

# QUEEN ELIZABETH II

A LIFETIME DRESSING FOR THE WORLD STAGE



JANE EASTOE



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PAVILION









# COPYRIGHT

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HARDY AMIES *L<sup>td</sup>*  
*Telephone 14 Savile Row, W.1. Regent 0728*

H.A. 1.  
Evening dress in blue/gray heavy satin,  
entirely embroidered in a design of autumn leaves  
and berries in gold thread and pearls. The wide  
skirt is lightly boned at the sides. The  
fitted bodice is finished with cuffs of plain  
satin, which also makes the stole.

This dress was worn by the Queen at a State dinner given by President and Mrs Eisenhower in 1957. The designer, Hardy Amies, recalled that Her Majesty 'shimmered' amongst the guests who included Barbara Hutton, Ginger Rogers and Doris Duke.

# INTRODUCTION

When Elizabeth Taylor arrived theatrically late at Buckingham Palace for a ceremony in which Richard Burton was being honoured by the Queen, Her Majesty later wryly commented to her milliner Frederick Fox: ‘What Miss Taylor failed to appreciate is that in this instance everyone had come to see me.’ As he notes, there was no vanity in this observation, but a simple statement of fact.

Throughout her reign, Queen Elizabeth II was the most photographed woman in the world. Her path from Princess, to Heir Presumptive and onto Queen was scrutinised in newspapers, magazines and on television across the decades. She remained the centre of attention wherever she went and was subject to critical assessment every time she set foot in public. The pressure of such continuous scrutiny must have been phenomenal, yet in seventy years on the throne she did not put a sartorial foot wrong; there was not a single wardrobe malfunction, at least none that the public was aware of, nor a fashion faux pas. Her impeccable personal style, and skill in resisting fashionable excess, ensured that her place as a style icon has finally been recognised by leading fashion commentators.

The often repeated assertion that the Queen wasn’t interested in clothes, was first fostered by Marion Crawford, governess to both Elizabeth and Margaret. In her book *The Little Princesses*, she observed that Princess Elizabeth was not picky about her clothes: ‘Lilibet never cared a fig. She wore what she was told without argument, apart from a long, drab mackintosh which she loathed.’ Others maintain that the Queen was at heart one of the old school, a countrywoman who did not care about her appearance.

But this is a myth that should be dispelled: ‘The Queen was not interested in high fashion’, observed one couturier, ‘but she was *very* interested in her clothes and was *very* particular. Her Majesty was acutely aware of how invasive the press were – her clothes were part of her armour. And, after a whole lifetime of wearing couture, she knew exactly what she was doing and made it perfectly clear when things weren’t quite right.’

The Queen's clothes reinforced the message that she was a national figurehead with power and status; they helped maintain her authority and emphasise her position. To describe her wardrobe as expansive, and the task of her dressers as considerable, is something of an understatement; consider that on her first Commonwealth tour alone the Queen took 100 specially designed, new outfits. There were in excess of 170 further Commonwealth tours, as well as many other State visits.

Yet, Her Majesty wore hand-me-downs, had her mother's clothes altered to fit her and wore off-the-peg outfits: on a Commonwealth Tour of Bermuda in 1953, her Coronation year, she wore a Horrockses dress. But principally she wore couture: that is, clothes designed for her, fitted precisely to her and in her own choice of fabric – one-offs. Nevertheless, as the couturier Maureen Rose observed in Brian Hoey's book, *Life with the Queen*: 'The Queen is very modest with a complete lack of vanity, she only looks in a mirror to check that everything is as it should be, not because she wants to see how good she looks.'

At the start of her reign, she favoured fairy-tale ball-gowns or stiff satin frocks, shimmering with beads in patterns designed to emphasise her status. Norman Hartnell, a master with duchesse satin, created two of her most iconic dresses; her wedding dress and her Coronation gown. He specialised in fabulous evening gowns, but his first design for her was in 1935 and he continued until his death in 1979. Hardy Amies started designing for the Queen in the early 1950s and continued until a year before his death in 2003. While he made many beautiful evening gowns, he was credited with transforming her day wardrobe with sharp, beautifully tailored coats, dresses and jackets. 'I think Hardy always saw her as the beautiful twenty year old he started dressing in 1952', noted a colleague, 'and of course she had an amazing figure and a tiny waist for years.' Ian Thomas, who had worked for Norman Hartnell, produced softer designs throughout the 1970s and 1980s and Maureen Rose, who in turn had worked with Thomas, continued to design for Her Majesty after his death until the late 1980s.

John Anderson received a Royal patronage from the late eighties until his death in the late nineties and his work was continued by his colleague Karl Ludwig Rehse who died in 2019. Her youngest couturier was Stuart Parvin, who was first commissioned to design for the Queen in 2000 and he also continued to work for her until her death. Other couturiers were utilised too, all firmly vetted by the palace before any contact was made.

Throughout history, the Royal wardrobe was maintained by a team of dedicated staff. Margaret MacDonald, a formidable Scottish lady fondly known as Bobo, started in service as Princess Elizabeth's nursery maid, graduated to personal dresser when the Princess reached sixteen and remained in the post for a remarkable sixty-seven years; she even accompanied the Princess on her honeymoon. Angela Kelly LVO (Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order) was Her Majesty's Personal Advisor and Curator (The Queen's Jewellery, Insignias and Wardrobe) as well as In-house Designer. Kelly joined the Royal Household and worked as an Assistant Dresser in the 1990s and looked after the royal wardrobe until the Queen's final days. With Her Majesty's approval, Kelly introduced the concept of in-house production and created her own designs with the aid of a dressmaker and milliner based at a workroom in Buckingham Palace. The Queen's dresser had an intimate relationship with Her Majesty – no one else saw the Royal person in a state of undress, excepting her doctor and, of course, her husband.

The cost of creating and sustaining such an expansive wardrobe was substantial. Her Majesty commissioned new clothes for significant events, but wore them over and over again to a range of functions. Great care was taken to ensure she never wore the same outfit to annual events. Hardy Amies received a stack of letters from his Royal patron over the years, some regarding his invoices: 'Thank you for the enormous bill which will take a little time to pay', she wrote, clearly feeling the pinch. Cost was a significant concern. In 1969, Prince Philip declared that the Royal family were 'almost in the red', prompting a review of the Civil List. The Labour MP Emmanuel Shinwell observed: 'If we want a monarchy, we have to pay them properly. We can't have them going around in rags.'

But Her Majesty was not complacent about the cost of her clothes: 'She was quite thrifty', a *vendeuse* observed, 'sometimes a dress would come back to us to be let out so she could wear it again.' And a letter to Hardy Amies in late December 1971 revealed that she had to be scrupulous in her accounting: 'I meant to ask you today and stupidly forgot a question of the account. Do you think it would be possible to have the new clothes and the purchase tax on one bill and the other alterations on a second one? I cannot get the Privy Purse to accept my word for the purchase tax, as the item is not put separately on the account.' Later in her reign, couturiers were asked to submit an estimate of the cost of constructing a design, and a discount

may have been requested by her Household. Angela Kelly was known to utilise fabrics that were given to Her Majesty as gifts, some dating back from her days as Princess and kept in storage for years. Another useful economy.

It is worth mentioning that Her Majesty was in a uniquely difficult position when it came to making a critical assessment of her clothes. It is said that she lived in a bubble of critical adulation until she was thirty, and few were brave enough to venture an honest opinion. The famously forthright Duke of Edinburgh was one who could be relied on to speak his mind, when his advice was sought. Angela Kelly was another whose opinion was valued. She plucked up the courage to question whether some couturiers were forward thinking enough in their designs for Her Majesty. In establishing an in-house design team, she dared to challenge their previously unquestioned authority.

As heir presumptive, royal tradition and formality influenced all aspects of Princess Elizabeth's young life, including her wardrobe. Her grandparents, George V and Queen Mary, were sticklers for protocol and cast a critical eye over all aspects of dress for official functions. Princess Elizabeth's parents, the Duke and Duchess of York (later George VI and Queen Elizabeth), were anxious to meet their exacting standards and dreaded the King's frequent critiques.

On accession to the throne, after the abdication of Edward VIII, the pair utilised formal dress to reinforce the message that they were a safe and steadfast pair of hands, in direct contrast to the modernity of the dapper and disgraced former king. Guided by both her mother and her grandmother, the young Queen Elizabeth II was encouraged to employ the same techniques. Over her long reign, attitudes softened and the ornate statement clothes once worn on state occasions are no longer de rigueur for the younger royals.

Her Majesty's clothes, viewed across the decades, are a moving tribute to the art of couture and have helped fashion her place in history. They emphasised her position and the status of the crown with a dignified and traditional conservatism. Seen up close, they are a symphony of artfully cut, heartbreakingly beautiful, shimmering sorbet silks. In gowns heavy with embroidery, fluttering with silk flowers and floating with a featherweight dusting of lace appliqué, every stitch bears witness to the demands of position and responsibility. We may never see their like again.



