



What is a Jubilee?

Slide 1: There are many occasions that mark out significant moments in the reign of a monarch. These include celebrations that are special to most people, such as anniversaries and birthdays, but they also include events that are particular to a monarch. These significant dates include the anniversary of their accession (the day that they became king or queen), their coronation (the day on which they are crowned king or queen) and finally very special occasions called Jubilees. But what is a Jubilee, and why is it important?

Slide 2: A Jubilee is a celebration of the life and reign of a monarch. Rather than happening every year, Jubilees happen after certain lengths of time, making them all the more special. To reflect how special these occasions are, each Jubilee is named after a precious stone or material. After 25 years on the throne, a monarch celebrates their Silver Jubilee; after 40 years they celebrate their Ruby Jubilee; a Golden Jubilee marks 50 years; a Diamond Jubilee marks 60 years; a Sapphire Jubilee marks 65 years and finally 70 years is celebrated with a Platinum Jubilee – that's an incredibly long time on the throne! Very few monarchs have celebrated many of these Jubilees, and the Platinum Jubilee is the rarest of them all. Let's look first of all at a famous queen who celebrated some very special Jubilees ...

Slide 3: Queen Victoria became queen when she was only 18 years old in 1837. Her Coronation took place the following year.

Until 2015 when the record was broken by our current Queen, Queen Victoria was Britain's longest reigning monarch, reaching not only her Golden Jubilee (can you remember how many years this marked?) but also her Diamond Jubilee. Let's see how she celebrated these special occasions ...

Slide 4: These two images show celebrations of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. One is a painting, and one is a photograph. They show tremendous crowds cheering for the Queen as well as many other things that reveal to us the jubilant and celebratory nature of the occasion. What else can you see? There is bunting decorating the streets, banners and flags, and special parades of soldiers too. Queen Victoria travelled through London several times during her Jubilee celebrations, accompanied by soldiers marching, and surrounded by spectators eager to see their Queen on this special occasion. At Buckingham Palace, she stood on the balcony and was cheered by huge crowds. Inside the palace she held a royal banquet, attended by diplomats, governors and royalty from all over the world. She wore a dress embroidered with silver roses, thistles and shamrocks, the national emblems of England, Scotland and Ireland. She gave special Jubilee brooches to her family, and in the evening they enjoyed a firework display.

Slide 5: The Queen received many presents to mark her Jubilee. What Jubilee gifts can you see in this photograph? Take a closer look here: [Unknown Person - The Queens Jubilee presents displayed in the Waterloo Gallery, Windsor Castle \(rct.uk\)](#)

Slide 6: As well as events that took place over the Jubilee weekend, Queen Victoria also wanted to have special memories and mementos of the occasion, to help her remember it for years to come. She commissioned a painting of herself and her family, to remember their coming together for her special Jubilee.

Queen Victoria is depicted sitting in the Green Drawing Room at Windsor Castle, surrounded by members of the royal family (can you spot Queen Victoria?). On the mantelpiece is a bronze bust of Prince Albert (Victoria's husband, who had died some years before). Why do you think it might have been important for the Queen to include the bust of Prince Albert in this painting? The Queen noted in her Journal that the composition was 'not to be stiff & according to Etiquette, but prettily grouped'. The artist encountered several difficulties when he was composing this painting – several people refused to stand next to one another, and some people didn't sit for the painting at all, sending very flattering photographs for the artist to work from instead! Nevertheless, the finished painting was considered a great success and Queen Victoria noted: 'The picture is beautiful, the Drawing room admirably painted & the likenesses very good ... the grouping & colouring, all, charming.'

Slide 7: Ten years later, Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee. A Service of Thanksgiving was held at St Paul's Cathedral in London. The service was followed by a grand procession through the streets of London, which were lined with well-wishers cheering for the Queen. You can see the crowds outside Buckingham Palace in this photograph. Queen Victoria later wrote in her Journal: 'No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me, passing through those 6 miles of streets ... The cheering was quite deafening & every face seemed to be filled with real joy. I was much moved and gratified.'

Slide 8: At the time of her Diamond Jubilee in 1897, Queen Victoria was 79 years old. Again, she wanted to capture the memory of this occasion, and so she commissioned more than one portrait of herself. In this photograph Queen Victoria is seated and facing three-quarters right, dressed in lace. She holds a fan in her left hand. This was used as an official Jubilee portrait, but it was in fact taken in July 1893, on the occasion of the wedding of the future King George V and Queen Mary. The Queen almost looks as though she has a spotlight on her. In the portrait she wears her famous small diamond crown (find out more here: [RCIN 31705 - Queen Victorias Small Diamond Crown \(rct.uk\)](#)). Like she had done for the Golden Jubilee, Victoria also gave out brooches to mark her Diamond Jubilee. You can see an example here: [RCIN 250482 - Diamond Jubilee Brooch \(rct.uk\)](#) .

Slide 9: Born more than a hundred years after Queen Victoria, Queen Elizabeth II has celebrated many Jubilees during her long reign. This photograph shows The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh on the occasion of Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee in 1977, 25 years after she

became Queen. To mark her Silver Jubilee, The Queen decided that she wished to meet as many people as possible on a tour across the nation. She embarked on six Jubilee tours in the UK and Northern Ireland, visiting 36 counties. In Glasgow the crowds were the biggest the city had ever seen, and in Lancashire more than a million people lined the streets!

Other special events were planned to mark the Jubilee. On the evening of 6 June 1977, The Queen lit a bonfire beacon at Windsor Castle which started a chain of beacons across the country.

Slide 10: The following day, St Paul's Cathedral in London was the setting for a Service of Thanksgiving, attended by heads of state from around the world and former British Prime Ministers. The Queen arrived in the Gold State Coach, witnessed by vast crowds lining the processional route.

Afterwards The Queen and members of the Royal Family attended a lunch at the Guildhall. In a speech The Queen declared, 'when I was twenty-one I pledged my life to the service of our people and I asked for God's help to make good that vow. Although that vow was made in my salad days, when I was green in judgement, I do not regret nor retract one word of it.'

An estimated 500 million people watched on television as the procession returned to Buckingham Palace down The Mall. Later that day The Queen made several appearances on the balcony at the Palace. Across the country the day was celebrated with local street parties and village gatherings; in London alone 4,000 events were reported to have been held.

