



Foreign &  
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INSIGHT UK

# The Monarchy

Queen Elizabeth II is the fortieth monarch since William the Conqueror obtained the crown of England in 1066. Her full title is Elizabeth II, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

Alfred (King of Wessex in southern England 871–99) started the process of unifying Anglo-Saxon England under a single king.

Not until 1603, when James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne from Elizabeth I as James I, did England and Scotland have the same monarch.

Queen Elizabeth II has been on the throne since 6 February, 1952, celebrating her Golden Jubilee (50 years since her accession) in 2002. Over the Golden Jubilee weekend (1–4 June) 25,000 people attended two concerts in the Buckingham Palace grounds and about a million people came to watch the Queen parade through London in the gold State Coach (built in 1762).

Only five other kings and queens in British history have reigned for 50 years or more:

- Queen Victoria 1837–1901 (63 years)
- King George III 1760–1820 (59 years)
- James VI of Scotland, 1567–1625, James I of England 1603–25 (58 years)
- Edward III 1327–1377 (50 years)
- King Henry III 1216–1272 (56 years)

**The UK is a constitutional monarchy and the monarch's role is defined by rules and conventions.**

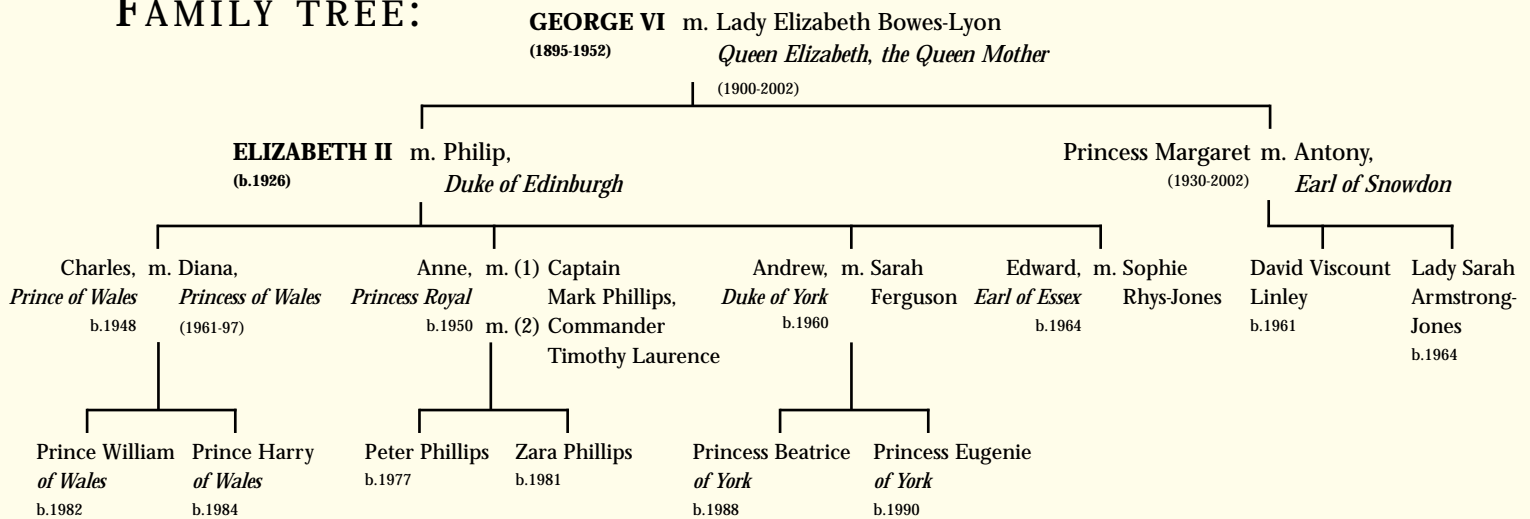
The monarch is politically neutral but has the right to be consulted, to encourage and to warn the Government of the day. The Queen has regular Tuesday evening audiences with the Prime Minister.

