

Britain's Queen Elizabeth May Become Longest-Serving Monarch

A fanfare of trumpets and cheering crowds greeted Queen Elizabeth on the 60th anniversary of her coronation on Tuesday, with a service in Westminster Abbey featuring a priceless crown that has adorned the heads of British monarchs for 350 years.

Decorated with rubies, sapphires and amethysts, the golden St Edward's crown was made for the coronation of Charles II in 1661 and has been used to crown every British monarch since.

Together with a golden, eagle-shaped bottle containing the holy oil for anointing, it took pride of place beside the altar for the historic service.

For Elizabeth, 87, it was a return to the scene of her coronation when, at age 27, she ascended the throne upon the death of her father, King George VI.

Jubilant throngs and trumpets heralded the arrival of a monarch who has seen 12 prime ministers during her reign – from Winston Churchill to David Cameron.

The service was attended by all the senior British royals including the Queen's 91-year-old husband Prince Philip, who had had to withdraw from an engagement the previous day with an unspecified ailment.

Heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles, Prince William and his pregnant wife Kate and Cameron were among 2,000 guests in the Abbey, the site of coronations for nearly 1,000 years.

While coronation day in 1953 was dull and rainy, bright sunshine poured through the stained glass windows of the

soaring gothic edifice during Tuesday's service.

"Pomp and Ceremony"

In 1953, millions of Britons gathered round brand new black-and-white television sets to watch Elizabeth's coronation, an event that gave Britain a chance to celebrate in the grim, austere years after World War Two.

"A nation watched. It was the first time the whole nation had watched anything as it happened," said Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby in his address. "This they saw: pomp and ceremony on a rainy June day, wrapped in time and custom. Very British."

Hers was the 38th coronation to take place at the Abbey, a tradition launched in 1066 by William the Conqueror, the first Norman King of England.

Tuesday's ceremony marked another milestone for Elizabeth as she edges towards Queen Victoria's record as Britain's longest-serving monarch. Victoria died in 1901 after more than 63 years and seven months on the throne.

The congregation sang the national anthem at the beginning of the service and Cameron read from the Old Testament Book of Kings. Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy wrote a poem for the occasion that focused on the symbolism of the historic crown.

Read by actress Claire Skinner during the service, it contained the lines: "One head alone can know its weight, on throne, in pageantry, and feel it still, in private space, when it's lifted: not a hollow thing, but a measuring; no halo, treasure, but a valuing; decades and duty."

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