

24 January 2013

The Queen's Coronation 1953

The special exhibition at
The Summer Opening of Buckingham Palace

27 July - 29 September 2013



*HM Queen Elizabeth II,
1953, Cecil Beaton*

This summer marks the 60th anniversary of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. To celebrate this anniversary, a special exhibition at Buckingham Palace will bring together an unprecedented array of the dress, uniform and robes worn for the historic event. Paintings recording the event, works of art and objects used on the day, will be included to help recreate the atmosphere of that extraordinary moment and the pageantry of a State occasion that has remained essentially unchanged for 1,000 years.

The Queen acceded to the throne on 6 February 1952 and was crowned at Westminster Abbey the following year, on 2 June 1953. Buckingham Palace was at the heart of the celebrations on Coronation Day, which heralded the dawn of a 'New Elizabethan Era'. Hundreds of thousands of well-wishers lined the Mall and filled the specially constructed stands around the Victoria Monument in front of the Palace. From here they witnessed the carriage processions of Members of the Royal Family, foreign Heads of State and Commonwealth Prime Ministers depart Buckingham Palace for Westminster Abbey. The processions culminated with The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh leaving the Palace in the Gold State Coach, drawn by eight Windsor greys with coachmen in full State Livery. The Palace was also the focal point for the famous balcony appearance of the Royal Family to witness the flypast and later in the evening, when The Queen turned on the illuminations in the Mall.

For the annual Summer Opening in 2013, the Palace's Ballroom will be transformed into the centre of the largest-ever exhibition about the Coronation. Here, the dress, robes and uniforms worn by the principal royal party will be brought together for the first time since 2 June 1953. The display will include HM The Queen's Coronation Dress and Robe; the uniform, robe and Coronet of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh; the dress and robe of HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother; the dress and robe of HRH The Princess Margaret; and the outfits worn on the day by two-year-old Princess Anne and four-year-old Prince Charles. The Prince's personal invitation to Westminster Abbey will also be on display.

The Queen's white satin Coronation Dress was created by the British couturier Norman Hartnell (1901-79). The design incorporates an iconographic scheme of embroidered national and Commonwealth floral emblems in gold, silver and pastel-coloured silks, encrusted with pearls, crystals and sequins. The exhibition at Buckingham Palace will also include Hartnell's original designs for the Dress and his embroidery samples.

The Queen's Robe of Estate, worn when Her Majesty departed from Westminster Abbey for the Palace, is of English purple silk-velvet and is more than 6.5 metres long from the shoulder to the tip of the train. It is exquisitely embroidered with wheat ears and olive branches, representing peace and prosperity, and terminates in The Queen's crowned cypher. The embroidery was designed and executed by the Royal School of Needlework, a task that took 3,500 hours to complete between March and June 1953.

Exhibited with the Dress and Robe will be a number of jewels worn by The Queen on Coronation Day. These include the Diamond Diadem, which Her Majesty wore for the journey from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey. The Diadem was designed and made for George IV to wear at his coronation in 1821 by the royal jewellers and goldsmiths, Rundell, Bridge and Rundell. The Diadem is one of the most recognisable of The Queen's jewels, as she is shown wearing it on postage stamps and some issues of banknotes. Also on display will be the diamond Coronation Necklace and Earrings, made for Queen Victoria in 1858 by R & S Garrard & Co. and worn by Her Majesty The Queen for her Coronation.

As they tour the State Rooms, visitors will experience a sense of the atmosphere of Coronation Day and learn how individual rooms were used in 1953. For example, it was in the Green Drawing Room that Cecil Beaton (1904-80) took his famous Coronation portraits of The Queen, using his signature theatrical backdrops to recreate the inside of Westminster Abbey. Other official portraits were taken in the Throne Room. The Coronation State Banquets were held on the evenings of 3 and 4 June 1953, and for the Summer Opening of the Palace, the table in the State Dining Room will be dressed to evoke the Banquets' magnificent settings of porcelain, silver-gilt and flowers. Along the visitor route will be works of art and paintings linked to the occasion, including the Coronation Frieze (1960) by Feliks Topolski (1909-89), who was commissioned to record the colour and excitement of the event, and Queen Elizabeth II in Coronation Robes (1954), the State portrait by Sir Herbert James Gunn (1893-1964).

The Queen's Coronation 1953 is part of a visit to the Summer Opening of the State Rooms at Buckingham Palace, 27 July – 29 September 2013. Advance tickets and visitor information: www.royalcollection.org.uk or +44 (0)20 7766 7300.



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For further information and photographs, please contact the Royal Collection Trust Press Office, +44 (0)20 7839 1377, press@royalcollection.org.uk. A selection of images is also available from www.picselect.com.

Notes to Editors

Royal Collection Trust

Royal Collection Trust, a department of the Royal Household, is responsible for the care of the Royal Collection and manages the public opening of the official residences of The Queen. Income generated from admissions and from associated commercial activities contributes directly to The Royal Collection Trust, a registered charity. The aims of The Trust are the care and conservation of the Royal Collection, and the promotion of access and enjoyment through exhibitions, publications, loans and educational programmes. Royal Collection Trust's work is undertaken without public funding of any kind. www.royalcollection.org.uk

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Press information

The outfits of Prince Charles and Princess Anne

Please find a separate fact sheet about the outfits worn by Prince Charles and Princess Anne at www.royalcollection.org.uk/press

The Gold State Coach

The Gold State Coach is the most dazzling of the coaches on display to the public at the Royal Mews, Buckingham Palace. It was commissioned in 1760 and was first used in 1762 when George III travelled to Westminster to open Parliament. The Coach has been used at every coronation since that of George IV. It was last used during the Golden Jubilee of 2002. Please find more information about the Royal Mews at www.royalcollection.org.uk/press/fact-sheets

The Coronation ceremony

Please find further details about the Coronation ceremony at www.royal.gov.uk/royaleventsandceremonies/coronation/coronation.aspx

Coronation Anniversary China

The official range of commemorative china to mark the anniversary of Her Majesty The Queen's Coronation is now on sale. All profits are dedicated to The Royal Collection Trust, a registered charity.

Inspired by the Coronation procession on 2 June 1953, the design reflects the pomp and pageantry of a grand State ceremonial occasion. Made exclusively for Royal Collection Trust, the official Coronation china range is produced in Stoke-on-Trent. The range consists of eight pieces: a coffee mug (£25.00), a pillbox (£29.00), a tankard (£39.00), a side plate (£39.00), a teacup and saucer (£55.00), and a commemorative plate (£89.00). Also available are two limited editions of 1,000: a 9-inch dessert plate (£95.00) and an 11-inch charger (£175.00). The china is available to buy at www.royalcollection.org.uk/shop Please find more information about the china range at www.royalcollection.org.uk/press

Admission to Buckingham Palace is managed by The Royal Collection Trust, a charity registered in England and Wales (1016972) and in Scotland (SCO39772).