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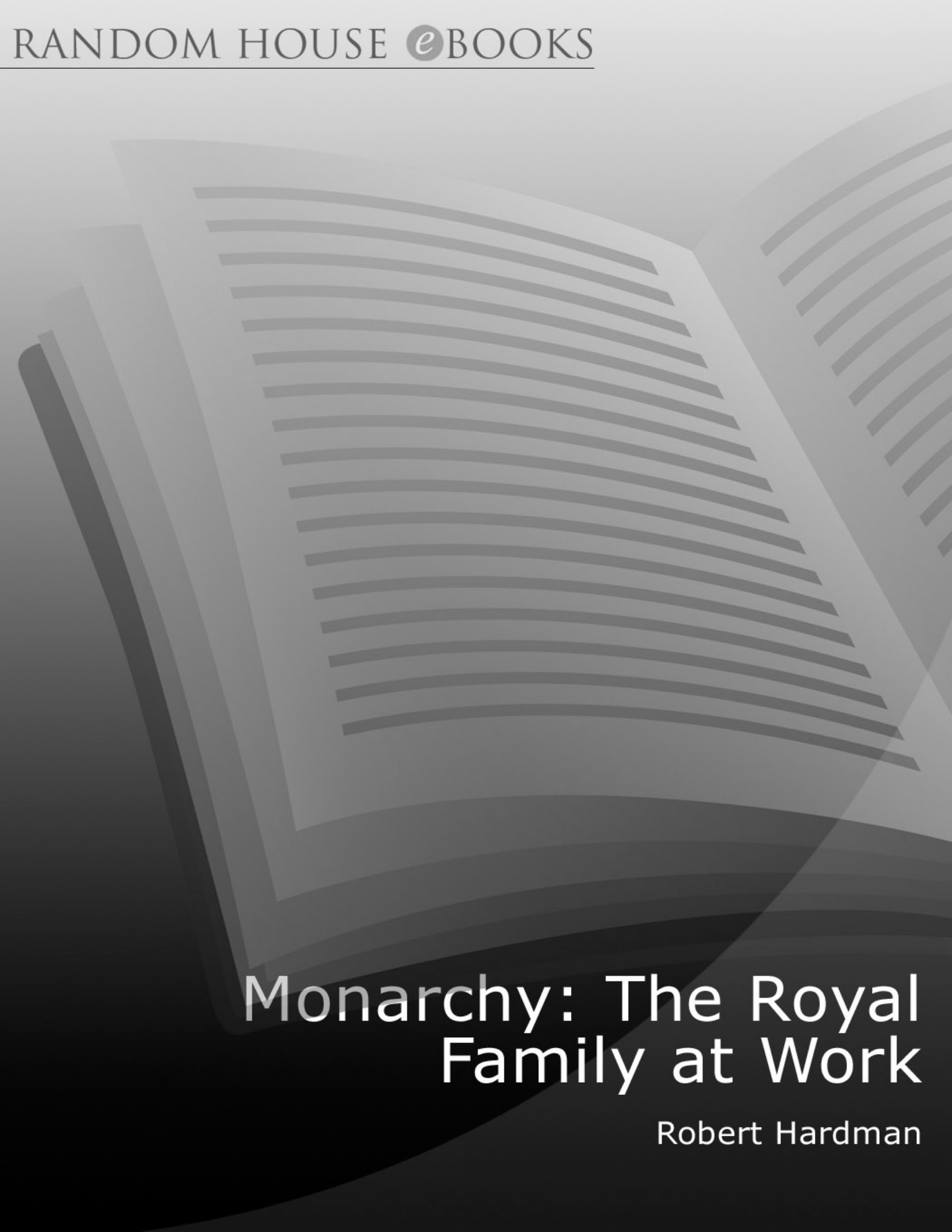

Monarchy: The Royal Family at Work

Robert Hardman

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Every year over 5000 royal engagements take place around the world, from the Queen's famous summer garden parties to the mysterious world of the Privy Council and high-profile overseas tours. But little is widely known about the inner workings of the institution that lies at the very heart of the British nation. For the first time ever, *The Monarchy* takes the reader behind the scenes, meeting the people that keep the royal machine running like clockwork.

With unprecedented access to the key players and organizations involved, *The Monarchy* follows the working life of the Queen over the course of a whole year, both home and abroad. Ever wondered who opens the Queen's mail, who pays the bills, or even how the royals follow the score in the Ashes? Alongside such trivial matters sit weightier concerns, such as audiences with the Prime Minister, the formal honouring of bravery and excellence, and the sensitive issue of the royal response at times of controversy or crisis.

