to be Executed in all Your Judgements.

King and Queene,

I will.

Arch Bishop or Bishop.

Will You to the utmost of Your power Maintaine the Laws of God the true Profession of the Gospell and the Protestant Reformed Religion Established by Law? And will You Preserve unto the Bishops and Clergy of this Realme and to the Churches committed to their Charge all such Rights and Priviledges as by Law doe or shall appertaine unto them or any of them.

King and Queene.

²⁵ At their coronation on 11 April 1689, William was crowned while sitting on the Coronation Chair, while Mary was crowned in a replica of the same chair.

All this I Promise to doe.

After this the King and Queene laying His and Her Hand upon the Holy Gospells, shall say,

King and Queene

The things which I have here before promised I will performe and Keepe Soe help me God.

Then the King and Queene shall kisse the Booke.²⁶

1.5

Claim of Right Act 1689

The Parliament of Scotland also invited William and Mary to occupy the Scottish Throne, subject to certain conditions. On 4 April 1689 a Convention of the Three Estates declared that James VII “had acted irregularly” by assuming regal power “without ever taking the [Coronation] Oath required by Law”. Thus, he had “forfeited the Right to the Crown, and the Throne is become vacant”.²⁷ The Convention further declared:

That by the Law of this Kingdom, no Papist can be King or Queen of this Realm, nor bear any Office whatsoever therein; nor can any Protestant Successor exercise the regal Power, until he or she swear the Coronation Oath.

The Estates also enacted an [Instrument of Government](#), the [Claim of Right Act 1689](#), which was to be presented to William and Mary alongside the offer of the Scottish Crown. Commissioners did so in London on 11 May.²⁸ The King replied to various documents (including Articles of Grievances), after which the (Scottish) Coronation Oath was tendered to the King and Queen, “holding their right Hands up after the manner of taking Oaths in Scotland”. Having ascertained that the clause regarding “the rooting out of Heretics” did not involve their own destruction, the King and Queen then signed a parchment copy of the Coronation Oath.²⁹

Section 2 of the (English) [Act of Settlement 1701](#) reiterated the English Coronation Oath. Following the accession of Queen Anne in 1702, the Parliament of Scotland confirmed she had taken the Scottish Coronation Oath (again in England) although, like William and Mary, she did not have a Scottish coronation ceremony.³⁰ An [Act for the security of the kingdom](#) was then passed by the Scottish Parliament in 1703-04. This required that the

²⁶ See [section III](#) of the Coronation Oath Act 1688.

²⁷ See Robert P. Barnes, [James VII's Forfeiture of the Scottish Throne](#), *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 5:4, Winter 1973, pp299-313.

²⁸ This took place at the Banqueting House, where Charles I had been executed.

²⁹ [The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons: Volume 2, 1680-1695](#), London: Chandler, 1742, pp255-77.

³⁰ As she was suffering from gout and unable to walk, Anne had to be carried into the Abbey for her coronation by Yeomen of the Guard (see Westminster Abbey website, [Queen Anne](#)).

Claim of Right be read to a new monarch before administration of the (Scottish) Coronation Oath.

Anticipating Union with England, in 1706 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland sent an Address to the Scottish Parliament asking that any new British monarch promise to “maintain the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of this Church and the Rights & privileges thereof as now by law Established”. The Scottish Parliament made this a condition of Union with England, achieved in May 1707, and this oath (known as the “Scottish Oath”) was sworn following every accession since 1714.³¹ Its intention was to bind the monarch from the earliest point of their rule rather than waiting for the coronation.

The Acts of Union also dealt with the “Honours of Scotland”, regalia hitherto used at Scottish coronations. The [Union with England Act 1706](#) provided that:

the Crown, Scepter and sword of State continue to be kept as they are within that part of the United Kingdom now called Scotland and that they shall so remain in all time coming (notwithstanding the Union).³²

1.6 After the Union(s)

With the 1707 Union, the (English) Coronation Oath Act 1688 now extended to Scotland as part of the new Kingdom of Great Britain. Thereafter, there would only be one statutory Coronation Oath for British monarchs.³³

For King George I’s Oath, taken at his coronation in 1714,³⁴ “this Kingdom of England” was amended to “this Kingdom of Great Britain”. This change was implied rather than explicit, the Kingdom of England having ceased to exist. A 1706 “Act for securing the Church of England as by Law established” also added the following passage:

And will you maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England and the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline & Government thereof as by law established within the Kingdoms of England and Ireland, the Dominion of Wales & Town of Berwick upon Tweed and the Territories thereunto belonging before the Union of the two Kingdoms.³⁵

³¹ See [Act for securing of the Protestant religion and presbyterian church government](#).

³² See [Article XXIV](#).

³³ See [Article II](#) of the Union with Scotland Act 1706, which extended the Act of Settlement 1701. [Section II](#) of the latter Act reiterated the Coronation Oath Act 1688.

³⁴ George I’s coronation ceremony was conducted mostly in Latin as the King’s ministers could not speak German (see The Gazette, [The Gazette and coronations](#), 16 August 2021).

³⁵ See [section II](#) of The Act of 6 Anne 1706. This Act of the English Parliament (which also formed part of the Union settlement) could be viewed as a quid pro quo for the Scottish Oath now to be taken by a new monarch following their accession.

The creation of a new kingdom of Great Britain had a broader effect on the coronation, “as it had now to be built up as a British occasion and the Scots [...] somehow brought in to be part of it”. As Roy Strong has written:

In 1714 the Earl Marshal of Scotland was bidden to summon the Scottish peers. It was at that Coronation that the Scottish peers first appeared, being assigned places next to their English counterparts. That change is caught most vividly in the petitions which the Court of Claims had to deal with on the Coronation of George III. Virtually all of these were from Scottish aristocrats who had held hereditary roles at the Scottish Coronation which they now wanted transferred south of the border and incorporated into the English rite.³⁶

Further implied amendments were made to the Coronation Oath taken by King George IV in 1821.³⁷ Not only was “Great Britain” replaced with “the United Kingdom” (reflecting the 1801 Union between Great Britain and Ireland) but the third part of the Oath now included a promise to maintain the settlement of the “united church of England and Ireland” (the fifth article of the Union with Ireland Act 1800 having united the two churches).³⁸



An etching of the coronation of King George IV on 19 July 1821 (after James Stephanoff).

George IV acknowledged the new United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland by having various standards borne at his coronation; Hanover, Ireland and

³⁶ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p359. For more on [The evolution of the British coronation rite, 1761-1953](#), see chapter by Nicholas Dixon in Anna Kalinowska and Jonathan Spangler with Pawel Tyszka (eds), *Power and Ceremony in European History Rituals, Practices and Representative Bodies since the Late Medieval Age*, London: Bloomsbury, 2023, pp49-65.

³⁷ This coronation had been scheduled for August 1820 but was postponed due to George's estranged wife, Caroline of Brunswick, returning from Europe to claim her right as Queen Consort.

³⁸ This was added by Order in Council (see [HL Deb 19 April 1869 Vol 195 c1068](#)).

Scotland were represented in addition to the Union Flag and Royal Standard. The Irish peerage (including Catholic peers) were invited to join the great procession, as did members of the Order of St Patrick,³⁹ while “into his jewels and robes [the King] introduced the motifs of the English rose, the Scottish thistle and the Irish shamrock”.⁴⁰ For the first time George IV processed in the 1760 Gold State Coach, used at every coronation since.⁴¹

In 1829, George IV was forced by his ministers, much against his will and his interpretation of his Coronation Oath, to assent to Catholic emancipation.⁴² His successor, William IV, initially refused to have a coronation at all, but eventually agreed to a more modest ceremony which took place in 1831.⁴³ This dispensed with the procession from Westminster Hall and the post-coronation banquet, neither of which were subsequently revived. William was crowned with George I’s old state crown; rather than having it remodelled he inserted padding so that it would fit.⁴⁴



The Coronation of Queen Victoria in Westminster Abbey, 28 June 1838 (George Hayter).

Queen Victoria’s coronation in 1838 was the last at which there was a public distribution of medals struck for the occasion.⁴⁵ The ceremony took five hours and suffered from a lack of rehearsal. Only the Queen and the Sub-Dean of

³⁹ [Coronation of His Most Excellent Majesty](#), Supplement to the London Gazette, 3 August 1821.

⁴⁰ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p360. The figures of Guyenne and Aquitaine ceased to appear, representing the final abandonment of British claims to a French empire. George IV’s coronation was also memorable not only for its cost but also the King’s refusal to admit his wife, Queen Caroline, whom he had recently failed to divorce.

⁴¹ That said, historians have observed that the coach does not feature in contemporary illustrations.

⁴² The Lord Chancellor, Lord Loughborough, had made it clear that the oath imposed no restriction on any Bill Parliament might wish to pass.

⁴³ [The Royal Coronation of Their Most Excellent Majesties](#), Supplement to the London Gazette, 13 September 1831. This was nicknamed the “Half-Crownation”. On a visit to Parliament for its dissolution, William IV had grabbed the Imperial State Crown while in the robing room of the House of Lords, put it on his head and remarked to Lord Grey, the Prime Minister: “The Coronation is over.”

⁴⁴ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p374. William IV scrapped the standard bearers introduced by George IV.

⁴⁵ 1,285 were distributed gratis to the Queen, peers, MPs and foreign ambassadors. The distribution had been authorised by an Order in Council dated 26 May 1838.

Westminster understood what was supposed to take place. The coronation ring was forced onto the wrong finger, an elderly peer fell down the steps while making homage and a bishop wrongly told Victoria the ceremony was over, which meant she had to return to her seat to finish the service.⁴⁶

1.7

Coronations since 1902

King Edward VII

There was a gap of 64 years between the coronation of Queen Victoria and that of her son, King Edward VII. The latter was scheduled for June 1902 but when the King fell ill it was postponed until 9 August.⁴⁷ This meant invited foreign dignitaries had left London by the time the ceremony took place. The delay, however, meant the ceremony was not the “fiasco” many feared it could be.⁴⁸ At the same time, the elderly Archbishop of Canterbury, Frederick Temple, conducted proceedings with difficulty and the St Edward’s Crown (which he appeared to drop) was placed on the King’s head back to front.⁴⁹

The Coronation Oath was again changed, this time on account of the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869.⁵⁰ For the first time, homage was only undertaken by the senior peer in each rank of the peerage rather than by each individually, a significant saving of time.⁵¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury’s sermon was dropped,⁵² although a growth of interest in historical coronation ceremonies meant other aspects were restored: the King’s Champion rode in public processions bearing the Standard of England while the Barons of the Cinque Ports re-joined the Procession to the Abbey, acting as recipients of the banners borne by representatives of the Realm.⁵³ Edward VII also reinstated the Union standard bearers.

King George V

For the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary in 1911, the aim remained to “harmonise ancient tradition with modern constitutional usage”. The Procession to the Abbey included bearers carrying the standards of the Union of South Africa, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of Canada and the Indian Empire (Wales was also added to the Union standard bearers). Queen Mary’s dress was embroidered

⁴⁶ Westminster Abbey website, [Queen Victoria](#). Despite all this, Victoria remained enthusiastic about her experience (see **Appendix 1**). The author Hugo Vickers has charted various [coronation calamities](#).

⁴⁷ [Supplement to the London Gazette, 29 October 1902](#).

⁴⁸ Sir Almeric FitzRoy, *Memoirs Vol I*, New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925, pp96-97.

⁴⁹ Westminster Abbey website, [Edward VII](#).

⁵⁰ Removal of references in the oath to the Irish Church had been sanctioned by [section 69](#) of the Irish Church Act 1869.

⁵¹ Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign: planning for accession and coronation](#), London: The Constitution Unit, May 2018, pp14-15.

⁵² This was revived in 1911 but not in 1937 or thereafter.

⁵³ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p474.

not only with emblems of the United Kingdom but also the lotus of India and the Star of Africa, “with the oceans linking the Empire swirling around its hem”.⁵⁴



The Homage at Edward VII's coronation on 9 August 1902 (John Henry Frederick Bacon).

This coronation also marked the last occasion on which the prerogative of “Royal Clemency” towards prisoners was exercised, ranging “from one week for those with a month or less to serve up to 90 days for those serving five years or more”. As a Cabinet memorandum later observed, this “led to few expressions of gratitude from those who benefitted from it, and grumbling from those who did not”.⁵⁵

King George VI

King Edward VIII's coronation was planned for 12 May 1937 but given his abdication in December 1936 this instead became the coronation of his brother, King George VI, and his consort Queen Elizabeth.⁵⁶ Fortuitously, George VI had attended planning meetings on behalf of his brother.

The Coronation Oath was again updated to include references to the Dominions arising from the Statute of Westminster 1931, which had granted them constitutional co-equality. The Archbishop now invited the King to:

solemnly promise and swear to govern the peoples of Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa, of your Possessions and the other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, and of your Empire of India, according to their respective Laws and Customs.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p442.

⁵⁵ [The Coronation: Amnesty for Prisoners](#), 10 December 1952, CAB 129/57/36, London: National Archives. In 1953, the Cabinet granted an amnesty to deserters from the Second World War.

⁵⁶ See [Form and Order of the Service](#), Cambridge: Chevron Press, 1937. The only other king not to have been crowned was [Edward V](#) in 1483, who vanished after reigning for only two months.

⁵⁷ This change was made on the authority of the Privy Council rather than via legislation, a decision with which the law officers concurred (see [HC Deb 17 March 1937 Vol 321 c2097W](#) and a Proclamation

As some Commonwealth premiers were Catholic, the King was also required to swear to maintain the Protestant Reformed Religion only as it was by law established in the UK. The first part of the Oath also omitted the reference to govern “according to the statutes in Parliament agreed upon”.⁵⁸ In 1911, the Oath had been taken by George V after the beginning of the Communion service; in 1937 it was restored to “its ancient place immediately after the Recognition and before the office of Holy Communion”.⁵⁹

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was added to the standard bearers in the Procession, while Queen Elizabeth’s purple train included emblems of Empire. The procession with the Gold State Coach after the ceremony was the longest ever to have taken place. A stickler for detail, George VI’s account of his coronation (see **Appendix 1**) recorded all its mishaps, including the placing of the St Edward’s Crown on his head back to front.⁶⁰

The only surviving person to have attended this coronation is the Earl of Airlie, who served as page to his father, who was Queen Elizabeth’s Lord Chamberlain.⁶¹

Queen Elizabeth II

Queen Elizabeth II was crowned on 2 June 1953, 16 months after the death of her father, George VI. The coronation ceremony was an enormous undertaking in which thousands of Commonwealth troops took part.⁶² It lasted three hours.⁶³

The Coronation Oath was once again altered without recourse to legislation.⁶⁴ This was necessary due to Indian independence and Ireland’s departure from the Commonwealth in the late 1940s. In advance of the coronation the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, recounted alterations since 1714 and said:

Her Majesty’s Government propose to follow this long line of precedents. To accept the view that changes in the terms of the Oath which are necessary to reconcile it with a changed constitutional position cannot be made except with

dated 20 February 1937). This was problematic as the Privy Council lacked the prerogative or statutory authority to alter the 1688 Act.

⁵⁸ Graeme Watt doubts the legality of the recast oath on this basis (see [The Coronation Oath](#), Ecclesiastical Law Journal 19:3, September 2017, pp325-41).

⁵⁹ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI: His Life and Reign*, London: Macmillan, 1958, p306.

⁶⁰ The Archbishop of Canterbury blamed “some officious person” for having removed a piece of red cotton which had been inserted under one of the principal jewels on the front of the crown (John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI*, p313).

⁶¹ [ROBERT HARDMAN shares a unique lunch with those in the royal entourage from the Queen’s Coronation](#), Mail Online, 14 April 2023.

⁶² The 50th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II’s coronation was marked with a service of celebration at Westminster Abbey in June 2003. The [Royal Warrant Holders Association](#) also hosted a festival in the garden at Buckingham Palace. A 60th anniversary service also took place at the Abbey on 4 June 2013, on which occasion the St Edward’s Crown was brought from the Tower of London and placed on the High Altar.

⁶³ For a detailed account of the planning for the 1953 coronation, see Brian Barker, *When the Queen was Crowned*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976. The author worked for David Eccles, the then Minister of Works.

⁶⁴ See [The Coronation Oath](#), 4 February 1953, CAB 129/58/45, London: National Archives.

the authority of an Act of Parliament would be to cast doubt upon the validity of the Oath administered to every Sovereign of this country since George I.

If, as I am advised, the Coronation Oath can be lawfully administered in the terms now proposed, no useful purpose would be served by legislation. It must be remembered that at Westminster the Queen will be crowned Queen not only of the United Kingdom, but also of other self-governing countries of the Commonwealth. The form of Oath now proposed has been put to each of these countries and none has raised any objection, or has suggested that it is necessary to pass legislation in its own Parliament or in the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Indeed, it would not be possible in the time now remaining before the Coronation to arrange for legislation to be passed by the Commonwealth countries concerned.⁶⁵



The Stone of Destiny, which had been stolen from Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1950, had been quietly returned to the Coronation Chair on 20 February 1952, just two weeks after the death of George VI.⁶⁶

The designer Sir Norman Hartnell included symbolic flowers in the Queen's white satin dress: a rose (for England), thistle (Scotland), leek (Wales), shamrock (Ireland), lotus (Ceylon/Sri Lanka), protea (South Africa), wattle (Australia),

wheat and jute (Pakistan), maple leaf (Canada) and fern (New Zealand).⁶⁷

The Queen later wore her coronation dress on another six occasions, including at the opening of Parliaments of New Zealand and Australia in 1954.

⁶⁵ [HC Deb 25 February 1953 Vol 511 cc2091-92 \[Coronation Oath Changes\]](#)

⁶⁶ For a full account of the Stone's theft and recovery, see James Wilkinson, *The Coronation Chair*, London: Tudsbury Press, 2014, pp20-30. There was a further attempt to steal the Stone in 1970.

⁶⁷ Hartnell had initially planned to include a daffodil, which he erroneously believed to be the national emblem of Wales.

2

Planning a coronation

As with the Lying-in-State and State Funeral for a deceased monarch, planning for the coronation of a new sovereign is extensive.⁶⁸ This involves the Government, Privy Council, Royal Household and the Church of England.

2.1

Coronation date

The date of a coronation is generally determined by the Cabinet and the Royal Household. The 14 Commonwealth Realms, other countries where the King is head of state, will also be consulted. Good weather is considered desirable. Every coronation of a British monarch since King George III has taken place between May and September. At every coronation between 1838 and 1953, there was at least a year between the accession of a monarch and their coronation.

In 1952, the Cabinet considered the date for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in consultation with the Commonwealth Realms and taking into account local government elections, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Epsom Derby.⁶⁹ The Queen selected 2 June 1953 as “the earliest practicable day after Whitsun week”. This was criticised in the press on the basis that hotels would be full during Derby week and that trees in “full leaf would interfere with the view of the Procession”. “There is not much in this,” judged David Eccles, the Minister of Works, in a Cabinet memorandum. “The greenery will put life into the decorations along the route. The date, having been decided, cannot now be altered.”⁷⁰

It has been the custom to proclaim the day of a coronation a bank holiday, as was the case in 1937 and 1953.⁷¹ In 1902 there were supposed to be two bank holidays (26 and 27 June), but when the coronation of Edward VII was delayed this instead became a half day on Saturday 9 August.⁷² In 1911 there were also two, although the second applied only in the “administrative county of London”.⁷³

⁶⁸ See Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP9372, [The death of a monarch](#).

⁶⁹ [The Date of the Coronation](#), 3 April 1952, CAB 129/51/2, London: National Archives.

⁷⁰ [Coronation Arrangements](#), 24 October 1952, CAB 129/56/8, London: National Archives. “The Duke of Norfolk”, observed Eccles, “is being attacked most unfairly.”

⁷¹ See [Belfast Gazette](#), 13 February 1953.

⁷² [HC Deb 23 July 1902 Vol 111 c1012 \[Coronation Bank Holidays\]](#). The delay produced what are known as the [Coronation Cases](#), which concern “frustration” in contract law. See *Krell v Henry* [1903] 2 KB 740 and *Herne Bay Steam Boat Company v Hutton* [1903] 2 KB 683.

