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70 YEARS of
Queen
Elizabeth II

About the Royal Family

The royal family of the United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy with a hereditary sovereign — Queen Elizabeth II — reigns as the head of state.

Queen Elizabeth has been on the throne since 1952; this year marks her 70th year in power.

WHO ARE THEY?

In the dim, dark recesses of the past, the British monarchy was a band of petty kingdoms in medieval Scotland and England. By the 10th century, England consolidated into two kingdoms and was then conquered by the Normans in 1066. From the Magna Carta in 1215, the British monarchy saw their power cut and the modern state as we know it was created in 1801 when the Ireland joined the Kingdom of Great Britain (England and Scotland) to form the United Kingdom.

Notable monarchs in the line include Alfred the Great (871-886); William the Conqueror (1066-1087); a whole string of King Henrys, ending with Henry VIII (1509-1547); his daughter, Elizabeth I (1558-1603); King George III (1760-1820); Queen Victoria, the present queen's grandmother, (1837-1901).

WHAT DO THEY DO?

The modern royal family have a host of official, ceremonial, diplomatic and representational duties. The queen appoints the prime minister and is the head of the British armed forces. The monarch is also the head of the Church of England, appointing archbishops and bishops on the advice of the prime minister and Church Commission. The Archbishop of

Canterbury is the spiritual leader of the church and of the Anglican Communion.

SUCCESSION

The British monarchy is hereditary. Upon the death of a sovereign, their heir immediately and automatically succeeds. It is expected that, once a sovereign ascends, they will reign until their death; but Edward VIII successfully abdicated the throne to marry divorcee Wallace Simpson in 1936. His is the only voluntary abdication in British history. Catholics may not succeed to the throne and Regency Acts allow for regencies to take power in special circumstances.

The present heir is Charles, Prince of Wales.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor, Princess Elizabeth of York, was born April 21, 1926, to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, then the duke and duchess of York. King George VI ascended to the British throne after the abdication of his brother, King Edward VIII, and Elizabeth became the heir presumptive. During World War II, she served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service and, in 1947, she married former prince of Greece and Denmark, Philip Mountbatten, later the Duke of Edinburgh. They had four children, Charles, Prince of Wales; Princess Anne; Prince Andrew, Duke of York; and Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex.



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Namesake: Queen Elizabeth I

The Virgin Queen, Queen Elizabeth I was a daughter of King Henry VIII and the last of the Tudor monarchs of England and Ireland.

She reigned from Nov. 17, 1558, until her death in 1603.

EARLY LIFE

Elizabeth was born in 1533 in the Palace of Placentia, Greenwich, England. She was the daughter of King Henry VIII and Queen Anne Boleyn, who was executed when Elizabeth was 2. After Anne's death, the marriage to the king was annulled and she was declared illegitimate. Upon Henry's death, Edward VI took the throne and, when he died, he left the crown to Lady Jane Grey in spite of the claims of Elizabeth and her half-sister, Mary, daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. Mary deposed Lady Jane Grey and Elizabeth was imprisoned, accused of supporting Protestant rebels during the Catholic Mary's reign.

Elizabeth ascended to the throne in 1558 upon Mary's death.

THE VIRGIN QUEEN

When Elizabeth took the throne, it was widely expected that she would marry and eventually have an heir. However, she defied tradition and ruled on her own. She avoided religious strife and systematic persecution and was cautious in foreign affairs. Her rule is known as the Elizabethan era, and produced playwrights such as William Shakespeare and adventurers such as Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh.

Armed forces lead by Elizabeth defeated the famous Spanish Armada and she established an English church that formed a national identity.

Elizabeth reigned for more than 40 years, the ninth-longest reign in British history. In contrast, Elizabeth II has reigned now for 70 years, while her grandmother, Victoria, sat on the throne for 63 years, 216 days.

SUCCESSION

Elizabeth's reign was succeeded by that of King James I, previously king of Scotland. The son of Mary, Queen of Scots, he was also a great-great grandson of Henry VII. He sponsored the King James translation of the Bible, and during his reign, culture continued to thrive. He was married to Queen Anne of Denmark and had seven children, one of whom, King Charles I, would ascend upon his death in 1625.