A silk gown with delicate lace appliqué, designed for the Queen by Norman Hartnell in the late 1940s, here on show at the 'Fashioning A Reign' exhibition at Windsor Castle in 2016. Her Majesty had a waist to rival Scarlett O'Hara's.



Sixteen-year-old Princess Elizabeth is photographed at Buckingham Palace in October 1942, twelve-year-old Princess Margaret had an identical dress.

# PRINCESS

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'THE FUTURE QUEEN HAD LESS FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN WHAT SHE WORE THAN MANY OF HER SUBJECTS. THERE WERE SO MANY RESTRICTIONS, EVEN THOUGH COST WAS NOT ONE OF THEM.'

**ANNE EDWARDS**

# PRINCESS

What clothes are deemed fit for a Princess? The Royal family agreed that Princess Elizabeth, born on the 21 April, 1926, should not be brought up in luxury. Nevertheless, her layette was handmade from the finest materials. But, as if to strike a chord with the nation, it was revealed that the Princess' paternal grandmother, Queen Mary, her mother, the Duchess of York and her maternal grandmother, Lady Strathmore, had personally stitched the said layette themselves.

As a baby and toddler, Princess Elizabeth, or Lilibet as she was known, was dressed exclusively in the most impractical colour – white, but as she grew up these frilly dresses were replaced with more practical garments. Despite the four years difference in their ages, when Princess Margaret was taken out of her baby whites, the two Princesses were dressed identically; hand-smocked and pin-tucked dresses, and velvet-collared coats for best, sensible sweaters and kilts for play. They both hated wearing hats and would snap the elastic under each other's chins to cries of 'you brute'.

According to Lilibet's governess, Marion Crawford, the girls could not have been more simply dressed. 'They wore cotton frocks, mostly blue with a flower pattern, and little cardigan coats to match when it was cool.' Her nurse Clara Knight, known as Alah, was said to believe that the Princesses were much too simply dressed: 'I don't think Alah ever quite approved of the simple lives the little girls led, or their almost severe wardrobes, their plain tweed coats, business-like berets and stout walking shoes', notes Crawfie. Alah could only indulge her fondness for more regal clothing on special occasions producing what Marion Crawford describes as: 'two dear little figures like dolls, all organdie frills and ribbons and bows'. Lilibet's only jewellery was a coral necklet, a pearl necklace from 'Grandpapa England' and a silver bracelet, a gift from her parents; these items were reserved for best.

Although the clothes were simple, it's worth noting that 'simplicity' had a different meaning in Royal circles. On her fourth birthday, Princess Elizabeth nearly caused a riot when crowds spotted her walking across the square at Windsor Castle in a pretty yellow coat trimmed with fur.



The three-year-old Princess Elizabeth steps out in a frilly white dress, the inevitable white socks and silver shoes. Her pearl necklace on a platinum chain was a gift from her father who gave her new two pearls on every birthday. Her style is typical of the way that 'nice' young girls were dressed in the 1930s, a look that was to continue up to and into the 1950s.

Norman Hartnell made his first dress for Princess Elizabeth in 1934. Both Princesses were to be bridesmaids at the marriage of their uncle, HRH the Duke of Gloucester, to Lady Alice Montagu-Douglas-Scott. The girl's dresses were made of pale pink satin and ruched tulle, and were designed to be ankle-length, but Hartnell was advised that the Princesses' grandfather, King George V, wished that the little ones would be in short dresses: 'I want to see their pretty little knees', so the dresses were altered according to his wishes and were later utilised for a trip to the pantomime.

The first serious Royal ceremony that Princess Elizabeth attended was her parent's Coronation on 12 May 1937. Special gold coronets were constructed for the girls, lined in crimson velvet and edged with ermine. However, when the King, Queen and Queen Mary examined them, they were deemed too heavy and ornate. Instead lightweight, silver-gilt coronets, in the style of medieval crowns, were commissioned and declared far more suitable. Margaret bounced so much on the day of the Coronation that at one point her coronet tilted down over one ear.

The Royal Library contains an essay by Elizabeth, written in pencil, in which she describes her outfit: 'Now I shall give you a description of our dresses. They were white silk with old cream lace and had little gold bows all the way down the middle. They had puffed sleeves with one little bow in the centre. Then there were the robes of purple velvet with gold on the edge.'

According to Marion Crawford, the Princesses wore identical dresses to garden parties: 'usually of tussore silk, often hand smocked, quite short with knickers to match', a tradition that continued until Elizabeth's thirteenth birthday, when she had grown as tall as her mother. Now silk stockings replaced white socks (the Queen had given her daughter a box of silk stockings as a gift for her twelfth birthday), hemlines were lowered and the girls were no longer made to wear matching outfits. The diarist Chips Channon thought it odd when he saw the Princesses still dressed the same at a Thanksgiving Service in 1945, Elizabeth was nineteen at the time.

It is clear from the photographs of both Princesses during the war that their clothes were typical of the somewhat drab utility clothing worn by most women. Like everyone else they were 'making do', as Cecil Beaton discovered when he photographed Elizabeth just before her nineteenth birthday: 'I was bidden to the Palace to see the Princess' dresses, which were hung for display around the walls of her bedroom. Of all those we

photographed ... the most successful was the pink spangled crinoline which was one of her mother's pre-war dresses, now altered to fit the daughter.'



A six-year-old Princess Elizabeth and her two-year-old sister Princess Margaret develop their love of horses in their maternal grandparents home in August 1932, Margaret is still in white, but Elizabeth has graduated into print dresses.



Norman Hartnell's very first design for Princess Elizabeth was a bridesmaid dress when she was just nine years old. Queen Mary declared: 'We are very pleased. We think everything is very, very pretty.'



King George VI and Queen Elizabeth take eleven-year-old Elizabeth and seven-year-old Margaret for a Coronation concert devised for the Princesses.



Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret in the garden of the Royal Lodge Windsor, with their mother in June 1936. The girls wear lace-fronted dresses in the Bavarian style that was still acceptable pre-war.



Princess Elizabeth, pictured here with her father the Duke of York, acted as bridesmaid to her uncle, the Duke of Kent and Princess Marina of Greece in November 1934.



According to Marion Crawford, there was only one issue with the Coronation clothes: 'We had one scene when Margaret found Lilibet was to wear a little train, while she had none.' Both wear cloaks edged in ermine. Both Princesses wear pearl necklaces, gifts from their grandfather King George V: Elizabeth's has three strings to Margaret's two.



The fifteen-year-old Princess Elizabeth is photographed with her sister Princess Margaret and their dog Chung at the Royal Lodge, Windsor, on 11 April 1942. The Princesses wore almost identical outfits two years earlier to make a radio broadcast on 'Children's Hour' and we know that Margaret often wore Elizabeth's hand-me-downs.



Princess Elizabeth plays the piano at Windsor in June 1940 in a typical war-time print dress and, as usual, her younger sister had an exact replica.



Princess Elizabeth wears a nautical-inspired design on board HMS *Implacable* on a visit from HMS *Vanguard* – note her hat – on the Royal tour to South Africa in 1947.



In 1945 at eighteen years of age, Princess Elizabeth joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service. She dressed the same as everyone else, although as one fellow servicewoman commented to Brian Hoey in his book *Life with the Queen*: 'Her uniforms were better tailored than ours, and even her overalls were pressed and laundered every day.'



Princess Elizabeth was made Colonel of the Grenadier Guards in 1942. Cecil Beaton marked the occasion with a portrait of the Princess in uniform with her hat worn at a jaunty angle. The hat caused a sensation, it was widely copied and 'The Princess Hat', as it was known, became a bestseller.



Dispelling the myth that Royalty never wear the same dress twice, Princess Elizabeth first appeared in the above dress on the Royal tour of South Africa and later wore it in some of her engagement pictures as well as in this formal portrait, suggesting it was a favourite dress.



Princess Elizabeth is photographed in 1945 by Cecil Beaton in a Norman Hartnell dress. It was originally made for her mother pre-war but, in the spirit of 'make do and mend', was altered by Hartnell to fit her.



Originally published in *Picture Post*, this photograph of Princess Elizabeth arriving at Westminster Abbey shows her being fussed over by her bridesmaids like any other bride.

# WIFE

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'THE GOLDEN RULE IN ROYAL DRESSING IS THAT CLOTHES MUST BE COMFORTABLE, BECOMING AND ACCEPTABLE. THE FIRST CANON OF GOOD TASTE IS TO DRESS IN A WAY THAT IS FITTING FOR THE OCCASION. A QUEEN DOES NOT DRESS TO IMPRESS. HAVING NO SOCIAL SUPERIORS SHE DOES NOT NEED TO.'

