

A HISTORY OF ROYAL JUBILEES

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QUEEN ELIZABETH II'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

In 2022, Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service. Only a small group of world leaders have achieved this milestone. In celebration of Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, we look back at the history of royal jubilee celebrations through the ages.

Header image: Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee 1977 portrait by Peter Grurgeon ©Woodmansteme /TopFoto

WHAT IS A JUBILEE?

Jubilees mark a major milestone in the reign of a Monarch, celebrating their life and service.

The naming of these celebrations follows the traditions of wedding anniversaries: 25 years is called a Silver Jubilee, 50 years a Golden Jubilee, 60 years a Diamond Jubilee, and 70 years a Platinum Jubilee.

DID YOU KNOW?

The origins of jubilees are found in the Old Testament where they marked a celebration of 50 years.

HISTORY OF JUBILEES

George III [\[/kew-palace/history-and-stories/george-iii/\]](#) is often credited as the first British monarch to mark a Golden Jubilee (50 years), a tradition followed by Queen Victoria [\[/kensington-palace/history-and-stories/queen-victoria/\]](#) and Elizabeth II, (George V celebrated a Silver Jubilee) but a few early British monarchs had reigns of more than fifty years.

These included Henry III, Edward III, and James VI and I [\[/banqueting-house/history-and-stories/james-i-and-anne-of-denmark/\]](#) as King of Scotland. Unfortunately, little is known about how they celebrated their jubilees.

However, the few records that exist reveal some surprising similarities to the present day. Edward III (1327-1377) celebrated his Golden Jubilee in 1376 with a spectacular weeklong joust at London's Smithfield beginning with a magnificent procession from the Tower of London accompanied by trumpeters.

 A portrait of King George III

GEORGE III'S GOLDEN JUBILEE, 1809

George III (1760-1820) was the first British monarch to mark his Golden Jubilee in a significant way and really began the tradition of national and international celebrations.

George III celebrated his jubilee on 25 October 1809, the start of the 50th year of his reign, but since the reign of Queen Victoria, Golden Jubilees have been celebrated after the completion of 50 years of service.

The celebrations were a lavish, brilliant, noisy affair with processions, feasts and a 50-gun salute fired from the Tower of London. A service of thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral was followed by banquets held in the King's honour, with food and money provided for the poor so everyone (even those in prison) could partake in the festivities.

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