⁷³ [HC Deb 3 April 1911 Vol 23 c1798 \[Coronation\]](#)

On 11 October 2022, Buckingham Palace announced that the coronation of King Charles III and the Queen Consort would take place on Saturday 6 May 2023. The coronation, said a statement, would “reflect the monarch’s role today and look towards the future, while being rooted in longstanding traditions and pageantry”.⁷⁴ On 9 April 2023 it was announced that the service would begin at 11:00.⁷⁵

On 6 November 2022 it was announced that the Monday following King Charles III’s coronation, 8 May 2023, was to be proclaimed a bank holiday at a Privy Council meeting on 9 November 2022.⁷⁶

There is no statutory right to a day off work specifically on bank holidays.⁷⁷ In February 2023 the Policy and Resources Committee of Shetland Islands Council decided that staff would need to take Monday 8 May as annual leave if they wanted to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III and the Queen Consort.⁷⁸

Local government elections were due to be held in Northern Ireland on Thursday 4 May 2023. In November 2022 the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) said it was considering a delay on account of the coronation taking place two days later.⁷⁹ On 21 December 2022, the NIO minister Steve Baker confirmed a delay until 18 May 2023.⁸⁰ Under [section 84](#) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, election dates can be changed via Order in Council.⁸¹

On 24 November 2022, the Leader of the House, Penny Mordaunt, said the House of Commons would “rise for the coronation recess at the close of business on Wednesday 3 May, and return on Tuesday 9 May”.⁸²

2.2

Coronation Proclamation

Once agreed, the coronation date is made public via a Royal Proclamation agreed by the King or Queen “in Council”, ie at a meeting of the Privy Council at which the monarch is present.⁸³ Until 2022, this Proclamation was read out

⁷⁴ [The Coronation of His Majesty The King](#), Royal Family website, 11 October 2022.

⁷⁵ Royal Family website, [The Coronation Procession](#), 9 April 2023.

⁷⁶ Scottish Government press release, [Scotland to mark the Royal Coronation](#), 6 November 2022. There were separate Proclamations for Scotland and the rest of the UK. See [Privy Council meeting, 9 November 2022](#).

⁷⁷ See Commons Library Insight, [Bank holidays: How are they created and changed?](#)

⁷⁸ [Shetland Islands: Council workers facing bank holiday blues after day off for King’s coronation rejected](#), Sky News website, 14 February 2023.

⁷⁹ [Question for Northern Ireland Office, UIN 98940 \[Local Government: Elections\]](#), 2 December 2022.

⁸⁰ [NI council election moved to avoid coronation clash](#), BBC News online, 21 December 2022.

⁸¹ See [The Postponement of Local Elections \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2023](#). See also [HC Deb 20 February 2023 Vol 728 cc1-4](#).

⁸² [HC Deb 24 November 2022 Vol 723 c449 \[Business of the House\]](#)

⁸³ This gathering has also been called a “Coronation Council”.

at St James's Palace in London and then at other locations around the United Kingdom, as well as in the Commonwealth Realms and Overseas Territories.⁸⁴

Until 1936, the Proclamation did not give a specific date. A Proclamation of 21 July 1910, for example, stated a resolve by King George V to celebrate the "Solemnity of Our Royal Coronation upon a date in June next to be hereafter determined".⁸⁵ A Proclamation by King Edward VIII on 29 May 1936, however, established the current practice of specifying a particular date.⁸⁶ The date of King Edward VII's coronation was announced twice,⁸⁷ as his illness made the original date impossible.⁸⁸

The date of King Charles' coronation was not specifically proclaimed, although the date (6 May 2023) was included in the bank holiday Proclamations signed on 9 November 2022 (see **Section 2.1**).

Table 1 Coronation proclamations and dates

Monarch	Accession	Coronation Proclamation	Coronation date
Queen Victoria	20 June 1837	7 April 1838*	28 June 1838
King Edward VII	22 January 1901	28 June 1901*	26 June 1902 (postponed)
		26 July 1902	9 August 1902
King George V	6 May 1910	21 July 1910*	22 June 1911
King Edward VIII	20 January 1936	29 May 1936	12 May 1937 (scheduled)
King George VI	11 December 1936	19 December 1936	12 May 1937
Queen Elizabeth II	6 February 1952	7 June 1952	2 June 1953
King Charles III	8 September 2022	9 November 2022	6 May 2023

Source: The Times Digital Index and The London Gazette (*these Proclamations did not give a specific date).

2.3 Court of Claims

The Coronation Proclamation has in the past also listed those who may constitute a [Court of Claims](#), "a hybrid body both executive and judicial in the

⁸⁴ In this respect, the Proclamation followed the pattern of that proclaiming a new monarch following their accession (see Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP9621, [The Accession of King Charles III](#)).

⁸⁵ [London Gazette, 21 July 1910](#).

⁸⁶ [London Gazette, 29 May 1936](#). The BBC broadcast this Coronation Proclamation live on radio (The Times, 28 May 1936).

⁸⁷ [London Gazette, 28 June 1901](#).

⁸⁸ [London Gazette, 25 July 1902](#). The new date does not appear to have been proclaimed in the manner of the first. Edward VII had chosen the anniversary of Queen Victoria's coronation (28 June) to make his original Proclamation.

sense of being simultaneously an emanation of the Privy Council and an august judicial body”.⁸⁹

The Court of Claims consisted of the most senior English and Scottish judges.⁹⁰ It met before the coronation of a new monarch to assess claims by individuals who believed they ought to perform a role at the ceremony. This might have included the right to carry a standard (a royal banner) or perform a personal service to the Sovereign, such as carrying part of their regalia. Claims connected with pre-1821 proceedings in – or the procession from – Westminster Hall were not permissible.⁹¹

In 1952 the Court of Claims’ operations were helped by the fact that relatively little time had elapsed since the previous coronation. As a result, the Court did not require fresh and expensively mounted claims to be repeated where there had been no doubt in 1936 as to whether the claim should be permitted. Twenty-one people claimed the right to perform roles at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II; only 16 were accepted. As the author Hugo Vickers has recounted:

The Duke of Newcastle, as Lord of the Manor of Worksope, traditionally presented the glove to protect the Sovereign’s hand while holding the sceptre. Unfortunately for him the Duke had recently placed the Manor of Worksope into a limited company – the London and Fort George Land Company Ltd – to oversee his estates. Accordingly this company claimed the right to present the glove but the Committee decided that they were not going to grant limited companies any rights over coronation regalia. The claim was rejected.⁹²

In 2018, the Constitution Unit proposed that the Court of Claims be abolished.⁹³ No Court of Claims has been constituted for the coronation of King Charles III. Instead, in “line with His Majesty’s wish for the event to be rooted in tradition but reflective of today, and in accordance with Government advice”, a Coronation Claims Office has been created within the Cabinet Office to consider claims to perform an historic or ceremonial role:

When looking at claims, the Coronation Claims Office will consider matters including whether the role or service was performed in 1953 or not, what the basis is for it to be performed now and the claimant’s connection to those who previously performed the role or service.

The Cabinet Office has also stated that officials from the Coronation Claims Office will consult with ecclesiastical experts from Lambeth Palace and

⁸⁹ Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign](#), p16. A Court of Claims first appears to have been commissioned prior to the coronation of Richard II in 1377. This should not be confused with the [Court of Claims](#) in the United States.

⁹⁰ Until 1952, the Lord Chancellor presided in his then capacity as head of the judiciary in England and Wales.

⁹¹ This was made clear in a Coronation Proclamation, which would declare that “We do dispense” with such claims. Claims for the position of Chief Butler at the coronation of Edward VII were disallowed by the then Court of Claims on the basis that it had been tied to the defunct coronation banquet.

⁹² Hugo Vickers, *Coronation: The Crowning of Elizabeth II*, Stanbridge: Dovecot Press, 2023, p28.

⁹³ Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign](#), pvii.

ceremonial experts from the Royal Household when considering claims. All claims had to be submitted in writing by Friday 3 February 2023.⁹⁴

Oliver Dowden, a Cabinet Office minister, later explained that an administrative rather than legal approach had been taken “for ease and speed of administration”.⁹⁵ Separately, he told the House of Commons that “more than 200 such claims have been received”.⁹⁶

The outcome of the Claims process was announced by the Cabinet Office on 9 April 2023. Those who will have roles in the coronation service are:

- The Earl of Erroll (bearing a silver baton or staff as Lord High Constable of Scotland)
- Barons of the Cinque Ports (an historic group of representatives of 14 coastal towns in south-east England)
- Clerk of the Crown in Chancery (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice) (recording the proceedings)
- The Lord Great Chamberlain (investing of the King with the regalia)
- Lord Hastings
- The Earl of Loudoun
- The Bishop of Durham (Bishop Assistant to the King)
- The Bishop of Bath and Wells (Bishop Assistant to the King)
- The Dean and Chapter of the Collegiate Church of St Peter (holding the ceremony and instructing the monarch in the forms, rites and ceremonies)
- The Lord Mayor of London
- The Earl of Dundee (carrying the Quartering of the Scottish Standard in Procession)
- The Lord Lyon King of Arms & Heralds and Pursuivants of Scotland (part of the King’s procession)

⁹⁴ Cabinet Office, [Coronation Claims Office to look at historic and ceremonial roles for King Charles III’s Coronation](#), 5 January 2023. See also [Goodbye Court Of Claims. Hello Coronation Claims Office](#), A Venerable Puzzle blog, 12 January 2023.

⁹⁵ Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: The work of the Cabinet Office](#), HC 950, 26 January 2023.

⁹⁶ [HC Deb 2 February 2023 Vol 727 c449 \[Topical Questions\]](#)

- The Walker Trust (Episcopal Bishop of Edinburgh) (performing the role of Usher of the White Rod)⁹⁷

2.4

Coronation Committee

Until June 1952, a Coronation Proclamation would appoint a Committee of the Privy Council comprising five of the Privy Counsellors present to consider “the preparations necessary to be made for the Coronation of Her Majesty”.⁹⁸ In 1952, the Queen in Council also ordered that the Committee nominate an Executive Committee.

In that instance, this “Committee of the Lords of Her Majesty’s Most Honourable Privy Council” met on 16 June 1952 to nominate an Executive Committee chaired, as custom dictated, by the Earl Marshal (the Duke of Norfolk).⁹⁹ The Executive Committee was to “carry out any recommendations” made by the Coronation Committee on receipt of the monarch’s approval.¹⁰⁰

The Coronation Committee included senior Cabinet ministers, the Earl Marshal, the Archbishop of Canterbury and senior members of the Royal Household. The Executive Committee mirrored this membership but comprised those who would actually be responsible for detailed planning, ie senior civil servants.¹⁰¹ As it comprised Privy Counsellors, the Coronation Committee was able to issue the necessary Orders of Council. Early in 1953 an Order in Council enabled the Earl Marshal to assume control of Westminster Abbey, which was closed to the public on 1 January.¹⁰²

In April 1952 the Queen had also established a Coronation Commission chaired by her consort, the Duke of Edinburgh, to “consider those aspects of the arrangements for the Coronation which were of common concern to the United Kingdom and other Member States of the Commonwealth”.¹⁰³ This included representatives from the UK and the Commonwealth Realms.

A 200-strong labour force, under the supervision of a government department known as the Ministry of Works, then built the “Theatre”, the central area of

⁹⁷ Cabinet Office, [People who will play historic roles at the heart of the Coronation Service announced](#), 9 April 2023.

⁹⁸ Prior to 1901, the Earl Marshal and College of Arms were primarily responsible for coronation planning, an arrangement which had come to be seen as lacking the necessary professionalism.

⁹⁹ Only meetings of the Privy Council at which the monarch is present are known as the King or Queen “in Council”. In September 2022, the Earl Marshal attempted to avoid a driving ban by telling a London magistrates court that it would interfere with [his planning for the coronation of Charles III](#).

¹⁰⁰ [London Gazette, 20 June 1952](#). In 1952, the Canadian Government established its own Coronation Committee which was responsible for Canada’s participation in the London ceremony as well as domestic celebrations.

¹⁰¹ Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign](#), pp16-17.

¹⁰² The Abbey is a [Royal Peculiar](#), a church that belongs directly to the monarch and not to any diocese, and which does not come under the jurisdiction of a bishop. For the coronation of King Charles III and the Queen Consort, the [Abbey will close to visitors from Tuesday 25 April 2023](#) and re-open on 8 May.

¹⁰³ [HL Deb 27 January 1953 Vol 180 c4 \[Coronation Arrangements\]](#)

the Abbey containing the throne. From 14 May 1953 rehearsals were held almost daily, the Queen attending on four occasions. On 29 May the final full rehearsal was held using a set of replica regalia.¹⁰⁴

Media reports suggested that the coronation ceremony for King Charles III would be “stripped back” or “slimmed down”,¹⁰⁵ although subsequent reports indicated a change of mind.¹⁰⁶

2 The Earl Marshal (and other offices)

The organisation of a coronation is usually the responsibility of the Earl Marshal, an hereditary officer of state. The Dukes of Norfolk were created Earl Marshal of England in 1483 but as Catholics they were not always able to perform their functions. Instead, the Duke would appoint a deputy. The Earl Marshal’s Office Act 1824, however, enabled to the Duke of Norfolk to exercise his official duties, notwithstanding his religion.¹⁰⁷

Historically, the Earl Marshal had jurisdiction over certain parts of Westminster Abbey. Before and including the coronation of 1821, the Lord Great Chamberlain (another hereditary office of state) was also involved by virtue of controlling, as he still does, Westminster Hall, the location for coronation banquets. After 1830, the Lord Great Chamberlain retained responsibility for dressing the monarch during their investiture. Other hereditary (English) offices of state, such as [Chief Butler](#), have lapsed,¹⁰⁸ or – as with the [Lord High Steward](#) (who bears the St Edward’s Crown) and [Lord High Constable](#) – are only created for the coronation ceremony itself.

The Officers of Arms, or heralds, act as the Earl Marshall’s staff. They also maintain the official records of coronations, which are held in the archives of the College of Arms.¹⁰⁹ On 17 April 2023, the College of Arms published details of the official protocol relating to the flying of flags to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III on 6 May 2023.¹¹⁰

A Coronation Committee for the May 2023 ceremony was not formally proclaimed but in the House of Commons on 17 November 2022, Andrew Selous MP, the Second Church Estates Commissioner, confirmed its existence

¹⁰⁴ Westminster Abbey website, [Elizabeth II](#).

¹⁰⁵ For an argument against such changes, see Charles Moore, [The case against a stripped-back coronation](#), Spectator, 22 October 2022.

¹⁰⁶ [King ‘backs pomp and pageantry rather than cut-price coronation’ say reports](#), Mirror, 22 December 2022.

¹⁰⁷ This Act meant the Earl Marshal or his deputy still had to take the Oath of Allegiance and the Oath of Office but not the [Oath of Supremacy](#). Nor did they have to sign a Declaration against Transubstantiation.

¹⁰⁸ The Chief Butler would hand a cup of wine to the monarch at the coronation banquet, receiving the cup “as his right” once the banquet was over (see [HC Deb 9 May 1957 Vol 569 c1174](#)).

¹⁰⁹ College of Arms website, [Planning the Coronation – College of Arms](#), 31 May 2013.

¹¹⁰ College of Arms website, [Coronation Flag-Flying – College of Arms](#), 17 April 2023.

by stating that the “Archbishop of Canterbury, the Earl Marshal and the coronation committee are planning the service”.¹¹¹

Sir Edward Leigh asked Mr Selous for reassurance that the Church of England would “use its influence” to ensure the coronation remained “a deeply religious and spiritual event” and “not degenerate into a kind of dumbed down, wokefest celebration of so-called modern Britain”.¹¹²

On 3 December 2022, the Royal Family announced that the St Edward’s Crown had “been removed from the Tower of London to allow for modification work to begin ahead of the Coronation on Saturday 6th May 2023”.¹¹³ It returned to public display at the Tower of London in February 2023.¹¹⁴

The Most Reverend Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, later told Channel 4 News that the coronation was giving him “nightmares”: “I dreamt we got to the point [of the coronation] and I’d left the crown at Lambeth Palace.”¹¹⁵

At a Cabinet meeting on 20 December 2022, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Oliver Dowden, and the Culture Secretary, Michelle Donelan, briefed ministers on preparations for the coronation of King Charles III. According to a report in The Times, the Prime Minister’s spokesman said it would be a “unique moment” for “us to show the best of Britain in many different aspects”.¹¹⁶

In evidence to the Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Mr Dowden said the King, “through Buckingham Palace”, was “responsible for the content of the coronation, the guest list and all the other things associated with the coronation”. The role of the Government, he added, was twofold:

Through DCMS, the Government support ceremonials, as they did with the platinum jubilee and various other moments of national celebration. Through the Cabinet Office, I chair a cross-Government co-ordination Committee to make sure that the whole of the Government works properly to support the coronation, whether that is in relation to policing, security, the footprint of the coronation in terms of the roads, the involvement of the military or all the other things that come together to make this a wonderful day in our nation’s history.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ [HC Deb 17 Nov 2022 Vol 722 c820 \[Coronation of King Charles III\]](#)

¹¹² [HC Deb 17 Nov 2022 Vol 722 c820 \[Coronation of King Charles III\]](#)

¹¹³ Royal Family website, [St Edward’s Crown removed from the Tower of London ahead of the Coronation](#), 3 December 2022.

¹¹⁴ A [new exhibition featuring the Crown Jewels](#) will open at the Tower of London on 26 May 2023.

¹¹⁵ [Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby admits he’s having ‘nightmares’ over conducting the King’s Coronation](#), MailOnline, 24 December 2022.

¹¹⁶ [Coronation ‘will restore UK’s reputation’ after year of global mockery](#), The Times (£), 21 December 2022.

¹¹⁷ Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: The work of the Cabinet Office](#).

There is a dedicated Government website [About the Coronation – Coronation of His Majesty The King & Her Majesty The Queen Consort](#).

In an editorial published on Christmas Day 2022, the Guardian newspaper was critical of what it called the “closet of secrecy” surrounding the coronation of Charles III:

Remarkably, there have been few announcements about what sort of event the king and his advisers, who presumably include ministers answerable to parliament, envisage [...] We do not, though, know what kind of ceremony is planned, what oath the king will swear, what role non-Anglicans will play, who will be invited (this question is larger than the fate of the Sussexes), whether there will be any civil society dimension of the ceremony in, say, Westminster Hall, or even what kind of processions are envisaged. That leaves a lot of interesting and potentially symbolic and resonant questions unanswered.¹¹⁸

Writing in the Spectator, the Crossbench peer Lord Moore observed that information regarding the coronation “leaks out in small drips” and confessed to:

anxiety is of the ‘What’s going on?’, ‘Who’s in charge?’ variety. The head man for state occasions is the Earl Marshal, the Duke of Norfolk, whose grandfather did it so brilliantly for the coronation of Elizabeth II, but the present Duke seems downbeat. It was he who squashed the tradition of publicly proclaiming the coronation and sought to push aside the Court of Claims, which confirms the right to perform certain roles at the coronation. Instead, the claims system has been reduced to applications by email. These had to be in by 8 February.

Claimants have not yet heard the results. Some have picked up rumours that no robes will be worn (and therefore no pages required), which would be miserable if true. The official tailors have still not had their instructions. The heralds, the only people in the royal set-up learned in the Law of Arms and the customs and rules involved, have been marginalised. How will peers, who have a specific, lifelong duty of allegiance, which MPs do not, be represented? And so on.

The Earl Marshal, I gather, does not answer inquiries. There seem to be no controlling minds, in government or palace, so the work is carried on by quite junior officials. It feels as if the organisers are dominated more by fear of causing offence than the need to put on a great state occasion with its necessary precision, historical accuracy and restrained magnificence. I expect it will be all right on the night, but just now it feels uneasy.¹¹⁹

Writing in the Daily Telegraph, columnist Petronella Wyatt said it was:

particularly disturbing that the Earl of Denby has not been asked to provide falcons, as his family has done since the 16th century. These little things deprive people of their purpose in life.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ [The Guardian view on the 2023 coronation: all change please](#), Guardian, 25 December 2022.

¹¹⁹ Spectator, 18 February 2023.

¹²⁰ [By pandering to the woke for his Coronation, the King risks his own irrelevance](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 21 February 2023.