Accompanying a major BBC1 television series, *The Monarchy* provides a fascinating insight into the public and private lives of this most familiar of families. Written by the Daily Mail's, Robert Hardman, and lavishly illustrated with exclusive colour photographs, this book will appeal both to avid royal-watchers and anyone fascinated in the history and heritage of the United Kingdom.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Hardman has been writing about the Monarchy for more than 15 years, first as royal correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph* and now as the author of the 'How I See It' column in the *Daily Mail*. During a distinguished Fleet Street career, he has also been, among other things, a political sketchwriter, a diarist, a sports columnist and a restaurant critic. His royal interviews have included Prince Philip, the Emperor and Empress of Japan, the King and Queen of Norway, the Queen of Denmark and the ex-King of Afghanistan. He is the writer and associate producer of the BBC1 series *A Year with the Queen*, which accompanies this book. He did the same for BBC1's acclaimed 2005 series, *The Queen's Castle*. Educated at Wellington and Cambridge, he lives in London.

Monarchy

THE ROYAL FAMILY AT WORK

Robert Hardman

EBURY PRESS

To my parents, Richard and Dinah Hardman

INTRODUCTION

Even the most powerful man on earth admits that it will be rather a special occasion. In his six years at the White House, the President of the United States of America and the First Lady have entertained almost every world figure of note. But no visitor has warranted a fairy-tale white-tie banquet. Until now.

Thousands of miles away, in a tiny nation where democracy has only just reached its teens, another president is planning one of the biggest parties since his country attained freedom. It will be quite a fairy-tale occasion there, too.

On the lawn of Buckingham Palace, a woman arrives for a tea party which will change her life. Outside one of the Palace's many drawing rooms, a poet, a bishop and a colonel are sitting nervously on huge sofas, waiting to be summoned. In the Houses of Parliament, the most senior legal figure in the land is practising a ten-second ritual. It does not require him to utter a word but he is a bundle of nerves. On a dusty Iraqi airfield, a combat-weary battalion is in a state of high excitement. So, too, are 300 proud relatives, gathered in the Buckingham Palace Ballroom to see their loved ones honoured by the nation. These are just random snapshots plucked from random weeks in a random royal year. Some of these occasions will lead the news bulletins. Others will warrant no more than a paragraph in a local newspaper. But, in most cases, those on the receiving end will remember the moment for as long as they live. Few forget an encounter with the Monarchy.

There have been countless books and productions devoted to the Royal Family. One film recently won an Oscar. There will, of course, be many more. The first question they tend to address can usually be summed up

as: ‘What are they really like?’ The answers vary but they have helped to define a cast of characters which the public feels it knows reasonably well.

I am not sure outsiders will ever know what members of the Royal Family are ‘really like’, just as we will never know what it is ‘really like’ to be them. Many biographies, no doubt, will continue to address these questions but that is not the purpose of this book.

President Bush joins the Queen in a toast at the White House.

No family in history can have endured more personal scrutiny than the post-war House of Windsor but whatever the fact, fiction, conjecture and polemic, that scrutiny appears to have done little to alter the fundamental attachment which the British people have towards the Monarchy.

What do I mean by ‘Monarchy’? If the Royal Family, led by the Sovereign, makes up the cast, then the Monarchy is the production. And it is a system which also produces the Head of State for fifteen other independent countries and a further fourteen overseas territories (not to mention the Monarch’s role as Head of the Commonwealth, a post-imperial cousinhood spanning nearly a third of the world’s population).

Another question, frequently asked but perhaps more pertinent, is: ‘What are they for?’ Former Prime Minister Tony Blair believes that most people have a pretty clear idea. ‘The public has come to an acceptance that the Monarchy is the best form of constitutional authority and a good way of keeping the country together in a changing

world,’ he says. ‘It is, I believe, completely secure both in the affections of the people and in their understanding that it’s got a role to play.’

Generations of ‘constitutional experts’, historians, journalists and politicians from every part of the spectrum have attempted to define the role of the Monarchy. None, though, has surpassed a political journalist whose observations remain the standard work on the subject after 140 years.

Most countries have a conventional written constitution; Britain has a constitutional monarchy instead. Laws are made by Parliament and the Monarch governs within those laws. So perhaps the closest thing we have to a written constitution is the brilliant piece of analysis by a nineteenth-century editor of *The Economist*. If monarchs have a manual, it is, surely, *The English Constitution* by Walter Bagehot. Originally a series of essays, it was published as a book in 1867. The British Empire was near its peak and yet its matriarchal figurehead, Queen Victoria, was starting to attract criticism for retreating into private grief following the death of Prince Albert six years earlier.

