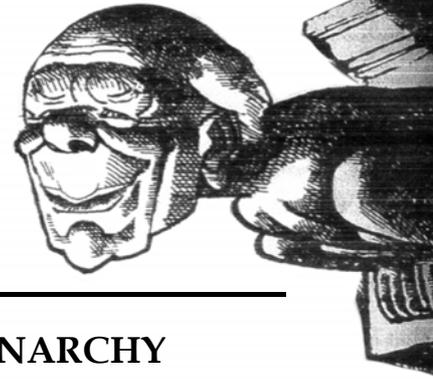
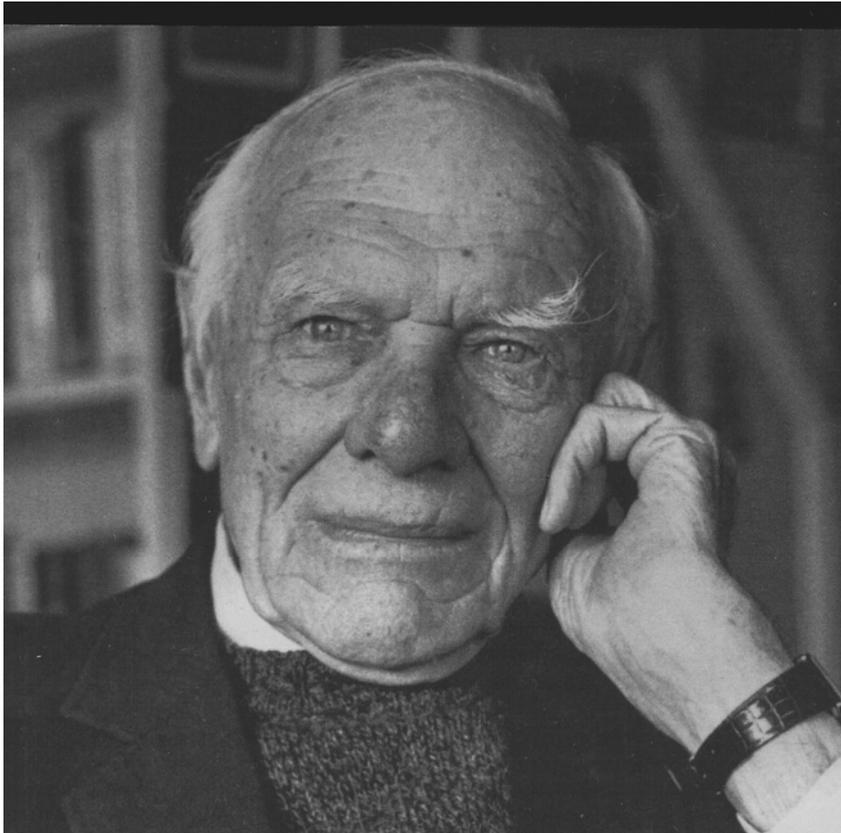


THE GARGOYLE

THE JOURNAL OF THE MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE SOCIETY
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FIFTY YEARS ON - A SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE BRITISH MONARCHY



“I got into terrible trouble ages ago for writing an article which was about the Monarchy, in which I said that in an age of mass communication, the media soon reduces it to being a “Royal Soap Opera”. And, of course, this is in fact what it now is and what it has to be”

Malcolm Muggeridge

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The Gargoyle is published quarterly and contributions from members are welcomed by the Editor on any aspect of Malcolm's diverse life.

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Letter from the President of the Society

Malcolm was still editing satirical magazine *Punch* in the late Spring of 1957 when he spent a couple of weeks in America. It was whilst there that the *Saturday Evening Post* commissioned him to write an article for them on the theme of royalty and constitutional monarchy. They had seen an earlier 1955 article by Muggeridge in the *New Statesman* called "Royal Soap Opera" (republished in the *Gargoyle* in April 2005). This had generated some controversy at the time particularly in the *Beaverbrook Press* but Malcolm felt it safe to further develop his theme in this American magazine, although later made aware of a forthcoming official royal tour of the US and which he mentioned in the article. Published on October 19th 1957, it was all pretty innocuous stuff judged by modern journalistic standards of reporting. Fifty years on it is hard to fully understand the emotive public reaction it triggered. Many likened the article to an act of treachery, if not actual treason. Fuelling the fuss and the controversy was not only the unfortunate timing and much pre-publicity, coinciding with the Queen's arrival in the US, but the mischievous and provocative title, not Malcolm's, given to the article: **Does England Really Need a Queen?** This was not the question being tackled in the article. As you will see from reading it again in full in this special issue, it was more about the historical interaction of the monarchy with the people and the impact of the media age.