On 18 April 2023, the BBC reported that hundreds of military personnel had paraded through the streets of central London “in a midnight rehearsal for the King’s coronation”.¹²¹

Others were critical that a coronation was happening at all. In January 2023 the campaign group Republic said it planned to protest during the period leading up to and including the ceremony on 6 May 2023. In the first a series of planned protests, campaigners unveiled a “polling station” sign on the railings of Buckingham Palace.¹²²

Graham Smith of Republic also said more than 1,350 people had pledged to protest during the coronation processions on 6 May. According to The Times, Republic activists will wear yellow T-shirts and wave yellow placards to create an “unmissable sea of yellow” along the procession route. When the King passes in the Gold State Coach, they plan to “boo loudly” and chant “Not my King”.¹²³

Stewart McDonald, an SNP MP, has said that with the crowning of a new monarch, it was “surely right and proper that we [the SNP] debate our party’s position” on an independent Scotland becoming a republic rather than a constitutional monarchy.¹²⁴ Humza Yousaf, who was elected SNP leader on 27 March 2023, has confirmed that he will attend the coronation “in his official capacity as First Minister of Scotland”.¹²⁵

2.5

The Stone of Destiny

Since 1996, the [Stone of Destiny](#) – which hitherto formed part of the Coronation (or St Edward’s) Chair – has resided at Edinburgh Castle. In a statement to the House of Commons on 3 July 1996, the then Prime Minister John Major announced that “the most ancient symbol of Scottish kingship” was to be returned to its “historic homeland” on the 700th anniversary of its “removal from Scotland” by King Edward I:

The stone remains the property of the Crown. I wish to inform the House that, on the advice of Her Majesty’s Ministers, the Queen has agreed that the stone should be returned to Scotland. The stone will, of course, be taken to Westminster abbey to play its traditional role in the coronation ceremonies of future sovereigns of the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister said the Government would consult “Scottish and Church opinion” as to the placing of the Stone “in an appropriate setting in

¹²¹ [King Charles coronation: Troops take part in midnight rehearsal](#), BBC News online, 18 April 2023.

¹²² [King Charles coronation protest sees polling station sign unveiled at Buckingham Palace](#), WalesOnline, 25 January 2023.

¹²³ [Anti-monarchist protesters plan to chant ‘not my King’ at coronation](#), The Times (£), 18 April 2023.

¹²⁴ [Coronation ‘is right time for debate on republic’](#), The Times (£), 26 January 2023.

¹²⁵ [Humza Yousaf will attend King Charles’s coronation – not AUOB rally](#), The National, 8 April 2023. During the SNP leadership campaign, Mr Yousaf had declared himself to be a republican.

Scotland”.¹²⁶ Once this consultation was complete, the Stone was “installed with due dignity” at Edinburgh Castle on St Andrew’s Day, 1996.¹²⁷

The historians Roy Strong and A. N. Wilson were both strongly critical of the move. The former mistakenly claimed it was “returned it by diktat to Scotland on the back of devolution” by Tony Blair (“By this act a unique medieval artefact was vandalised”).¹²⁸ The latter also (erroneously) wrote that:

In preparation for a devolved Scottish Assembly, the Prime Minister John Major, a latter-day iconoclast to rival the Puritan vandals who attacked the Abbey in the reign of Charles I, tore out the stone in 1996 and without ceremony sent it back to Scotland, not to be placed in a position of sacred honour but just as an exhibit. The symbolism of 700 years was mindlessly destroyed in an afternoon.¹²⁹

The Stone had been moved before, albeit illegally. Four Scottish students took it from the Abbey on Christmas Day, 1950.¹³⁰

It was later recovered and the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Hector McNeil, presented three options to the Cabinet:

- to leave the Stone in Westminster Abbey;
- to return it to Scotland for custody between coronations; and
- to arrange for it to be displayed in the capital cities of the Commonwealth, beginning with Edinburgh.¹³¹

In a debate in the House of Lords on 9 May 1951, seven peers spoke in favour of returning the Stone to Scotland, with only one opposing it and two adopting a neutral stance.¹³²

Following a change of government and the death of King George VI, in February 1952 the Cabinet decided that the Stone would remain at the Abbey. Winston Churchill told the Commons that:

For over 650 years the Stone has been in Westminster Abbey and, from its use at successive Coronations it has a historic significance for all countries in the

¹²⁶ [HC Deb 3 July 1996 Vol 280 c973 \[Stone of Destiny\]](#). A Private Member’s Bill had been introduced in 1924 [calling for the Stone’s transfer to Scotland](#). For a full account of the Stone’s return to Scotland, see James Wilkinson, *The Coronation Chair*, London: Tudsbury Press, 2014, pp31-39. Professor Warwick Rodwell has argued that the Stone did in fact belong to the Abbey rather than to the Crown (see Warwick Rodwell, *The Coronation Chair and Stone of Scone*, Barnsley: Oxbow, 2013).

¹²⁷ See [The day the Stone of Destiny returned to Scotland](#), BBC News online, 27 November 2021. See also [Edinburgh Gazette, 29 November 1996](#) for a record of the ceremonial upon the Stone’s return.

¹²⁸ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p73.

¹²⁹ A. N. Wilson, *London: A Short History*, London: Phoenix, 2005, p17.

¹³⁰ [The students who stole the Stone of Destiny](#), BBC News online, 24 March 2023.

¹³¹ David Breeze and Graeme Munro, *The Stone of Destiny: Symbol of Nationhood*, Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 1997, pp30-31. McNeil favoured the second option.

¹³² [HL Deb 9 May 1951 Vol 171 cc829-58 \[The Coronation Stone\]](#)

Commonwealth. With the approval of Her Majesty's Government, the Stone has been restored to its traditional place.¹³³

In late 2020 it was announced that the Stone of Destiny was to be moved to a new museum in Perth at some point during 2024.¹³⁴

In September 2022 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) confirmed that the Stone of Destiny would be transferred to London for use in King Charles III's coronation.¹³⁵ In a written answer, the Secretary of State for Scotland said the Cabinet Office and Department for Culture, Media and Sport were working with the Scottish Government and HES "on the movement of the Stone for the Coronation of King Charles III".¹³⁶

In March 2023, Ash Regan, a candidate to succeed Nicola Sturgeon as leader of the SNP, proposed that "aspects of the coronation ceremony involving the stone take place in Scotland so that it can be celebrated in its rightful place".¹³⁷

3 Commissioners for the Keeping of the Regalia

Under the terms of a Royal Warrant issued in 1918, the Lord Justice Clerk, the Lord Clerk Register (Scottish legal positions), the Lord Advocate (the Scottish Government's legal adviser) and the Keeper of the Scottish Seal are ex-officio Commissioners for the Keeping of the (Scottish) Regalia.

Since 1996, the Commissioners have also been empowered by another Royal Warrant for the safekeeping of the Stone of Destiny. It is also their responsibility to arrange for its return to Westminster Abbey whenever it is required for a coronation service.

During a ceremony at the Great Hall in Edinburgh Castle, the Duke of York, representing Queen Elizabeth II, formally issued the [Royal Warrant](#) to the Commissioners of the Regalia which transferred the Stone into their care.¹³⁸ The current Keeper of the Scottish Seal is the First Minister of Scotland.

Ahead of King Charles' coronation, the "extremely fragile" Coronation Chair is being cleaned and its gilding stabilised by conservation experts at Westminster Abbey.¹³⁹ The Daily Telegraph also reported that the chair had "shrunk" and may need reinforcing. Conservators were "said to be using a replica of the stone, which is not the same weight but is of the same

¹³³ [HC Deb 26 February 1952 Vol 496 c941 \[Coronation Stone\]](#)

¹³⁴ [Stone of Destiny to return to Perthshire as museum centrepiece](#), BBC News, 23 December 2020.

¹³⁵ [Stone of Destiny to return to Westminster Abbey for coronation](#), BBC News, 12 September 2022.

¹³⁶ [UIN 156118, 1 March 2023 \[Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla: Stone of Destiny\]](#)

¹³⁷ [King Charles coronation: SNP leadership contender backs calls to stop Stone of Destiny being used in London ceremony](#), Sky News website, 5 March 2023.

¹³⁸ Historic Environment Scotland website, [20 facts revealed about the Stone of Destiny](#).

¹³⁹ [Extremely fragile coronation chair being restored](#), BBC News online, 1 March 2023.

dimensions, to aid their work”.¹⁴⁰ Analysis of this 3D replica revealed roman numerals.¹⁴¹

For more on the Scottish dimension see the SPICe Spotlight blog, [The coronation of King Charles III](#).

2.6

Who pays for a coronation?

Unlike Royal weddings, a coronation is a state occasion paid for by the Government.¹⁴² As Bob Morris has observed:

It is difficult to construct a fully comparable and meaningful list of costs over a long period. In recent times at least, Treasury practice has been to compile a Coronation Vote that included only the direct costs falling to the Household, Ministry of Works and the Government Hospitality Fund (which looked after overseas invitees) against the Appropriations in Aid arising principally from Works’ sales of viewing seats, Abbey chairs and materials.¹⁴³

Monarch	Year of coronation	Estimated cost (£ nominal)	Estimated cost (£, 2021 prices)
King George I	1714	7,287	1,200,000
King George II	1727	8,720	1,500,000
King George III	1767	9,430	1,600,000
King George IV	1821	238,000	21,100,000
King William IV	1831	43,159	4,000,000
Queen Victoria	1838	69,421	6,200,000
King Edward VII	1902	193,000	19,100,000
King George V	1911	185,000	17,200,000
King George VI	1937	454,000	23,500,000
Queen Elizabeth II	1953	912,000	18,800,000

Source: Source: Roy Strong, *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, London: HarperCollins, 2005.

Note: Estimated cost in 2021 prices is based on a spliced series of consumer price inflation compiled in the Bank of England’s Millennium of macroeconomic data, updated with ONS CPI data. Rounded to nearest hundred thousand.

¹⁴⁰ [Coronation Chair strengthened to take weight of King and ancient Stone of Scone](#), Daily Telegraph, 1 March 2023.

¹⁴¹ [Roman numerals are found on the Stone of Destiny ahead of the King's coronation](#), Mail Online, 5 April 2023.

¹⁴² [King Charles III, the new monarch](#), BBC News online, 19 September 2022.

¹⁴³ Bob Morris, *Inaugurating a new reign*, p23.

Such a cost can be politically controversial. The socialist MP Keir Hardie, for example, attacked the coronation of 1911 as “an orgy for the display of wealth and senseless spending”.¹⁴⁴ Monarchs have often taken pre-emptive action in this regard. For Queen Victoria, extra rations of beef were distributed to workhouses and prisons, while on behalf of George VI in 1937, a special welfare payment was made to the unemployed, although this was not repeated in 1953.¹⁴⁵

In 1953, “Coronation Estimates” of £925,000 presented to the House **before** the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.¹⁴⁶

In his evidence to the Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Cabinet Office minister Oliver Dowden said both the King and the Government were “mindful of ensuring that there is value for the taxpayer”:

[I]t has always been the case that the Government have paid for coronations. The reason for doing so is that the sovereign is our Head of State and it is important that we mark that properly [...] It is right that we celebrate this moment in the life of our nation and do so in an appropriate fashion and in a way that the nation can come together in celebrating [...] These are moments in the life of our nation. They bring joy to millions of people. They also mark us out as a nation around the world [...] It is a marvellous moment in our history and people would not want a dour scrimping and scraping. They would want an appropriate ceremony. That is what we will have.¹⁴⁷

Asked about unsubstantiated reports that the coronation would cost £100 million, the then First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, said: “I think it should be responsibly done, and cost effectively done, and I’m pretty certain about this actually that the King will want that to be the case.”¹⁴⁸

The pollster YouGov asked if people thought the coronation of King Charles “should or should not be funded by the government?” 32% said it should, 51% that it should not and 18% did not know.¹⁴⁹

2.7

Attending the coronation

As a state occasion, the Government ultimately decides the guest list for a coronation. At the last ceremony in June 1953, the allocation of seating was the responsibility of the Earl Marshal:

This was no light duty since it required the construction of an outcome that could be credibly presented – and defended – as reflective of the society of the

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p426.

¹⁴⁵ Bob Morris, *Inaugurating a new reign*, p16 fn37.

¹⁴⁶ [HC Deb 10 March 1953 Vol 512 c95W](#)

¹⁴⁷ Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: The work of the Cabinet Office.](#)

¹⁴⁸ The News Agents, [Nicola Sturgeon on Gender, Starmer and Prince Harry](#), 27 January 2023.

¹⁴⁹ [Do you think the coronation of King Charles should or should not be funded by the government?](#), YouGov website, 18 April 2023.

day. Accordingly, it was of great interest to the Cabinet who had directed that there should be a much larger representation from the Commonwealth than in 1937, the Prime Minister also wanting a substantially increased number of seats for the trade unions.¹⁵⁰

For the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, the chairmen of recently formed county councils were invited, as were mayors of the London boroughs and representatives of the legal and medical professions. Three hundred places were also reserved for Imperial representatives, particularly India's maharajahs, governors, officers and eminent citizens.

As the number of overseas invitees increased, domestic numbers were reduced. In 1911 peers' daughters, Scottish Sheriffs, county council chairmen and provincial mayors all lost their places, although the Coronation Committee decided to offer two seats each to representatives of the Trades Congress Parliamentary Committee, the Central Board of the Co-operative Union and the National Conference of Friendly Societies.¹⁵¹

Attempts were also made at the 1937 coronation of King George VI to have the working classes play a more visible part. The Royal Household invited four people from industrial communities across the UK.¹⁵²

Attendance at the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was the most substantial yet: more than 8,000 guests representing 129 nations.¹⁵³ For the coronation of King Charles III, Bob Morris has speculated that "it will be more like a royal wedding. Not loads and loads of people."¹⁵⁴

On 4 April 2023, President Biden congratulated King Charles III on his upcoming Coronation "[and informed him that First Lady Jill Biden looks forward to attending on behalf of the United States](#)". A US president has never attended the coronation of a UK monarch. In 1953, President Eisenhower named four representatives who attended in his place.¹⁵⁵

Members of the Royal Family watch from the Royal Gallery in the Abbey. In 1953, Princess Marie Louise (Queen Victoria's granddaughter) witnessed her fourth coronation, having also been present for those of Kings Edward VII, George V and George VI. The future King Charles III was also present to see his mother being crowned, as she had been present at her parents' coronation in May 1937.

¹⁵⁰ Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign](#), pp20-21.

¹⁵¹ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p428.

¹⁵² Edward Owens, *The Family Firm: Monarchy, Mass Media and the British Public, 1932-53* (Kindle edition), London: University of London Press, 2019, p237.

¹⁵³ The media is also accommodated. Among the foreign press in 1953 was Jacqueline Bouvier (later Kennedy), who covered the coronation for the Washington Times-Herald, although she did not attend the ceremony itself.

¹⁵⁴ [When is King Charles's coronation and how will it differ from the Queen's?](#), The Times (£), 22 September 2022.

¹⁵⁵ [The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II – The Text Message](#), US National Archives website, 31 May 2018. For a list of world leaders confirmed as attending (as of 17 April 2023) see [Which world leaders are going to King Charles's coronation?](#), Mail Online, 17 April 2023.

The Duke of Windsor, who had abdicated as King Edward VIII in 1936, was not present at either his brother's coronation or that of his niece. In a press statement released before the latter occasion, the Duke said it would be "contrary to precedent for any sovereign or former sovereign to attend". In reality, he hoped that he and his wife **would** be invited, but the Prime Minister advised them both not to be present.¹⁵⁶

It is rare for other monarchs (unless under the protection of the British Empire) to attend the coronation of a UK King or Queen. Instead, representatives from their family may attend. In 1953, for example, the then Crown Prince of Norway, Olav, attended on behalf of his father, King Haakon VII. Denmark sent Prince Axel while Sweden's royals sent the Duke of Halland and Belgium was represented by the Prince of Liege.¹⁵⁷

Prince Pierre of Monaco represented his father, Rainier III, at the 1953 coronation, but in January 2023 Prince Albert of Monaco confirmed that he and his wife, Princess Charlene, would attend the coronation of King Charles III.¹⁵⁸ This suggested a break with the custom of not inviting other monarchs to the ceremony.¹⁵⁹ In April 2023 Japan's Cabinet also approved a four-day trip for Crown Prince Fumihito and his wife Crown Princess Kiko to attend the coronation.¹⁶⁰

There was considerable media speculation as to whether the Duke and Duchess of Sussex will attend the coronation of King Charles III. On 5 March 2023 a spokesperson for the couple confirmed the Duke had "recently received email correspondence from His Majesty's office regarding the coronation". The spokesperson added: "An immediate decision on whether the Duke and Duchess will attend will not be disclosed by us at this time."¹⁶¹ On 13 April 2023, the Palace confirmed that the Duke of Sussex would be present at coronation, but that his wife, the Duchess of Sussex, would not be attending.¹⁶²

Members of Parliament

For the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953, Members of Parliament were asked to accept fewer places than in 1937 in order to accommodate increased numbers from the then British Empire and Commonwealth. At that

¹⁵⁶ See Philip Zeigler, *King Edward VIII: The Official Biography*, London: Collins, 1990, pp539-40. See also [Cabinet Conclusions](#), 20 November 1952, CAB 128/40/6, London: National Archives.

¹⁵⁷ Royal Central website, [What will King Charles's coronation guest list look like?](#), 23 October 2022. See also Hugo Vickers, *Coronation: The Crowning of Elizabeth II*, Stanbridge: Dovecot Press, 2023, pp53-54.

¹⁵⁸ [Prince Albert and Princess Charlene confirm attendance at King Charles's coronation](#), Hello! Magazine, 17 January 2023.

¹⁵⁹ See [Foreign monarchs to attend coronation in break with 900-year tradition](#), The Times (£), 27 February 2023.

¹⁶⁰ [Japan's crown prince, princess to attend British king's coronation](#), Kyodo News website, 11 April 2023.

¹⁶¹ [Harry and Meghan weigh up coronation invitation](#), BBC News online, 4 March 2023.

¹⁶² [Prince Harry to attend coronation without Meghan](#), BBC News online, 13 April 2023. The Daily Telegraph noted that despite her non-attendance, [a picture of the Duchess of Sussex had been included in the official coronation souvenir programme](#).

time, there were 625 MPs. The 76 MPs who were Privy Counsellors were invited separately and following reductions in the places allocated to members of the Armed Forces, civil and foreign services, attaches and Westminster schoolboys, a total of 800 places were allocated for MPs and their spouses. This meant balloting was unnecessary.¹⁶³

On 20 May 1953 the then Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, moved:

That this House, in accordance with Her Majesty's gracious intimation, doth authorise Mr. Speaker as representing this House, to attend Her Majesty's Coronation on Tuesday, Second Day of June next.

Sir David explained that “according to precedent, the House will dispense with going to the Abbey in its corporate capacity, and Mr. Speaker will proceed to the Abbey in State, accompanied by the Serjeant at Arms with the Mace”.¹⁶⁴ See **Section 3.1** for more details on the historic Speaker's Procession on the occasion of a coronation ceremony.

According to a report in the Sun newspaper, only two dozen MPs will be invited to the coronation of King Charles III and the Queen Consort in May 2023, meaning “only top Cabinet ministers, senior Privy Counsellors and opposition chiefs will likely make the cut”.¹⁶⁵ A later report in the Daily Telegraph claimed 20 MPs and 20 peers would be invited.¹⁶⁶ Other reports have suggested 25 of each in addition to the current Cabinet and former Prime Ministers.¹⁶⁷ The most recent report states that:

Apart from Cabinet Ministers and other designated post-holders, only 50 MPs and 50 peers will be present. The others will be compensated with a pre-Coronation visit by the King to the Palace of Westminster. MPs and peers – or their spouses and partners – were also able to apply for one of 400 ‘Coronation pavement tickets’ to stand outside Parliament's Carriage Gates and witness the Royal procession.¹⁶⁸

According to a report in The Times, this “special audience with the King over afternoon tea will be held in Westminster Hall” on 2 May in order to “pacify those MPs and peers who miss out on an invitation” to the ceremony itself.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ This was a reduction of 30 places compared with 1937. See [The Coronation: Allocation of Seats in Westminster Abbey](#), 12 November 1952, CAB 129/57/3, London: National Archives.

