

## WEDDING GOWNS FIT FOR A QUEEN

By Maureen Hart

Queen Victoria started it all. The youthful royal popularized the custom of wearing white when she married Prince Albert on February 10, 1840 at the Chapel Royal, St. James Palace, with 12 bridesmaids in attendance to carry her train (another innovation which was widely copied).

Given her exalted status, Victoria's dress of rich white satin was majestic and opulent. It featured a fitted bodice and full skirt. Elbow length sleeves were accented with lace, matching a lace bertha collar which was centered with orange blossoms. She wore an orange blossom bridal wreath with a white veil of Honiton lace. It took 200 workers nine months to complete the lace, which measured four yards and was three-quarters of a yard in depth, and cost 1000 pounds.

### LADY ELIZABETH BOWES-LYON

Given the influence that Victoria had on bridal fashion, the world has always paid particular attention to royal brides. When Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon married the Duke of York on April 26, 1923, she wore a tubular style, which was popular at that time, but the dress was said to be inspired by a medieval Italian gown. Designed by Madame Handley Seymour, a former London court dressmaker to Queen Mary, the gown was fashioned of ivory chiffon moire with a dropped waist and a court train of Nottingham lace. The future Queen Mother wore a headdress which fell low over her forehead, echoing the cloche hat that was popular at that time, and held by a simple wreath of white heather, myrtle leaves, and knots of white roses.

### THE DUCHESS OF WINDSOR

The Duchess of York became queen consort in 1936, when her husband ascended the throne as George VI. His brother, the Duke of Windsor, had abdicated for the love of Wallis Warfield Simpson, whom he married in France on June 3, 1937. Mrs. Simpson chose a simple blue Mainbocher outfit for the ceremony. The full-length gown and long-sleeved jacket was constructed of silk crepe, and styled with a tightly cinched, buttoned waist. The bride added a jeweled brooch on the high collar, a dainty pair of gloves, and a hat adorned with pink and blue feathers.



## QUEEN ELIZABETH II

When her niece, the future Queen Elizabeth II, married Prince Philip of Greece in 1947, wartime rationing was still in force, so devoted Britons sent their clothing coupons to Buckingham Palace so that the bride could have the dress of her dreams. The beautiful princess walked down the aisle at Westminster Abbey in a sumptuous Norman Hartnell gown of satin and silk with embroidery and bead trim styled with a sweetheart neckline, wide shoulders, a 15-foot full court train, and a silk net veil held by a glittering tiara. The white satin gown was embellished with 10,000 crystals and seed pearls fashioned in the shape of white roses, orange blossoms, lilacs, jasmine, and ears of wheat. Elizabeth carried a waterfall bouquet of orchids with a sprig of myrtle. She wore a double stand of pearls, a gift from her father, the king.



## PRINCESS MARGARET ROSE

The queen's sister, Princess Margaret, chose an elegant Norman Hartnell gown, which was stunning in its simplicity, for her wedding to society photographer Antony Armstrong-Jones on May 6, 1960. Though featuring a billowing full skirt with a self-train, high neckline, cinched waist, and long sleeves, the silk organza gown had no ornamentation. Margaret also wore the Poltimore diamond tiara with a cathedral-length veil of silk organza and carried a cascading bouquet of orchids.



## PRINCESS ANNE

The queen's only daughter, Princess Anne, evoked an extravagant medieval, Tudor-style look when she married Captain Mark Phillips on November 5, 1973. Her white silk dress featured a high neckline, pin-tucked bodice, and extravagant trumpet sleeves. The neckline and shoulders were embroidered with pearls, and the long, pure silk gauze train featured a design of flowers outlined with pearls and silver thread. The couple were later divorced, and the princess wore a simple suit to marry Commander Timothy Laurence in Scotland on December 12, 1992.



### PRINCESS DIANA

Probably the most watched royal wedding ever was that of Lady Diana Spencer and Prince Charles on July 29, 1981 at St. Paul's Cathedral. The 20-year-old bride wore a romantic ivory taffeta and silk confection designed by David and Elizabeth Emanuel with a full skirt, fitted bodice with a lace inlay and dainty bow at the neckline, huge pouffed sleeves edged in lace, and an extraordinarily long 25-foot train. The gown was a Victorian vision, enhanced with 10,000 pearls and mother-of-pearl sequins. Her veil was held by the Spencer family tiara. Her fairytale look inspired every bride thereafter who clamored for a crinoline and tiara. She carried an enormous bouquet of yellow Mountbatten roses, gardenias, stephanotis, orchids, lily-of-the-valley, and freesia with trailing greenery.



