

The Coronation Regalia

So we're here at Westminster Abbey and there is a fantastic set of replica regalia. What do I mean by regalia? I mean the crowns and the crown jewels, all those key items, as part of the coronation ceremony. And they give us a real insight into the different stages of the coronation. Ceremony itself takes place over a number of hours and there's different stages to it.

So, for example, fairly early on, we have the anointing. Have to remember, the coronation is a religious ceremony as well as a state one. And the anointment involves the spoon with the anointing oil, where the Archbishop of Canterbury anoints the new sovereign. We have the investing. That's the moment where the new sovereign is passed the key elements of the crown jewels.

So we have two sceptres. One represents their role as head of state, one represents their role as the head of the Church of England, and the famous orb as well. The key element after that, the bit we all know, is the crowning. And the crowning takes place with the St Edwards crown, one of the most famous crowns in the regalia. The reason being it dates back to 1661.

There was an older one before that, but unfortunately Oliver Cromwell decided to melt it down. But in 1661, for Charles II's coronation, he decided that a new crown needed to be made. It weighs 2.23 kg, so it's quite a heavy crown and it has 444 precious stones and diamonds in it. Now, the key thing about the St Edwards crown is it's only ever used in the coronation, no other time, and the rest of the time it lives securely back at the Tower of London. But as you know, we can't possibly let the new king or queen leave the coronation ceremony without the crown.

And this is the point where the imperial state crown is placed upon the head of the new monarch. And this is the crown that then accompanies the new king or queen on those state occasions, such as the state opening of Parliament, and something that you'll see quite often throughout their reign.