**COLIN MCDOWELL**

# WIFE

Born in 1926, Princess Elizabeth Alexandra Mary's style was always definitively English and aristocratic, from the sensible coats worn for public occasions, to the formal dress she wore for her father's Coronation in 1937, she was never fussy, flouncy or overdressed. Nonetheless, the young Princess learned early that hats and crowns were an essential feature of her wardrobe.

According to Marion Crawford in her book *The Little Princesses*, it was not until the year before she became engaged that Princess Elizabeth was allowed, for the first time, to select her own dresses: 'Lilibet's taste in clothes followed her mother's closely. She chose mostly pastel shades, and was from the very first attached to silk or thin wool frocks, with coats that matched exactly. For evening frocks she mostly chose very full skirts of the picture kind. Wisely, for these suit her admirably.' As a teenager Lilibet's clothes were made by Miss Ford of Handley Seymour, who also made Queen Mary's clothes. Norman Hartnell, who was to be commissioned to create Princess Elizabeth's wedding dress, was already a favourite with both her mother and her grandmother. The simple cream dress that Princess Elizabeth wore for her official engagement photographs (see [here](#)) could easily have belonged to her mother, so similar was the style. But fashion in the post-war days was austere, and it was a look that was to dominate until the launch of Dior's New Look in Paris, 1949.

When it came to the wedding dress, however, Princess Elizabeth was very much in charge. A number of designers were selected to submit sketches for the wedding, planned for 20 November, 1947. In August, Hartnell heard that one of his designs had been selected from the twelve he had submitted, leaving him with under three months to complete the dress. This was a time of rationing and Princess Elizabeth had famously saved up her ration coupons for the occasion. Hartnell ordered the silk satin he

required to make the dress from a Scottish firm, but questions were immediately asked of the prime minister as to the provenance of the worms used to make the silk. There was concern so soon after the war that the nationality of the silkworms might be from unpatriotic sources, such as Italy or Japan, but Hartnell was able to allay fears with the information that the dress fabric was made from: 'Chinese worms – from Nationalist China', while the silk for the train was woven by Kentish silkworms.



One of a series of engagement photographs of Princess Elizabeth and Lt. Philip Mountbatten on 11 July 1947. The Princess was allotted an extra 100 clothing coupons for her wedding, with bridesmaids and pages also being given extra coupons for their clothes.

Embroidery was a feature of Hartnell designs and obtaining the required pearls for the wedding dress caused the couturier something of a headache. Hartnell's manager, Captain Mitchison, was despatched to the United States and when asked on his return if he had anything to declare, whispered that he had: 'ten thousand pearls for the wedding dress of

Princess Elizabeth'. The pearls were held at customs until the duty was paid. Hartnell, with his head-embroideress, traced out the intricate embroidery pattern by hand in pencil on 15 yards (13.7 metres) of tracing paper. Hartnell observed: 'Wherever there was space or a weakness of design I drew more wheat, more leaves, more blossom of orange, syringa or jasmine.' Three hundred and fifty women worked on the dress for seven weeks to have it ready in time. It was delivered to the palace in a 4 feet (1.2 metre) square box the night before the wedding.

The dress was described in an official press release: 'A Princess Gown of Ivory Duchesse satin, cut on classic lines with fitted bodice, long tight sleeves and full falling skirt. The broad heart-shaped neckline of the bodice is delicately embroidered with seed pearls and crystal in a floral design. From the painted waistline, formed by a girdle of pearl and embroidered star flowers, the swirling skirt is hand embroidered in a design inspired by the paintings of Botticelli, representing garlands of White York Roses carried out in raised pearls entwined with ears of corn minutely embroidered in crystals and oat-shaped pearls. Alternating between the garlands of roses and wheat, and forming a final border around the entire hem of the skirt, are bands of orange blossom and star flowers appliqué with transparent tulle bordered with seed pearls and crystals.

A full court-train, 15 feet (4.5 metre) long, of transparent ivory silk tulle attached to the shoulders, is edged with graduated satin flowers, finally forming the deep border at the end of the fan-shaped train. A reversed type of embroidery, as used on the Wedding Gown, is here employed on the train by the use of appliqué satin star flowers, roses and wheat, further encrusted with pearl and crystal embroideries. A voluminous Bridal Veil of crisp white tulle is held by a tiara of pearls and diamonds.'



Princess Elizabeth arrives at Westminster Abbey on 20 November 1947, with her father, George VI, for her wedding to Lt. Philip Mountbatten (who was given the title Duke of Edinburgh). Norman Hartnell observed of his commission to design Princess Elizabeth's wedding dress: 'I hoped this would be the most beautiful dress I had ever made.' The Princess wore the historic Hanoverian diamond fringe tiara, inherited from George III.



In July 1951 Princess Elizabeth took the place of her father on a visit to Canada and the United States and, along with Philip (the Duke of Edinburgh), indulged in some square dancing at Ottawa Government House – the Royal dressers rushed to buy a circle skirt for Princess Elizabeth and a checked shirt and jeans for Philip – a price tag was in evidence revealing the hasty purchase.



The Princess in a cotton print dress and straw hat on a warm July day in 1951, note her favoured peep-toe, white platform shoes, with ankle straps.

On her feet the Princess wore open-toed, platform shoes, covered in the same material as the dress. The heels were higher than she usually wore and the silver buckles on the shoes were studded with tiny pearls.

Yvonne, the *vendeuse* at Hartnell, who went to help Princess Elizabeth into her dress, later reported that a last-minute panic had ensued when the bride's bouquet of white orchids had gone missing. Neither bride nor King knew where it was, a footman remembered receiving it, but most of the palace staff had been allowed to wait in the forecourt to see the bride leave. It was eventually uncovered in the porter's lodge where it had been left to keep cool. There was a similar upset over a missing pearl necklace that had been sent to St James's Palace by mistake to be displayed among the wedding gifts. Princess Elizabeth's Private Secretary was sent to retrieve it, but the policemen on duty at St James's were not convinced by his tale. Eventually, they were persuaded to return to Buckingham Palace with him to ensure that he was not a jewel thief.

The bride and groom departed on their honeymoon to Broadlands in the early evening in a chilly, open-topped landau that was to take them past cheering crowds to Victoria station. Princess Elizabeth wore a powder-blue crepe, going-away dress and coat, also by Hartnell, which was topped off with a feathered blue beret by Thaarup. She was pregnant within three months of the marriage.

It is easy to forget, with all the fashion furore surrounding today's younger Royals, that this young couple provoked just as much excitement. Prince Philip told Gyles Brandreth that in the 1950s he and the Queen were subject to: 'such adulation – you wouldn't believe it, you really wouldn't', and he went on to describe the Queen as 'the world's sweetheart' with huge crowds fighting to catch a glimpse of her.

The Queen's husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, died on 9 April, 2021. He had reached the age of 99 and the couple had been married for 73 years. He pledged his allegiance to his wife at her coronation as her: 'liege man of life and limb and earthly worship'. Though he lived his life largely in the shadow of the Queen, he was quietly the best-dressed royal of his time. As the *New York Times* stated after his death, the Duke showed up for 22,219 solo appearances on behalf of the Queen during his public career. Like her, he was never underdressed for a single one of them.



Two stunning designs for the Queen from Hardy Amies.



Queen Elizabeth wore one to make her first live Christmas broadcast on television on 25 December 1957.



Queen Elizabeth meets Marilyn Monroe at the 1956 Royal Film Performance of *The Battle for River Plate*, in a dramatic, black velvet dress by Hartnell that showcases her fabulous jewellery. It was unusual for the Queen to wear black, but Hartnell wanted Her Majesty to outshine the film stars and not compete with them for glittering effect.



Princess Elizabeth photographed at Clarence House, her marital home, in 1951, in a tulle and lace crinoline with silver thread by Norman Hartnell. In the same year, President Truman commented: 'When I was a little boy, I read about a fairy princess, and there she is.' Her sapphire necklace and earrings, part of the King George VI Victorian Suite, were a wedding gift from her proud father.



The Queen wears a hat of artificial leaves and berries and Queen Victoria's diamond stud earrings at a garden party at Freetown, Sierra Leone in November 1961.

# HATS

The Queen was very rarely seen without a hat, indeed it was such a significant feature that bookies took bets on what colour hat she would wear for each day of Ascot, as well as at Royal weddings. For this reason, nobody knew what hat she would select for these occasions until she appeared on the day.

Initially hats were an issue between couturier and dresser, for they were commissioned separately; Bobo (see [here](#)) wanted to retain control and used to remind couturiers that they were *only* responsible for the clothes, while she controlled the total ensemble. It took gentle pressure from the couturiers over the years for hats to be considered as part of the complete outfit and designed and made alongside the couture clothes.

Aage Thaarup, who was a favourite milliner of the Queen Mother, made many hats for the Queen in the 1940s and 1950s until he went bankrupt. Freddie Fox was asked to make a hat for Queen Elizabeth for the first time in late 1969 for a trip to Argentina and Chile. 'I made the hats myself, six designs', Freddie explains, 'without telling anyone else what the commission was. Miss MacDonald (Bobo) and Miss Betty, from Amies, had a conference and finally gave me the head measurement. I'd only seen the Queen once and I worked with a postage stamp stuck to the workbench so that I could visualize her facial proportions.'

