# Princess Elizabeth’s wedding dress symbolised hope with 10,000 pearls amid wartime austerity



# The Memorably Elegant Wedding of Princess Elizabeth: A Symbol of Hope in Post-War Britain

Amidst the uncertainty of post-World War II England, the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Philip Mountbatten on November 20, 1947, emerged as a beacon of hope and renewal. The ceremony took place at the iconic Westminster Abbey, attended by 2,000 invited guests, with an estimated 200 million listeners tuning in via BBC Radio—a staggering testament to the public’s interest in the event. It marked the dawn of the longest royal marriage in British history and a revitalisation of national pride during a turbulent time.

Choosing Westminster Abbey, where her father, King George VI, was crowned just over a decade prior, added significant personal meaning to the occasion. This historic venue would soon see another crowning just five years later, further intertwining the lives of the Royal Family with its storied walls.

At the heart of this ceremony was the opulent gown designed by British couturier Norman Hartnell, whose work was inspired by Botticelli's renowned painting, *Primavera*. The dress not only captured the essence of elegance but also symbolised the rebirth of a war-torn nation. Crafted from soft duchesse satin sourced from Dunfermline, the gown was adorned with eponymous motifs representing hope and renewal, including roses, jasmine blossoms, and ears of wheat, all beautifully embroidered in silver and gold thread.

In an era marked by wartime austerity, the creation of this exquisite gown was particularly poignant. The wedding dress was funded using clothing coupons—a resource still in effect due to rationing. In a remarkable outpouring of goodwill, the public sent their own coupons to support the princess's wedding, although these were graciously returned. This act of collective contribution underscored the nation’s desire to partake in the festivities of a royal celebration.

An integral feature of the gown was the use of 10,000 tiny pearls, imported from the United States. According to Hugo Vickers in *Elizabeth, The Queen Mother*, Hartnell's manager took care to declare these at customs, ensuring all duties were paid. This careful attention to detail extended to the gown's 13-foot silk tulle train, which was ingeniously attached at the shoulders, and a secret four-leaf clover stitched into the skirt as a token of luck for the bride on her special day.

Hartnell's meticulous design was also evident in the attire of the bridesmaids, which included Princess Margaret and other key royal figures, each dressed to complement the bride's radiant appearance. The bridesmaids' gowns were equally refined and were crafted with the same intricate care, embodying the spirit of celebration at the heart of this royal union.

The bride's footwear was uniquely designed by Hartnell—ivory satin sandals adorned with silver buckles embellished with pearls, harmonising perfectly with the overall ensemble. Unfortunately, on the day of the ceremony, her tiara—an heirloom transformed by Garrard from the Collingwood necklace originally gifted to Queen Mary—snapped just before it was placed on her head. Quick-thinking jewellers performed an emergency repair, allowing the tiara to be reattached and worn by the bride, despite a noticeable gap that would appear in photographs.

Completing her bridal look were two pearl necklaces—gifts from her father, King George VI—further steeping her look in familial significance. The smaller strand was historically linked to Queen Anne, while the larger was said to belong to Caroline of Ansbach, enriching the occasion with layers of royal legacy.

The wedding of Elizabeth and Philip transcended mere royal celebration; it signified a moment of unity and national pride. The couple emerged from the ceremony united, joining family members on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, greeted by cheering crowds below, embodying a fresh chapter for both the monarchy and the country.

