**Coronations in Westminster Abbey**

Coronation have taken place at Westminster since at least 1066, when William the Conqueror arrived in London after his victory at the battle of Hastings. Whether or not Harold, his predecessor as monarch, had been crowned in Edward the Confessor’s Abbey is uncertain - coronations do not seem to have had a fixed location before 1066, though several monarchs were crowned at Kingston-upon-Thames, where the King’s Stone still exists - but William was determined to reinforce his victory, which gave him the right to rule by conquest, with the sacred hallowing of his sovereignty which the coronation ceremony would give him. He was crowned in the old Abbey - then recently completed and housing Edward the Confessor’s body- on Christmas Day 1066.

The service to-day has four parts: first comes the Introduction ,consisting of: the entry of the Sovereign into the Abbey; the formal recognition of the right of the Sovereign to rule - when the Archbishop presents the Sovereign to the congregation and asks them if they agree to the service proceeding, and they respond with an assent; the oath, when the Sovereign promises to respect and govern in accordance with the lows of his or her subjects and to uphold the Protestant reformed Church of England and Scotland; and the presentation of the Bible to the Sovereign, to be relied on as the source of all wisdom and low. Secondly, the Sovereign is anointed with holy oil, seated on the Coronation Chair. Thirdly, the Sovereign is invested with the royal robes and insignia, then crowned with St Edward’s crown. The final ceremony consists of the enthronement of the Sovereign on a throne placed on a raised platform, bringing him or her into full view of the assembled company for the first time, and there he or she receives the homage of the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal and the congregation, representing the people of the realm.

The service has changed little - English replaced Latin as the main language used during the ceremony following Elizabeth Ist coronation, and from 1689 onwards the coronation ceremony has been set within a service of Holy Communion although indeed this was a return to ancient custom rather than the creation of a new precedent).

Coronations have not always followed an identical pattern. Edward YI, for example, was crowned no less than three times, with three different crowns placed in turn upon his head; while at Charles I’s coronation there was a misunderstanding and, instead of the congregational assent following the Recognition Question, there was dead silence, the congregation having finally to be told to respond - an ill omen for the future, as it turned out. Charles II’s coronation, following on the greyness of the puritan Commonwealth, was a scene of brilliant colour and great splendour. As the old regalia had been destroyed, replacements were made for the ceremony, and the clergy were robed in rich red copes - the same copes are still used in the Abbey

George IY saw his coronation as an opportunity for a great theatrical spectacle and spent vast sums of money on it. He wore an auburn wig with ringlets, with a huge plumed hat on top, and designed his own robes for the procession into the Abbey. After the coronation, because Queen Caroline had been forcibly excluded from the ceremony, the crowds in the streets were extremely hostile to him and he had to return to Carlton House by an alternative route.

In complete contrast, William IY took a lot of persuading before he would agree to have a coronation at all, and the least possible amount of money was spent no it - giving it the name the «penny coronation». Despite his dislike of extravagant show and ceremony, he still brought a slightly theatrical touch to the scene by living up to his nickname of the «sailor king» and appearing , when disrobed for the Anointing, in the full-dress uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet.

The last three coronations have demonstrated continuing respect for the religious significance of the ceremony and recognition of the importance of such a public declaration by Sovereign of his or her personal dedication to the service of the people.

At the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 , for the first time the service was televised and millions of her subjects could see and hear the ceremony taking place. It is possible that few watching realised just how far back into history the roots of that historic ceremony starched, and how little fundamental change had occurred over the centuries.