



# Be a part of history – and celebrate!

## **Slide 1 – The King’s Coronation**

In 2023 the word ‘Coronation’ will be used a lot – it isn’t a word we hear often! But before we explore what is happening this year, we need to find out what a coronation is!

## **Slide 2 – What is a coronation?**

A coronation is a ceremony in which a monarch is formally invested of their regal powers. It is a grand, celebratory event in which the monarch is presented with royal ceremonial objects, such as the Crown Jewels, and it is where the crown is physically placed on the monarch’s head, in front of thousands of very important guests.

While the objects used in each monarch’s coronation may have changed from time to time, the way the coronation of English (and later British) monarchs has taken place has remained nearly the same for almost a thousand years. This year, on 6 May 2023, we will see the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

This Coronation is especially exciting because it is the first coronation of a monarch to take place in the United Kingdom since that of the late Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 – that’s 70 years ago! Queen Elizabeth II reigned from 1952 until her death in 2022. The Coronation of King Charles III is a moment in history, and we are all able to take part in this historic event by witnessing and celebrating the occasion.

## **Slide 3 – How have people celebrated coronations in the past?**

Over the centuries, there have been many ways in which coronations have involved the people of the nation, from processions to parties. Let’s explore just some of the many ways celebrations have included people in coronations past and present.

## **Slide 4 – Processions on foot ...**

This engraving shows the coronation procession of King James II, in 1685. It shows the many, many people involved in this procession, in their spectacular robes of bright colours, which would have been dazzling for the people in the crowds to see.

Can you find the King in this image?

This is one of a number of prints purchased by George IV for use in planning his own Coronation, which was inspired by the costumes and traditions of earlier coronations, even though it took place much later, in 1821.

### **Slide 5 – ... and by coach!**

For Queen Victoria's Coronation in 1838, it was decided that instead of a coronation banquet, there would be a glorious procession around London, in which the queen would be visible to her people, and wave to the crowds who came to cheer her.

Queen Victoria rode in the magnificent Gold State Coach – a beautiful way to travel, but not the most comfortable, according to Queen Victoria! It was also not a particularly fast way to travel, partly owing to the size of the vehicle. It is 7 metres long, 3.6 metres tall, weighs 4 tonnes, and needs eight horses to draw it. Because of its age and how heavy it is, it is only ever used at a walking pace!

In 1838, crowds of people lined the streets to see the newly crowned Queen Victoria – reports say that more than 400,000 people came to London to see her! The painting above shows this procession. Can you see how big the coach looks compared to the people? It is enormous!

### **Slide 6 – ... special decorations ... Triumphal arches**

Decoration is an important part of any celebration or part – and a coronation is no exception! In coronations past, fantastic structures called triumphal arches have been built to line the streets of cities visited by the monarch, creating grand entrances and surroundings for procession to pass through. These arches were not permanent like buildings, they were temporary, often made out of cheap materials, and would be taken apart after the celebrations were over.

In the images you can see on screen, what do you think these arches may have been made out of? One is from more than 300 years ago, for the Coronation of Charles II, the other from just 70 years ago, for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

### **Slide 7 – ... special decorations ... Fireworks and floodlights**

Fireworks and floodlights provided dramatic silhouettes and splendid illuminations, from lights creating a dramatic skyline in Edinburgh, to fantastic fireworks on the River Thames ...

### **Slide 8 – ... special decorations ..**

... and even an illuminated bus!

### **Slide 9 – ... special decorations ... Creative crowns**

Decorations were even made out of some rather surprising materials- such as flowers and plants, as you can see in this image showing flowers planted in the shape of a crown, with the year '1937', to mark the coronation of King Edward VII. This lovely design was featured in Princes Street Gardens – a public park where everyone could enjoy this symbol of the coronation. Can you tell which letters appear on either side of the crown?

Or how about the gigantic crown suspended in the air by garlands in the image on the right – what do you think the garlands are made from? (A. Paper).

### **Slide 10 – ... special decorations ... Banners and bunting**

Banners and bunting have played an important part in royal celebrations for many years. Here you can see bunting strung across a London street for the coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in 1902, and a banner swaying in the wind ready for the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937.

Look at the fountain in the background of the image on the right. Do you recognise which famous building the banner is in front of?

### **Slide 11 – ... special decorations ...**

Q. How many different types of decorations can you see in this image?

A. Flags, bunting, streamers, banners, images of the monarch (5).

This is a photograph of a small group of children and teenagers standing on a street in north-west London. The street is decorated with flags and bunting for the 1937 Coronation of King George VI. Behind the group, two men stand holding a ladder. A man stands at the top of the ladder adjusting a banner that reads “CHILDREN’S CORONATION TEA PARTY”.