Chatting to guests at Buckingham Palace.

Enjoying the rain at a Holyroodhouse garden party.

Bagehot’s achievement was to explain the role of the Monarchy to its squabbling subjects. Everyone knew that the Sovereign was a human link with the past and the signatory to all Acts of Parliament. But what else was he or she for? Bagehot split the machinery of State into ‘elements of the constitution’ and divided them between the ‘efficient’ and the ‘dignified’. The first, notably the Cabinet and the Commons, were the parts of the State which actually ran the country. The ‘dignified’ elements were those which lacked direct power but enjoyed influence and inspired reverence. Chief among these was the Monarchy.

Bagehot observed, rightly, that the ‘dignified’ bits had an absolutely crucial role in propping up the ‘efficient’ elements. It was the Sovereign, he explained, who gave the State and its Government a human persona. ‘The use of the Queen, in a dignified capacity, is incalculable. Without her in England, the present English Government would fail and pass away,’ he wrote. These were not the words of a toady. In the same paragraph, he described Queen Victoria and the then Prince of Wales as ‘a retired widow and an unemployed youth’, but he went on to explain their allure:

‘Royalty is a government in which the attention of the nation is concentrated on one person doing interesting actions. A republic is a government in which that attention is divided between many, who are all doing uninteresting actions.’

The State Opening of Parliament.

As far as Bagehot was concerned, the Royal Family, supporting the Monarch, only further underlined that sense of family, hearth and home at the apex of the nation. Equally, the Monarchy's position as custodian of the Church gave the Government further respectability.

The Queen alone could appoint prime ministers and dissolve Parliament. Above all else, Bagehot defined the Monarch's greatest powers as follows: 'The Sovereign has, under a constitutional monarchy such as ours, three rights – the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn. And a king of great sense and sagacity would want no others.'

Bagehot's conclusions have stood the test of time and today remain the most authoritative guide to the constitutional function of the Monarchy. But Bagehot was not right about everything. One of his sternest warnings concerned privacy: 'Above all things our royalty is to be reverenced, and if you begin to poke about it you cannot reverence it. When there is a select committee on the Queen, the charm of royalty will be gone. Its mystery is its life. We must not let in daylight upon magic.'

But Bagehot could not foresee television, mass media and the Internet, let alone the shape and values of twenty-first-century society. The Monarchy has been well and truly poked about. It has endured the probings of a select committee. Historians and everyone else can argue whether daylight came in with newsreels, the televising of the Queen's Coronation, the modern documentary or the tabloid press. But it is, surely, beyond question that if the curtains had stayed resolutely drawn, the Monarchy would be withering away, if indeed it was still around at all.

In the course of writing this book I have spoken to many, inside the Palace and out. All of them believe that the pace of royal change has actually gathered momentum in recent years. It might seem odd that an institution run by the same person for more than half a century should be busier,

livelier and more proactive since the boss turned 80 than it was when she was 30. But it is undeniable that there have been more fundamental changes to the Monarchy since 1990 than at any stage since the Abdication Crisis of 1938.

Opening the doors to tourists, the gardens to pop concerts and the accounts to the taxman and the world would have been inconceivable as recently as the late 1980s. Having just retired after six momentous yeas as Lord Chamberlain, the Queen's top courtier, Lord Luce is well-placed to offer an overview: 'The Monarchy cannot just exist. It depends on popular support to survive, and that means adapting,' he says. He is fond of quoting the most famous line from Giuseppe di Lampedusa's classic novel, *The Leopard*: 'If we want things to stay the same, things will have to change.'

To survive, the Monarchy has always had to adapt, evolve and modernise. The present Sovereign made that clear in 1997, some weeks after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. There has been endless conjecture – in print and in film – of the Monarch's thinking during those turbulent months. This, though, is what the Queen said at the Prime Minister's luncheon to mark her Golden Wedding anniversary. Having acknowledged that both monarchies and governments depend on the support and consent of the people, she went on: 'That consent, or the lack of it, is expressed for you, Prime Minister, through the ballot box. It is a tough, even brutal, system but at least the message is a clear one for all to read. For us, a Royal Family, however, the message is often harder to read, obscured as it can be by deference, rhetoric or the conflicting currents of public opinion. But read it we must.'