Immediately news of the forthcoming article broke in England, my uncle was invited to defend it on *BBC Panorama*, but the offer was quickly retracted under external pressure and he had to fly to the US to publicly defend himself. Later banned from broadcasting on the BBC altogether, he learned at first hand how the Establishment can close ranks and found the experience deeply unpleasant. Moreover, it left him suddenly with no gainful means of employment. Ironically he had only recently left *Punch* to be able to devote more time to the more profitable medium of television. It was a watershed in his career, and tagged thereafter as anti-monarchist, it was an episode he later had much cause to regret.



There has been much recent talk in the press about a fifty year crisis of faith experienced by Mother Teresa leading to great unhappiness, revealed in letters written to her spiritual confidant Rev. Michael Van Der Peet.

A new book **Mother Teresa: Come be my light** has been published. Ironically, it was Muggeridge who wrote "There can be no faith without doubt" whilst at the same time being greatly impressed by Mother Teresa's apparent certainty and the practical application of her own faith as he reflected in **Something Beautiful for God**.

These confessions of long periods of spiritual impoverishment are not thought likely to hold up the process leading to her eventual canonisation which must surely be advanced soon.

Sally Muggeridge

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The death of our good friend Lord Deedes at 94, a former *Daily Telegraph* colleague of Malcolm, has been well reported. The Society much enjoyed Bill's presence and contribution at the Centennial Lunch given at the Garrick Club in June 2003. Bill Deedes later recalled the lunch and included a chapter on Muggeridge in "Brief Lives".

Does England Really Need a Queen?

By Malcolm Muggeridge (1957)

Elizabeth II is popular – but powerless. Is her monarchy anything more than a club for snobs and a drain on the taxpayer? A famous British writer sounds off.

Admiration for the monarchy as an institution, and for the present incumbents as individuals, would seem, on the face of things, to be universal among all sections of the British population. The newspapers minutely report the doings of the royal family and praise them fulsomely, often to the point of fatuity. Even the Daily Worker does not attack them outright, but contents itself with an occasional ironic comment. As for the British Broadcasting Corporation, and now the independent television networks – they are both tireless and unctuous in describing the public appearances of the Queen and of her consort, the Duke of Edinburgh; of her sister, Princess Margaret, as well as of the Queen Mother, and other more distant relations like the Duchess of Kent and her children. The Queen's son, Prince Charles, and her daughter, Princess Anne, have already become public figures. Almost before they could walk, they had acquired that characteristic gesture of royalty, the flapping of the hand in acknowledgement of applause. They became front-page news while still in their cradles.

There would seem to be little doubt that all this caters for an authentic public interest. Magazine editors assume that features about the royal family, however banal and repetitious, will restore flagging circulations. Pictures in colour of the Queen or of Princess Margaret are believed never to fail on the bookstalls. The Duke of Edinburgh's valet or a former royal governess like "Crawfie" can command for their reminiscences sums which even Mr. Noel Coward or Mr. Somerset Maugham might envy. A major royal occasion like a coronation or a funeral brings half London onto the streets. Even when the Queen is not in residence at Buckingham Palace, some

faces will be sure to be staring through the railings there, in the same sort of way that pious old women shuffle through dark, deserted churches.

This popular esteem for the monarchy and for the person of the sovereign is a relatively recent development. The first Hanoverian monarchs were wholly German, and detested the country of their adoption as much as their subjects detested them. George III enjoyed some popularity, probably because he went mad, and in her declining years Queen Victoria was held in awed regard. She ruled for a record number of years, and, next to lunacy, the English admire longevity. Of George IV, *The Times* – not, in those days, the automatic champion of constituted authority which it was subsequently to become – wrote on the occasion of his death:

"As Prince of Wales, in the tawdry childishness of Carlton House, and in the mountebank Pavilion, or clusters of Pagodas at Brighton, His Royal Highness afforded an infallible earnest of what one day might be expected of His Majesty. In July 1783, £50,000 per annum was settled on the Prince. Three years afterwards his debts amounted to £160,000. Some familiar then counselled him to bribe the people of England by an appeal at once to their good nature and their morality, and to marry for the public good. Those who knew little of the Prince's character asked each other who was to be the fortunate object of his affections. Those who knew better asked who was to be the victim of his necessities."

The obituary continues in the same strain, referring to "the late King's many generations of intimates, with whom he led a course of life, the character of which rose little higher than that of animal indulgence.... Never have we seen recorded," it goes on, "among the Prince's intimates the name of one man distinguished in the world for any intellectual attributes (we say nothing of the

moral) which it would not have been charity to forget,” and concludes:

“It is shocking that foul examples should emanate from so high a source, that the very name of modesty should be obliterated from the walls of that edifice whose lord is the fountain of honour for all Englishmen and their children.”

