

The End of an Era: Elizabeth II (1926-2022) [B1]

La morte della Regina Elisabetta II rappresenta la scomparsa di un simbolo di altri tempi. La più longeva tra i regnanti della storia britannica, era, più che una semplice governante, l'incarnazione di un'istituzione che garantiva coesione e un senso di continuità per una società che si trova immersa in una crisi di identità.



Queen Elizabeth II, who died last month, was the **longest-serving** monarch in British history, finally accumulating an incredible seventy years on the throne. Yet Elizabeth was never actually expected to become queen! When she was born in 1926, she was third in line to the throne. However, when her uncle, King Edward VIII, **unexpectedly** abdicated in 1936, her father became monarch as King George VI. Elizabeth then ascended the throne when her father died on 6 February, 1952, **aged** just fifty-six. She was **crowned** Queen on 2 June, 1953, in Westminster Abbey.

EFFECTIVE MONARCH

Elizabeth II is generally considered to have been a highly effective monarch, with some considerable **achievements**. There were also, inevitably, some

mistakes. One of her greatest [achievements](#) was something completely intangible: all these years she was a [safe harbou](#) for millions of people, someone that was always there in an [ever-changing](#) world. Her attitude was apolitical, so she rarely divided the country.

PUBLIC WORK

Elizabeth II took her public work extremely seriously. For most of her life she [carried out](#) more than four hundred public [engagements](#) every year. She was also the [patron](#) of more than six hundred British [charities](#) and organisations, and helped [raise](#) almost £1.5 billion, mostly for [charities](#) trying to reduce poverty.

ROYAL IMAGE

The Queen also [improved](#) and modernised the monarchy's public image. She made the royal family more [approachable](#). In 1969, the Queen permitted a TV [crew](#) to follow her and her family for two months. The two-hour documentary, The Royal Family, showed the royals as a family for the first time. The Queen, however, quickly [regretted](#) her decision. The documentary affected the mystery and glamour of the monarchy, and possibly facilitated the invasive tabloid [coverage](#) of recent decades.

MEETING PEOPLE

The Queen gave few interviews during her reign, but she was determined to see the public. In 1970, during a royal tour of Australia, she ignored centuries of tradition and took a casual [stroll](#) —a [walkabout](#)— among the [crowds](#). This became a regular practice in the royal family. The Queen was also determined [to keep up to date](#) with changes in technology. In 1976, she was the first monarch to send an email. Twenty-one years later, she launched a website detailing her charitable activities and the work of the royal family. She was also quick to use Twitter and Instagram.

SOFT POWER

The Queen was a Head of State but not a Head of Government. She personified [soft](#) power. During her reign she became the world's most powerful [figurehead](#), using her superpower — royal [glue](#) — to preside over the transformation from a British Empire, covering 25 per cent of the world, to a voluntary association of [sovereign](#) nations, the Commonwealth, currently comprising fifty-four states in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The Commonwealth promotes socio-economic and cultural [ties](#). [Throughout](#) her reign, the Queen supported racial equality and advancement.

HEALING PROCESS

Elizabeth II also used her [soft](#) power in the recent [attempts to heal](#) the long, [bloody](#) relationship between England and Ireland, which reached a violent climax last century with decades-long acts of horrific terrorist violence. These were mostly ended by the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The Queen also played her role when she made the first monarch's visit to Ireland in 2011. She [reset](#) relations between the two countries simply by showing respect to those who had died fighting England. The Queen was also the first British monarch to [address](#) Congress, in 1991, more than two hundred years after the US won independence from British government.

DOMESTIC CHANGES

The Queen also made some important changes at home during her reign. Through the Crown [Act](#), 2013, she made the succession more [equitable](#). The [Act](#) ended centuries of history of the [eldest](#) son being the [heir](#) to the throne even if he had an older sister. It also allowed the monarch to marry a Catholic. In addition, Elizabeth II reformed the monarchy's finances, responding to public criticism of the [expenses](#) of the royal family. In the 1990s, the Queen began to pay [taxes](#) on royal [income](#) which had been exempt for years.

MONARCHY MISTAKES

During the Queen's long reign, there were, of course, mistakes. The Royal Family documentary affected the mystery of the monarchy. Three years earlier, however, Elizabeth II made what she considered her worst mistake. In 1966, 116 children and twenty-eight adults died in a [coal](#) mining disaster in Aberfan, Wales. The Queen delayed her visit for a week, possibly thinking her presence would affect the [rescue](#) efforts. She appeared [heartless](#). The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in 1997, was also [handled](#) badly. The Queen [misjudged](#) the public [mood](#), [refusing](#) to allow the national flag to fly [at half mast](#) over Buckingham Palace. Realising her mistake, she gave a rare televised [address](#) about the People's Princess ... and the flag appeared, on the day of the funeral. In recent times a perhaps yet more shocking scandal emerged, with serious sexual misconduct allegations against Prince Andrew, the Queen's favourite son.