The Queen's hats needed to function perfectly. She was known to take her milliners down to the Royal car to show them the problems she experienced getting in and out without her headwear being pushed askew. She would also sit in the car to show them where her head rested, for she needed to remain looking immaculate at all times. Other royal milliners included Simone Mirman for Hartnell, Freddie Fox for Amies, Valerie for Ian Thomas, Philip Somerville and, in later years, Rachel Trevor-Morgan for Stuart Parvin. Milliner Stella McLaren made hats in-house at Buckingham Palace under the watchful eye of Angela Kelly.



The Queen wears a yellow, feathered hat and yellow, square-necked dress in St Kitts, 1966.



The Queen, photographed by Eve Arnold, in a svelte pink feathered, ribbon-trimmed toque in 1966.



The Queen, at the Epsom Derby, in a stunning, white flowered toque in 1962.



The Queen wears a Rachel Trevor-Morgan hat on the third day of Royal Ascot in June, 2018.



In 1974, in the Solomon Islands on a tour of the South Pacific Islands, the Queen wears a polka-dot hat with asymmetric feathers, by Freddie Fox.



Embracing 1970s fashion trends, the Queen wears a yellow spotted silk turban on a visit to Mexico in 1975.



Cecil Beaton's picture of Princess Elizabeth with five-week-old Prince Charles taken in December 1948. She is wearing the flower basket brooch that her parents, the King and Queen, gave to her to celebrate the birth of their first grandchild.

# MOTHER

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'THE QUEEN AND THE QUEEN MOTHER DO NOT WANT TO BE FASHION SETTERS, THAT'S LEFT TO OTHER PEOPLE WITH LESS IMPORTANT WORK TO DO. THEIR CLOTHES HAVE TO HAVE A NON SENSATIONAL ELEGANCE.'

**NORMAN HARTNELL**

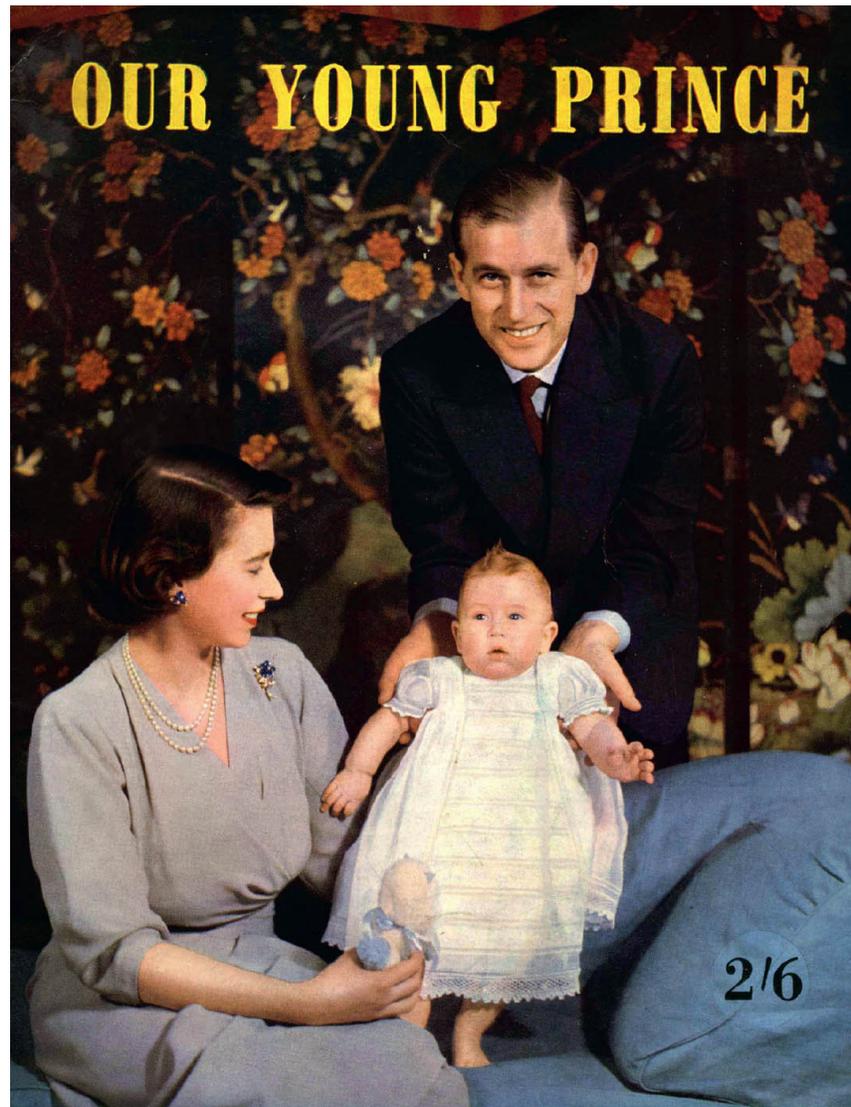
# MOTHER

The demands of being a wife, mother and Princess were considerable; nevertheless the first four years of her marriage allowed Elizabeth more personal freedom than ever before, as she was not yet burdened with affairs of state. Elizabeth and Philip were relatively carefree, but it should be remembered that they were still Royal. Prince Charles had two Scottish nurses, even though Princess Elizabeth had declared: 'I'm going to be the child's mother, not the nurses'. Nevertheless, she had to attend to Royal duties, and while she was in London during the week, Charles remained with his nurses, first at Windlesham Moor in Berkshire and later at Clarence House when it had been redecorated. His parents returned home to see him at weekends. Cecil Beaton took the official portraits of the new baby: 'The Princess, with wild-rose complexion, periwinkle-blue eyes, and a cool refreshing smile came in, followed by her nurse holding the precious bundle.'

Motherhood brought a distinct change in Princess Elizabeth's wardrobe, for the first time she stopped dressing like a mirror-image of her mother, choosing much more distinctive tailored, full-skirted suits, which highlighted her tiny waist. She dressed like some other mothers of the period in neat suits, complemented with one or two pieces of good jewellery, although perhaps her suits were rather better tailored, and her good jewellery infinitely better than most. Major Charteris, Her Majesty the Queen's Private Secretary from 1950–77, told Gyles Brandreth how she looked when he met her for the first time: 'She was wearing a blue dress and a brooch with huge sapphires. I was immediately struck by her bright blue eyes and her wonderful complexion. She was young, beautiful and dutiful. I knew at once that I would be proud to serve her.'

Phillip and Elizabeth were regarded as a magical couple; Chips Channon described seeing them at a ball at Windsor Castle at the end of

Ascot in 1949: ‘The Edinburghs made a somewhat late appearance (he had been to the Channel Islands or somewhere) and they looked divine. She wore a very high tiara and the Garter – he was in the dark blue Windsor uniform, also with the Garter. They looked like characters out of a fairy tale.’



A souvenir magazine, *Our Young Prince*, is published in April 1949 to commemorate the birth of Prince Charles on 14 November 1948. It is the first published photograph of the family altogether.

Despite being a young mother, Princess Elizabeth moved to Malta in Christmas 1949. She remained there with the Duke of Edinburgh – where

he was made Lt. Commander of the frigate HMS *Magpie* – until the summer of 1951, although repeated trips home were required. In common with many service wives, the baby was left at home. Nevertheless, she and the Duke still had a considerable retinue; Bobo her dresser, an Equerry, a lady-in-waiting, a valet for the Duke and a detective. They stayed with family; the Mountbattens, who had a butler, housekeeper, three cooks, two housemaids, six stewards and two cleaning ladies to support themselves and the young couple.

It is perhaps at this time that the Duke of Edinburgh's young wife was at her most fashionable. In 1953, Norman Hartnell designed an elegant, slim-fitting, satin dress in black, with a white panel at the front (see [here](#)). Dubbed the 'Magpie' dress by the press, it featured in most of the national papers and copies were quickly made and on sale by the next day. It was available in black and white, but also in a variety of colours, and within just a few days an impressive 120 copies had been sold. It was even turned into a paper pattern that cost the equivalent of 30p. Her Majesty never wore it again. She was also partial to Horrockses printed cotton dresses and, whenever she was photographed in one, the company would be swamped with orders.

The couturier Hardy Amies was approached by Princess Elizabeth in 1950 and described in his book, *Still Here*, how he planned to dress her in an updated New Look with shorter skirts: 'just below the knee or certainly just above the calf ... I already had the idea that royalty should be dressed like royalty, so I used rich materials. I also wanted to get away from the cliché of the pale-blue dress; at the same time blue was obviously going to be the Princesses's [sic] great colour, dictated by those oversized blue eyes.'