And read it she has, according to the Prime Minister who was sitting alongside her that day. 'The most important thing to realise about the Queen,' says Tony Blair, 'is she has understood that the fundamental link in the modern world between the Monarchy and the people is around the

concept of duty. She understands that, provided that there is a clear sense of duty for a Monarch, people then reciprocate with loyalty and affection.'

Today's Monarchy is mindful of other duties and responsibilities well beyond those laid down by Bagehot, who was writing long before the Commonwealth came into existence. These more modern duties are not codified or enshrined in some oath. They are simply the ways in which today's Queen has come to define her own role. That is why she splits her duties into two distinct categories: Head of State and Head of Nation. If the former comprises her constitutional role, the latter is the more human stuff.

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair has an audience of the Queen at Balmoral.

So, I will leave it to others to keep on asking, 'What are they really like?' And I feel that Bagehot, his successors and the Queen herself are better qualified to answer the question: 'What are they for?'

This book, like the BBC television series which accompanies it, does not attempt to judge the Monarchy. This is not a history book but a portrait of an entire year. It aims to answer another serious question: 'What do they do?'

During the year in question, the Sovereign and thirteen members of her family will perform some 4,000 engagements, ranging from, say, a visit to a mosque in Pakistan to a coffee morning in Hampshire. If you work on the very rough basis that every engagement involves either a handshake, a conversation, a simple ‘hello’ or a passing nod to 100 people, then, each year, nearly half a million individuals will have some sort of royal encounter.

Add to that the 40,000 people who receive an invitation to a royal party every year, the 2,500 people who receive an honour at an investiture every year (plus the 7,500 people who will accompany them), and you start to understand why one former private secretary describes the Monarchy as being in the ‘feel good business’. How does it all happen? And what are the results?

Over the course of our year on the inside, I have sought to examine just what goes on in the working life of Britain’s best-known family.

We know the big, televised rituals because they come round like the seasons – the State Opening of Parliament, Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph, the Christmas Broadcast. But we have little idea of what goes on behind the scenes, of all the planning which goes into even the most ritualistic of events. We may read that the Queen held a garden party. We will not read of her inspection of the medical facilities or the chocolate cake in advance. Nor will we read what happened to the guests.

Only the most assiduous readers of the Court Circular will note that an ambassador or a spiritual leader has had an audience of the Queen. And they certainly won’t know what was said. They won’t be aware of the detailed computer analysis which decides royal movements six months in advance. They will not see the frantic efforts being made to track down the appropriate retired admiral to represent the Queen at a particular memorial service or the dance of the furniture at Buckingham Palace as a state

room switches from dinner mode to party mode and back again. They won’t see the royal chef travelling to meet the animals which will end up in his oven for the next state banquet. And, crucially, they won’t see the other side of the equation either – the quiet pride of a ship’s company after a visit from their Lord High Admiral; the satisfaction of the headmistress whose years of patient, hard graft have not passed unnoticed.

The crowds gather outside Buckingham Palace after Trooping the Colour.

Fine, some will say, but that is the Monarchy's job and that is what we pay for. Some, indeed, will argue that we pay too much or that these are tasks which could be performed by an elected head of state. Cost aside, there will always be those who argue for an alternative system on ideological grounds, claiming that a Monarchy perpetuates the class system or that it is unfair for the top job to reside with one family. But opinion poll after opinion poll suggests that the vast majority of people in Britain are happy with a system which is quintessentially British, ancient, colourful, familiar and immune to tampering. No politician, however over-mighty, can take the Crown.

That is not a debate I intend to enter here. Just as one can write a book about the work of the Church or the Army without veering off into a debate about the existence of God or the ethics of killing, so one can examine the work of the Monarchy without a lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of alternative systems of government.

After more than fifteen years of reporting on the life and times of the Royal Family all over the world, my own view is that the United Kingdom has been fortunate to have a constitutional monarchy. Britain might take its own stability, continuity and individuality for granted but, seen through the eyes of the rest of the world, these are enviable strengths. And at their root lies the Monarchy.

I do not vouch for the peoples of Australia, Canada, Jamaica, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea or any of the other realms which share the same Head of State but, inevitably, have a different relationship with a Sovereign based overseas.

In Britain, we have a system which is certainly popular and benign. It receives more scrutiny than almost any other public institution and, as a result, regular doses of criticism. Sometimes this is fair, sometimes this is exaggerated, sometimes this is wrong. But this institution has learned to take the long view and move with the times

rather than the headlines. In good weather or bad, it has just got on with the job.

This book and the BBC series that goes with it will, I hope, help to explain the job.