The life of Queen Victoria’s successor, Edward VII, cannot be compared with George IV’s, but it, too, was not particularly edifying. He got himself involved in an unsavoury lawsuit arising out of an accusation of cheating at cards. He was a witness in an action for divorce. Nevertheless, when he died, his memory was accorded the sonorous adulation which has come to be regarded as due to a deceased monarch. Max Beerbohm’s delightful, if cruel, caricature of him was put away.

It was during the reign of Edward VII’s son, George V, that popular monarchy, as we know it today, took shape. George V himself, according to Sir Harold Nicolson, a simple, estimable, painstaking man, has recorded the utter astonishment he felt at the manifestations of personal affection which were so notable a feature of the Jubilee celebration on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession. It had just not occurred to him, any more than it would have done to George IV, that his subjects held him in affectionate regard as a man, as distinct from holding him in respect, or even awe, as a monarch.

One of his courtiers who accompanied him on his drive through some of the poorest districts of London described to me how they had quite expected demonstrations of hostility or at any rate ridicule. Instead, to their amazement, they were acclaimed with delight. If the very poor would thus take the king and his majestic spouse, Queen Mary, to their hearts in spite of – perhaps because of – the vast disparity in their material circumstances, then, surely, it might be confidently assumed that the whole population were solidly behind the throne. Louis XIV of France made the historic and fabulous claim: “*L’état, c’est moi*” – I and the state are one and the same.

George V found himself in a position to make an even more fabulous claim: “*Le peuple, c’est moi*” – I and the people are one and the same.

If King George V and Queen Mary found themselves the unexpected objects of authentic popular affection, their eldest son, the Prince of Wales, later to become the forlorn, itinerant Duke of Windsor, was idolized as few men outside the Orient ever have been. For millions of his father’s subjects he was more than the heir to a beloved monarch and a splendid throne. He represented their own hopes of a better, kinder, more glamorous way of life than they had hitherto known. His personality became a part of the utopian hopes which characterized the years after the 1914-18 war. His fame and his times were indissolubly connected. Like so many of his contemporaries, he was apt to confuse aspiration and achievement, to assume that human ills would all dissolve in the sunshine of good intentions. When he said, in the course of a visit to the depressed areas in South Wales, that “something” must be done, everybody fallaciously assumed that something would be done. He might have made a popular American President in times of prosperity, but he lacked the humility to be a king, who, like the king in chess must at all costs be preserved or the game ends, but whose own moves are correspondingly restricted.

In his memoirs, *A King’s Story*, this man speaks of having a rendezvous with history. The rendezvous turned out to be an ambush. Many, including the Duke of Windsor himself and his Duchess, have described the circumstances which led up to his abdication before he had even been crowned. These accounts differ in certain particulars, and in their judgments of individuals concerned, like Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister, and Doctor Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury. What, however, is irrefutable is that the abdication was inevitable. The Duke of Windsor was a man born not to be king. Those that knew him in the days of his youthful popularity will not easily forget his good looks, his charm, his

gallantry, his unaffected yet moving eloquence, all of which conspired to make him the very image of human felicity. Yet even then inward doubts were gnawing at him. As he has put it himself, he felt a “vague apprehension that he might one day upset the royal apple cart.”

Upset it he certainly did. In leaving his people and relinquishing the destiny so dazzlingly embarked upon, he confronted the monarchy with what seemed at the time an insoluble problem of how to transfer to a retiring, nervous brother with an unhappy impediment in his speech, the fabulous popularity which the Duke of Windsor, first as Prince of Wales, and then as King Edward VIII, had so notably enjoyed. To the surprise of most, the transfer was achieved without difficulty. The new king, it was said, was just like his father. He became, instead of Albert I, King George VI, and adjusted his birthday celebrations to coincide, not with his own, but with the late king’s birthday. By the time his coronation took place, the beloved Prince of Wales and the tragically romantic Edward VIII had equally been lost in the shadowy, rapidly aging playboy figure of the Duke of Windsor. King George VI, with his able wife and two charming daughters, held the centre of the stage. His Christmas broadcasts, though funereal in tone, seemed to equal his father’s in the satisfaction they gave. Through the sombre war years he played the part assigned to him with courage and dignity. Despite the withdrawal from the cast of its leading actor, the show went on playing to packed houses. Thenceforth, the Duke of Windsor’s rare visits to London passed almost unnoticed. He belonged to a past which everyone wanted to forget, and his ghostly presence was embarrassing. He just did not matter any more.