NATIONAL SYMBOL

With the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the world has lost one of its most recognised and popular figures. During her reign, the monarch served as Britain's most important symbol of national identity and [pride](#). One thing is clear: the new King will [have some very big shoes to fill](#)!

15 FACTS ABOUT THE QUEEN

1. During the Second World War, the Queen [trained](#) as an auto mechanic while serving in the (Women's) Auxiliary Territorial Service. This started a [lifelong](#) love of cars and mechanical work. 2. Her financial and property [holdings](#) made her one of the world's richest women. 3. Her favourite dog was the corgi. She owned more than thirty. She invented a new [breed](#) of dog when one of her corgis [mated](#) with a dachshund belonging to her sister, Princess Margaret, creating the 'dorgi'. 4. She was the only person in Britain allowed to drive without a licence. 5. One of her favourite hobbies was keeping [racehorses](#). She attended races and visited [stud](#) farms in Kentucky, US. 6. She also loved [pigeon](#) racing, reading [mysteries](#), doing crossword

puzzles, watching [wrestling](#) on TV, and supporting Arsenal Football Club. **7.** She became a [homeowner](#) at the age of just six, when the people of Wales [gifted](#) her a house in the grounds of Windsor's Royal [Lodge](#). **8.** She answered 3.5 million [items of correspondence](#) and sent more than 175,000 telegrams of congratulations to centenarians in the UK and the Commonwealth. **9.** She sent out more than fifty thousand Christmas cards and gave ninety thousand Christmas puddings to her staff. **10.** The Queen owned an elephant, two giant turtles, a jaguar and a pair of [sloths](#), all presents from other countries, which lived in London Zoo. **11.** She used ration coupons (introduced in World War Two) to buy material for her wedding dress for the ceremony in November 1947. **12.** She received many unusual gifts during her travels around the world, including cowboy boots, sunglasses, pineapples and seven kilos of [prawns](#). **13.** Elizabeth II launched or named twenty-three cruise ships during her lifetime. **14.** The site of her birthplace in Mayfair, London (17 Bruton Street), is now a [trendy](#) Cantonese restaurant, called Hakkasan. **15.** She had two birthdays: her actual birthday on April 21, and her official one in June.

Glossary

- **rescue** = salvataggio
- **heartless** = insensibile
- **wrestling** = diffuso
- **unexpectedly** = inaspettatamente
- **bloody** = sanguinaria
- **heir** = erede
- **racehorses** = cavalli da corsa
- **stud** = stallone
- **coverage** = copertura
- **attempts** = tentativi
- **expenses** = spese
- **holdings** = proprietà
- **misjudged** = giudicare male
- **engagements** = impegni
- **stroll** = giro
- **homeowner** = proprietaria
- **pigeon** = piccione
- **crowned** = incoronare
- **carried out** = portare a termine
- **crew** = troupe
- **soft** = leggero, senza l'uso della forza
- **Act** = legge
- **taxes** = tasse
- **to heal** = guarire
- **income** = reddito
- **address** = discorso
- **pride** = orgoglio
- **trendy** = di moda
- **safe harbou** = porto sicuro, rifugio
- **coal** = carbone
- **charities** = associazioni benefiche
- **regretted** = pentirsi
- **figurehead** = figura di rappresentanza

- **Throughout** = in tutto
- **eldest** = maggiore
- **to keep up to date** = mantenersi aggiornata
- **ties** = legami
- **equitable** = equo
- **sloths** = bradipi
- **prawns** = gamberetti
- **ever-changing** = in continuo cambiamento
- **improved** = migliorare
- **handled** = affrontare, gestire
- **trained** = formarsi
- **mysteries** = gialli
- **Lodge** = residenza
- **have some very big shoes to fill** = riempire
- **aged** = all'età di
- **patron** = patrona
- **walkabout** = a spasso
- **crowds** = folle
- **sovereign** = sovrane
- **at half mast** = a mezz'asta
- **achievements** = risultati
- **lifelong** = di tutta una vita
- **mated** = accoppiare
- **items of correspondence** = oggetti di corrispondenza
- **refusing** = rifiutare
- **mood** = umore, stato d'animo
- **breed** = razza
- **longest-serving** = che ha regnato più a lungo
- **raise** = raccogliere
- **approachable** = accessibile
- **glue** = colla
- **reset** = ristabilire
- **gifted** = regalare