¹⁶⁴ [HC Deb 20 May 1953 Vol 515 cc2087-88 \[Coronation \(Mr Speaker's Attendance\)\]](#)

¹⁶⁵ [GET 'EM ORE, YER MAJ: King Charles will make major change to Coronation and will not wear old-fashioned costume on historic day](#), The Sun, 20 January 2023.

¹⁶⁶ [Buckingham Palace pleading for more places at Coronation](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 25 February 2023.

¹⁶⁷ [Welby's spiritual guidance prepares King Charles for coronation](#), Sunday Times (£), 12 March 2023.

¹⁶⁸ [Downing Street accused of 'bribing' Tory rebels with tickets to King Charles's Coronation next month](#), Mail on Sunday, 16 April 2023.

¹⁶⁹ [Welby's spiritual guidance prepares King Charles for coronation](#), Sunday Times (£), 12 March 2023.

The peerage

Until 1953 the entire peerage attended a coronation ceremony. At that point, there was a total UK peerage of 936, including 736 members of the House of Lords, minors and peeresses in their own right.¹⁷⁰

In a statement to the House of Lords on 27 January 1953 the then Lord Chancellor rejected the view that every peer enjoyed an “absolute right” to a seat in the Abbey. Rather he was:

convinced that it lies entirely within the Royal Prerogative or otherwise within the personal power of the Sovereign to determine what Peers shall be summoned to the Abbey and what services shall be rendered by them; and it would be clearly improper in this House to challenge or criticise the exercise by the Sovereign of such powers.¹⁷¹

The Lord Chancellor also reminded peers that their homage had been curtailed after 1902. Instead, 910 peers were accommodated (via a ballot) in the Abbey.¹⁷² If unsuccessful, a peer and his wife were entitled to a free seat in a covered stand to be erected outside.¹⁷³ Peers who were Privy Counsellors were not, like MPs, separately invited.

Responding to a written question on 21 March 2023, Lord Parkinson said a number of tickets to attend the coronation had been “split between the different parties and groups in the House of Lords, with this split agreed by all parties and groups who will distribute the tickets to peers”. He added that there would be “other opportunities” for peers to be involved with the coronation, “both on the day itself and in the preceding weeks”, with tickets split across all parties and groups on the same basis.¹⁷⁴

Media reports have suggested that the coronation of King Charles III will “have a day dress dress code, meaning morning suits will be optional for male guests”.¹⁷⁵ Another report in the Daily Telegraph suggested that peers were lobbying the Cabinet Office in order to attend.¹⁷⁶

According to Debrett’s:

On the occasion of King Charles III’s coronation, peers have been requested not to wear traditional robes, including coronets. They may opt to wear

¹⁷⁰ Women were not permitted to sit in the House of Lords until the creation of life peers in 1958.

¹⁷¹ [HL Deb 27 January 1953 Vol 180 cc4-5 \[Coronation Arrangements\]](#). Some peers argued that their presence at a coronation amounted to a meeting of Parliament in the Abbey.

¹⁷² This was a reduction of 235 places compared with 1937. See [The Coronation: Allocation of Seats in Westminster Abbey](#).

¹⁷³ Further seats in the covered could be acquired on payment of £6 each. A peer allocated seats inside the Abbey could purchase seats in an uncovered stand for £4 each: “Applications for seats should be made to my Private Secretary, at the Lord Chancellor’s Department, House of Lords. Cheques should accompany the application and should be made payable to Her Majesty’s Paymaster General” ([HL Deb 27 January 1953 Vol 180 c7](#)).

¹⁷⁴ [UIN HL5639, 20 February 2023 \[Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla\]](#)

¹⁷⁵ [Most sacred part of the King’s Coronation could be caught on camera for first time in history](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 30 January 2023.

¹⁷⁶ [Peers in uproar as only a minority will be invited to King Charles’s Coronation](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 10 February 2023.

parliamentary ermine (the robes that they wear for the State Opening of Parliament) or standard business attire.¹⁷⁷

Commonwealth

A memorable feature of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in June 1953 was the presence of a substantial Commonwealth presence, particularly from Canada.

On 16 March 2023 the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announced that a ceremony would be held in Ottawa to mark the coronation of the King and Queen of Canada on 6 May. This will include “speeches, artistic performances, and special unveilings”. Attendees will include members of the King's Privy Council for Canada. A statement also said the Canadian delegation “attending the Coronation Service will be announced in the coming weeks”.¹⁷⁸

On 30 March 2023 Anthony Albanese, the Prime Minister of Australia, informed the House of Representatives that on 6 May he would:

attend, along with the Governor-General, the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III in London. Our nation will be represented at the historic event by us along with all state governors and a number of other notable Australians, most of whom are based in the United Kingdom. Outstanding citizens have been chosen to show the world the best of our values: caring for others, serving community and championing progress. I note that the Palace requested in particular that there be significant representation from Indigenous Australians as part of the coronation. There will be a holder of the Victoria Cross for Australia and another of the Cross of Valour attending, as well as representatives of the Australian Defence Force.¹⁷⁹

An 18-strong New Zealand delegation will form part of the King's Procession at the start of the coronation ceremony (see **Section 3.1**). This will include rugby captain Richie McCaw, Abdul Aziz, who tried to overcome a gunman in the 2019 Christchurch massacre, Kiingi Tuheitia, the Māori king, Chris Hipkins, the Prime Minister and Dame Cindy Kiro, the Governor-General.¹⁸⁰

Other religious denominations

Although the coronation had always been an Anglican ceremony, in 1937 Cosmo Lang, the Scottish-born Archbishop of Canterbury,¹⁸¹ decided to involve other denominations for the first time: seven representatives of

¹⁷⁷ Debrett's website, [Dress Codes](#).

¹⁷⁸ [Prime Minister announces Canadian ceremony to mark the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III](#), Prime Minister of Canada website, 16 March 2023. For commentary on Canada's role in the coronation of King Charles III, see [Ottawa is tight-lipped about King Charles's coronation – and monarchists are worried](#), CBC News website, 3 March 2023. Polling has suggested that [73% of Canadians are not interested](#) in the coronation.

¹⁷⁹ [House of Representatives Hansard 30 March 2023, p62](#).

¹⁸⁰ [Heroes and athletes lead New Zealand coronation procession](#), The Times (£), 19 April 2023.

¹⁸¹ Lang was the son of a Church of Scotland minister. His brother Marshall served as Kirk Moderator in 1935, and another brother, Norman, as the Anglican suffragan bishop of Leicester.

England's Free Churches and three from the "national" Church of Scotland walked in the Abbey procession.

Prior to the 1953 coronation, meanwhile, the Secretary of State for Scotland sought a role for the [Moderator of General Assembly of the Church of Scotland](#) in the Abbey sanctuary. The Archbishop of Canterbury agreed, but rejected a later suggestion by Clement Davies, the Liberal Party leader in the Commons, that the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council might also be given a role in the coronation service.¹⁸² On 2 June 1953 the Moderator, the Very Reverend James Pitt-Watson, presented a Bible to the Queen.¹⁸³

Cardinal Griffin of the Roman Catholic Church was asked to attend but declined. A papal mission did, however, ride in the processions to and from Westminster Abbey, although they remained outside during the ceremony itself. This followed a precedent set in 1937.¹⁸⁴

There has been speculation that the coronation of King Charles III will be more ecumenical than previous ceremonies. One source told the BBC:

It will be an Anglican service. But as the King says, Britain is a community of communities. He will be thinking very carefully about how to reflect those different faith communities within the abbey, if not within the service itself. It is about representation, about looking at that audience and feeling that Britain can see itself in the pews of the abbey.¹⁸⁵

Others have argued that the coronation service must remain recognisably Anglican to "confer a specially protected place in the nation for the Church of England".¹⁸⁶ Dr Ian Bradley, a Church of Scotland minister, has on the other hand argued that it is "not absolutely central" to the coronation's sacramental character "that it remains embedded in the Anglican communion service".¹⁸⁷ David Pratt, a fellow at Downing College, Cambridge, has observed that:

When viewed in the long term, the coronation could be seen as relatively fertile ground for ecumenism [...] On balance, therefore, room might be found for

¹⁸² The Archbishop did so on the basis that the Free Churches were not established by law.

¹⁸³ This role had formerly been undertaken by the Archbishop of Canterbury. "But his presence posed more problems than it solved," judged Roy Strong of the Moderator, "for he had no reason to be part of a ceremony installing the Supreme Governor of the Church of England" (Roy Strong, *Coronation*, pp487-88).

¹⁸⁴ *Catholic Standard and Times*, 10 April 1953. Archbishop Fernando Cento, Papal Nuncio to Belgium, represented the Holy Father, together with Monsignor Pierre Veuillot, of the Vatican Secretariate of State, and the Marquis Francesco Theodoli, colonel of the Noble Guard. The UK government also nominated two Catholic laymen who had "distinguished themselves in the service of their country" to attend the papal mission.

¹⁸⁵ [When is King Charles's coronation and how will it differ from the Queen's?](#), *The Times* (£), 22 September 2022.

¹⁸⁶ C. Buchanan, "The Next Coronation" in P. Bradshaw (ed), *Coronations, Past, Present and Future*, Cambridge: Grove Books, 1997, p41.

¹⁸⁷ Ian Bradley, *God Save the Queen: The Spiritual Heart of the Monarchy*, London: Continuum, 2012, p250. Bradley suggested a Catholic Cardinal share in the anointing with the Archbishop.

other faiths, though they would perhaps be accommodated most easily through associated ritual, rather than in the oath or the rite.¹⁸⁸

According to a report in the Mail on Sunday, the King’s desire for a “diverse” coronation ceremony, including participation by non-Christians, risked “clashing with centuries-old canon law, which bars Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and other faith leaders from reading out prayers during the service”. The religious affairs commentator Catherine Pepinster speculated that this had delayed publication “of the Coronation’s Order of Service”. According to the same newspaper, Buckingham Palace “sources” denied there was any delay.¹⁸⁹

George Pitcher, a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics and an Anglican priest, observed in response to the Mail on Sunday story that:

The truth is that his coronation service has trickily raised our constitutional anachronisms, which have been hidden in plain sight [...] But the House of Lords should be abolished and the Church of England should be disestablished. And it’s taken the coronation of the one who will be head of both to show us that. The Church and the state should be separate.¹⁹⁰

The Constitution Unit has suggested developing a new venture of “recognition” of King Charles III “outside the religious canopy”, perhaps in Westminster Hall.¹⁹¹ The National Secular Society has also called for a more “secular and inclusive coronation” for King Charles.¹⁹² The Church of England has published [Daily Prayers for the Coronation of King Charles III](#), for use between 9 April (Easter Day) and 6 May 2023.

Table 3 Coronation attendance	
Monarch	Attendance
King Edward VII (1902)	5,873
King George V (1911)	7,139
King George VI (1937)	7,606
Queen Elizabeth II (1953)	8,251

Source: Roy Strong, *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, London: HarperCollins, 2005

It has been widely reported that the UK’s Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and his wife Valerie will spend the night before the coronation as guests of the King and Queen Consort at Clarence House. Under Jewish law they are not allowed

¹⁸⁸ History & Policy website, [The deep past provides a context for King Charles’s coronation](#), 12 April 2023.

¹⁸⁹ [Charles is at odds with Church of England over what role other faiths will play in his Coronation](#), Mail on Sunday, 8 April 2023.

¹⁹⁰ [If King Charles wants a multi-faith coronation, it might be easier to disestablish the Church of England](#), Premier Christianity magazine, 13 April 2023.

¹⁹¹ See Bob Morris, [The Coronation of Charles III](#), London: The Constitution Unit, October 2022, p34.

¹⁹² National Secular Society, [NSS calls for a more secular and inclusive coronation](#), 3 November 2022.

to travel by car or to use electricity on Shabbat, the Jewish sabbath, but this means they will be able to walk to the ceremony on 6 May 2023.¹⁹³

2.8

Invitations



Those attending a coronation receive a formal invitation.¹⁹⁴ The invitation for the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla was designed by the heraldic artist Andrew Jamieson and has been printed on recycled card. According to the Royal Family's website, central to the design "is the motif of the Green Man, an ancient figure from British folklore, symbolic of spring and rebirth, to celebrate the new reign".¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ [Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis to stay with the King on coronation eve to observe Shabbat rules](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 27 October 2022.

¹⁹⁴ For images of historic coronation invitations, see [Coronation invitations through the ages](#), BBC News online, 5 April 2023.

¹⁹⁵ Royal Family website, [The Coronation Invitation](#), 4 April 2023. For analysis of the symbolism on the invitation see [King Charles's coronation invite symbolism](#), Mail Online, 5 April 2023. The folklorist Francis Young has observed that the Green Man is not "[an ancient figure from British folklore](#)" but "a made-up figure of 20th century folklore".

The invitation refers to “Queen Camilla” rather than the Queen Consort. The Times quoted a Palace source as saying that: “The coronation is an appropriate time to start using ‘Queen Camilla’ in an official capacity. All former Queen Consorts have been known as ‘Queen’ plus their first name.”¹⁹⁶

2.9

Other guests

On 8 April 2023 it was announced that King Charles and the Queen Consort had invited 850 people to their coronation ceremony in recognition of their charitable contributions. The group includes 450 British Empire Medal recipients and 400 young people from groups chosen by the Royal Family.¹⁹⁷

A full guest list for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was compiled under the authority of the Earl Marshal by Sir John Heaton-Armstrong and published in 1953 as “The coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey on 2nd June 1953: categories of peers and peeresses who received the Queen’s summons and persons who received the Queen’s invitation”.

2.10

Coronation furniture

Another aspect of coronation planning has concerned the furniture to be used in the Abbey. During the 20th century, the custom was for chairs and stools to be specially designed for those attending the ceremony. Chairs would include the monarch’s Royal cypher.¹⁹⁸ After the coronation ceremony, the chairs and stools used by the congregation were sold, with preference “given to those who occupied them”. Others were auctioned to recoup some of the costs of staging the coronation. In 1953, applications could also be made for carpets and damask frontals, with preference given to churches.¹⁹⁹ According to a report in the Daily Express newspaper, a spokeswoman for Westminster Abbey said: “At the moment our plans are just to use our normal seats for the coronation.”²⁰⁰ New Thrones (as distinct from the Coronation Chair) are usually made for a coronation. Two new chairs, for example, were made for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II: the Chair of Estate and the Throne Chair.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ [King Charles’s coronation: It’s Queen Camilla from now on](#), The Times (£), 4 April 2023.

¹⁹⁷ [King Charles coronation: Invites sent to 850 community champions](#), BBC News online, 8 April 2023.

¹⁹⁸ See Stephanie Connell Art & Antiques, [Why I Love...Coronation Furniture!](#), 23 October 2020.

¹⁹⁹ See [HL Deb 23 June 1953 Vol 183 cc1151-52 \[Sale Of Coronation Chairs And Stools\]](#)

²⁰⁰ [King to abandon 121-year-old seating tradition for cost-saving Coronation](#), Daily Express, 10 February 2023.

²⁰¹ [King Charles and Queen Consort Camilla will sit on brand new thrones at the King’s coronation in May](#), MailOnline, 5 February 2023.

2.11

Coronation merchandise

During the 20th century, coronations were accompanied by the production and sale of both authorised and unauthorised merchandise. When King Edward VIII abdicated in December 1937, a considerable number of “Coronation pottery-mugs, beakers, jugs, ashtrays-all bearing a reproduction of the head of King Edward VIII” had already been produced, although some buyers sought then “as souvenirs of the crisis”.²⁰²

In April 2023 the Royal Collection shop began selling the official “Coronation Collection” of chinaware crafted “from the finest English bone china and finished in 22 carat gold”.²⁰³

Ahead of the coronation, the Sotheby’s auction house will hold a “Coronation Sale” of historical items connected with previous coronation ceremonies.²⁰⁴ An [Official Souvenir Programme](#) for the coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla went on sale on 18 April 2023.

2.12

Orchestrating the coronation

Responsibility for coronation music rests with Westminster Abbey’s Master of Music working in collaboration with the Master of the King’s “Musick”.²⁰⁵ There is usually a full orchestra and choirs.²⁰⁶ Certain pieces are strongly associated with coronations. Frideric Handel’s “Zadok the Priest” has been performed since 1727, and Hubert Parry’s arrangement of “I was glad” since 1902.²⁰⁷

Separately, Anglican churches will mark the coronation by ringing a special peal of bells in an event called [Ring for the King – Ringing for the King’s Coronation](#).²⁰⁸ The Royal School of Church Music has also encouraged choirs to join their [Sing for the King!](#) Project.²⁰⁹

On 18 February 2023 Buckingham Palace announced details of the music to be performed at the coronation of the King and Queen Consort on 6 May. This will include 12 new commissions including a Coronation Anthem by Andrew Lloyd Webber and a Coronation March by Patrick Doyle. The Official Royal Harpist, Alis Huws, will also perform as part of the Coronation Orchestra. One of the

²⁰² The Times, 11 December 1936.

²⁰³ Royal Collection Shop website, [The Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla](#).

²⁰⁴ [Document that made Charles II king to be auctioned for £600k](#), Guardian, 6 April 2023.

²⁰⁵ Judith Weir, the first female holder of the office, was appointed for a ten-year term in 2014 (see [Judith Weir: the female music master with royal seal of approval](#), Guardian, 3 July 2014).

²⁰⁶ One of the choristers was William Wallace, since 1995 Lord Wallace of Saltaire.

²⁰⁷ See [Music played at the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey](#).

²⁰⁸ See also [King Charles coronation: ‘We want bell-ringers in every church’](#), BBC News online, 22 February 2023. According to The Times, a [“Bellringer shortage threatens a quieter coronation”](#) (17 March 2023).

²⁰⁹ UIN 126648, [Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla](#), 18 January 2023.

liturgical sections of the ceremony will be performed in Welsh, while a second item will include sections in three Celtic languages.²¹⁰

Sir John Eliot Gardiner will conduct the pre-service programme of choral music, although he told the BBC he was “not quite sure what the final makeup of the music is going to be”, adding that it would only be announced about ten days before the coronation.²¹¹

On 16 April 2023 the Palace announced six of the new commissions which will be performed at the coronation service, prior to the arrival of the King and Queen at the Abbey. These include a “King Charles III Coronation March” by the film composer Patrick Doyle and a Coronation Anthem called “Make a Joyful Noise” by Andrew Lloyd Webber.²¹²

2.13 Coronation honours

It has been the custom for the monarch to confer certain honours to mark their coronation. Those for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II were published in The Gazette on 1 June 1953.²¹³

2.14 Coronation emblem

On 10 February 2023 Buckingham Palace announced that the designer Sir Jony Ive and his creative collective, LoveFrom, had created a coronation emblem. This unifies:

the flora of the four nations of the United Kingdom; the rose of England, the thistle of Scotland, the daffodil of Wales and the shamrock of Northern Ireland. Together, the flowers create the shape of St Edward’s Crown [...] The emblem has been designed using the red, white and blue of the union flag.

The emblem will feature throughout the coronation celebrations in May 2023, on all official merchandise and across digital and social media.²¹⁴ A coronation emoji based on the St Edward’s Crown is to be featured on Twitter when certain hashtags are used.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ [Buckingham Palace announces music for the Coronation](#), Westminster Abbey website, 18 February 2023.

²¹¹ [Coronation conductor says music will reflect Britain's 'ethnic diversity and gender divide'](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 18 March 2023.

²¹² Royal Family website, [New Music Commissions for the Coronation Service at Westminster Abbey](#), 16 April 2023.

²¹³ [London Gazette, 1 June 1953](#).

²¹⁴ Royal Family website, [The Coronation Emblem](#).

²¹⁵ Royal Family website, [The Coronation Procession](#), 9 April 2023.



There is also a Canadian emblem for the coronation, “created to mark the first crowning of a Canadian monarch in 7 decades”.²¹⁶ It was designed and painted by Cathy Bursey-Sabourin, Fraser Herald at the [Canadian Heraldic Authority](#).

²¹⁶ Government of Canada, [The Canadian Coronation emblem](#), 5 April 2023.

2.15

Other coronation preparations

On 21 March 2023 the Court Circular recorded that the King and Queen Consort had visited the Royal School of Needlework at Hampton Court Palace:

Their Majesties, escorted by Dr. Susan Kay-Williams (Chief Executive, Royal School of Needlework), viewed the progress of work being undertaken for the Coronation by embroiderers and other members of Royal School of Needlework staff, before viewing displays of objects from past Coronations from the Royal School of Needlework Archive and Collection and objects from the Historic Royal Palaces Collection.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ The Times, 22 March 2021.

