

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Born 21 April 1926 in Mayfair, Elizabeth Alexandra Mary - Princess Elizabeth - and her family did not expect that she would one day become Monarch.

First child of The Duke and Duchess of York, she stood third in the line of succession to the throne after Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII), and her father. In 1930, Princess Elizabeth gained a sister, with the birth of Princess Margaret Rose.

Princess Elizabeth's quiet family life came to an end in 1936, when her grandfather, King George V, died. His eldest son came to the throne as King Edward VIII. Before the end of the year, King Edward VIII had decided to give up the throne to marry the woman he loved, Mrs Wallis Simpson.

Upon his abdication, Princess Elizabeth's father acceded to the throne as King George VI with Queen Elizabeth (his wife and the mother of Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret) as his consort. In 1937, the two Princesses attended their parents' Coronation in Westminster Abbey. As heir apparent (first in line to the throne), Princess Elizabeth started to study constitutional history and law as preparation for her future role.

Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip met at the wedding of Prince Philip's cousin, Princess Marina of Greece, and The Duke of Kent in 1934. They subsequently married in Westminster Abbey on 20 November 1947.

On 6 February 1952, King George VI died following a prolonged illness. Princess Elizabeth received the news of her father's death and her own accession to the throne while staying in a remote part of Kenya, en route to Australia. In an instant, she ceased to be Princess Elizabeth and became Queen Elizabeth II. Her coronation was held at Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953.

The following year, the Royal Couple embarked on the first of 16 tours of Australia, including 12 to New South Wales. Among these Royal Tours, The Queen notably opened several sessions of the NSW Parliament and the Sydney Opera House in 1973. She has visited 12 New South Wales regional cities and towns including: Armidale, Bathurst, Blue Mountains including Katoomba and Leura, Broken Hill, Casino, Dubbo, Lismore, Lithgow, Newcastle, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong.

On 9 September 2015, Her Majesty became Britain's and later, following the death of Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej on 13 October 2016, the world's longest reigning monarch.

As Head of the Commonwealth, The Queen's commitment to the Commonwealth of Nations spans over seven decades and she has supported over 600 patronage organisations around the world.

In only her fifth non-Christmas televised address in April 2020, she called for members of all Commonwealth nations to show unity and resolve during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a special message to Australians, she stated: "... my thoughts are with all Australians. Whilst it can be difficult to remain hopeful in such challenging times, especially following the summer's devastating bushfires and recent flooding, I am

confident that the stoic and resilient nature of the Australian people will rise to the challenge."

"I extend my sincere admiration to the many Australians who work tirelessly to help those affected, provide essential services for their fellow citizens, and continue to care for the most vulnerable."

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh's enduring marriage saw them support each other through seven decades of Royal duties. Together, they had four children, eight grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren. On 9 April 2021, The Duke of Edinburgh, whom The Queen had called 'my strength and stay', died peacefully at Windsor Castle at the age of 99.