As future generations reflect on this monumental day, the wedding dress of Princess Elizabeth—a delicate combination of fashion, history, and national sentiment—remains a symbol of hope, resilience, and enduring love in the annals of British history.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.news24.com/life/Relationships/Weddings/queen-elizabeth-used-coupons-to-buy-her-wedding-dress-with-10-000-pearls-and-24k-gold-thread-20220913)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.royalcentral.co.uk/features/the-wedding-dress-of-queen-elizabeth-ii-183474/)
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* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.thecourtjeweller.com/2020/11/the-queens-bridal-jewels.html)
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* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.royalcentral.co.uk/features/the-wedding-dress-of-queen-elizabeth-ii-183474/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://www.thecourtjeweller.com/2020/11/the-queens-bridal-jewels.html), [[6]](https://www.tatler.com/article/the-queen-princess-elizabeth-wedding-dress)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.tatler.com/article/the-queen-princess-elizabeth-wedding-dress)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14683621/how-tiny-pearls-brought-queen-elizabeth-wedding-dress.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - This article delves into the creation of Queen Elizabeth II's wedding dress, highlighting the use of 10,000 tiny pearls imported from the United States. It discusses the design by Norman Hartnell, inspired by Botticelli's 'Primavera,' and the incorporation of motifs symbolizing post-war rebirth, such as roses, jasmine blossoms, and ears of wheat. The piece also touches upon the use of clothing ration coupons during wartime to fund the dress and the inclusion of a four-leaf clover on the skirt for good luck.
3. <https://www.news24.com/life/Relationships/Weddings/queen-elizabeth-used-coupons-to-buy-her-wedding-dress-with-10-000-pearls-and-24k-gold-thread-20220913> - This article explores the creation of Queen Elizabeth II's wedding dress, emphasizing the use of 10,000 seed pearls imported from the United States and 24-carat gold thread. It details the design by Norman Hartnell, inspired by Botticelli's 'Primavera,' and the incorporation of motifs symbolizing post-war rebirth, such as roses, jasmine blossoms, and ears of wheat. The piece also discusses the use of clothing ration coupons during wartime to fund the dress and the inclusion of a four-leaf clover on the skirt for good luck.
4. <https://www.thecourtjeweller.com/2020/11/the-queens-bridal-jewels.html> - This article examines the Queen's bridal jewels, focusing on the two pearl necklaces worn by Queen Elizabeth II on her wedding day. The smaller strand, made of 46 pearls, is said to have been worn by Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch. The longer strand, which includes 50 pearls, is attributed to Caroline of Ansbach, the queen consort of George II. The piece also discusses the history and significance of these pearls within the British royal family.
5. <https://www.royalcentral.co.uk/features/the-wedding-dress-of-queen-elizabeth-ii-183474/> - This article provides an in-depth look at Queen Elizabeth II's wedding dress, designed by Norman Hartnell. It details the materials used, including ivory silk from Chinese silkworms and 10,000 seed pearls imported from the United States. The dress features motifs symbolizing post-war rebirth, such as roses, jasmine blossoms, and ears of wheat. The piece also discusses the use of clothing ration coupons during wartime to fund the dress and the inclusion of a four-leaf clover on the skirt for good luck.
6. <https://www.tatler.com/article/the-queen-princess-elizabeth-wedding-dress> - This article discusses the creation of Queen Elizabeth II's wedding dress, emphasizing the use of 10,000 seed pearls imported from the United States and 24-carat gold thread. It details the design by Norman Hartnell, inspired by Botticelli's 'Primavera,' and the incorporation of motifs symbolizing post-war rebirth, such as roses, jasmine blossoms, and ears of wheat. The piece also touches upon the use of clothing ration coupons during wartime to fund the dress and the inclusion of a four-leaf clover on the skirt for good luck.
7. <https://www.theweddingsecret.co.uk/magazine/a-look-back-at-the-queens-wedding-dress/> - This article provides a detailed look at Queen Elizabeth II's wedding dress, designed by Norman Hartnell. It discusses the materials used, including ivory duchesse satin and 10,000 seed pearls imported from the United States. The dress features motifs inspired by Botticelli's 'Primavera,' symbolizing post-war rebirth, such as roses, jasmine blossoms, and ears of wheat. The piece also touches upon the use of clothing ration coupons during wartime to fund the dress and the inclusion of a four-leaf clover on the skirt for good luck.