George IV’s coronation commenced at 11am on 19 July 1821 at Westminster Abbey, and lasted five hours. Afterwards, there was a coronation banquet in Westminster Hall. George wanted his coronation to surpass that of Napoleon Bonaparte’s as Emperor of France in 1804 and spared no expense. It was the most expensive coronation ever held in Britain, costing over £230,000 (approximately £21 million today), including a grant of £100,000 from Parliament.

The coronation reflected George’s self-image as a man of fashion. He assisted in the design of some of the outfits, taking inspiration from the Tudor and Stuart Courts. The King’s robes cost over £24,000, with a red velvet train of 6.4 metres (27 feet) embroidered with gold stars. He wore a suit of cloth-of-silver, trimmed with gold lace and braid. His new crown contained over 12,000 diamonds.

At the coronation banquet, the King’s Champion, Henry Dymoke, rode into Westminster Hall, fully armoured, and challenged anyone to contest the right of the new King to reign. It was a traditional part of the proceedings, but this, along with the banquet, was the last time it took place. The reason was cost, not because anyone accepted the challenge. One person who might have done so, George’s estranged wife Caroline, had already been refused entry to Westminster Abbey for the coronation ceremony.