3

The coronation ceremony

The coronation ceremony of Queen Elizabeth II on 2 June 1953 occurred in four successive phases, each of which possessed historical symbolism:

- 1) The Recognition, which derives from the ancient procedure of recognition by the Witan, Anglo-Saxon forbear of Parliament;
- 2) The Oath, symbolising a contract between the monarch and their people(s);
- 3) The Anointing, representing a monarch's consecration by the Church of England; and
- 4) The Homage of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal (but not Members of Parliament), which is a feudal survival.

This section is based on the Order of Ceremonial from the coronations of King George V (1911),²¹⁸ King George VI (1937)²¹⁹ and Queen Elizabeth II (1953).²²⁰

3.1

Procession to the Abbey

A public (or “state”) procession of some sort has long been associated with the coronation ceremony. The present iteration, from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey, dates from 1902.

On 2 June 1953, some members of the Royal Family and representatives of other monarchies were driven in cars to the Abbey from the Palace and St James's at 08:40 and 08:50. These were followed by a carriage procession of “rulers of states under Her Majesty's protection” (for example, the Queen of Tonga²²¹ and the Sultan of Zanzibar) and then Commonwealth Prime Ministers (the first of which was Sir Winston Churchill).²²² Next came carriages with

²¹⁸ [Ceremonial of the Coronation of Their Majesties](#), Supplement to the London Gazette, 27 September 1911.

²¹⁹ [Ceremonial of the Coronation of Their Majesties](#), Supplement to the London Gazette, 10 November 1937.

²²⁰ [Ceremonial of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II](#), Supplement to the London Gazette, 20 November 1953. See also [Coronation of Her Most Sacred Majesty Queen Victoria](#), Supplement to the London Gazette, 4 July 1838.

²²¹ [Queen Sālote of Tonga refused to raise the roof of her carriage](#) for protection despite the heavy rain.

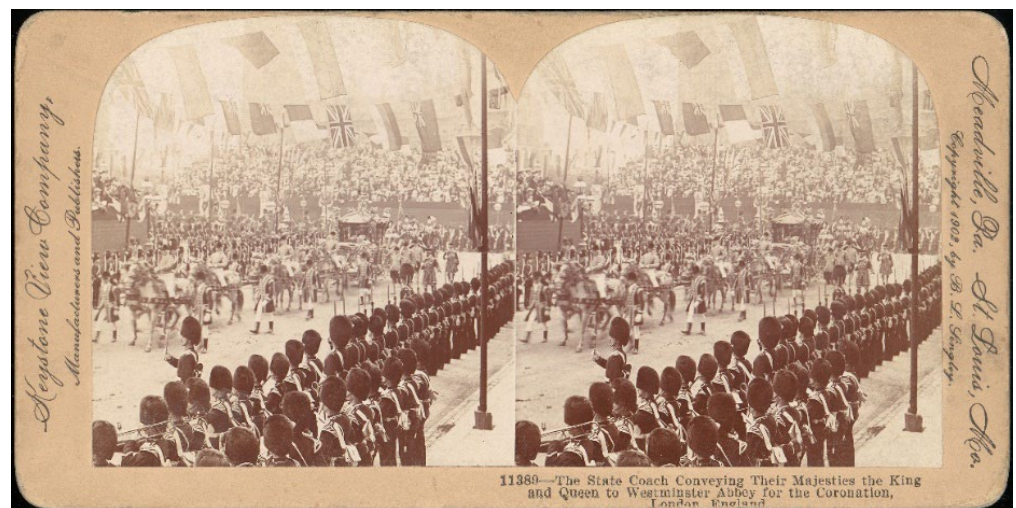
²²² The Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Viscount Brookeborough, followed the Prime Minister of Ceylon and preceded the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia. In 1937, the then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Viscount Craigavon, followed Southern Rhodesia and preceded the Amir of Transjordan and the Sultan of Zanzibar.

British Princes and Princesses “of the Blood Royal” and Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother (who departed from Clarence House).

Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh departed Buckingham Palace at 10:26 in the 1762 [Gold State Coach](#),²²³ which was drawn by eight grey horses.²²⁴ Accompanying the coach were members of the Household Cavalry, Foot Guards and the Royal Horse Artillery. Following them were representatives of the UK and Commonwealth Armed Forces.

The route to Westminster Abbey was by The Mall, Admiralty Arch, the south side of Trafalgar Square, Northumberland Avenue, Victoria Embankment, Bridge Street, the north and west sides of Parliament Square and Broad Sanctuary to the west entrance of Westminster Abbey.²²⁵

The aim of such a Procession is to allow as many people as possible to witness (part of) the coronation. In 1937 and 1953 the Ministry of Works was responsible for the erection of all public stands outside the Abbey.²²⁶



Stereograph view of the procession of Edward VII and Alexandra to the Abbey in 1902 (R. Y. Young).

In June 1953, the Lord Mayor of London also processed in his State Coach from the Mansion House to Westminster Abbey.

The Speaker of the House of Commons made a shorter drive from his parliamentary residence to the Abbey. His State Coach was “retired” in 2005 and now forms part of the National Trust Carriage Museum at Arlington Court.²²⁷ In April 2023, a House of Commons spokesperson confirmed that the

²²³ The Gold State Coach is housed at the [Royal Mews](#).

²²⁴ On the drive to the Abbey the Queen carried a coronation bouquet comprising orchids from England, stephanotis from Scotland, carnations from Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man with additional orchids from Wales. She also wore the Diamond Diadem designed for George IV’s coronation. This features roses, shamrocks and thistles (Westminster Abbey website, [Elizabeth II](#)).

²²⁵ See [Coronation Procession of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II June 2 1953](#).

²²⁶ Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign](#), p22.

²²⁷ UK Parliament website, [The Speaker’s State Coach](#). This was used at the coronations of 1902, 1911, 1937 and 1953.

“Speaker State Coach is a heritage item and will not be used in the Coronation procession”.²²⁸

In January 2023, Buckingham Palace announced that King Charles and the Queen Consort would arrive at Westminster Abbey on 6 May 2023 in “The King’s Procession”.²²⁹ On 9 April 2023, the Palace announced that the King and Queen would travel in the Diamond Jubilee State Coach, which was created for Queen Elizabeth II’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012. It will be drawn by six Windsor Greys and accompanied by The Sovereign’s Escort of the Household Cavalry. The Palace also stated that it would:

depart Buckingham Palace through the Centre Gate, and proceed down The Mall, passing through Admiralty Arch and south of King Charles I Island, down Whitehall and along Parliament Street. The King’s Procession will travel around the east and south sides of Parliament Square to Broad Sanctuary to arrive at the Sanctuary of Westminster Abbey, where the Coronation Service will begin at 11 o’clock.²³⁰

According to the BBC, the King’s Procession will feature “just under 200 members of the armed forces”. “Flanking them on either side will be over 1,000 personnel from the Army, navy and RAF who will line the route.”²³¹

The King’s Procession will be led by the Cross of Wales, a gift from the King to the Church in Wales to celebrate its centenary. This cross includes two shards of the True Cross – said to be the cross used in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ – which were given to the King by Pope Francis to mark the coronation. Crafted from recycled silver bullion provided by the Royal Mint in Llantrisant, the silver elements of the cross bear a full hallmark, including the Royal Mark (a leopard’s head), which was applied by the King during a November 2022 visit to the Goldsmiths’ Centre in London.²³²

According to The Times, the King is expected to wear the Robe of State, also known as the Parliament Robe, when he enters the Abbey: “When he leaves at the end of the service, he will wear a different mantle, the Robe of Estate, also known as the Imperial Robe.”²³³

On 4 April Buckingham Palace announced that the King and Queen would each be attended by four Pages of Honour throughout the coronation ceremony on 6 May 2023:

The King’s Pages of Honour will be His Royal Highness Prince George of Wales, Lord Oliver Cholmondeley, Master Nicholas Barclay and Master Ralph Tollemache. The Queen Consort’s Pages of Honour will be Her Majesty’s

²²⁸ [Coronation carriage canned for Speaker Hoyle](#), Spectator Coffee House blog, 10 April 2023.

²²⁹ Royal Family website, [Coronation Weekend plans announced](#), 21 January 2023.

²³⁰ Royal Family website, [The Coronation Procession](#), 9 April 2023.

²³¹ [King’s coronation: Thousands from armed forces to take part](#), BBC News online, 16 April 2023.

²³² [The parts Wales will play in king Charles’ coronation](#), Wales Online, 18 April 2023. Upon its return, the cross will be shared between the Anglican and Catholic churches in Wales.

²³³ [King Charles’s coronation: It’s Queen Camilla from now on](#), The Times (£), 4 April 2023.

grandsons, Master Gus and Master Louis Lopes and Master Freddy Parker Bowles, and Her Majesty's great-nephew, Master Arthur Elliot.²³⁴

On 23 April 2023, the Government published guidance regarding how members of the public could watch the processions in London in person, or visit the screening sites at Hyde Park, The Green Park and St James's Park.²³⁵

3.2

Procession inside the Abbey

These were the timings for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in May 1953:

08:30 The doors of Westminster Abbey are closed to all guests who did not form part of the Procession. Thereafter, those in the Procession enter the Abbey via the Peers' or Royal Entrances.

09:55 The regalia is transferred from the High Altar to a table in the vestibule of the annexe.²³⁶ The Great Officers of State and the peers appointed by the Queen to bear the regalia (crown, orb, sceptre etc.), as well as Archbishops and Bishops and others appointed to take part in the Procession, assemble in the annexe near the west door of the Abbey.²³⁷

10:38 The regalia is delivered by the Comptroller of the Lord Chamberlain's Office to the Lord Great Chamberlain, and by him to peers appointed to bear it in procession.

11:00 The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh arrive at the Royal Entrance to the Abbey where they are met by the Earl Marshal, Great Officers of State and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York

11:15 The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh join the Procession in the vestibule and, entering by the west door of the Abbey, proceed in State through the nave and the choir to the Chair of Estate located close to the altar.

The Procession was led by the Abbey beadle, who was followed by the chaplains, representatives of the Free Churches in England and Wales,²³⁸ the Moderator and two ex-Moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of

²³⁴ Royal Family website, [A new photograph of The King and The Queen Consort](#), 4 April 2023.

²³⁵ Department for Culture, Media & Sport, [How to watch the Coronation and processions \(Saturday 6 May\)](#), 23 April 2023.

²³⁶ Since the reign of Charles II, the crowns and other regalia to be used in the coronation ceremony are brought from the Tower of London to the [Jerusalem Chamber](#) at the Abbey the evening before and placed in charge of the Dean of Westminster.

²³⁷ As in 1937, this was a temporary structure. That in 1953 was designed by Eric Bedford and [featured models of the ten Queen's Beasts on its exterior](#): the Lion of England, the Griffin of Edward III, the Falcon of the Plantagenets, the black Bull of Clarence, the white Lion of Mortimer, the Beaufort Yale, the white greyhound of Richmond, the red Dragon of Wales, the Unicorn of Scotland and the white Horse of Hanover (Westminster Abbey website, [Elizabeth II](#)).

²³⁸ These were the Congregational Union of England and Wales, the Presbyterian Church of England, the Baptist Union, the Methodist Conference and the Free Church Federal Council.

Scotland, the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and Officers of the Orders of Knighthood.

4 The regalia

Edward the Confessor (1042-66), who deposited his Royal ornaments for safekeeping at Westminster Abbey, may have been the first monarch to assemble a regalia. This has been replaced or altered over the succeeding centuries. Much of it was destroyed, for example, on the orders of Oliver Cromwell in 1649 but remade for Charles II's coronation in 1661 (including the Orb and the St Edward's Crown).²³⁹

New sets of regalia were made in 1685 and 1689 for the crowning of the Queen Consort (Mary of Modena) and Queen Mary II respectively. New crowns were also made for Queen Mary in 1911 and Queen Elizabeth in 1937. After 1702, the regalia was usually set with jewels hired for the coronation only. In the interim, the Imperial State Crown would be set with coloured jewels for use at the State Opening of Parliament.

Two Royal maces, three swords (representing Mercy, Spiritual Justice and Temporal Justice), the Great Sword of State (symbolising the Sovereign's Royal authority) and St Edward's Staff (dating from 1661) also form part of the regalia used in coronation ceremonies, as do the spurs (representing knighthood and chivalry), the jewelled Sword of Offering (dating from 1820) and the Armill (gold bracelets representing sincerity and wisdom).²⁴⁰

The Sovereign's Orb (which represents Christian sovereignty) is placed in the monarch's right hand and later returned to the altar. The coronation ring (representing kingly dignity) is placed on the Sovereign's right hand. After that, the Sceptre with the Cross symbolises the Sovereign's temporal power under the Cross, while the Sceptre with Dove – or Rod of Equity and Mercy – symbolises the Sovereign's spiritual role.

The climax comes when the Archbishop of Canterbury places the St Edward's Crown on the Sovereign's head. This is only worn by a monarch once. On the way out of the Abbey, a newly crowned King or Queen will wear the Imperial State Crown (which was remade for George VI in 1937). The United Kingdom is the only European monarchy which still uses its regalia for the consecration ceremony of a sovereign's crowning.²⁴¹

Next came Standards borne by former Governors-General of the then Commonwealth Realms.²⁴² These were followed by the Union Standard, that of

²³⁹ [St Edward's Crown: a Restoration gift from Parliament](#), History of Parliament website, 30 March 2023.

²⁴⁰ Queen Elizabeth II was given new Armill by the Commonwealth for her coronation in 1953.

²⁴¹ Royal Family website, [The Crown Jewels](#). Belgium and the Netherlands have never had a coronation ceremony; Denmark, Norway and Sweden discontinued theirs from 1840, 1908 and 1873 respectively, and there have been no Spanish coronations since the medieval period.

²⁴² Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Pakistan, the Union of South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Canada.

the Principality of Wales, Standards of the Quarterings of the Royal Arms (England, Scotland and Ireland) and finally the Royal Standard.²⁴³

Following the standard bearers were members of the Royal Household and the Keeper of the Jewel House, who bore a cushion with the coronation ring, Armill and sword. Next were the Knights of the Garter appointed to hold the canopy for the Queen's anointing, the Lord Privy Seal and the Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth. Then processed the Lord Chancellor, the Archbishop of Canterbury (with his Cross), English Heralds, Lord Lyon King of Arms, the Duke of Edinburgh (in the uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet), some of the Duke's household and more English Heralds.

The Royal regalia was carried into the Abbey by the appointed peers, interspersed with Irish and Scottish Heralds and English and Scottish Great Officers of State. At this stage, any coronets belonging to those in procession were carried (by pages) rather than worn.

Finally, the Queen – flanked by the Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Bishop of Durham²⁴⁴ – closed the procession into the Abbey, her train borne by the Mistress of the Robes and six assistants.

When the Queen reached the area of the “Theatre” near the altar, she made her private devotions (including kneeling at her faldstool) and then sat in her Chair of Estate. The Abbey choristers sang the anthem “I was glad” and the Queen's Scholars of Westminster School acclaimed the monarch “in the customary manner”.²⁴⁵

The peers bearing the regalia (except those carrying the swords) presented each item to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in turn delivered them to the Dean of Westminster. He then laid them upon the altar.²⁴⁶

3.3 The Recognition

The first part of the 1953 coronation was the presentation of the monarch to “the people”. This was the responsibility of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, accompanied by the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Lord High Constable (of England), the Earl Marshal and preceded by Garter King of Arms, presented the Queen to those on the east, south, west and north sides of the Theatre. At each presentation, the people signified their

²⁴³ Before the entrance to the choir, the standards were handed to the Barons of the Cinque Ports, who then continued in Procession to the Theatre.

²⁴⁴ To whom this privilege has been accorded since 1189.

²⁴⁵ On 6 May 2023, the King's Scholars of Westminster School will proclaim the traditional “Vivat” acclamations.

²⁴⁶ In 1911 George V and Queen Mary presented new hangings to the Abbey for the High Altar which are still in use. The frontal is made of cream white damask silk with an embroidered Crucifixion scene in the centre flanked by angels holding shields with the Royal arms and coat of arms of [St Edward the Confessor](#). The dorsal, for the back of the altar, shows figures of St Edward and the Pilgrim with kneeling images of the king and queen (Westminster Abbey website, [George V](#)).

“recognition and joy” with a loud acclamation of “God Save Queen Elizabeth” (trumpets also sounded after each recognition). The Queen then returned to her Chair of Estate and the Archbishop to the altar.

On 6 May 2023, fanfares will be played by the State Trumpeters of the Household Cavalry and the Fanfare Trumpeters of the Royal Air Force.²⁴⁷

3.4

The Coronation Oath

The Coronation Oath is a legal obligation although its taking is “neither a prerequisite to the accession to the Crown nor to provision of the royal assent”.²⁴⁸ King Edward VIII, for example, but did not take the Coronation Oath but discharged Royal functions during his 325-day reign. In 1996, the then Prime Minister John Major said ministers “would not advise Her Majesty to sign into law any provision which contradicted Her Oath”.²⁴⁹

[Section IV](#) of the Coronation Oath Act 1688 provides that the Oath shall be administered (read) to the monarch by the Archbishop of Canterbury or York or another Bishop appointed by the King and Queen for that purpose and “in the Presence of all Persons that shall be Attending Assisting or otherwise present at such their respective Coronations”.

At her coronation on 2 June 1953, Queen Elizabeth II responded to the following questions “ministered” by the Archbishop of Canterbury:

Archbishop: Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the Peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan, and Ceylon, and of your Possessions and the other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, according to their respective laws and customs?

Queen: I solemnly promise so to do.

Archbishop. Will you to your power cause Law and Justice, in Mercy, to be executed in all your judgements?

Queen: I Will.

Archbishop. Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law? Will you maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established in England? And will you preserve unto the Bishops and Clergy of England, and to the Churches there committed to their charge, all

²⁴⁷ [Buckingham Palace announces music for the Coronation](#), Westminster Abbey website, 18 February 2023.

²⁴⁸ See Graeme Watt, [The Coronation Oath](#).

²⁴⁹ [HC Deb 15 Oct 1996 Vol 282 c587](#). Ministers had done so in the past, for example legislation disestablishing the Church in Ireland.

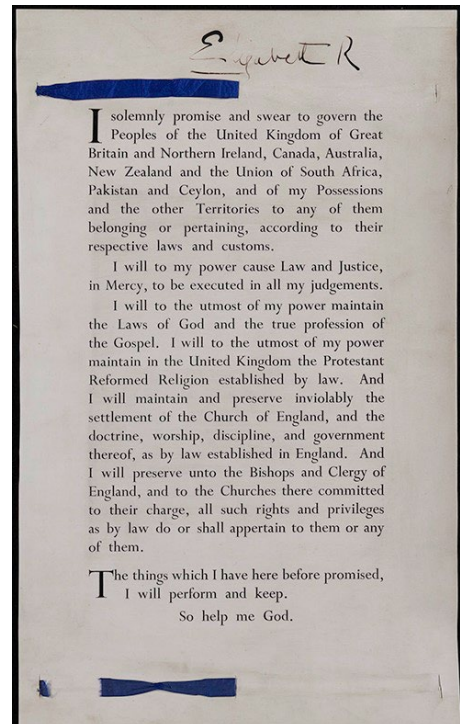
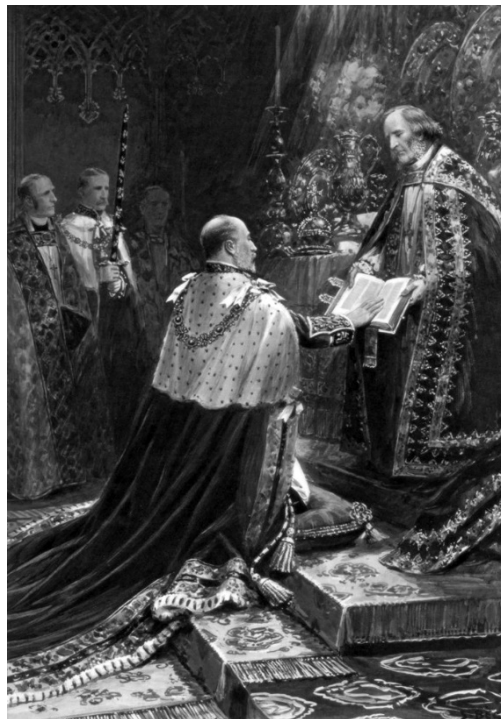
such rights and privileges, as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them?

