

# Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Elizabeth II

The two great Queens divided by 350 years and very different circumstances have shown women in the top job to best effect. Both came to the throne in eras when it was assumed men filled the leadership roles. Both inherited the job despite rules giving precedence to the male line. Both handled male dominated institutions with skill. The second Elizabeth was a role model for many more women leaders who in recent years have risen to the most powerful roles in our society, changing our public and business realms substantially so all but the most unreformed welcome good women leaders as well as men.

Their jobs were very different. Elizabeth I was head of government as well as Head of State, wielding ultimate power in her realm. Elizabeth II was the perfect constitutional monarch, embodying the power of the state but leaving it to governments elected by the people and answerable to Parliament to exercise the power.

Elizabeth I was at constant risk of assassination as her religious and political enemies circled. She had to reckon with the possible enmity of Spain, the super power of the day, drawing her into war. She needed to still the conflicts between Catholic and Protestant. She led her country to a remarkable victory against a huge Spanish invasion fleet and presided over a welcome internal peace which powered rising prosperity and a cultural flowering.

Elizabeth II survived the world war which threatened her family just like others from the bombing campaigns and inherited the throne at a young age owing to her father's untimely death. She needed to keep the idea of monarchy fresh and lively for a new modernising era. With great skill she evolved the style and practice of the monarchy, adapting it to a television age. Her image like her predecessors was on every token of our money, on our postage stamps and in many a Council chamber and boardroom. It was also there in our living rooms on tv showing us her every move and gesture on visits and at state occasions. As the reign advanced so we saw more of her family life. She faced a level of public and media scrutiny that previous monarchs avoided, though they had often been lambasted by cartoonists and scribbling critics.