

The Queen's Birthdays

Why Does the Queen Celebrate Two Birthdays?

The tradition of two royal birthdays was started by George II in 1748. He was born in November and he felt that the weather would be too cold for his annual birthday parade on his actual birthday. A solution to this was to celebrate his birthday with a military parade, called Trooping the Colour, held every spring. This tradition has continued ever since – no matter what month the King or Queen was born. This is the monarch's official birthday.



Earlier on in her reign, our Queen celebrated her official birthday on a Thursday, but it was later changed to the second Saturday in June. Other countries of the Commonwealth (nations in the world that The Queen reigns over) celebrate at different times too, but mostly during the months of May and June.

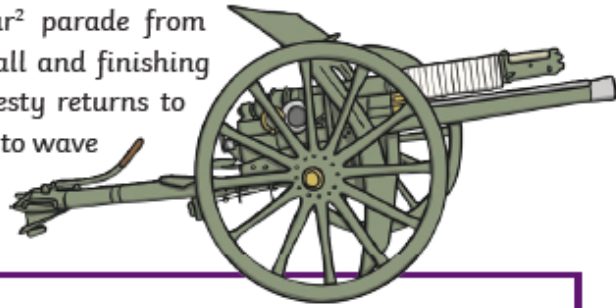
Royal Facts

1. **Name:** Elizabeth Alexandra Mary
2. **Born:** 21st April, 1926
3. **Job:** Queen Elizabeth II reigns as The Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and many of the Commonwealth countries.
4. The Queen celebrates two birthdays every year, one on April 21st (her actual birthday) and one on the second Saturday in June (her official birthday).
5. Since September 2015, Her Majesty is the United Kingdom's longest reigning monarch (king or queen). The Queen entered the record books as Britain's longest-reigning monarch after surpassing the reign of her great-great grandmother, Queen Victoria.



Birthday Traditions and Ceremonies

April 21st (The Queen's actual birthday) is usually spent privately with her family and close friends. But the occasion is marked by a 41 gun salute¹ in Hyde Park, a 21 gun salute in Windsor Great Park and a 62 gun salute at the Tower of London. On the second Saturday in June, her official birthday is celebrated with the colourful Trooping the Colour² parade from Buckingham Palace, down The Mall and finishing at Horse Guards Parade. Her majesty returns to the balcony of Buckingham Palace to wave to the crowds that have gathered to wish her well.



Glossary

1. **A gun salute¹.** A gun salute is a mark of respect for special royal celebrations. The number of rounds (or blasts) depends on the place and the occasion. The basic salute is 21 rounds; in Hyde Park and Green Park an extra 20 rounds are added because they are royal parks. There is a 62 gun salute at the Tower of London because it is a royal palace and fortress. Gun salutes are usually fired at midday.
2. **Trooping the Colour².** During the ceremony, The Queen inspects the troops who have paraded for her. The bands play and the soldiers march, along with horses and the Regimental Colour (banner). It is a colourful celebration and thousands of people line the pavements of The Mall to enjoy the sight. For many years, The Queen rode her horse, Burmese, with her troops, but more recently she has ridden in a carriage. During the parade in 1981, Marcus Serjeant aimed a pistol at Her Majesty as she rode from Buckingham Palace down Horse Guards Parade for the beginning of the Trooping the Colour ceremony. Six blank cartridges were fired before he was tackled by a guardsman and police. The Queen continued with the parade.



Questions

1. On what date was Queen Elizabeth born?

2. Which month is The Queen's actual birthday and which month is The Queen's official birthday?

3. Which queen did Queen Elizabeth II pass as longest reigning British monarch in September 2015? What relation was that queen to Queen Elizabeth II?

4. Why does The Queen celebrate two birthdays?

5. Why do you think The Queen's birthday celebrations were changed from a Thursday to a Saturday?

6. What are the three main locations for the Trooping the Colour parade? List them here.

7. Do you think there would be any disadvantages to having two birthdays? Give reasons for your answers.

8. Why do you think The Queen continued with the parade after she was shot at in 1981?

9. What are the titles called that separate each part of the fact file?

10. If you had to organise The Queen's birthday celebrations, plan three activities that she may enjoy. Give reasons for your choices.
