



Britain's Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother takes a British flag from a well-wisher outside Clarence house, her residence in London, on her 95th birthday Friday. Hundreds of well-wishers gathered outside her official residence to give her their best wishes.
AP photo

Crowds gather to wish the Queen Mum a happy 95th

By Helen Branswell

LONDON (CP) — The legs were a bit wobbly but the indomitable spirit was still very much in evidence as the Queen Mother was showered with birthday wishes as she turned 95 on Friday.

Hundreds crowded in and around the narrow courtyard outside her home, Clarence House, to extend birthday cheer to one of the perennial favorites among the Royal Family.

She didn't disappoint.

Decked out in one of her signature off-the-face hats (this year's a light apple green) and matching dress, she made several forays out to accept posies from young children and speak with her fond fans.

On one, she was accompanied by the Queen, Princess Margaret, Prince Charles, and two of her great-grandchildren, princes William and Harry, who had gathered for her annual birthday lunch.

On another, she took the salute from the Royal Corps of Signals as the Corps' band played Happy Birthday.

But this year, the traditional walkabout was more of a drive-about.

A bit unsteady of late, the Queen Mother moved from well-wisher to well-wisher in a golf cart, dubbed by some the Queen Mum-mobile.

Still, she managed a remarkable 45 minutes in blazing mid-day sun.

Some of those with the best

view had staked out their spots days before.

Norman Williams, 57, had camped outside the gate since Wednesday.

"This is to say 'Thank you' for all she has done since she was here 12 months ago, and we are hoping we will see her next year," said the retired factory worker, who has been coming each year since 1969.

"She's a wonderful person, really," said Gladys Jenkinson, 89, of Sussex, who came to pay her respects.

"She's maintained a dignity through all these years and all the troubles in the Royal Family, which must have hurt her deeply, I think."

In an age when the Royal Family's stature has fallen somewhat, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother is an enduring reminder of a time when the monarchy was widely loved, admired and emulated.

"I just think she's a marvelous old lady," said Maurice Bensley, 66, who has come to Clarence House the last few Aug. 4ths to extend his birthday wishes.

"The Queen Mother and the Queen have never let the side down. There's never been a breath of scandal about either of them."

Never letting the side down is what the former Elizabeth Angela Marguerite Bowes-Lyon is best known and loved for.

The daughter of a Scottish earl,

she was initially reluctant to marry into the stifling life of royalty. In fact, she twice turned down Prince Albert — later King George VI — before she married him in 1924.

Having taken on the burden of public life, she has always striven to be an example to her people. They, in turn, have never

forgotten that she refused to desert them during the dangerous days of the Nazi blitz of London.

"The children won't leave without me; I won't leave without the King and the King will never leave," she replied when urged to flee with her daughters to the safety of Canada.



Hard at work

Two residents of Woodingford Lodge in Woodstock work at crafts recently. Bernice Thomas, left, puts finishing touches on a crocheted dress. The 86-year-old made the pink dress her great grandchild. Pearl Hughes, 88, loves to crochet and knit. She is shown working on a project that will be for sale in the Lodge's Craft Room.