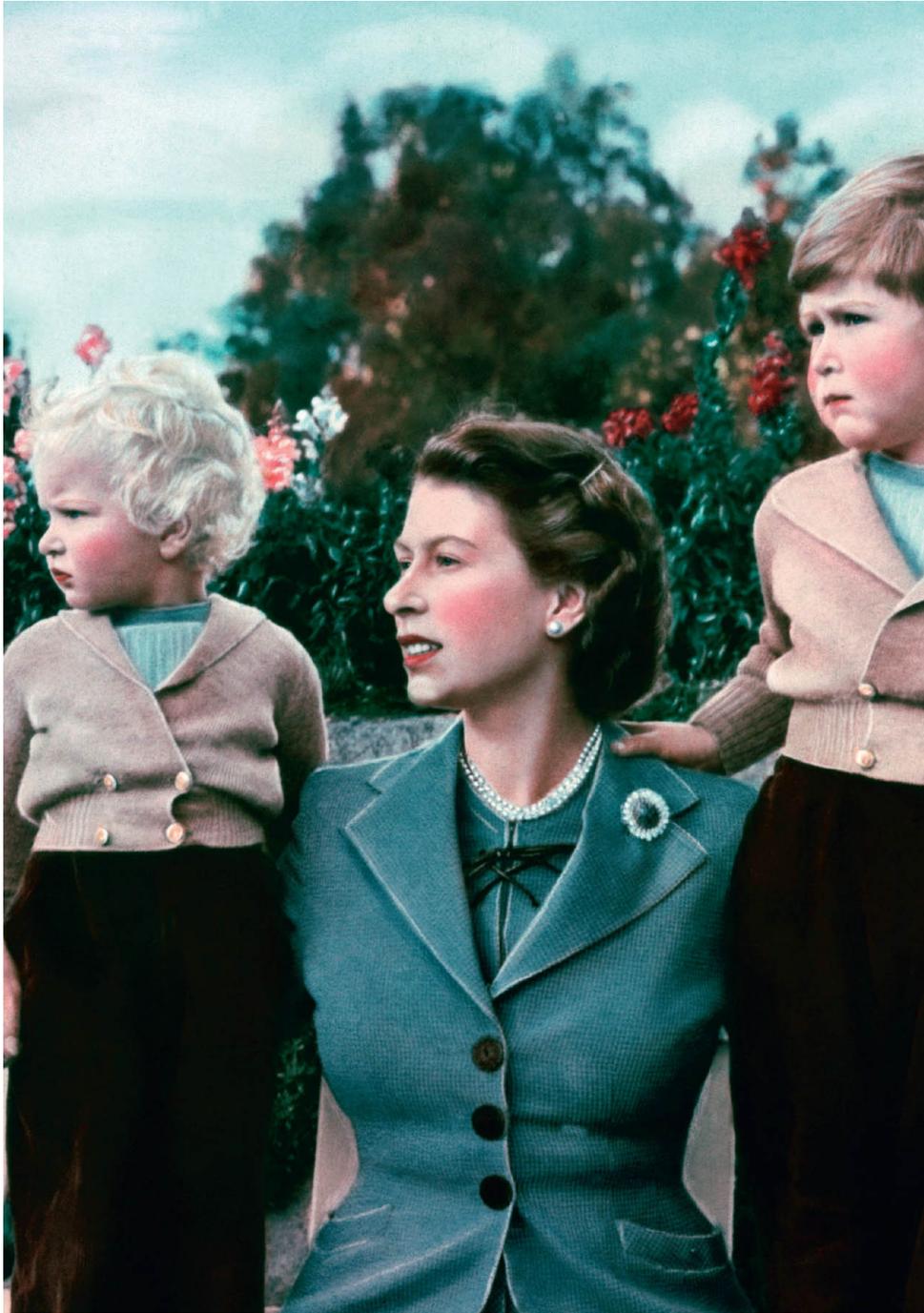
Over the same period, Princess Elizabeth also received the first criticism of her clothes. While sporting a temporarily fuller figure, as many young mothers do after the birth of their children, the American press accused her of being frumpish and the French press maintained that Englishwomen can look pretty, but never chic.



Princess Elizabeth and Princess Anne in an official christening portrait, October 1950. Elizabeth is in a tailored print dress, her diamond and sapphire brooch was her first official gift at the launch of the ship *British Princess* in 1946. Anne wears the Honiton lace robe, worn by members of the Royal family since 1841.



Princess Elizabeth in pale-blue organza with Princess Anne in 1951.



Queen Elizabeth in a beautiful tailored suit, with her children Charles and Anne at Balmoral in September 1952. The children are dressed identically, as she and her sister were.



Queen Elizabeth in a glamorous, full-skirted, typically 1950s, silk frock, wearing the two-string pearl necklace that was originally part of the Hanoverian collection, and the Williamson pink diamond, which was made into a flower brooch in 1953, pictured here in December 1954. Charles and Anne are now dressed individually – Anne is in traditional girlish pink party frills and wears her mother's original pearl necklace.



The Royal family on a visit to Kincleven Church, Meiklous, Perthshire in October 1955. The Queen is wearing a slim-skirted, tailored suit and heels, despite the rough terrain.



The Queen favoured full-skirted, summer dresses for casual wear, as seen here at a polo match in Windsor with her family in June 1956. She frequently wore off-the-peg Horrockses designs, which sold out the moment she was seen in them, though hers were actually made-to-measure for her.



Queen Elizabeth, in a tailored, full-skirted, floral suit, with Princess Anne in candy stripes at Windsor in May 1959.



Queen Elizabeth photographed at Windsor Castle for the September issue of *Tatler*, 1962. Note the ever present handbag at her side. Her Majesty was reputed to own some 200 handbags, which she used again and again. Launer had the royal warrant to supply her handbags for over forty years.



A silver wedding anniversary photograph by Lord Lichfield in 1972 shows the Royal Family on holiday in Balmoral, relaxed in tartan.

# TARTAN



The Royal Family always made a point of wearing Scottish tartans and tweeds to emphasize their heritage and home connections. The Balmoral Tartan, designed for Queen Victoria, should only be worn by the Royal Family. Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret in the garden of the Royal Lodge, Windsor, in 1936, in typical play clothes of the time; short wool sweaters teamed with a kilt, white socks and sensible lace-up shoes.



Thirty-five years later, Queen Elizabeth is in much the same clothes and still in the company of corgis, here at Garbh Allt burn on the Balmoral estate, September 1971.



The Royal Family feature on the cover of *Woman's Own* magazine, April 1953, giving some heavy support to the Scottish textile industry.



Queen Elizabeth in an exquisitely tailored, full-skirted, wool coat, is pictured with the Lady Mayoress on a visit to Berwick-on-Tweed in June 1958.

# DAY TO DAY

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'I AM ONLY ONE OF THREE DESIGNERS WHO SUPPLY CLOTHES TO THE QUEEN. EVEN MY THIRD OF THE WARDROBE TAKES SO MUCH TIME TO FIT THAT THERE IS OFTEN GREAT DIFFICULTY IN FINDING TIME TO SQUEEZE THE FITTINGS INTO THE QUEEN'S BUSY DIARY.'

**HARDY AMIES**



Since her accession to the throne in 1952, Queen Elizabeth had to deal with her red boxes of state papers, she was designated 'Reader No. 1' and briefed on international matters as well as domestic politics. Even at work in the palace in 1958, she was a picture of timeless elegance in a dress that could be by contemporary designer Roland Mouret.

# DAY TO DAY

The Queen required more clothes in a year than most of us do in a lifetime. Four or five changes per day were not unusual and her schedule was daunting. She attended church services, presented honours, visited hospitals, schools and factories, entertained visiting dignitaries and hosted banquets, as well as carrying out all her other daily, weekly and annual duties.

For the first 50 years of her reign, when new clothes were required, the Queen's dresser simply telephoned the couturier of choice and put in a request for designs. Further information as to precisely what functions the clothes were needed for would not be forthcoming.

The practice of either supplying, or withholding, relevant detail seemed dependent upon the dresser in charge. Bobo used to brief designers but, in other instances, designers were left to work in the dark. 'We would receive a call from the dresser to say that the Queen would like to see some sketches – and that would be it, no more information', observes one couturier. 'We would speak to our PR and he would contact the palace press office, they in turn would speak to the Ladies-in-Waiting and try to glean what was going on. Was a tour planned and if so where and what time of year? For a designer it was so frustrating, you felt you could never do your best – it would have been so much better to have been given a brief, but we were never given one.'

If the house had established that a tour was scheduled then it could set about designing appropriately, although more generic designs would also be included. Creating couture design is an elaborate and time-consuming process, requiring careful planning and numerous fittings. It produces a custom-made garment, painstakingly constructed to conceal any physical flaws. Couture houses that worked with Her Majesty over a long period of time would have had a *vendeuse* who acted as overseer to the whole process. The in-house design team swung into action to create designs, these would be pored over and fine-tuned in conversations with the Queen's *vendeuse* and the couturier, fabrics selected or specially called in.