Queen: All this I promise to do.

Then the Queen rose from her Chair of Estate and, with the Sword of State carried before her, proceeded to the altar where, kneeling and laying her right hand on the Holy Gospel in the great Bible²⁵⁰ (tendered by the Archbishop) she took the Coronation Oath:

The things which I have here before promised, I will perform and keep. So help me God.

The Queen kissed the Bible and applied the Royal Sign Manual (her signature) to a transcript of the Oath. She then returned to her Chair of Estate as the Bible was delivered to the Dean of Westminster.²⁵¹



King Edward VII taking his Coronation Oath in 1902 and a signed copy of Queen Elizabeth II's Oath from 1953 (Document reference: The National Archives, ref. C57/17)

Until and including the 1937 coronation, the Bible was presented to the monarch by the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1953, however, the Moderator of

²⁵⁰ In 1953, the Holy Bible was specially bound by the firm of Sangorski & Sutcliffe in red goatskin with cream inlay, tooled in gold and black, and was designed by Lynton Lamb. The cover features a pattern of ER cyphers and crowns, around the central lozenge of the Queen's coat of arms.

²⁵¹ Royal Family website, [The Queen's Coronation Oath, 1953](#). The journalist and Herald Dermot Morrah inaccurately claimed "there was scarcely any allusion in the ceremony of 1953 to the fact that Elizabeth II was Queen of seven distinct and sovereign realms [...] indeed, she was crowned not even as Queen of the United Kingdom, but of England alone" (Dermot Morrah, *The Work of the Queen*, London: William Kimber, 1958, p132).

the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Archbishop received it from the Dean at the altar and then presented it jointly to the Queen:

First the Archbishop said ‘Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords.’ The Moderator continued ‘Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God’.²⁵²

Having received it, the Queen handed the Bible back to the Moderator who brought it to the Dean who “reverently placed it again upon the Altar”.

There was speculation in 1994 that the Coronation Oath might be further amended at the next coronation to meet the then Prince of Wales’ “vision of his spiritual role as ‘Defender of the Faith’”. Others suggested the inclusion of a “supplementary declaration affirming the Prince’s belief in the divinity of other religions”.²⁵³ More recently, the Constitution Unit has suggested possible amendments to the Coronation Oath.²⁵⁴ According to a report in the Daily Telegraph, the Oath itself will not be changed but a “form of words” added (either before or after the Oath) which will “allow the King to recognise his commitment to the multiple faiths of a diverse Britain”.²⁵⁵

In a letter to the Guardian, the author Anthony Holden suggested the coronation could cause a “constitutional crisis” because of the King’s earlier “confession of adultery”:

The late Robert Runcie, when archbishop of Canterbury, told me that this would require a revision of the coronation oath, which in turn would require a new statute of parliament. Given the convention that parliament does not debate the monarchy without the monarch’s consent [...] this would require the prime minister of the day to seek King Charles III’s permission to debate whether or not it felt able to crown him. This, Runcie told me, would amount to a constitutional crisis. It seems hard to disagree.²⁵⁶

Constitutional experts, however, dismissed Holden’s claim. Sir Vernon Bogdanor observed that the wedding of the King and Queen Consort had been followed by a service led by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams:

It is clear that the King has obeyed the rules of the Church [of England]. Rowan Williams is, I think, in a better position to interpret the rules of the Church than Anthony Holden.²⁵⁷

²⁵² Westminster Abbey website, [Elizabeth II](#).

²⁵³ See Jonathan Dimbleby, *The Prince of Wales: A Biography*, London: Little, Brown, 1994, p533.

²⁵⁴ See Robert Hazell and Bob Morris, [Swearing in the New King: The Accession and Coronation Oaths](#), London: The Constitution Unit, October 2022, pp31-32.

²⁵⁵ [King Charles to recognise all faiths at his coronation](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 12 December 2022. The same article claimed there was “not enough time” for legislation altering the Coronation Oath ahead of the King’s coronation.

²⁵⁶ [King Charles’s coronation must reflect a changed Britain](#), Guardian, 29 December 2022.

²⁵⁷ [Experts play down Coronation crisis fears](#), Mail on Sunday, 31 December 2022.

In response to a written question in the House of Lords, Baroness Neville-Rolfe stated on 17 April 2023 that the “text of the [Coronation] Oath will be published in due course and Parliament will be updated on any changes to the wording”.²⁵⁸

In a written statement on 19 April 2023, Oliver Dowden, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, said some “updating to the wording of the oath is required to reflect the current position as regards the Realms and Territories”. As their “number” had “evolved” since 1953, the King will refer to these “collectively” rather than individually, as in 1937 and 1953. Mr Dowden added that:

As Churchill set out, the position was considered carefully in both 1937 and 1953; and it has been again for HM The King’s coronation. I propose to follow the same approach as then, that no express legislative authority is required to make the changes on the basis that they are to ensure consistency with the position regarding the Realms and Territories, as reflected in legislation. This follows the clear and consistent approach taken in 1953 as per the statement given by the then Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill.²⁵⁹

The Accession Declaration Oath

If the Accession Declaration Oath has not already been taken by a new Sovereign at their first State Opening of Parliament, then it is required by law to be taken at their coronation, usually after the Coronation Oath.²⁶⁰

Originally required under the Test Act to make clear a monarch’s opposition to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, it was first included in the coronation ceremony for Queen Anne in 1702. She took it after the sermon (later abolished) and before her Coronation Oath.

After King Edward VII expressed opposition to taking an oath which included language offensive to many of his subjects, it was significantly amended by the [Accession Declaration Oath Act 1910](#). It now states that:

I [here insert the name of the Sovereign] do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God profess, testify, and declare that I am a faithful Protestant, and that I will, according to the true intent of the enactments which secure the Protestant succession to the Throne of my Realm, uphold and maintain the said enactments to the best of my powers according to law.²⁶¹

Only King George VI has taken the amended oath at his coronation ceremony.²⁶² George V, Edward VIII and Elizabeth II all took theirs at their first State Opening of Parliament.²⁶³ As a State Opening is not due to take place

²⁵⁸ [UIN HL7075, 30 March 2023 \[Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla\]](#)

²⁵⁹ [Statement UIN HCWS727, 19 April 2023 \[The Coronation Oath\]](#)

²⁶⁰ See the [Bill of Rights 1688](#). If a State Opening takes place after a monarch’s accession but before their coronation, then by convention the Imperial State Crown is present but not worn (see [An uncrowned monarch and a state opening](#), The House magazine, 2 December 2022).

²⁶¹ See the [Schedule](#) to Accession Declaration Act 1910.

²⁶² See [London Gazette, 10 November 1937](#).

²⁶³ A Regent appointed under the [Regency Act 1937](#) is [required to take an oath](#) which combines the three statutory oaths (Scottish, Accession Declaration and Coronation) to “maintain and preserve in England and in Scotland the Settlement of the true Protestant religion”.

until later in 2023, then Charles III will take his Accession Declaration Oath at his coronation on 6 May 2023.

3.5

The Anointing

Following the Creed, a hymn and the prayer of Consecration in 1953, the choir began Handel's anthem "Zadok the Priest".²⁶⁴ While this was being sung, the Queen was "divested" of her crimson robe, Diadem and Collar of the Garter and instead put on a gown of white for her Anointing. This took place with the Queen sitting on King Edward's Chair (the Coronation Chair).²⁶⁵

With this aspect of the coronation ceremony considered sacred (and, therefore, not filmed),²⁶⁶ four Knights of the Garter held a canopy of gold cloth above the Queen during the Anointing. The oil had earlier been consecrated by the Bishop of Gloucester. The recipe is secret but contains oils of orange flowers, roses, jasmine, cinnamon, musk, civet and ambergris.²⁶⁷

The Dean, having brought from the Altar the Ampulla and the Anointing Spoon, poured into the Spoon some of the holy oil: and the Archbishop anointed the Queen therewith, in the form of a cross.²⁶⁸

The Knights of the Garter then withdrew the canopy, the Queen rose and proceeded to a faldstool placed between the altar and King Edward's Chair and knelt as the Archbishop pronounced the Blessing. The Queen then returned to the Coronation Chair.

A former Dean of Westminster has observed that:

At its heart, the anointing of the Sovereign, and clothing with priestly garments that precede the coronation itself, resemble the ordination of a priest or the consecration of a bishop.²⁶⁹

According to the Daily Telegraph, the canopy for the coronation of King Charles III will be made by the Royal School of Needlework. The same report speculated that an alternative canopy with a "see-through top" might be

²⁶⁴ This was composed by George Frideric Handel for the coronation of King George II in 1727 and has been performed at the ceremony ever since.

²⁶⁵ For more on coronation robes, see [King Charles III's sacred Coronation robes revealed](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 16 February 2023.

²⁶⁶ Newsreel footage in 1937 showed the canopy in a wide shot; in 1953 a fixed shot of the High Altar was shown during the Anointing.

²⁶⁷ Under the authority of the Surgeon-Apothecary, the oil for the 1953 coronation was made up at Savory and Moore Ltd by J.D. Jamieson, to a formula devised by Peter Squire (Westminster Abbey website, [Elizabeth II](#)). Usually, a batch was made to last a few coronations, but in May 1941 a bomb hit the Deanery and destroyed the phial, so a new batch was made.

²⁶⁸ Head, breast and hands. The Ampulla is a golden eagle flask which holds the holy oil, while the spoon is the oldest piece in the regalia, probably made for Henry II or Richard I.

²⁶⁹ John Hall, *Queen Elizabeth and Her Church: Royal Service at Westminster Abbey*, London: Continuum, 2012, p2.

used, allowing the anointing to be broadcast for the first time.²⁷⁰ According to The Times, Palace sources confirmed on 13 April that this would not be used.²⁷¹

New oil for the coronation of the King and Queen Consort has been produced using olives harvested from two groves on the Mount of Olives, one being the Monastery of Mary Magdalene (the burial place of the King's grandmother, Princess Alice of Greece). The oil was perfumed with essential oils – sesame, rose, jasmine, cinnamon, neroli, benzoin and amber – as well as orange blossom. It was then consecrated at a special ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.²⁷²

In a foreword to the official coronation Souvenir Programme, the Archbishop of Canterbury confirmed that the anointing would be “the only part of the ceremony the public will not see”:

In the midst of this glorious spectacle is a moment of stillness and simplicity [...] it is a private moment between a new King and the King of Kings [...] the King is set apart for service: service of the people of this country and service of God. This is why at this moment he will exchange robes of status and honour for a simple white shirt [...] even as King, he is one of the people, and that even if he has a particular role to fulfil, he shares in our human frailties and vulnerabilities. In its simplicity, the anointing is the only route towards bearing power and responsibility well: asking for God's help in the task and accepting its responsibility.²⁷³

The Investiture

Having risen from her chair, the Queen was helped to remove her gown of white before she was “invested” (dressed) with the Colobium Sindonis (a loose linen-lawn garment), the Supertunica (a golden cloth robe) and finally the Girdle.²⁷⁴

The Lord Great Chamberlain then presented the Spurs to the Queen, who “laid her hand upon them in token of acceptance”, after which the Sword for the Offering was delivered in its scabbard by the Archbishop of York. The Queen then rose and offered the Sword to the Dean at the altar before returning to the Coronation Chair. The peer who had first received the Sword then symbolically redeemed it for the sum of one hundred shillings.

Next came the Armill (golden bracelets of sincerity and wisdom), which the Archbishop placed upon the Queen's wrists. Upon rising, she was invested with the Stole and the Pallium, with the Lord Great Chamberlain fastening the clasps of the Robe. The Queen then resumed her seat.

²⁷⁰ [Most sacred part of the King's Coronation could be caught on camera for first time in history](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 30 January 2023.

²⁷¹ [King Charles's coronation: TV cameras will not show anointing](#), The Times (£), 13 April 2023.

²⁷² [The consecration of the Coronation Oil](#), Royal Family website, 3 March 2023.

²⁷³ [Justin Welby: King's anointing is 'moment of stillness' at coronation](#), The Times (£), 18 April 2023.

²⁷⁴ Up until Queen Victoria's coronation in 1838, new robes were provided; George V and his successors all wore the same robes.

The Archbishop delivered the Orb into the Queen's right hand, after which she gave it back to the Dean for placing upon the altar. The Ring was then placed on the fourth finger of her right hand, over which was placed the [Coronation Glove](#) presented by Lord Woolton. Finally, the Sceptre and the Rod were delivered into the Queen's right and left hands by the Archbishop.

The crowning

After saying the prayer of Benediction, the Archbishop – accompanied by the Archbishop of York and other Bishops – went before the Queen as the Dean brought the St Edward's Crown from the altar, after which the Archbishop of Canterbury "reverently placed it upon Her Majesty's head".²⁷⁵ At this sight those in the Abbey cried "with loud and repeated acclamations": "God Save the Queen." The time was 12:37.

The Queen having been crowned, the Princes, Princesses, peers and peeresses present put "on their coronets and caps of estate, and the Kings of Arms their crowns". Trumpets sounded and, by a signal given, the great guns of the Tower of London and those in Hyde Park were fired. The Archbishop said a prayer beginning with the words "God crown you with a crown of glory and righteousness" and then the choir sang the anthem "Be strong and of a good courage". Finally, the Archbishop pronounced the Benediction, the Archbishop of York and others present "following every part of it with a loud and hearty Amen".

The word coronation comes from the Latin "corona", meaning a crown, "but monarchs are described as being crowned, rather than coronated".²⁷⁶

The crowning takes place on the Cosmati Pavement, an elaborate Italian mosaic laid in 1268. At the coronations of Elizabeth II in 1953 and her father George VI in 1937, the pavement was covered by red felt, but according to The Times, King Charles III "will be crowned sitting in the Coronation Chair, which will rest on a low-stepped dais above the centre circle of the ancient floor in front of the High Altar". In other words, the pavement will be uncovered.²⁷⁷

According to the BBC, gun salutes will be sounded from firing stations in 13 locations including Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast at the moment the King is crowned on 6 May 2023.²⁷⁸

The enthronement

With the Sword of State before her, the Queen rose from the Coronation Chair and ascended the steps of her Throne:

²⁷⁵ In 1902, Edward VII could not be crowned with the St Edward's Crown as he was ill and could not sustain its weight.

²⁷⁶ [A guide to coronations](#), Westminster Abbey website.

²⁷⁷ See [Cosmati Pavement: shoes off for a treasure of the coronation](#), The Times (£), 24 March 2023.

²⁷⁸ [King's coronation: Thousands from armed forces to take part](#), BBC News online, 16 April 2023.

The Queen, having come to her Throne, was then lifted up into it by the Archbishops, the Bishops, and the other Peers, who thereafter stood round about the steps of the Throne; and the Archbishop, standing before the Queen, pronounced the Exhortation beginning with the words “Stand firm, and holdfast”.

3.6

The Homage

Finally, the Queen delivered the Sceptre and Rod to their respective bearers and removed the Coronation Glove from her right hand so that the Archbishop could kneel before her, place his hands between hers and pronounce his words of Fealty.²⁷⁹ The other Lords Spiritual (bishops with seats in the House of Lords) also knelt and said their words of Fealty at the same time. The Archbishop then kissed the Queen’s right hand and retired.

Next, peers of the realm paid homage. Prior to the 1902 coronation, every peer did so individually, which took some time. Since (and including) 1902, only the senior peer in each order of the peerage has paid homage.²⁸⁰

Homage is paid in order of seniority, so if there is a Prince of Wales (which there was not in 1937 or 1953), he goes first. At the coronation of George V in 1911, the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIII) knelt before his father and recited the words:

I Edward Prince of Wales 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.²⁸¹

The Prince of Wales then rose, touched the Crown upon the King’s head and kissed him on the left cheek.²⁸²

In 1953, the most senior peer present was the Duke of Edinburgh. He took off his coronet, ascended the steps of the Throne, knelt before the Queen, placed his hands between hers and pronounced his words of Homage. He then rose, touched the Crown upon the Queen’s head, kissed her left cheek and withdrew. He was followed by the Dukes of Gloucester and Kent, both cousins of the Queen.

Then the senior peer present of each “degree” (Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, Viscounts and Barons) took off their coronets and paid homage in like manner, and the “other Peers of his Degree, taking off their coronets and kneeling in their places, said their words of Homage with him”. The senior peer then touched the Crown and kissed the Queen’s right hand before retiring.

²⁷⁹ This resembles the act of a newly appointed bishop or archbishop (see Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP8886, [The relationship between church and state in the United Kingdom](#), p21).

²⁸⁰ [When is King Charles’s coronation and how will it differ from the Queen’s?](#), The Times (£), 22 September 2022.

²⁸¹ These words are also recited at the investiture ceremony for a Prince of Wales, as in 1911 and 1969.

²⁸² Harold Nicolson, *King George V: His Life and Reign*, London: Constable, 1952, p146.

At the conclusion of the Homage in 1953, the Queen again received into her hands the Sceptre and the Rod from their respective bearers. While the Homage was being performed, Anthems were sung by the choir, “and when it was ended, the drums beat, the trumpets sounded, and all the people shouted crying out: God Save Queen Elizabeth, Long Live Queen Elizabeth, May the Queen Live For Ever.”

MPs have never paid Homage at a coronation ceremony. During planning for the 1953 service, Clement Attlee, the former Labour Prime Minister, suggested at a February 1953 meeting of the Coronation Committee that the Speaker of the House of Commons do so after the peers to represent “the common man”. This idea was dismissed on the basis that it was by then too late to consult members of the Commonwealth.²⁸³ There were concerns that if only the UK Speaker and one or two others from Commonwealth Realms paid Homage, then “lack of unity in this part of ceremony would be brought into conspicuous and undesirable prominence”.²⁸⁴

According to a report in the Sunday Times, the Prince of Wales (Prince William) will be the only Royal Duke who will pay homage at the coronation of Charles III on 6 May 2023.²⁸⁵ Most hereditary peers were removed from Parliament under the [House of Lords Act 1999](#).²⁸⁶

3.7

Queen Consort

If a Queen Consort is to be crowned alongside a King, then this has taken place after the Homage. Male consorts of a Queen Regnant are not crowned. In a simpler ceremony, a Queen Consort is anointed, crowned and enthroned but is not required to take an oath. This last occurred in 1937 for Queen Elizabeth, the consort of King George VI (later Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother).

After the Homage, Queen Elizabeth rose from her Chair of Estate and went to the steps of the altar. There she knelt while the Archbishop of Canterbury said a prayer and four peeresses held aloft canopy of gold cloth:

The Archbishop poured the holy Oil [...] upon her head, saying, “In the Name of the Father,” &c. Then the Archbishop received from the Keeper of the Jewel House the Queen’s Ring, and put the same on the fourth finger of Her Majesty’s right hand, saying, “Receive this Ring,” &c. The Archbishop then took the Crown from the Altar and reverently set it on the Queen’s head, saying, “Receive the Crown of glory,” &c. Her Majesty having been crowned, the

²⁸³ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p428.

²⁸⁴ [The Coronation Service](#), 17 February 1953, CAB 129/59/18, London: National Archives.

²⁸⁵ [William knows he’s a punchbag for Harry – he’s silent but burning inside](#), Sunday Times (£), 8 January 2023.

²⁸⁶ But not the Earl Marshal, who organises the coronation.