### SARAH FERGUSON, DUCHESS OF YORK

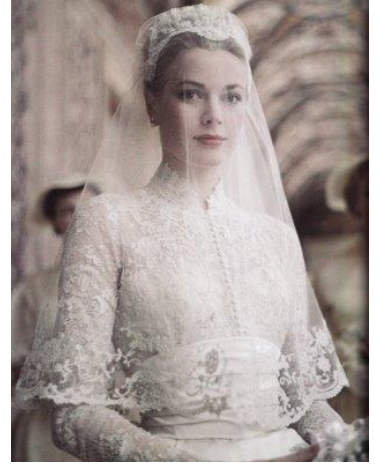
Commoner Sarah Ferguson selected a regal dress designed by Lindka Cierach to marry Charles' brother, Prince Andrew, on July 23, 1986 at Westminster Abbey. Her ivory duchess satin gown featured a low pointed waistline, scooped neckline, elaborate embroidery and bugle beads adorning the bodice, padded shoulders accented with bows and a flared satin skirt, with a large bow at the bustle. It flowed into a 17-foot-long train embroidered with an "A" for Andrew, as well as Sarah's personal arms, consisting of a bumble bee and a rose. The bride's veil was attached to a crown of gardenias, which was removed following the vows and replaced by a glittering tiara.

### SOPHIE RHYS JONES, COUNTESS OF WESSEX

When the queen's youngest son, Edward, married Sophie Rhys Jones on June 19, 1999, at St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, the bride selected a sleek, flowing silk organza dress coat edged with pearls and glass beads, worn over a slim silk crepe V-necked dress and featuring an ivory silk train. The ensemble designed by Samantha Shaw was embroidered with 350,000 cut glass and pearl beads. She wore a beaded cathedral-length veil of silk tulle sprinkled with crystals, fastened to a tiara belonging to the Queen, and carried a large bouquet of ivory roses, lily-of-the-valley, freesia, and greenery. She also wore a matching set of black and white pearl earrings and necklace with a cross, which was designed by the bridegroom.

### GRACE KELLY

When Academy Award-winning actress Grace Kelly of Philadelphia married Prince Rainier of Monaco on April 19, 1956, her wedding dress, designed by Helen Rose, was a gift from MGM Studios. The gown was made from antique Valenciennes rose point lace, 25 yards of taffeta, and 98 yards of tulle. Her circular silk net veil was appliquéd with lace lovebirds and thousands of seed pearls. The ivory dress featured a peau de soie bell-shaped skirt, which was worn over three petticoats; a high-necked lace bodice of Brussels lace with seed pearl trim, a triangular tulle and lace train insert, and a pleated silk faille cummerbund. Pearl-embellished lace covered with prayer book, shoes, and cap, which was surmounted with an orange-blossom wreath.



### CROWN PRINCESS LETIZIA OF SPAIN

Letizia Ortiz, a former journalist, married Crown Prince Felipe of Spain in Madrid's Cathedral on May 22, 2004. She selected a regal off-white gown designed by Manuel Pertegaz with a fitted bodice, V-shaped neckline edged with a stand-up collar; long, slim sleeves with beaded flared cuffs, and embroidered trim on the front skirt. Her long train was embroidered with heraldic symbols. Letizia wore a flowing silk lace veil held by a sparkling diamond and platinum tiara which had been worn by her mother-in-law, Queen Sofia, on her wedding day, and carried a bouquet of lily-of-the-valley.



### CROWN PRINCESS MARY OF DENMARK

The former Mary Elizabeth Donaldson of Australia married Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark in Copenhagen Cathedral on May 14, 2004, wearing a satin bridal ensemble by Danish designer Uffe Frank which encompassed both Australian and Danish heritage. She wore a veil first used by Crown Princess Margaret of Sweden in 1905 and carried a bouquet of Australian eucalyptus from the palace garden. She wore a gown with a wide boatneck, sleeves below the elbow, a fitted bodice and flared skirt.