'Everyone would put in their two pennorth...' noted a designer who worked

for Hardy Amies. 'In those days we would call in an illustrator to produce polished drawings from our rough sketches. Then the *vendeuse* would call to ask for an appointment to meet the Queen.'

The next stage in the process would be for the couturier and the *vendeuse* to attend the palace with designs for Her Majesty to make a selection. 'The Queen went through the sketches very deliberately and sometimes asked for more information', a couturier explained. 'She then repeated the process indicating which designs she had selected. She was very quick and decisive.' If the couturier was regularly commissioned by Her Majesty, then garments in various stages of construction would also be fitted at the same appointment. Fitting each ensemble could take between 15 and 30 minutes.

Once the designs had been selected, work could begin. Couture houses kept a mannequin for the Queen's clothes. At Amies, this was known as 'The Queen's Dummy' and was adjusted to reflect her changing shape over the years. It was her to her credit that one couturier noted: 'She remains pretty stable and is wonderfully upright, but occasionally we would have a bit of a panic in the taxi after a fitting because her shape had altered.'<sup>3</sup>

At Hardy Amies, the Queen had her own dressmaker, Miss Lillian, and tailor, Mr Michael, who cut the toiles – fabric mock-ups, often constructed in cotton calico, for the first fitting and sometimes lined for comfort. This was a prudent practice because if fabric was expensive, which in couture it generally is, no risks can be taken with the actual cloth. By the second fitting, the garment was constructed in its correct fabric and fine-tuned for perfect fit. The *vendeuse* would contact a selected milliner, indicating the design and fabric chosen, so that they could also attend the second fitting with a selection of hats for consideration. At the third and final fitting, the dress should not require any adjustments, save the hem, and Her Majesty could try on the completed design with her choice of shoes, bag and hat to ensure that everything worked.

One *vendeuse* noted: 'Fittings were always very easy. She was marvellous to deal with and amazingly patient. Everything was always laid on beautifully for us – it was a joy and an honour to look after her.' Standing, being fitted, fussed over and pinned is a very wearing process.

Several couturiers confirmed that the Queen tested her clothes out carefully at fittings. And while Her Majesty the Queen was always observed to be appreciative, there was generally no feedback from her.

Fittings were a daunting process and most couturiers and milliners confirmed that the first visit was terrifying. Frederick Fox explained that he was carefully briefed by Hardy Amies in advance: ‘*Don’t touch the Queen, don’t ask questions and don’t turn your back*’, he was instructed. Come the day, ‘the Queen was standing at the end of a long room, I advanced, did my chat and my thing. When it was time to depart I was rooted to the spot, I thought that if I walked backwards I would fall over the furniture or one of the corgis. Her Majesty spotted my dilemma and turned her back on me to ask Bobo to fetch some specific shoes – giving me the opportunity to withdraw.’



Norman Hartnell designed this coat of white grosgrain, edged with navy blue. It was first worn by Her Majesty at the Coronation Review of the Fleet at Spithead, and then later, here, in Wales in 1953.

Bobo, described in her obituary in the *Guardian* in September 1993 as ‘the scourge of milliners and couturiers’, curtailed the influence of designers, ensuring that no single couture house could exert a monopoly. She made it clear that while they designed the dresses, the accessories – shoes, handbags and hats – were commissioned by her. Hardy Amies, complained bitterly about ugly handbags, stating plainly that they were ruining his beautiful designs. He, along with other couturiers, adopted the practice of giving Her Majesty tastefully chosen handbags as Christmas presents in the hope they might be utilised.

Most couturiers maintained a record of everything they made for Her Majesty. At Hardy Amies, this item was commonly known as The Queen’s Book: ‘this was my bible’, one *vendeuse* explains. ‘It contained a record of everything that was made and when. It detailed the fabric, where it came from, and for reference purposes fabric swatches were pinned in. This was necessary because we might make a coat and dress for her, the dress might be in silk, and three years later she might ask for another dress to be made to go with the coat and I had all the relevant information. The book was very precious.’

But the privilege of servicing the Queen came at a cost: as one couturier observed: ‘Just in man hours it was terribly expensive – four members of staff out of the office all afternoon, sometimes on a weekly basis, let alone the extra care and effort that was put into every single stitch of each and every garment. There was an enormous pride in the house that we were making things for the Queen, it was a huge privilege, but with that privilege came a lot of responsibility and those expenses had to get absorbed.’ It is perhaps worth noting that it was not unknown for the Queen’s suppliers to go out of business.

In later years, Angela Kelly and the in-house team designed and made many outfits for Her Majesty, as well as maintaining her entire wardrobe. The process was much the same, although the in-house team had the advantage of more inside information. Angela Kelly continued to commission other couturiers and introduced Stuart Parvin to Her Majesty.



The Queen is a perfect 1950s fashion plate in a tiny hat and voluminous duster coat on a visit to a war veteran in Scotland in July 1953.



Princess Elizabeth receives the Freedom of the City of London in her first significant unaccompanied ceremony on 11 June 1947. The floral dress is typically 1940s post-war utilitarian in style.



The Queen inspects the Grenadier Guards, July 1968, in a masterly piece of crisp tailoring, possibly by Hardy Amies.



Queen Elizabeth talks to Dr Adenauer, the West German Chancellor, at Windsor Castle in April 1958. Her exquisite embroidered evening gown shows off her tiny waist. The politician Richard Crossman described her as: 'this little woman with the beautiful waist'.



The Hartnell 'Maggie' dress in black and white satin, that Her Majesty wore to a Royal Command Film Performance of the musical *Because You're Mine* at Leicester Square, 1953. The dress was copied and in the shops within twenty-four hours. (See [here](#).)



The Queen takes a good look at the parade of the Oaks runners dressed in an immaculate dress and coat suit with feathered hat, in June 1962.



Visiting Ventnor on the Isle of Wight, in 1965, the Queen wears a perfectly tailored pink ensemble elevated to a distinctive style statement with this bold choice of hat.



The Queen, photographed in 1976, displays typical 1970s fashion detailing, including a large teardrop collar and waist belt. The same coat was worn to Lord Lichfield's wedding a year earlier. She also wears Empress Marie Feodorovna of Russia's cabochon sapphire, diamond and pearl brooch.



Queen Elizabeth in a slim, blue, tailored suit, with matching feathered hat and black accessories, arrives at a wet Aberdeen airport, complete with corgis, to start her holidays at Balmoral in 1972.



Queen Elizabeth was often described as a countrywoman at heart, certainly her off-duty wardrobe combined all the finest aspects of country style: tailored tweeds, quilted jackets, simple knitwear and the perennial favourite, the silk square. Here the Queen watches Prince Philip driving Four-In-Hand at the Windsor Horse Show in 1984.



The Queen at Balmoral in her beautifully tailored riding clothes.



Queen Elizabeth leaves a Service of Celebration to mark 400 years of the King James Bible, held at Westminster Abbey in November 2011. Her Majesty wears a cream, raised woven fabric coat designed by her Senior Dresser, Angela Kelly. The matching hat is by Rachel Trevor-Morgan.



Queen Elizabeth wears a couture design by Sandra Murray for the opening of the Scottish Parliament in July 1999. The silk and wool frockcoat is worn over a wool-crepe dress overlaid with lace. The Isle of Skye tartan plaid is secured by Her Majesty's Oban brooch. The hat is by Philip Somerville; the gloves, shoes and bag were specially made to match – the breakaway ensemble was hailed as a style triumph.



Angela Kelly designed this elegant, Wedgwood-inspired ensemble that the Queen wore to a Service of Thanksgiving in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, in Northern Ireland, as part of her Diamond Jubilee Tour in 2012.



In 2018 the Queen attended London Fashion Week and stole the show in a Chanel-inspired pale blue wool suit, designed by Angela Kelly. Its trim was decorated with aquamarine Swarovski crystals.

# SHOES

The family firm of Rayne first acquired a Royal Warrant in 1936, courtesy of Queen Mary, an honour that was to be repeated by Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother and Queen Elizabeth. Rayne shoes were delicate, beautifully designed and, this was key, exquisitely comfortable; a major consideration for royalty who spent long hours on their feet.

After the Second World War, when Edward Rayne joined the company, it became the most glamorous shoe brand in Europe, supplying the likes of Marlene Dietrich, Elizabeth Taylor, Vivien Leigh and Diana Rigg, as well as the Royal family. Rayne worked with designers such as Roger Vivier, Jean Muir, Mary Quant, Bill Gibb and Bruce Oldfield, in addition to both British and French couturiers.

Edward Rayne caused royal consternation early in his career on a trip to New York in 1947 when he accidentally revealed Her Majesty's shoe size to a journalist at a cocktail party; a detail deemed so fascinating that it was splashed across newspapers in the United States and Britain. Mr Rayne was summoned to the palace and asked how he could have been so indiscreet. Nevertheless, he must have been forgiven for he continued to make shoes for the Queen for forty years. He made her wedding shoes – three pairs were produced in case of disaster – and her Coronation shoes, which were designed by Roger Vivier at Her Majesty's special request.