Princesses and Peeresses put on their coronets, which they continued to wear until they left the Abbey.²⁸⁷

Princess Elizabeth (the future Queen Elizabeth II) was struck by this moment: “When Mummy was crowned and all the peeresses put on their coronets, it looked wonderful to see arms and coronets hovering in the air and then the arms disappear as if by magic.”²⁸⁸ The Archbishop received from the Dean:

the Sceptre with the Cross and the Ivory Rod with the Dove, and placed the Sceptre with the Cross in Her Majesty’s right hand and the Ivory Rod with the Dove in her left, saying the Prayer, “O Lord, the giver of all perfection;” &c. The Queen then rose, and, supported and attended as before, ascended the Theatre (reverently bowing to His Majesty as she passed the Throne), and was conducted to her own Throne on the left of that of the King.²⁸⁹

According to the Sunday Times, in a “break with tradition, the Queen will be crowned alongside the King” on 6 May 2023.²⁹⁰ According to a report in The Times, the Queen Consort’s five grandchildren will carry her canopy rather than four duchesses.²⁹¹

On 14 February 2023, the Palace announced that Queen Mary’s Crown was to be used for the coronation of the Queen Consort at Westminster Abbey. This was commissioned and worn by Queen Mary at her coronation (alongside George V) in 1911. It is the first time a Consort’s crown has been re-used since the 18th century. In a statement, the Palace said that “in the interests of sustainability and efficiency”, the Crown Jeweller would remove four of the Crown’s eight detachable arches and reset it with the Cullinan III, IV and V diamonds. These diamonds were part of Queen Elizabeth II’s personal jewellery collection.²⁹²

The Consort’s crown used by Queen Elizabeth in May 1937 was made for Queen Alexandra, into which she placed the Koh-i-Noor diamond.²⁹³

²⁸⁷ The Queen’s ring had previously been worn by Queen Adelaide, Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary.

²⁸⁸ William Shawcross, *Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother*, London: Macmillan, 2009, p403.

²⁸⁹ [London Gazette, 10 November 1937](#). The sceptre and rod were both made for Queen Mary of Modena, wife of James VI and I.

²⁹⁰ [The three-day coronation with pomp, pageantry and Camilla crowned too](#), Sunday Times (£), 21 January 2023.

²⁹¹ [Camilla’s grandchildren to star in King’s blended family coronation](#), The Times (£), 25 February 2023.

²⁹² Royal Family website, [Queen Mary’s Crown is removed from display at the Tower of London ahead of the Coronation](#), 14 February 2023.

²⁹³ The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, has said that any plans for the Queen Consort to wear the Koh-i-noor at her coronation would bring back “[painful memories of the colonial past](#)”.

3.8

The departure

The Communion

Following the Homage in 1953, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh took Holy Communion,²⁹⁴ after which the Queen put her Crown back on and again received into her hands the Sceptre and the Rod.²⁹⁵ She sat in her Throne and the Duke of Edinburgh in his Chair of Estate. The choir sang the “Gloria”, the congregation knelt and the Archbishop pronounced the Blessing. The congregation then stood as the choir sang the “Te Deum”.

The Recess

Finally, the Queen descended from her Throne, crowned and carrying the Sceptre and the Rod in her hands, and entered St Edward’s Chapel at 13:28. She delivered to the Archbishop the Sceptre and the Rod, which were laid upon the altar, followed by the St Edward’s Crown. The Queen was then disrobed and other vestments removed. Meanwhile, the Dean laid upon the altar the Orb, Spurs and St Edward’s Staff.

Preceded by four Sword bearers, the bearers of the regalia then left the Chapel and took their places in the Procession being formed in the Church. This was formed in the same order as that on entering the Abbey, except that the Bishops who had carried the Bible, the Chalice, and the Paten, the Moderator of the General Assembly and the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, remained in the Sacramentary, and the representatives of the Church of Scotland and of the Free Churches, the Domestic Chaplains and the Chaplains, remained in their seats.

The four Swords were carried before the Queen and received near the west door of the Abbey by the Keeper of the Jewel House. Peers and peeresses wore their coronets and Kings of Arms their crowns. Now wearing the Imperial State Crown (which is lighter to wear), the Queen again received the Sceptre and the Orb from the Archbishop and, at a signal given by the Earl Marshal, the Procession moved forward: “and the Queen, leaving Saint Edward’s Chapel, whilst all assembled sang the National Anthem, proceeded in State, supported as before, through the Choir and the Nave to the West Door of the Church”. Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother and other members of the Royal Family then processed from the Royal Gallery to the west door of the Abbey.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ As with the Anointing, this was considered private and was not filmed in 1937 and 1953. In 1937, the King and Queen Elizabeth “removed their crowns and received Holy Communion, probably the most moving and sacred moment of the tumultuous day for them both” (William Shawcross, Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother: The Official Biography, p403).

²⁹⁵ During the Communion, “an Ingot or Wedge of Gold of a pound weight” was delivered to the Queen by the Lord Great Chamberlain and then placed upon the altar.

²⁹⁶ The Queen Mother’s Mistress of the Robes’ train was borne by [Lord James Douglas-Hamilton](#), later a Conservative Party MP, life peer and Member of the Scottish Parliament.

3.9

Projecting the coronation

Coronations were not photographed until the early 20th century when Sir Benjamin Stone, an MP and amateur photographer, took the first image during that of George V. The King and Queen Mary were also [photographed after the service wearing their coronation robes](#). The photographer Cecil Beaton captured a memorable photograph of [Queen Elizabeth II wearing her coronation robes and regalia in 1953](#).

According to the Sunday Times newspaper, Hugo Burnand will act as the official photographer at the coronation of King Charles III and the Queen Consort on 6 May 2023.²⁹⁷

The 1902 coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra was recreated for a silent French newsreel.²⁹⁸ Only in May 1937 was the BBC allowed to broadcast George VI's coronation service on radio. Research by the historian Edward Owens found that producers carefully selected the commentary team to include English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh voices. They were also told not to use the term "English" when they could use "British".²⁹⁹



George V shortly before his Anointing (Sir Benjamin Stone).

When the Cabinet announced in the autumn of 1952 that television cameras would not be permitted to transmit the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, the resulting public outcry later forced it to agree that all but the anointing and the communion (as in 1937) could be broadcast. It is estimated that some 27

²⁹⁷ [Photographer crowns career with King's coronation](#), The Times (£), 12 February 2023.

²⁹⁸ A wash-house attendant played Edward VII and a music hall singer Queen Alexandra.

²⁹⁹ Edward Owens, *The Family Firm*, p240.

million people watched the service in the UK, which followed a surge in sales of television sets. Worldwide, the estimated audience was ten times that.³⁰⁰

Recorded (colour) footage was later edited to produce two films for cinematic release, [A Queen is Crowned](#) and Elizabeth the Queen, both of which were first screened on 8 June 1953, just six days after the coronation. A Queen is Crowned was dubbed into nine languages and shown in 54 countries. It was narrated by the actor Laurence Olivier.³⁰¹

The BBC will suspend the TV licence fee for the coronation of King Charles and the Queen Consort. This will enable community venues to screen the ceremony on 6 May and the concert (see **Section 4.2**) on 7 May without purchasing a licence.³⁰² The Government has also announced that the coronation will be broadcast live on “big screens” at more than 30 sites across the UK.³⁰³ In response to a written question, the DCMS minister Stuart Andrew said:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport offered funding to the Devolved Administrations, the Mayoral Combined Authorities in England and to ten local authorities in England covering the largest urban populations as a contribution to the cost of hosting public screenings of the Coronation and Coronation Concert. The total amount offered for Coronation screenings was £840,000 which will ensure that we capitalise on the unique opportunity the Coronation offers to bring people and communities together in celebration and showcase the best of the UK to the world.³⁰⁴

On 12 April 2023, the Government confirmed additional screening sites for the coronation, bringing the total to 57 in locations including Ely Cathedral, Trinity Market in Hull and Alnwick Castle, Northumberland, “meaning that more than 100,000 people will be able to watch the Coronation live in their hometowns”.³⁰⁵

The broadcasters Kirsty Young, Huw Edwards and Clare Balding will lead the BBC’s coverage of the coronation on 6 May 2023.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁰ [The BBC and the Coronation – BBC 100](#)

³⁰¹ Roy Strong, Coronation, pp435-36.

³⁰² [Major change to BBC TV licence fee for King Charles' coronation ceremony – here's all you need to know](#), The Sun, 28 February 2023.

³⁰³ [King's coronation to be aired at more than 30 big screen sites across the UK](#), Sky News website 17 March 2023. See also [UIN 169293, Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla: Northern Ireland, 20 March 2023](#).

³⁰⁴ [UIN 169323, Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla: Broadcasting, 20 March 2023](#).

³⁰⁵ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Crown Jewels light and sound show to tour UK and bring magic of Coronation to millions](#), 12 April 2023.

³⁰⁶ [David Dimbleby turns down chance to cover coronation](#), The Times (£), 11 April 2023.

4 After the coronation

4.1 Procession from the Abbey

After the coronation service, by custom another State Procession makes its way from Westminster Abbey to Buckingham Palace. Bob Morris has described that in 1953:

40,000 British, Commonwealth and Colonial troops and related services were involved marching twelve abreast. From the UK, all military formations were represented and for the first time every infantry regiment detachment carried its colours.³⁰⁷

After the detachments of colonial, Commonwealth and domestic Armed Forces, the Procession largely followed the same sequence as that from the Palace to the Abbey prior to the ceremony.³⁰⁸ Closing the State Procession were the Royal Standard, personal aides-de-camp and equerries to the Queen, Royal Grooms and the third and fourth divisions of the Sovereign's Escort.

The return route was designed so that it could be seen by as many people in London as possible. The 7.2 km route took the 16,000 participants two hours to complete. The Procession went by Parliament Square, Whitehall, Pall Mall, Piccadilly, Hyde Park Corner, Marble Arch, Oxford Street, Regent Street, Haymarket, Trafalgar Square then through Admiralty Arch along The Mall to Buckingham Palace. It was so long that it took 45 minutes for it to pass any stationary point. "The sole defect was the one no planner could prevent," observed Bob Morris, "it was an overcast and showery day."³⁰⁹

Earlier in the 20th century, the Procession took place the day after the coronation. "A wonderful drive," wrote King George V of his in 1911, "a sight which I am sure could never be seen in any other country in the world."³¹⁰

Since 1902, the finale of coronation day itself has been a balcony appearance from the new monarch and other members of the Royal Family. This was inaugurated by Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. By 1937 Buckingham Palace was floodlit and a crowd of around 50,000 demanded a total of four nightly

³⁰⁷ Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign](#), p22.

³⁰⁸ The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh left the Abbey at 14:53 and returned to the Palace at 16:30.

³⁰⁹ Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign](#), p23.

³¹⁰ Harold Nicolson, King George V, p147.

balcony appearances. In 1953 there were five, the first being to view a fly-past of hundreds of planes in a group choreographed to form the letters “ER”.³¹¹



Queen Elizabeth II's balcony appearance on 2 June 1953 (Library and Archives Canada, K-0000046).

The Constitution Unit has proposed a procession on Horse Guards Parade, “of the kind held to celebrate the Queen Mother’s 90th birthday on 28 June 1990”, which might feature all the organisations supported by King Charles III when he was Prince of Wales.³¹²

But in January 2023, it was announced that the King and Queen Consort would return to Buckingham Palace in a larger ceremonial procession, known as “The Coronation Procession”:

Their Majesties will be joined in this procession by other Members of the Royal Family. At Buckingham Palace, The King and The Queen Consort, accompanied by Members of the Royal Family, will appear on the balcony to conclude the day’s ceremonial events.³¹³

According to The Times, unconfirmed coronation rehearsal plans include all three of the Prince of Wales’s children joining “their parents in a carriage behind the King and Queen”:

The rehearsal plans show that, as expected, neither Harry and Meghan nor the Duke of York will take part in the procession, which is confined to working members of the royal family. Princess Beatrice and Princess Eugenie will not be in the procession either.

Apart from the Prince and Princess of Wales and their children, the only other royals in the procession out of the abbey will be the Princess Royal and her husband, Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, the new Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, and the Duke of Kent and his sister Princess Alexandra.

The same report stated that the procession back to Buckingham Palace was “likely to be about a third of the size it was for Queen Elizabeth’s coronation in 1953”. It also said ten bands were expected to take part in the Procession (rather than 24 as in 1953), with “representative detachments of realm and

³¹¹ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p449.

³¹² Bob Morris, [The Coronation of Charles III](#), pp35-36.

³¹³ Royal Family website, [Coronation Weekend plans announced](#), 21 January 2023.

Commonwealth forces, flanked by the national flags of the 56 member nations of the Commonwealth”.³¹⁴

On 9 April 2023 the Palace stated that the Coronation Procession would be “much larger in scale” than the King’s Procession, “taking the same route in reverse”:

The Coronation Procession will include Armed Forces from across the Commonwealth and the British Overseas Territories, and all Services of the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom, alongside The Sovereign’s Bodyguard and Royal Watermen. Their Majesties will travel in the Gold State Coach [...] The coach will be drawn by eight Windsor Greys and, due to its weight of four tonnes, will travel at walking pace.³¹⁵

According to the BBC, the Coronation Procession will feature “nearly 4,000 personnel”, “making it the largest military ceremonial operation in 70 years”.³¹⁶

Upon returning to Buckingham Palace, the King and Queen will receive a Royal Salute from the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Armed Forces who have been on parade that day. The Royal Salute will be followed by three cheers from the assembled service personnel.³¹⁷

Also according to the BBC, thousands of veterans and NHS workers will watch the coronation from a stand in front of Buckingham Palace on 6 May 2023: “The guests, invited by the Royal British Legion, will be given a special view of the coronation, including the processions and flypast.”³¹⁸

4.2

Other coronation celebrations

Not everybody, of course, is able to line the processional route in London, but as Roy Strong has written, by 1953 complimentary events had become:

the norm for every Coronation, with street parties, firework displays, municipal banquets, garden parties, tree-planting and every form of commemoration, not to mention a glut of souvenir mugs and other ephemera. And that, of course, reflected another aspect of the twentieth century, consumerism.³¹⁹

The Ministry of Food granted 82 applications for people to roast oxen if they could prove that, by tradition, an ox had been roasted at previous coronations. Coronation Chicken was invented for the foreign guests who were to be entertained after the coronation.³²⁰

³¹⁴ [George, Charlotte and Louis to star in King’s coronation](#), The Times (£), 17 March 2023.

³¹⁵ Royal Family website, [The Coronation Procession](#), 9 April 2023.

³¹⁶ [King’s coronation: Thousands from armed forces to take part](#), BBC News online, 16 April 2023.

³¹⁷ Royal Family website, [The Coronation Procession](#), 9 April 2023.

³¹⁸ [King’s coronation: Thousands from armed forces to take part](#), BBC News online, 16 April 2023.

³¹⁹ Roy Strong, *Coronation*, p455.

³²⁰ Royal Family website, [50 facts about The Queen’s Coronation](#).



A 1953 coronation street party in Shrewsbury (National Library of Wales).

The Government has proposed that pub licensing hours be extended to mark the coronation of Charles III and the Queen Consort on 6 May 2023. Under section 172 of the [Licensing Act 2003](#), the Home Secretary can make an order relaxing licensing hours to mark occasions of “exceptional national significance”. A consultation will propose extending licensing hours from 11pm to 1am from Friday 5 to Sunday 7 May in pubs, clubs and bars in England and Wales.³²¹

In January 2023, the Palace announced that on Sunday 7 May 2023 – the day after the ceremony – a Coronation Concert would take place at Windsor Castle. This will be produced and broadcast live by the BBC and feature The Coronation Choir (comprising community choirs and amateur singers from across the UK) and The Virtual Choir (made up of singers from across the Commonwealth). The centrepiece of the concert will be “Lighting up the Nation”, in which “iconic” locations across the UK will be “lit up using projections, lasers, drone displays and illuminations”. The BBC will hold a national ballot to distribute pairs of free tickets.³²² On 15 April 2023, Katy Perry, Take That and Lionel Richie were among the first acts to be announced.³²³

The [Coronation Big Lunch](#) will also take place on 7 May, something the Palace has called “a nationwide act of celebration and friendship”. Finally, on Monday 8 May (a bank holiday), “The Big Help Out” will “use volunteering to bring communities together and create a lasting volunteering legacy from the

³²¹ Home Office, [Government proposes extending licensing hours for the Coronation](#), 19 December 2022.

³²² Royal Family website, [Coronation Weekend plans announced](#), 21 January 2023.

³²³ [Katy Perry and Lionel Richie to perform at coronation concert](#), BBC News online, 15 April 2023.

Coronation Weekend”.³²⁴ A recipe for a “coronation quiche” has been personally chosen by the King and Queen “in the hope it will be a centrepiece” to Big Lunches.³²⁵

Some local authorities are also inviting applications for coronation street parties to take place on Monday 7 May 2023.³²⁶

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport has also released a Coronation “Toolkit” which includes “homemade bunting ideas, recipe cards, kids’ activity sheets, playlists and social media assets using the official emblem”.³²⁷ In addition, Spotify has a two-hour “Coronation Celebration Playlist”, while three official coronation recipes have also been devised.³²⁸

Royal Voluntary Service will also mark the coronation with Coronation Champions Awards, which will “celebrate extraordinary volunteers across the country who have been contributing to their communities”.³²⁹ Nominations can be made via the [Royal Voluntary Service](#) website.

[Mass Observation](#) has recorded royal events since the coronation of George VI and Queen Elizabeth on 12 May 1937. In early 2023 it invited “people to observe and record any activities or events in their local area so we can piece together a picture of the country as it commemorates the Coronation of King Charles III”.³³⁰

On 12 April 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced that an “immersive light and sound show” displaying the Crown Jewels on “iconic” UK landmarks would “tour the country as part of plans to tell the story of coronations to thousands of people”.³³¹

4.3 Coronation broadcast

An innovation in May 1937 was a coronation radio broadcast by King George VI, his first following his succession to the Throne in December 1936. He said that:

If, in the coming years, I can show my gratitude in service to you, that is the way above all others that I would choose [...] for the highest of distinctions is the service of others, and to the Ministry of Kingship I have in your hearing

³²⁴ Royal Family website, [Coronation Weekend plans announced](#), 21 January 2023.

³²⁵ [King Charles and Camilla choose coronation quiche as signature dish](#), Guardian, 17 April 2023.

³²⁶ See, for example, Solihull Council, [Street parties for the Coronation of King Charles III – we’re open for applications!](#), 17 January 2023.

³²⁷ HM Government, [Toolkit – Coronation of His Majesty The King & Her Majesty The Queen Consort](#).

³²⁸ [3 Official Recipes For King Charles III's Coronation Revealed](#), Country Living, 9 February 2023.

³²⁹ [Coronation Champion Awards](#), Royal Voluntary Service website.

³³⁰ See [The 2023 Coronation Project](#).

³³¹ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Crown Jewels light and sound show to tour UK and bring magic of Coronation to millions](#), 12 April 2023.

dedicated myself, with the Queen at my side, in words of the deepest solemnity. We will, God helping us, faithfully discharge our trust.³³²

This custom was repeated by George's daughter, Queen Elizabeth II, following her coronation on 2 June 1953.³³³ She said that:

Throughout this memorable day I have been uplifted and sustained by the knowledge that your thoughts and prayers were with me. I have been aware all the time that my peoples, spread far and wide throughout every continent and ocean in the world, were united to support me in the task to which I have now been dedicated with such solemnity.

Many thousands of you came to London from all parts of the Commonwealth and Empire to join in the ceremony, but I have been conscious too of the millions of others who have shared in it by means of wireless or television in their homes. All of you, near or far, have been united in one purpose. It is hard for me to find words in which to tell you of the strength which this knowledge has given me.

The ceremonies you have seen today are ancient, and some of their origins are veiled in the mists of the past. But their spirit and their meaning shine through the ages never, perhaps, more brightly than now. I have in sincerity pledged myself to your service, as so many of you are pledged to mine. Throughout all my life and with all my heart I shall strive to be worthy of your trust [...]³³⁴

4.4 Coronation banquets

Between 1189 and 1821, Westminster Hall was the traditional venue for coronation banquets to honour newly crowned monarchs.³³⁵ Since 1830, a celebratory banquet has been held at Buckingham Palace, but not on the day of the coronation.

Two banquets were required to accommodate the large number of guests at the coronation celebrations of June 1953. The banquets held on 3 and 4 June at Buckingham Palace, as well as two evening receptions held on 5 and 9 June, were attended by more than 8,000 guests, including foreign heads of state and representatives of the Commonwealth Realms.³³⁶

In 1937 the Empire/[Commonwealth Parliamentary Association](#) (CPA) was given a coronation luncheon at Westminster Hall, an arrangement [repeated in 1953](#). The CPA says there are “no plans” to do so in 2023, adding that “what was appropriate then will not necessarily be appropriate now”. According to

³³² John W. Wheeler-Bennett, King George VI, p312.