Princess Elizabeth During WWII

Buckingham Palace, the London residence of the royal family, was bombed Sept. 13, 1940, during the Blitz, Germany's bombing campaign against Britain.

King George VI and Queen Elizabeth decided to stay in the palace in solidarity with the people of London. Like many children in London, however, Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret were outside the city, where they'd been since the onset of hostilities in 1939.

PRINCESS ELIZABETH AND BRITAIN'S CHILDREN

More than 2,600 British children left the country altogether during the Blitz and, on Oct. 13, 1940, Princess Elizabeth gave her first public address as part of the BBC Children's Hour in an attempt to boost public morale. She spoke to the children separated from their families.

"Thousands of you in this country have had to leave your homes and be separated from your fathers and mothers. My sister Margaret Rose and I feel so much for you, as we know from experience what it means to be away from those you love most of all," Elizabeth said. "To you living in new surroundings, we send a message of true



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sympathy and, at the same time, we would like to thank the kind people who have welcomed you to their homes in the country."

MILITARY INVOLVEMENT

Princess Elizabeth was an honorary colonel of the Grenadier Guards and, at age 18, joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the women's branch of the British

Army. She was not given a special rank and started as a second subaltern before being promoted to junior commander, similar to a captain.

She trained as a mechanic and passed a driving and vehicle maintenance course. Women in the ATS also served as cooks, telephone operators, drivers, postal workers, searchlight operators and ammunition inspectors.

During World War II, 335 ATS women were killed.

The war ended on May 8, 1945, and, dressed in her uniform, Princess Elizabeth joined celebrations with her sister.

"I remember we were terrified of being recognized, so I pulled my uniform cap well down over my eyes," Queen Elizabeth II told the BBC. "Lines of unknown people

(were) linking arms and walking down Whitehall, and all of us were swept along by tides of happiness and relief. I think it was one of the most memorable nights of my life."

As a member of the ATS, Queen Elizabeth II was the first female member of the Royal family to be an active duty member of the British Armed Forces, the military she now heads as queen.

The Queen and Prince Philip

Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip were married for 73 years. Technically cousins, they first met at a royal family wedding in 1934, then again five years later in 1939 on a visit to Britain's Royal Navy College.

After World War II, the future queen and Philip spent time together while he was stationed at a naval officers' school and spent weekends and breaks with her family.

WHO IS PRINCE PHILIP?

Philip was born in Greece to the Greek and Danish royal families, but his family was exiled from the country when he was a baby. He was educated in France, Germany and the United Kingdom, joining the Royal Navy in 1939 when he was 18.

Philip served with distinction during World War II. He and Elizabeth were engaged in 1947. As part of the engagement, Philip relinquished his Greek and Danish titles and became a naturalized British subject.

He took his maternal grandparents' name of Mountbatten and, the day before his wedding to Princess Elizabeth, was granted the style His Royal Highness. Upon their wedding, he was created the Duke of Edinburgh, Earl of Merioneth and Baron Greenwich.

THE WEDDING

Like many other post-war brides, Princess Elizabeth used ration cards to buy materials for her 1947 wedding, including the cloth for her dress. More than 2,000 guests came to



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Westminster Abbey to celebrate the couple.

"My ambition is to weld the two of us into a new combined existence that will not only be able to withstand the shocks directed at us, but will also have a positive existence for the good," Philip wrote to his mother shortly after the wedding.

MARRIAGE

Children quickly followed the wedding, with Charles born a year after the marriage and Anne two years later. Philip maintained his military career until Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1952, when he became royal consort, a transition that was at first difficult for the both of them, but a role that



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was critical to Queen Elizabeth II's reign.

"A huge invisible part of Prince Philip's work and legacy is the support he gave the queen, which has been invaluable to her," Sarah Gristwood, historian and author, told NBC News. "The fact her monarchy has been so long and successful is in large part to his work behind the scenes. In those first years of her reign, she took a decision that if she was to be the head of state, he would be the head of the family."