Edward Rayne attended the Queen four to six times a year, generally when shoes were required for tours or state occasions, and these were carefully created to complement the couturier's designs, as the selection of sketches for a tour of Holland in 1958 (opposite) indicates. Nevertheless, Her Majesty was no Imelda Marcos; shoes were carefully looked after and worn as long as practical, although there were occasional problems, as any dog owner will know to their cost. Her Majesty's corgis were no exception and the Queen would occasionally produce a pair with a chewed heel and

ask Mr Rayne if he might be able repair the problem. Angela Kelly, who had the same size feet as the Queen, wore in new shoes for Her Majesty. In her book *The Other Side of the Coin*, Kelly reported: ‘The Queen has very little time to herself, and no time to wear in her own shoes.’



Rayne was one of the most celebrated British shoe designers. The company produced shoes for Wallis Simpson, Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother, Princess Margaret, Princess Anne and Princess Diana as well as Her Majesty. The sketches pictured here were made for Queen Elizabeth's Tour of Holland in 1958.



Her Majesty arrives at Westminster Abbey for her Coronation on 2 June 1953.

# STATE OCCASIONS

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'SHE DID NOT FIND IT DEMEANING TO BE A DOLL DRESSED FOR HER SUBJECTS' PLEASURE. SHE SAW IT AS THE ESSENCE OF HER JOB. THE HOLY PUPPET CLOTHED IN MAGIC ROBES FOR THE PEOPLES' COMFORT WENT BACK TO THE VERY ROOTS OF PRIMEVAL MONARCHY.'

**ROBERT LACEY**

# STATE OCCASIONS

The Queen began her reign on 6 February 1952 in an outfit none of us associate with her. She was in Sagana Lodge in Kenya when she was given the news that her father had died. She had been up since dawn, watching the wildlife, and was wearing jeans. Still in jeans when she left the Lodge for Nanyuki to start the long journey home, she flew from here to Entebbe where the Royal party were reunited with the rest of the luggage, which had been flown up from Mombasa – including the black mourning clothes that had been packed by Bobo to guard against this very eventuality. She emerged from the aircraft, a small figure in black, and was met on the tarmac at Heathrow by Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

In October 1952, Her Majesty asked Norman Hartnell to design her Coronation gown. She requested a dress in white satin that conformed in line to that of her wedding gown. After exhaustive research, Hartnell offered eight designs ranging from severe to elaborate. The eighth sketch utilized national emblems: the Tudor Rose, the shamrock, the thistle and the daffodil, although Hartnell learned, to his despair, that the leek, not the daffodil, was the national emblem of Wales. His design was amended accordingly and the Queen requested that the emblems of all her dominions should also be included: the maple leaf, the fern, acacia, protea, lotus, wheat, cotton and jute. The final ninth design and sample embroideries were deemed to be perfect, save that the green used for the shamrock should be more subdued.

The emblems were embroidered in pale silk and highlighted with pearls, crystals and opals to create an iridescent sheen. Unknown to the Queen, Hartnell added one small detail of his own, on the left-hand side of the skirt he had one four-leafed shamrock embroidered for luck. The garment was technically difficult to make and the stiff, bejewelled and weighty skirt would not move correctly, so it was lined with cream taffeta, and reinforced

with three layers of horsehair crinoline, to give a dignified gentle movement. At the final fitting, Her Majesty's verdict was: 'Glorious', but she warned Cecil Beaton, who was to take the official photographs, that: 'There are layers upon layers: skirt and mantle and trains.' The dress weighed an impressive 30 lb (13.6 kg). Hartnell also designed a 'simple' white lawn gown, with a deep collar, a bodice hand-tucked on the cross, and a sunray pleated skirt. This garment, required for the Anointing ceremony, slipped over Her Majesty's Coronation gown and fastened simply at the back.



The shimmering opulence of the Coronation gown stunned onlookers. The glittering Imperial State Crown is set with 2,873 diamonds, 273 pearls, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds and five rubies.



The Coronation Dress, seen in isolation at an exhibition in 2015, is a glittering work of art, armoured with embroidery.

The Queen rehearsed in the State Ballroom with sheets attached to her shoulders, to simulate the weight of her robes. She also rehearsed wearing the heavy, 5 lb (2.2 kg) St Edward's Crown, as she had seen her father do before her. Hartnell's gown was deemed to be a masterpiece. In his book,

*The Strenuous Years*, Cecil Beaton described the impact the Queen had at her Coronation: ‘The cheeks are sugar-pink: her hair tightly curled around the Victorian diadem of precious stones straight on her brow. Her pink hands are folded meekly on the elaborate grandeur of her encrusted skirt; she is still a young girl with a demeanour of simplicity and humility. Perhaps her mother has taught her never to use a superfluous gesture. As she walks she allows her heavy skirt to swing backwards and forwards in a beautiful rhythmic effect. This girlish figure has enormous dignity; she belongs in this scene of almost Byzantine magnificence.’

State occasions represented an opportunity for her Majesty to wear her most ornate evening gowns, and her best jewellery. At the end of a state occasion she used to remark to Bobo, her dresser, ‘I gave them my best bits’, referring to her jewellery. In addition to the jewels, there may well have been insignia: Orders, Collars, Badges and Garter sashes, which had been known to cause a sartorial crisis – the most notable occasion being in Japan when an emerald green dress was teamed with a red sash, edged in blue. The Queen often wore Royal Family Orders pinned to her sash; a family tradition, started by George IV, of wearing miniatures of each other.

These most formal of occasions also saw the Queen in full dress uniform; she was Colonel-in-chief of the Household regiments and had a critical eye for accuracy in military apparel. Official robes, such as the heavy Garter robes worn at the Celebration of the Solemnity of the Garter, were maintained and only occasionally replaced. At the State Opening of Parliament, Her Majesty wore the Parliament Robe of State and donned the Imperial State Crown. She was reputed to be happier in uniform than any other style of dress. An ex-courtier told Ben Pimlott: ‘She used to be fanatical about getting into training for Trooping the Colour. Two months beforehand, she would start losing weight because she had to fit into the uniform.’



The Queen attends Trooping the Colour ceremony in June 1951, riding side saddle. Her uniform and riding skirt were made by Bernard Weatherill.



The Queen wears the insignia and mantle of the Order of the Garter – the oldest Order of Chivalry in Britain – in the annual Garter service in June at St George's Chapel, Windsor. The robes were made by Ede & Ravenscroft on Savile Row.



The Queen wears a magnificent white and silver beaded dress in her Coronation Year, 1953. She is wearing the Order of the Garter, the oldest Order of Chivalry in the world, as well as the Royal Family Orders; miniatures of her father and grandfather set in diamonds on pieces of moiré silk.



Queen Elizabeth loved Karsh Yousef's photographs of her, describing them as 'delicious'. Here she is wearing an embroidered duchesse satin dress, with asymmetric neckline, by Norman Hartnell.



Norman Hartnell and Hardy Amies together created such a strong image for the Queen that it was sometimes hard to tell whose designs were whose. Compare the stunning illustration of a Hardy Amies design for the Royal tour of Canada in 1959.



Hartnell's slim-fitting dress with tulle, fan-tailed bustle worn in New York in October 1957 – later in the evening, it sparkled magnificently under the Kleig runway lights as the Queen departed by plane.



The dress and mantle that the Queen wore for the Order of the British Empire Dedication Ceremony was designed for her in 1960. Instituted by King George V in 1917, the ceremonial attire had only been worn by kings and was unsuitable for the Queen. Students from the Royal College of Art were asked to produce designs and one by Marion Foale, later part of the design duo Tuffin and Foale, was selected. Fastening with a practical zip, it was still used until the end of her reign.



Lord Lichfield took this photograph of Queen Elizabeth leaving Buckingham Palace in the Irish State Coach on the way to the State Opening of Parliament in 1971. She is wearing a Hartnell, mink-trimmed, silver and white coat created for her state visit to France in 1972. Four different dresses were made to go underneath it.

# FURS



The Queen arrives at a Royal Variety Performance in 1960 in a curved and shaped fur stole, which she wore repeatedly throughout her reign. Princess Elizabeth was brought up wearing furs in the days when it was socially acceptable to do so. In 2019, it was revealed that the Queen stopped wearing real fur.



On a tour of India in 1961 she gave a speech to an estimated crowd of 250,000 in Old Delhi.



Queen Elizabeth, in a chic yellow dress and flowerpot hat, is protected from the sun under a giant umbrella in Ghana, November 1960.

# ON TOUR

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'SHE DOESN'T DO FASHION – SHE IS THE LAST ONE INTO A FASHION AND THE LAST ONE OUT OF IT, BUT HER APPEARANCE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HER AND SHE IS VERY DEVOTED TO HER JOB.'