³³³ Elizabeth II's first radio broadcast after becoming Queen had taken place on Christmas Day in 1952.

³³⁴ Royal Family website, [A speech by The Queen on her Coronation Day, 1953](#).

³³⁵ The earliest recorded banquets were those of Prince Henry (crowned in the lifetime of his father, Henry II) in 1170 and of Richard I in 1189 (see UK Parliament website, [Coronation banquets](#)).

³³⁶ Royal Collection Trust Fact Sheet, [The Queen's Coronation 1953 The Coronation State Banquets](#).

the Daily Telegraph, the King will instead host a reception for Commonwealth leaders on 5 May and a reception for world leaders that evening.³³⁷

4.5

Coronation Review of the Fleet

Another custom is the Coronation Review of the Fleet at Spithead in Dartmouth. This honours the Sovereign's role as Head of the Armed Forces. Queen Elizabeth II's took place on 15 June 1953, 13 days after her coronation. It involved 190 vessels and more than 300 naval aircraft. The muster included 1 battleship, 8 carriers, 12 cruisers, 20 destroyers, 40 frigates, 18 minesweepers, 30 submarines and 62 other vessels.³³⁸ The naval reviews for Edward VII (the first), George V and George VI also included UK and Dominion warships. The 1937 review proved memorable because the BBC commentator Thomas Woodrooffe announced to listeners (in a slurred voice): "The fleet's lit up!" He was faded out after drunkenly rambling for nearly four minutes.³³⁹

No announcement has been made regarding a fleet review following the coronation of King Charles III. Dr George Gross, an academic at King's College London, told The Times it seemed:

increasingly likely that there will be a clear break with tradition when it comes to the navy and the Spithead-Solent coronation review. One would have thought we would have heard something by now. These are complex things to organise and one would have thought it would be ticketed or advertised in a similar way to the concert at Windsor Castle.³⁴⁰

4.6

Service of thanksgiving

In 1911 and again in 1937 there was a coronation thanksgiving service at St Paul's Cathedral.³⁴¹ These were followed by a Coronation Luncheon at the Guildhall with the Lord Mayor and Corporation of the City of London. On 12 June 1953, Queen Elizabeth II followed this precedent.³⁴² At Temple Bar, according to tradition, the Queen asked permission to enter the City by touching the Lord Mayor's sword, which was proffered to her pointing downwards. After lunch, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh "revived an ancient custom by progressing in state up the Thames from Tower Pier to Westminster".³⁴³

³³⁷ [Coronation celebrations will not include Commonwealth banquet, breaking with tradition](#), Daily Telegraph (£), 11 March 2023.

³³⁸ The Times, 16 June 1953. A few weeks later Queen Elizabeth II also reviewed and took the salute at a "great Coronation Parade of ex-Service associations" (The Times, 6 July 1953).

³³⁹ [Thomas Woodrooffe at the Coronation Fleet Review – History of the BBC](#)

³⁴⁰ [King's fleet won't sail to mark coronation](#), The Times (£), 13 February 2023.

³⁴¹ King Edward VIII, had he been crowned, planned not to have such a service.

³⁴² See British Pathé, [Queen Gives Thanks](#).

³⁴³ The Times, 13 June 1953.

In 1953, there was also a New Zealand service of thanksgiving at St Paul's on 5 June.

4.7

UK and Commonwealth tours

Following the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh drove through different parts of London on four separate days in June and received mayors at Islington, Hampstead, Bermondsey and Wandsworth Town Halls. There was also an evening reception for members of London County Council on 6 July.³⁴⁴

It has also been the custom for a monarch to visit Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland after their coronation. Following his coronation in 1911, George V paid a short “state visit” to Ireland, all of which was then part of the United Kingdom. Six days later his son, the Prince of Wales, was invested at Caernarfon, after which the King visited Edinburgh. In 1937, George VI paid short state visits to Scotland (during which he invested the Queen with the Order of the Thistle) and Northern Ireland.

In late June 1953, Queen Elizabeth II also embarked upon a series of domestic state visits. In Wales, she attended the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, and in Northern Ireland she gave a joint address to both Houses of the Parliament of Northern Ireland at Stormont. In Scotland, the Queen attended a [National Service of thanksgiving and dedication](#) at St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, where the [Honours of Scotland](#) – the Crown, sceptre and sword – were ceremonially presented to the Sovereign before a congregation of 1,700.³⁴⁵ Like her earlier coronation, this was televised.³⁴⁶

It has not yet been announced if there will be a similar ceremony for King Charles III. The pro-independence party Alba has cited an opinion poll which showed that 56% of those asked believed Charles “should not be Scotland's King if he does not come to Scotland to be coronated [sic]”.³⁴⁷

Between November 1953 and May 1954, Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh visited 13 countries in the West Indies, Australasia, Asia and Africa, covering more than 40,000 miles by land, air and sea. Thousands of people later lined the banks of the River Thames to watch their return on board the Royal Yacht Britannia.

³⁴⁴ See Diary of the Season: State Banquets and Coronation Festivities, The Times, 6 May 1953.

³⁴⁵ When the Dean of the (Order of the) Thistle suggested that the Queen might hold the sceptre this was firmly rejected by the Lord Chancellor's Department, lest the service appear to be a second coronation (Bob Morris, [Inaugurating a new reign](#), p20 fn48).

³⁴⁶ There was some criticism of the Queen for wearing a day dress and carrying a handbag.

³⁴⁷ Alba website, [Majority of Scots don't think Charles should be crowned King of Scots at this year's Coronation](#), 4 January 2023.

4.8

Coronation portraits

Engravings or prints depicting aspects of the coronation ceremony can be traced back to Charles II. For several centuries, a new sovereign (and, if applicable, their consort) have sat for an official coronation portrait.

The official artist for the 1953 coronation was Feliks Topolski, who produced a permanent record now displayed in the Lower Corridor of Buckingham Palace.

An image of an enthroned monarch with the regalia is also later included in newly designed Great Seals of the Realm, while in 1953 four special coronation stamps were issued on 3 June, the day after the coronation.³⁴⁸ According to an exhibition at the Postal Museum in London, a special stamp will also be issued for the coronation of King Charles III.³⁴⁹

The Royal Mint has announced that the “world’s first official crowned portrait of His Majesty King Charles III” will be released on 24 April 2023: “In honour of this significant celebration, we are delighted to announce that we will be releasing a coronation coin collection that bears The King’s first official crowned coinage portrait.”³⁵⁰

Chris Barker, an historian and curator at the Royal Mint Museum, said these coins would be unusual as they will feature a crowned effigy of the King which in the 20th century has been reserved only for commemorative medals:

What also really stands out is the way the King is portrayed crowned because there’s a remarkable resemblance to his grandfather, George VI, and he has shown wearing the Tudor crown on coronation medals from his reign. You can see that the King is obviously channelling some of the iconography of the last king that Britain had.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Smithsonian National Postage Museum website, [Stamps to Mark a Coronation](#).

³⁴⁹ [The King’s Stamp – The Postal Museum](#)

³⁵⁰ Royal Mint website, [The Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III UK Coin Collection](#).

³⁵¹ [First crowned portrait of King Charles to feature on Coronation coins](#), Metro News, 13 April 2023.



King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in their coronation robes (Sir Luke Fildes)



Coronation portraits of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (Sir Gerald Festus Kelly)

5 Other ceremonies

5.1 Delhi Durbar

After Queen Victoria was created Empress of India in 1877, it became the practice for a Durbar to take place in or near Delhi. This was held for the first time by the Viceroy of India in 1877 and in absentia (for Edward VII) in 1902.

On 12 December 1911, King George V and Queen Mary received the homage of Indian rulers as Emperor and Empress of India. As it was the convention not to remove the regalia from the Realm,³⁵² a new Imperial Crown of India was specially made for the Delhi Durbar.³⁵³ There was no crowning, but the Imperial Crown was worn throughout the ceremony.



King George V and Queen Mary at the Delhi Durbar of 12 December 1911 (George Percy Jacomb-Hood).

King George VI's Durbar was postponed several times, partly on account of the burden which a State visit would place upon the Indian taxpayer, and partly owing to political difficulties arising from implementation of the

³⁵² According to Nigel Cawthorne (*The Strange Laws of Old England*, London: Piatkus, 2013) this convention derives from medieval kings being required to keep their jewels at home as collateral. There is not, as is sometimes stated, a law prohibiting the removal of the regalia. Edward III pawned the jewels to pay his troops during an overseas campaign; Charles I's wife also managed to pawn the Crown Jewels in Holland at the beginning of the English Civil War.

³⁵³ Manufactured by Garrard, the Imperial Crown of India contained 6,000 diamonds and cost £60,000 (£6.7 million in today's money). It was paid for by the Government of India (Jane Ridley, *George V: Never a Dull Moment*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2021, p183).

[Government of India Act 1935](#). The Second World War and the removal of George VI's title as Emperor meant George V's 1911 ceremony was the last.

5.2

Investiture of the Prince of Wales

Since the 14th century, the title [Prince of Wales](#) has been granted to the heir apparent to the English and, since 1707, the British Throne. If these titles are not given it does not affect the line of succession.³⁵⁴

King Charles III was created Prince of Wales via Letters Patent in 1958.³⁵⁵ Upon his Accession to the Throne on 8 September 2022, the title “reverted” to the Crown. The following day, the King announced in a broadcast that he had created his son William the Prince of Wales.³⁵⁶

An investiture ceremony for the Prince of Wales was revived in 1911 for the future Edward VIII.³⁵⁷ Charles' investiture took place at Caernarfon Castle on 1 July 1969.³⁵⁸ There are no plans for an investiture to be held during 2023.³⁵⁹

The Honours of the Principality of Wales are the regalia associated with the Princes of Wales. In 1911, a new set of Welsh honours was designed for the investiture of Prince Edward. This consisted of a coronet, a rod, a ring, a sword and a robe or mantle with doublet and sash. Edward, later King Edward VIII, retained the coronet following his abdication so a new one was created for his great nephew's investiture in 1969. In 1969 the rod, ring and sword were all re-used, as were the clasps from the 1911 robe.

Before 4,000 guests, the Letters Patent investing Charles as Prince of Wales were read in English and Welsh, during which the Queen invested her son and heir with the insignia of the Principality. He received the sword as a symbol of justice, the coronet as a token of rank, the ring as a token of duty and the rod as a symbol of government.³⁶⁰

As with coronation ceremonies, the Prince of Wales posed for official photographs and portraits in 1911 and 1969, while a range of merchandise was issued promoting their investitures. In 1969, the [investiture furniture was designed by Lord Snowdon](#) and later sold to those present at Caernarfon.

³⁵⁴ Prince of Wales website, [Titles and Heraldry](#).

³⁵⁵ See Royal Collection Trust website, [Letters patent for the creation of Charles Duke of Cornwall as Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester 1958](#).

³⁵⁶ Royal Family website, [His Majesty The King's address to the Nation and the Commonwealth](#), 9 September 2022.

³⁵⁷ [The investiture of Edward VIII – success before tragedy](#), BBC Wales History website, 25 July 2011.

³⁵⁸ See John S. Ellis, *Investiture: Royal Ceremony and National Identity in Wales, 1911-1969*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008.

³⁵⁹ [Prince of Wales has no plans for investiture, Kensington Palace confirms](#), BBC News online, 16 November 2022.

³⁶⁰ Royal Family website, [The Honours of the Principality of Wales](#).

6

Appendix 1: Royal accounts of coronations

Queen Victoria wrote about her coronation in her journal:

I reached the Abbey amid deafening cheers at a little after half-past eleven; I first went into a robing-room quite close to the entrance where I found my eight train-bearers [...] Then followed all the various things; and last (of those things) the Crown being placed on my head — which was, I must own, a most beautiful impressive moment; **all** the Peers and Peeresses put on their coronets at the same instant. My excellent Lord Melbourne, who stood very close to me throughout the whole ceremony, was **completely** overcome at this moment, and very much affected; he gave me **such** a kind, and I may say **fatherly** look. The shouts, which were very great, the drums, the trumpets, the firing of the guns, all at the same instant, rendered the spectacle most imposing. The Archbishop had (most awkwardly) put the ring on the wrong finger, and the consequence was that I had the greatest difficulty to take it off again, which I at last did with great pain. At about half-past four I re-entered my carriage, the Crown on my head, and the Sceptre and Orb in my hands, and we proceeded the same way as we came — the crowds if possible having increased. The enthusiasm, affection, and loyalty were really touching, and I shall remember this day as the **Proudest** of my life! I came home at a little after six, really **not** feeling tired. At eight we dined.³⁶¹

King George V also recorded his impressions of 22 June 1911, which he called “Our Coronation Day”:

Today was indeed a great & memorable day in our lives & one we can never forget, but it brought back to me many sad memories of 9 years ago, when the beloved Parents were crowned. May & I left B.P. in the Coronation coach at 10.30 with 8 cream-coloured horses. There were over 50,000 troops lining the streets under the command of Lord Kitchener. There were hundreds of thousands of people who gave us a magnificent reception. The Service in the Abbey was most beautiful, but it was a terrible ordeal.

It was grand, yet simple & most dignified and went without a hitch. I nearly broke down when dear David came to do homage to me, as it reminded me so much when I did the same thing to beloved Papa, he did it so well. Darling May looked lovely & it was indeed a comfort to me to have her by my side [...] We left Westminster Abbey at 2.15 (having arrived there before 11.0) with our Crowns on and sceptres in our hands. This time we drove by the Mall, St. James' Street & Piccadilly, crowds enormous & decorations very pretty. On reaching B.P. just before 3.0 May & I went out on the balcony to show ourselves to the people [...]

³⁶¹ Arthur Christopher Benson (ed), *The Letters of Queen Victoria Vol I*, London: John Murray, 1907, p148. For a fuller account see [Queen Victoria's account of most amazing spectacle on earth with King's coronation coming up](#), Mail on Sunday, 12 March 2023.

Such a large crowd collected in front of the Palace that I went out on the balcony again. Our guests dined with us at 8.30. May & I showed ourselves again to the people. Wrote & read. Rather tired. Bed at 11.45. Beautiful illuminations everywhere.³⁶²

King George VI wrote a memorandum regarding his 1937 coronation:

We were woken up very early, about 3.0 a.m., by the testing of the 'loud speakers' which had been placed in Constitution Hill; one of them might have been in our room. Bands & marching troops for lining the streets arrived at 5.0 a.m. so sleep was impossible. I could eat no breakfast & had a sinking feeling inside. I knew that I was to spend a most trying day, & to go through the most important ceremony in my life. The hours of waiting before leaving for Westminster Abbey were the most nerve racking. At last the time came & we drove in the State Coach to the Abbey in our Robes.

On our arrival our pages & train bearers met us to carry our robes to our retiring rooms. Elizabeth's procession started first but a halt was soon called, as it was discovered that one of the Presbyterian chaplains had fainted & there was no place to which he could be taken. He was removed however after some delay & the procession proceeded & arrived in position.

I was kept waiting, it seemed for hours due to this accident, but at last all was ready for my progress into the Abbey. This went off well & my pages & I negotiated the flight of steps going up to the Sacrarium. I bowed to Mama & the Family in the gallery & took my seat. After the Introduction I removed my Parliamentary Robes & Cap of Maintenance & moved to the Coronation Chair. Here various vestments were placed upon me, the white Colobium Sindonis, a surplice which the Dean of Westminster insisted I should put on inside out, had not my Groom of the Robes come to the rescue. Before this I knelt at the Altar to take the Coronation Oath. I had two Bishops, Durham, & Bath & Wells, one on either side to support me & to hold the form of Service for me to follow. When this great moment came neither Bishop could find the words, so the Archbishop held his book down for me to read, but horror of horrors his thumb covered the words of the Oath.

My Lord Great Chamberlain was supposed to dress me but I found his hands fumbled & shook so I had to fix the belt of the sword myself. As it was he nearly put the hilt of the sword under my chin trying to attach it to the belt. At last all the various vestments were put on & the Archbishop had given me the two sceptres. The supreme moment came when the Archbishop placed the St. Edward's Crown on my head. I had taken every precaution as I thought to see that the Crown was put on the right way round, but the Dean & the Archbishop had been juggling with it so much that I never did know whether it was right or not [...] Then I rose to my feet & walked to the throne in the centre of the amphitheatre. As I turned after leaving the Coronation Chair I was brought up all standing, owing to one of the Bishops treading on my robe. I had to tell him to get off it pretty sharply as I nearly fell down. The Homage of the Bishops & Peers went off successfully.³⁶³

³⁶² Harold Nicolson, King George V, p147.

³⁶³ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, King George VI, pp312-13. It was, wrote the King's official biographer, "a very human document, not without its gaiety; combining a Sovereign's recognition of the gravity of the event with a naval officer's meticulous perception of untoward lapses in ceremonial".

7 Appendix 2: Pre-Union Coronation Oaths

The English Coronation Oath dates to the Anglo-Saxon period, but only in 1308 was it cast as a series of questions and answers:

Will you grant and keep and by your oath confirm to the people of England the laws and customs granted to them by the ancient kings of England your righteous and godly predecessors, and especially the laws, customs and privileges granted to the clergy and people by the glorious King Saint Edward your predecessor?

Will you keep towards God and holy church and to clergy and people peace and accord in God entirely after your power?

Will you cause to be done in all your judgments equal and right justice and discretion in mercy and truth to your power?

Do you grant to hold and keep the laws and righteous customs which the community of your realm shall have chosen [*quas vulgus elegerit*], and will you defend and strengthen them to the honour of God to the utmost of your power?³⁶⁴

The Parliament of Scotland also approved a Scottish Coronation Oath in 1567:

I, [...], promise faithfully, in the presence of the eternal, my God, that I, enduring the whole Course of my Life, shall serve the same Eternal, my God, to the utmost of my Power, accordingly as he required in his most Holy Word, revealed and contained in the New and Old Testament; and according to the same Word shall maintain the true Religion of Jesus Christ, the preaching of his Holy Word, and due and right administration of his Sacraments, now received and practised within this Realm; and shall abolish and oppose all false Religion contrary to the same; and shall rule the People committed to my Charge, according to the Will and Command of God, revealed in his foresaid Word, and according to the lovable Laws and Constitutions received in this Realm, in no way repugnant to the said Word of the Eternal, my God; and shall procure to my utmost to the Kirk of God and whole Christian people true and perfect Peace in all times coming; the Rights and Rents, with all just privileges of the Crown of Scotland, I shall preserve and keep inviolate, neither shall I transfer nor alienate the same; I shall forbid and repress in all Estates and all Degrees theft, Oppression and all kind of Wrong; in all Judgements, I shall command and procure that Justice and Equity be kept to all creatures without exception, as he be merciful to me and you that is the Lord and Father of all Mercies; and out of all my lands and empire I shall be careful to root out all Heresy and Enemies to the true Worship of God, that shall be convicted by the true Kirk of God of the foresaid Crimes; and these Things above-written I faithfully affirm by my solemn Oath.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ F. W. Maitland, *Constitutional History of England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, p99. This was Maitland's translation from the Latin text.

³⁶⁵ [Scottish Monarch – Coronation Oath](#).

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Appendix 3: Coronations since 1603

Date	Monarch (and consort)
Saturday 6 May 2023	King Charles III and Queen Camilla
Tuesday 2 June 1953	Queen Elizabeth II
Wednesday 12 May 1937	King George VI and Queen Elizabeth
Thursday 22 June 1911	King George V and Queen Mary
Saturday 9 August 1902	King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra (postponed from 26 June 1902)
Thursday 28 June 1838	Queen Victoria
Thursday 8 September 1831	King William IV and Queen Adelaide
Thursday 19 July 1821	King George IV
Tuesday 22 September 1761	King George III and Queen Charlotte
Wednesday 11 October 1727	King George II and Queen Caroline
Wednesday 20 October 1714	King George I
Thursday 23 April 1702	Queen Anne
Thursday 11 April 1689	King William III and Queen Mary II (joint monarchs)
Tuesday 23 April 1685	King James VI & II and Queen Mary
Tuesday 23 April 1660	King Charles II (England)
Wednesday 1 January 1651	King Charles II (Scotland)
Tuesday 18 June 1633	King Charles I (Scotland)
Thursday 2 February 1626	King Charles I (England)
Monday 25 July 1603	King James VI & I and Queen Anne

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