On the couple's fiftieth wedding anniversary, Philip said that tolerance is the key to their long, happy marriage.

"It may not be quite so important when things are going well, but it is absolutely vital when things get difficult," Philip said. "You can take it from me that the queen has the quality of tolerance in abundance."

Prince Philip died April 9, 2021, at Windsor Castle. He was 99.

Princess Margaret

Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowden, was Queen Elizabeth's younger sister.

She was born Aug. 21, 1930, and died Feb. 9, 2002. She was the queen's only sister and she became one of the world's most celebrated socialites, known for her glamorous lifestyles, romances and scandals. She was considered a fashion icon, adopting trendy accessories and developing a close relationship with Christian Dior. An exhibit of her fashion opened at Kensington Palace in 2007.

GROUP CAPTAIN PETER TOWNSEND

Group Captain Peter Wooldridge Townsend was a British Royal Air Force officer and equerry to King George VI, Margaret and Elizabeth's father, and to Queen Elizabeth II. Margaret and Townsend fell in love, and the military officer divorced his wife, Rosemary and proposed to Margaret in 1953.

However, many in government felt the divorced man would be an unsuitable husband for Margaret. The engagement eventually dissolved under the strain.

ANTONY ARMSTRONG-JONES

Margaret met photographer Antony Charles Robert Armstrong-Jones, later the first Earl of Snowden, and they were engaged in 1960. They were married May 6 in Westminster Abbey, the first royal wedding to be broadcast on television. The marriage began to collapse early amid Margaret's partying and the earl's philandering. Despite this, the couple were married for 18 years and had two children, David Armstrong-Jones, the second Earl of Snowdon, and



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Lady Sarah Chatto.

Their divorce was the first of a senior member of the royal family since 1901.

ILLNESSES

The dissolution of Margaret's marriage and her hard-partying lifestyle took a toll on the princess's health. In May 1978, as her divorce from Armstrong-Jones was granted, Margaret was diagnosed with gastroenteritis and alcoholic hepatitis. In 1985, the heavy smoker had part of her left lung removed. She gave up smoking in 1991, but continued to

drink heavily. She had pneumonia in 1993 and strokes in 1998 and 2001. She died in 2002 at 71 after another stroke that was followed by cardiac problems.

Margaret was cremated and her ashes were placed in the Royal Vault at St. George's Chapel before being transferred to her parents' tomb.

Her mother, also Queen Elizabeth, died seven weeks after she did.

The Line of Succession

Queen Elizabeth has four children, eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. Here's how the family breaks down and what it means for the line of succession.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, had four children. They are Charles, Prince of Wales; Princess Anne; Prince Andrew, Duke of York; and Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex.

Charles is the heir to the throne and will be king when Queen Elizabeth II dies or abdicates the throne. He's married to Camilla Parker Bowles, Duchess of Cornwall. He has two children by Diana, Princess of Wales, who he married in 1981 and divorced in 1996. She died in 1997 in a car crash in Paris.

Charles and Diana's children are William, Duke of Cambridge, who's second in line to the throne. He's married to Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge. Their children are Prince George of Cambridge, Princess Charlotte of Cambridge and Prince Louis of Cambridge. Charles and Diana's younger son, Prince Harry, and his wife Meghan, stepped down as senior members of the royal family in 2020. They live in California with their children, Archie Harrison and Lilibet Diana



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Mountbatten-Windsor.

Princess Anne is married to Vice Admiral Timothy Laurence. She has two children from her first husband, Capt. Mark Philips. They are Peter Philips and Zara Tyndall. Peter Philips has two children from his ex-wife, Autumn. They are Savanna and Isla. Zara and her husband, Mike, have three children, Mia Grace, Lena

Elizabeth and Lucas Philip.

Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, has two children with his ex-wife Sarah, Duchess of York. They are Princess Beatrice of York, married to Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi, and Princes Eugenia of York, who is married to Jack Brooksbank. Princess Beatrice has a daughter, Sienna Elizabeth and Princess Eugenia a son, August Philip.