*The Queen is married to the HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, the son of Prince and Princess Andrew of Greece and Denmark.*



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## FAMILY TREE:



### The QUEEN'S ROLE

*The monarch's duties include approving legislation and acting as the Head of the Armed Services and of the Church of England.*

As a constitutional monarch, the Queen must, on the advice of Ministers, assent to (approve) all Bills. The Queen cannot refuse to give Royal Assent to laws passed by Parliament. Since 1952, the Queen has given Royal Assent to more than 3,000 Bills, which then become Acts of Parliament.

Not since 1707 has a monarch refused to agree to a Bill becoming law, and the last time a UK monarch changed a government to suit himself was in 1834. Nowadays, the monarch appoints as Prime Minister the person who has the support of the House of Commons – usually the leader of the largest party after a general election.

At the beginning of each Parliamentary session, usually in November, the Queen opens Parliament and gives the Queen's Speech, which sets out the Government's policy and the laws it intends to put forward.

### SUCCESSION and CORONATION

The Queen succeeded her father, George VI, when he died in 1952, because she was his eldest child. The sovereign is normally succeeded by their eldest son, or, if there is no son, by their eldest daughter.

The right to succeed to the throne comes partly from Acts of Parliament and partly from common law. By law, the sovereign cannot be, or marry, a Roman Catholic, and must be in communion with the Church of England and promise



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to uphold both the Churches of England and of Scotland and the Protestant succession.

**Elizabeth II was crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury in Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953 following her accession on 6 February 1952. For 900 years, all coronations of British monarchs have taken place in the Abbey.**

## CHURCH of ENGLAND

The Queen is Head of the Church of England – a position that all British monarchs have held since it was founded by Henry VIII in the 1530s. Just under half the population have been baptised in the Church of England.

The Queen appoints archbishops and bishops on the advice of the Prime Minister.

*‘I accept Your Majesty as the sole source of ecclesiastical, spiritual and temporal power’*

Oath of loyalty sworn by Church of England bishops.

## COMMONWEALTH

The Queen is Head of the Commonwealth and usually attends the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. During her reign, she has visited almost all the countries of the Commonwealth, some several times, and has regularly met with Commonwealth leaders and heads of state.

*‘I declare before you all, that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great Imperial Commonwealth to which we all belong. But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do; I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God bless all of you who are willing to share it.’*

The Queen’s declaration of her dedication to the Commonwealth on her 21st birthday (when still Princess Elizabeth)

Every Christmas the Queen broadcasts a message to the Commonwealth. In 1953, she broadcast from overseas for the first time, when she visited New Zealand. The first television broadcast was made in 1957.

After the Jubilee pop concert at the Palace on 3 June, the Queen lit the final Golden Jubilee beacon in a chain stretching around the world, including the Commonwealth and the Arctic and Antarctica, repeating the events of Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee in 1887.



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*‘Gratitude, respect and pride, these words sum up how I feel about the people of this country and the Commonwealth - and what this Golden Jubilee means to me.’*

The Queen at her Golden Jubilee lunch,  
4 June 2002.

## TRAVELLING

In 1977, for her Silver Jubilee celebrations, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh travelled around 56,000 miles to share the anniversary with people throughout the Commonwealth.

The Queen has gone to countries no other British monarch has ever visited, such as Russia in October 1994, Korea in 1999 and Brunei and Malaysia in 1998. While she was in Malaysia the Queen attended the Commonwealth Games there.

**Another historic visit was her trip to South Africa in April 1995, after the end of apartheid there, her first visit to that country since 1947.**

The Queen has met the Pope several times, most recently in October 2000 when she visited the Vatican.

## OTHER REALMS

As well as being Queen of the United Kingdom, Elizabeth II is Queen of Antigua & Barbuda, Australia, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Grenada, Jamaica, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, St Christopher & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & The Grenadines, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

## Sources and further information

Buckingham Palace  
[www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)

Houses of Parliament  
[www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

Commonwealth Institute  
[www.commonwealth.org.uk](http://www.commonwealth.org.uk)

Commonwealth Secretariat  
[www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)

The Guardian special reports  
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