### **Slide 12 – Banquets in palaces**

Coronation celebrations have also traditionally included grand meals called banquets. This painting shows the Coronation Banquet of King George IV, who was crowned in 1821. If you look closely, you will see that there are knights on horseback inside this beautiful building! One of these knights is the King’s Champion. During the banquet, the King’s Champion, Henry Dymoke, wearing full armour, challenged anyone to contest the right of the new king to reign. He is escorted by two mounted peers, the Deputy Earl Marshall, General Kenneth Alexander Howard, later 1st Earl of Effingham and the Lord High Constable, the Duke of Wellington. The

King, attended by officers of state and members of the royal family, is seated at his throne and raises his glass to drink to the Champion.

When you are looking at this image, remember, this painting shows a scene before electricity was invented – the brilliant brightness of the hall is created by 28 chandeliers, which would have been full of candles! Can you see the chandeliers? How do you think the candles were lit?

### **Slide 13 – ... and dinners in halls...**

For King Edward VII's Coronation, as well as a grand banquet at the Palace there were Coronation Dinners for the People on 5 July 1902, in which 500,000 dinners were served to Londoners at 800 locations around the capital. These people are queuing for their Coronation dinner and everyone is in their finest clothes.

### **Slide 14 – ... and parties in the street!**

For the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II many people held street parties in their villages and towns across the country. These images show parties in places across the nation, with people coming together to enjoy food, music, and celebrations.

### **Slide 15 – Travel through television**

On Tuesday 2 June 1953, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place. The previous coronation had been that of her father, King George VI in 1937. Much had changed in the years between these events and, with advancements in technology, Queen Elizabeth II decided it should be allowed for her Coronation to be televised by the BBC. This would be the first time television cameras had been allowed inside Westminster Abbey and was to be the first major world event to be broadcast internationally. Not only was it to be the first international broadcast but, across Europe, residents of several countries were actually able to watch the event live! To make sure the people of Canada could see the event on the same day, members of the RAF flew BBC recordings across the Atlantic Ocean to be broadcast by the CBC. Recordings were also flown to the USA and Australia but with a slightly longer delay! Not everyone had access to a television at the time and so great 'watch parties' sprung up around the country, and many people even rented a television just for the event. The worldwide audience for the Coronation was estimated to be 277 million.

### **Slide 16 – Special souvenirs**

Across the centuries, people have been able to collect and enjoy special souvenirs as mementoes of coronations. From postcards and invitations to commemorative cards and even novelty items, such as the one on the far right. This commemorative souvenir of the Coronation of King Edward VII features a window, behind which is a printed image of the king; when a tab at the bottom is pulled down, a second image of the King in Coronation robes replaces the first image. You can see the instructions at the top 'Figure it out' and at the bottom 'Pull'.

## **Slide 17 – How to celebrate!**

His Majesty The King will hold many events this year to celebrate his Coronation and that of The Queen Consort.

These celebrations will include:

- The Coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey
- A special concert for thousands of people to attend
- The Coronation Big Lunch, inviting neighbours and communities to enjoy food and fun together
- The Big Help Out, encouraging people to try volunteering and to help out in their local areas

And, this year, you are all part of this special moment in history! How will you celebrate?

## **Slide 18– Recording history**

How do we know so much about coronations which have taken place in the past? Through the many records produced by people who lived through the events, whether capturing and recording in paintings, photographs and photograph albums (as in the one above right), or in newspapers and films. We also know through the words of people who witnessed the occasions: diaries, letters and so forth. Queen Victoria herself kept a diary throughout her life, from the age of 13, and she even created sketches of her own Coronation to remember the occasion by. You can see an example of this above. She was a talented artist, and used drawing as a way to record different events throughout her life.

For Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, a time capsule was created to mark the year. The capsule included contributions from almost 40,000 people from 66 countries. Contained within it are stories of schooldays, of Independence Days and memories of the late Queen's Coronation in 1953. The most popular day in the capsule's timeline, with 200 entries, was 29 April 2011 – the day of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's wedding (they are now known as The Prince and Princess of Wales).

## **Slide 19– Recording history**

How might you record this historic moment in time?

## **Slide 20– Celebrate**

We've seen that, for past coronations, there have been lots of celebrations and parties! Processions, decorations, street parties, banquets, and more.

Why not take inspiration from some of these past celebrations to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III this year? You could:

- Hold a Coronation Street Party in your school – Make sure to include garden party games, a royal menu, special invitations and, of course, decorations such as bunting and banners. Perhaps you could try to create natural decorations, inspired by the example of the floral crown in Edinburgh's Princes Gardens?
- Create your own Coronation Art Gallery – Take inspiration from the tales of coronations past and make your very own works of art to commemorate this occasion. Why not hold an exhibition in your school hall?