CHAPTER ONE

HEAD OF NATION

SHANE HUGGINS IS on a mission. Absolutely nothing is going to stop him marching across the classroom to present the Queen with a trio of plastic-wrapped tulips. ‘They’re red,’ he says thrusting them into the Queen’s hand. ‘Thank you,’ the Queen replies, scooping them up. ‘Do you know what flowers they are?’ ‘They’re red,’ Shane replies, with faultless three-year-old logic. ‘Yes, I suppose they are,’ the Queen replies, catching the wide-eyed pride of Shane’s mother, Maria.

Emerging from the classroom, the Queen shakes another fifty or so hands everyone from managers to midwives and walks out into the car park of the new children’s centre in Whitehawk on the outskirts of Brighton. It’s not the grand, Regency quarter of the raffish old South Coast town which grew into a handsome resort on the back of royal patronage. This is the rough end. ‘Most of our clients come from round here,’ whispers a police officer. Perhaps that is why the welcome is louder here than it was earlier in the city centre where this royal away-day began with a concert at the Theatre Royal and a bicycle ballet in the street. Whitehawk does not get much in the way of VIPs, let alone monarchs. The engines start and a small royal convoy four motorbikes, one State Bentley, one minibus for officials and one police Range Rover moves off slowly. Hundreds of children try to run alongside for as long as they can as the convoy cruises through the council estate up to the main road. It picks up pace and drives at a sedate speed for a few miles back to the local railway station.

Along the unmarked route, the reaction is so similar that, from inside the convoy, it almost seems a genetic impulse. A handful of bored students, waiting at a bus stop, do it. So do a group of paint-splattered builders waiting to cross the road. They are going about their business on a pleasant spring afternoon when they suddenly see the most famous woman in the world looking at them. Without even thinking about it, they all stop in their tracks and wave. And, once the car has passed, they all turn to the people around them and lower their jaws. No doubt, all these people have varying views on life and society. They are not manic monarchists – if they were, they would have gone to see the Queen at one of her designated engagements. These are just ordinary people who, while walking down the street, have bumped into that reassuringly familiar face which has been on every stamp, coin and jubilee mug for as long as most people have been alive.

At Brighton station, the Queen boards the Royal Train. The Royal Class 67 diesel locomotive, 'Royal Sovereign', slowly heaves its claret-coloured carriages out onto the branch lines of southern England. The train will take a slow, roundabout route to Windsor, weaving in between the rush-hour schedules. The Queen's day will not make the national headlines, but it will be long remembered in East Sussex. The local paper is already clearing the decks for a twenty-eight-page souvenir supplement. The Queen has a souvenir of her own. Settling down into her small sofa, she starts to browse through the farewell gift which she received from Whitehawk: a book of children's hat designs for their Monarch. 'I was rather amused by that,' she says, smiling at a picture of herself sporting a huge green splodge. 'Very inventive children, aren't they. But there's always the usual thing of why wasn't I wearing a crown?'

She starts laughing at another picture of herself in a pirate's hat. But less lively reading material is on its way. Her Assistant Private Secretary, Edward Young, arrives

with the afternoon’s red box, a slightly battered leather-bound thing the size of a deposit box, which bursts open with folded state papers when unlocked. The Queen puts aside her book of hats and works her way through a pile of dreary-looking Government correspondence before settling down with a Foreign Office profile of the President of Ghana who is coming to stay at the Palace next week. There are also notes on her forthcoming state visit to the USA. The British Ambassador will not make any key decisions without her approval.

It has been an unremarkable day in the sense that this is the sort of thing monarchs have been doing for years: visit a region, shake hands, open something, commemorate something, salute various deserving causes and meet as many people as possible before heading off to meet a visiting head of state. This is the day job of royalty. It is not the constitutional, parchment-signing side of being Monarch; that might be termed Head of State. This is the human side which is just as important. This is the Queen as Head of Nation.

On board the Royal Train, the Queen prepares to study the day's state papers.

At an age when most people are stuck rigidly in their ways (she was born in 1926), the Queen is very conscious that the Monarchy has to move with the times. Few will be aware that today's programme has been planned with forensic analysis. And few will appreciate that if a tour like this had taken place just twenty years previously, there would have been outrage. Some would have suggested that Her Majesty's advisers had taken leave of their senses. How could she come to Royal Brighton and not visit the Royal Pavilion? Why was she taken to unlovely Whitehawk instead? Why was the civic reception full of ordinary charity workers instead of important local dignitaries? There will be no complaints after this visit, though. All the elements of today's programme were personally approved by the Queen (as they always are). After more than fifty