Some of the line of succession is clear. It goes, generally speaking, to the oldest children and through their line. After that, it gets more murky. Starting with Queen Elizabeth II, it moves to her eldest son, Prince Charles, then to his eldest son, Prince William, before moving to his eldest, Prince George. Next, it would go to Prince George's younger sister, Princess Charlotte, then

to their third child, Prince Louis.

The line of succession then skips back a generation to Prince Charles' second child, Prince Harry, and his children, Archie and Lilibet, before skipping back to Queen Elizabeth's second child, Prince Andrew and his line.

No one said succession was easy.

A Queen's Reign: A Timeline

Queen Elizabeth II is the United Kingdom's longest-serving monarch, having been on the throne for 70 years.

Here are just a few of things that have happened during her reign.

1953: Joseph Stalin dies and the Korean armistice is signed. The first issue of TV Guide comes out.

1955: Winston Churchill resigns as prime minister and is succeeded by Anthony Eden. West Germany becomes a sovereign state and the Soviet Union and seven Eastern European countries sign the Warsaw Pact.

1959: Fidel Castro assumes power in Cuba. Alaska and Hawaii become U.S. states.

1963: The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers the "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, D.C. President John F. Kennedy assassinated in Dallas.

1966: Star Trek premieres and the FDA approves the birth control pill.

1968: The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy assassinated. "60 Minutes" debuts on CBS.

1970: The Beatles break up. Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin both die of drug overdoses. "Monday Night Football" debuts. IBM introduces the floppy disk.

1972: President Nixon visits China and Britain takes over

direct rule of Northern Ireland. Israeli athletes are killed at the Olympic Games in Munich after an Arab terrorist group invades the Olympic Village. Five men are arrested in an attempt to bug the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate complex.

1975: "Saturday Night Live" premieres. President Ford escapes two assassination attempts. VCRs are developed in Japan.

1981: Ronald Reagan becomes president and survives and assassination attempt. MTV debuts and the Supreme Court allows television cameras in the courtroom. The AIDS virus is identified.

1982: The UK wins the Falklands War with Argentina. Michael Jackson releases the

"Thriller" album and "Cats" debuts on Broadway. The space shuttle Columbia makes its first mission.

1986: The Chernobyl nuclear power station accident alarms the world. The space shuttle Challenger explodes, killing all seven astronauts aboard. "The Oprah Winfrey Show" premieres.

1991: Soviet Union collapses. The grunge band Nirvana releases "Smells Like Teen Spirit."

1993: The European Union is created. President Clinton lifts the ban on homosexuals in the U.S. military. Riots erupt in Los Angeles after the beating of motorist Rodney King.

1997: Hong Kong returns to Chinese rule. "Titanic" becomes the most expensive film of all time. UK scientists

clone a sheep. It's named Dolly.

2001: The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks rock the world. In response, U.S. and British forces launch a bombing campaign in Afghanistan. IRA announces it's dismantling its weapons arsenal.

2003: U.S. and UK launch war against Iraq. North Korea withdraws from the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. The space shuttle Columbia explodes, killing seven astronauts aboard.

2005: Tony Blair becomes the first Labour Party prime minister to win three successive terms. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastate the U.S. Gulf Coast.

2008: Fidel Castro steps down in Cuba, handing over power to his brother, Raul.

Barack Obama accepts the Democratic presidential nomination, becoming the first Black man to be selected by a major party as its nominee for president.

2011: Osama bin Laden killed in Pakistan. More than 100 tornadoes sweep through the U.S. South, killing 300 people. Japan is hit by an earthquake and 23-foot tsunami.

2016: The United Kingdom votes to leave the European Union. President Obama travels to Cuba.

2019: President Trump impeached by the U.S. Congress. UK Prime Minister Theresa May resigns over the Brexit referendum.

2021: Rioters storm the U.S. Capitol in unrest leading up to the inauguration of President Joe Biden.

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