

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee: A Pocket Full of Horses

Queen Elizabeth II's legendary love of horses was celebrated as part of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee event, A Gallop Through History. The magical celebration featured more than 1,000 performers and 500 horses, creating an awe-inspiring theatrical show at Windsor Castle.

The monarch's longstanding love of horses was brought to life in the equestrian extravaganza in the grounds of the castle. Military displays by the Armed Forces of Britain, Europe and the Commonwealth and global equestrian displays combined with actors, musicians and dancers to entertain a delighted Queen Elizabeth.



Five centuries of history

The 96-year-old monarch was greeted by a standing ovation as she arrived at the packed arena. Her face lit up with a glorious smile while she watched the equine displays, as the Platinum Jubilee Event took the audience through more than five centuries of history.

It featured horses in many different roles, as well as some of Her Majesty's own equine friends. She smiled with delight when she saw her own much-loved fell pony, Carltonima Emma, taking part.

Celebrities including actors Tom Cruise and Helen Mirren and singer Katherine Jenkins appeared in the open air celebration. Mirren played Queen Elizabeth I in a tableau, while Cruise announced a performance by the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery.

One of the highlights was a traditional display of horsemanship by the Royal Cavalry Oman, when the horses lay down on command.

Public appearances

The Queen was making her second public appearance in three days, having been spotted enjoying the Royal Windsor Horse Show prior to her jubilee celebration.

Fears had been raised for her health in recent weeks after she didn't attend the State Opening of Parliament for the first time in history. She has reportedly suffered from "episodic mobility issues". She seemed in fine form at both the Windsor horse show and her jubilee celebration, demonstrating how her great love of horses transcends her health and other personal issues.

It has been a difficult year for Her Majesty following the death of her beloved husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on 9th April 2021. They had first met when the then Princess Elizabeth was 13 and her future husband was 18, but he thought of it as just a friendship. However, during World War II, when Philip served with the Royal Navy on the battleship HMS Valiant in the Mediterranean Fleet, they wrote to each other and romance blossomed.

After marrying on 20th November 1947 at Westminster Abbey, the Royal Couple were happily married for 73 years, until the Duke sadly passed away, at the age of 99.

Royal fans were delighted to see Queen Elizabeth looking in fine spirits at the Gallop Through History event after the testing year she had experienced.

All the Queen's horses

The Queen's love of horses dates back to childhood, as she has had many horses throughout her life. She has spent an incredible 92 years in the saddle, after being given her first pony, a Shetland named Peggy, when she was just four. After her initial riding lessons, she became a proficient rider by the time she was six.

In 1944, aged 18, she received a silver trophy at the Royal Windsor Horse Show with her pony, Hans, for Best Turn Out Not Exceeding 13 Hands. She celebrated with Hans by letting him eat from the trophy!

In the 1960s, one of the Queen's favourite horses was Betsy, a 15.2 h deep brown mare that Her Majesty rode all the time. Betsy was spirited and full of character. The Queen was said to love riding her.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police presented the Queen with another favourite horse, Burmese, in 1969. She rode the mare for Trooping the Colour for 18 years. Burmese retired in 1986 and lived the rest of her days at Windsor, before her death at the age of 28. She is buried in the grounds in a private area.

Sanction was the Queen's favourite riding horse for many years. He was with her for her Golden Jubilee in 2002. He had a strong bond with Her Majesty, described as "telepathic", as he seemed to know which way to go without her having to direct him.

Her current fell pony, Emma, who took part in the jubilee event, is still going strong at the age of 24.

In honour of the Queen's 90th birthday, the Fell Pony Society brought 120 ponies to Windsor. They lined the route to the castle for Her Majesty, who was riding in a carriage with Prince Philip, pulled by his driving fell pony team and followed by Emma.

The Queen also owns a [stable](#) of race horses. One of her most famous, Estimate, a filly born in 2009, won the Royal Ascot Queen's Vase as a three-year-old. She also won the Sagaro Stakes as a four-year-old and the Gold Cup at Royal Ascot.

Tribute to Her Majesty

At the launch of the Gallop Through History extravaganza, Sir Mike Rake, the Platinum Jubilee Advisory Board chairman, praised the Queen's "unwavering devotion" and "leadership" during her 70 years on the throne.

Touching upon the "dark and troubling times" of the past 18 months, he spoke of her "steadiness" and told the delighted 5,000-strong crowd of how Her Majesty deserved "recognition and celebration". She has, without question, been a queen that the United Kingdom can be truly proud of.