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Edward VIII (Jan-Dec 1936)



As Prince of Wales, Edward VIII (reigned January-December 1936) had successfully carried out a number of regional visits (including areas hit by economic depression) and other official engagements. These visits and his official tours overseas, together with his good war record and genuine care for the underprivileged, had made him popular.

The first monarch to be a qualified pilot, Edward created The King's Flight (now known as 32 (The Royal) Squadron) in 1936 to provide air transport for the Royal family's official duties.

In 1930, the Prince, who had already had a number of affairs, had met and fallen in love with a married American woman, Mrs Wallis Simpson. Concern about Edward's private life grew in the Cabinet, opposition parties and the Dominions, when Mrs Simpson obtained a divorce in 1936 and it was clear that Edward was determined to marry her.

Eventually Edward realised he had to choose between the Crown and Mrs Simpson who, as a twice-divorced woman, would not have been acceptable as Queen.

On 10 December 1936, Edward VIII executed an Instrument of Abdication which was given legal effect the following day, when Edward gave Royal Assent to His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Act, by which Edward VIII and any children he might have were excluded from succession to the throne.

In 1937, Edward was created Duke of Windsor and married Wallis Simpson in a ceremony in France.

During the Second World War, the Duke of Windsor escaped from Paris, where he was living at the time of the fall of France, to Lisbon in 1940. The Duke of Windsor was then appointed Governor of the Bahamas, a position he held until 1945.

He lived abroad until the end of his life, dying in 1972 in Paris (he is buried at Windsor).

Edward was never crowned; his reign lasted only 325 days. His brother Albert became King, using his last name George.

[Read King Edward VIII's Abdication speech \(pdf, 84kB\)](#)

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