**FREDERICK FOX**

# ON TOUR

The work and planning that went into any Royal tour was phenomenal, each requiring months of preparation seeing every detail of the trip organised and timed. Clothes were specially commissioned and, while these may have been worn to a vast array of functions for years afterwards, it would be considered undiplomatic if they were not brand new for the tour. The Queen and her clothes needed to complement her hosts, as well as being respectful of the culture and local conventions. In advance of a trip to Saudi Arabia in February 1970, the Queen wrote to Hardy Amies: ‘I’m told “no bare flesh” is the main concern’, so Amies dutifully concealed her arms and legs.

Once everything was finalised, the details were printed in a small, pocket-sized booklet called *The Blue Book* – known unofficially as ‘The Bible’. This was carried by every member of the household concerned with a visit. Every last detail was listed, including the clothes to be worn at each event. A capital letter ‘T’ beside the Queen’s name indicated that she would be wearing a tiara. Her Majesty learnt to be a master of quick changes, as many as six outfits per day could be required and she was often seen putting on her tiara in the corridor on route to her next function.

A mountain of luggage was assembled and, unlike that of film stars, it was neither elegant nor immaculate, but rather a motley assortment of trunks, cases, zip bags and hatboxes. The only single defining feature was that each bore the words ‘The Queen’ on the side. The weight must have been immense, but Her Majesty’s luggage was never weighed. Clothes were beautifully packed and sent ahead so that they were all ready and waiting on arrival. Tours were exhausting for dressers, who were permanently packing, unpacking and ironing.

The Queen’s jewellery travelled with her in a special leather case, and was the responsibility of her personal footman, who returned it to the care of the dresser at its destination. On the New Zealand leg of Her Majesty’s

first tour of the Commonwealth (1953–4), it was discovered that her jewels were missing. There was always the possibility that the bag had accidentally been put with the rest of the luggage, which was already airborne. One can only imagine the relief when, on arrival at Government House in Wellington, the jewel case was discovered, together with the rest of the household luggage.



On other women a skirt catching the breeze would count as a wardrobe malfunction, but the Queen ensured that such problems never occurred. Former couturier Maureen Rose explained the secret: 'I always put in a straight lining, fitted to the body, so that even if the dress blew up, the lining wouldn't.' Here she is returning from a visit to Canada in August 1959.



The Queen always dressed appropriately; trousers were required for a tiger shoot with King Mahendra of Nepal in March 1961, although Her Majesty did not participate.

Her Majesty's first foreign tour was a trip to South Africa and Rhodesia in 1947, until then she had not set foot outside the United Kingdom. Clothes rationing was still causing problems, so Hartnell utilized some of the her mother's pre-war clothes as material for her dresses. A rare wardrobe malfunction occurred on a trip to Cecil Rhodes' grave in the Matopos Hills, Bulawayo; the Queen Mother realised that her high-heeled, peep-toed shoes were completely unsuitable and she could not continue. Princess Elizabeth saved the day by giving her mother her own more sensible shoes, and undertaking the rest of the climb in stockinged feet.

A little over a year later, she made an unofficial visit to Paris. Her mother had scored a fashion triumph eleven years earlier wearing an all-

white wardrobe, designed by Hartnell; Princess Elizabeth and her new husband had a similar impact. At a gala evening she sparkled in a diamond tiara and necklace, a wedding gift from the Nizam of Hyderabad, and was said by her Private Secretary Jock Colville to have ‘conquered Paris’.

Just four months after the Coronation, in November 1953, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh embarked on a huge five and a half month tour of the Commonwealth. Charles and Anne were left behind. The trip included banquets, troop inspections, parliament openings and state occasions and required a huge wardrobe – 150 dresses no less – which Norman Hartnell and Hardy Amies had been commissioned to work on months in advance. The day wear was chic and discreet, evening dresses glittered with beads and embroidery. For the human touch, there were even some Horrockses ready-to-wear dresses among the couture grandeur.

The weather was always considered when clothes were prepared for Royal tours. The Queen wrote to Amies regarding a planned trip to South east Asia in 1972: ‘I find every time I read a programme for the Far East Tour, I get hotter and hotter at the prospect of six weeks in that climate.’ It was confirmed that *sousdebra*, a form of detachable underarm padding designed to absorb perspiration, was utilised in the Royal wardrobe when deemed appropriate. But, despite all this careful preparation, last-minute changes of outfit still occurred; flimsy dresses were replaced if a sudden downpour looked likely, or a tailored coat-suit abandoned in a heat wave. It is perhaps reassuring to note that despite everything, Her Majesty, like the rest of us, was still affected by the weather.

In 70 years on the throne, the Queen visited 117 countries. From 2015, she was represented by her children and grandchildren on overseas visits.



Queen Elizabeth wears Norman Hartnell's heavy, black-and-white satin 'Magpie' coat-dress for a State visit to Paris in April 1957. Dresses from Hartnell's collections were withdrawn from sale if selected by the Queen.



Hardy Amies designed this glamorous, fitted, white lace dress for the Queen's tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1953–54. It has the understated elegance of the designs favoured by Grace Kelly.



A Norman Hartnell silk dress designed for the Queen's Royal Tour of Pakistan in 1961. The waterfall of green silk is a tribute to the national flag and a reminder of the significance of the back view. Seen at the 'Fashioning A Reign' exhibition, Windsor Castle in 2016, the front is pinpricked with puncture holes from the weight of Royal insignia.



The incredible glamour of the young Queen Elizabeth won approval from the Americans in New York City in 1957.



Queen Elizabeth arrives at a state reception in Paris in April 1957, *Picture Post* reported: 'The Queen Conquers France.'



This gold-lamé and lace, one-shouldered evening was designed by Hartnell for the Queen's extended Commonwealth tour. She is pictured here in Wellington, New Zealand in 1954.



Queen Elizabeth in a stunning gold dress and hat at a costume parade in Karachi during the Royal Tour of India in January 1961.



On the same trip, the Queen wears a lavender dress and duster coat to a civic ceremony in New Delhi. All Her Majesty's gloves were supplied by Cornelia James; she could wear as many as five pairs a day. Her preference was suede fabric gloves that could be easily cleaned and dyed.



Queen Elizabeth works florals in a stunning piece of 1960s design and tailoring on a trip to Malta in November 1967.



In May 2011, the Queen travelled to the Republic of Ireland, the first visit by the British monarchy since the country had ceased to be part of the United Kingdom. Angela Kelly designed this dress, featuring 2,000 shamrocks sewn onto the bodice, one shamrock only was edged in green for luck. An Irish harp made of Swarovski crystals, was sewn onto her left shoulder. She wears Queen Mary's Girls of Great Britain and Ireland tiara and Queen Mary's diamond floret earrings.

# JEWELS



The Queen could carry off bling, which she described with delicious understatement as her 'best bits' like no one else. She held the greatest jewellery collection in the world. Aside from the Crown Jewels, of which she was custodian, she inherited, and was gifted, a priceless assortment of spectacular pieces. Much of it was accrued by Queen Victoria, Queen Alexandra, and Queen Mary, the latter collected with real passion. Only Her Majesty, and Angela Kelly, the Queen's Advisor and Curator (The Queen's Jewellery, Insignias and Wardrobe), knew its full extent. Her Majesty wears Queen Victoria's Collet and Queen Alexandra's Russian Kokoshnik Tiara, encrusted with 488 diamonds, on a State visit to Ethiopia in 1965.



The Queen wears the Cambridge Lover's Knot Tiara and Queen Victoria's Jubilee diamond and pearl necklace.



The Queen in the King George IV State Diadem en route to the Opening of Parliament, 1952.



The Queen wears the 'Scarab' brooch, a personal gift from Prince Philip in 1966. The bold design in yellow gold, by Andrew Grima, features rubies and diamonds.



The Queen's aquamarine and diamond clips were an 18th birthday gift from her parents in 1944. They could be worn as a single brooch, or matching clips.



At a state banquet in Washington DC in 2007 the Queen wears the Girls of Great Britain tiara, a wedding gift to her grandmother Princess May of Teck, and a three-strand, diamond festoon necklace, a wedding gift from her father.

On her left shoulder is the True Lover's Knot brooch, bequeathed to her by Queen Mary, as was the diamond chain link bracelet. This was owned by the Grand-Duchess Vladimir of Russia and acquired by Queen Mary on the Duchess' death in 1921.

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## Notes

1: Confidential introduction interview with couturier, see acknowledgements.

2: Confidential interview with couturier A, see acknowledgements.

4: Confidential interview with *vendeuse*, see acknowledgements.

4: Confidential interview with couturier B, see acknowledgements.

\* Most biographies of Queen Elizabeth II maintain that she received the news of the death of her father and her ascension to the throne while wearing jeans. Elizabeth Longford, who has impeccable credentials, maintains that Her Majesty was wearing a white dress.

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