When King George VI’s daughter ascended the throne as Elizabeth II, it was as though champagne were suddenly and unexpectedly to be served at a vicarage tea party. Pens which had wearied of animadverting upon the late King’s devotion to duty and impeccable home life found a new and attractive theme in the gaiety and charm

of the young wife and mother who was now to reign. How slender were the shoulders upon which so heavy a burden of responsibility had inexorably fallen! How sweet and unaffected was the smile which ambassadors, ministers and adoring subjects might equally expect! England, it was pointed out, always did well under a queen. Elizabeth I, Anne and Victoria had each presided over epochs glorious alike in letters and the arts and in military prowess. A new Elizabethan age might be expected. Such a prospect, in the circumstances of dwindling imperial influence and John Foster Dulles, was alluring.



The Queen’s consort fitted well into this expectation of a new springtime in public affairs. He was handsome, high-spirited, fond of sport, and elegant in his naval uniform – the very prototype of the dream husband upon whom women’s magazines thrive. His interests were mechanical, his practical jokes uproarious, and his chosen companions more notable for fun and frolics than for elevated conversation. At the same time, he could, when required, deliver a serious address to bodies like the British Association, and his television appearances were widely praised, though possibly not so widely viewed.

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, their family and their doings came, in fact, to constitute a kind of royal soap opera, whose interest seemed never to flag even though the successive instalments might be somewhat monotonous. Sophisticated observers might marvel at the appeal of so invariable a theme, but the general public continued to be delighted – more especially so since, as is the case with all good soap opera, there was a problem

figure in the person of Princess Margaret. The Townsend affair and other rumoured romances have helped to sustain viewers' interest at a peak level. Each time that the Princess acquires a new escort the gossip writers set to with a will. Commander Colville, a genteel figure responsible for the palace's press relations, has to withstand their assaults as best he may. Once more the cameras click, the typewriters tap, the wires hum, until order is restored by means of yet another official denial that the Princess is contemplating matrimony.



Such is popular monarchy. It has its charm and its utility. A largely materialistic society like ours has a natural propensity to hero worship, and the image of a royal family is no bad way of satisfying it. The monarchy, that is to say, provides a sort of substitute or *ersatz* religion. In the days when monarchs ruled as well as reigned, they claimed a divine right, whereby they were not accountable to human laws or institutions. Their ministers and their parliaments might advise, but in the last resort the monarchs, as the anointed representatives on earth of the divine will, took the decisions. The monarch was God's

viceroy, and, as such, not susceptible to interference by mortal men. When, as in the case of Queen Elizabeth II, a monarch only reigns with no ruling powers whatsoever, it is inevitable that the focus of interest should be transferred from the office to the person.

It is the Queen herself, her family, her associates, her way of life, which holds the public attention. The role she has inherited is purely symbolic, and the functions that go with it are purely ceremonial. Because she has no power, she must be in herself, wondrous. If she were ordinary she would be nothing. No one ever found it necessary to suggest that Queen Anne was other than a fat, rather stupid, bad-tempered and fickle woman. Her *raison d'être* was to rule. Queen Elizabeth II is not called on to rule. Her sole *raison d'être* is to be queen, and as such she must exemplify all the qualities which, in the popular estimation, are queenly. That is to say, she must be alluring, removed from the necessities and inadequacies of ordinary men and women – a creature of this world in the sense that she has a home, a husband and children, and yet not quite of this world in that she is a queen.

Thus it is that when the BBC – that serene temple of contemporary orthodoxy – deals with the royal family, the voices of its announcers and commentators become hushed and reverent. The whole atmosphere suddenly changes, as when, at a church social, in the midst of festivities, a word of prayer is offered. Then faces which were smiling grow suddenly grave, and all switch their attention from mundane to sacred things.

The high priest of this cult of royalty as presented on the air is unquestionably Mr. Richard Dimbleby, who, from the coronation onward, has undertaken the bulk of the BBC television commentary on all royal occasions. He is a large individual, with a luscious manner of speaking and a flow of eloquence which not even technical hitches can impede. He just goes on and on, in rich, full-throated ease. Whenever the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh make an important public appearance, he describes the scene – their movements, attire and observations as well as

all accompanying genuflections and ceremonial. His manner is priestly and, at the same time, in a portly sort of way, jaunty. It is no exaggeration to say that without his ministrations the impact of the monarchy on the public would be appreciably less. As Voltaire said of God, if he did not exist it would have been necessary to invent him.

What Mr. Dimpleby manages to convey, by the intimacy of his observations, by his lush imagery and sedate bearing, is that the subject of his commentary combines being a queen with being enchantingly "human." Seen through Mr. Dimpleby's eyes, she is girlishly radiant, as well as being imperiously dignified; gay and spontaneous, as well as conscious of her duties and responsibilities. All this would have seemed to the Queen's forebears so much gibberish. Confronted with Mr. Dimpleby, her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, would, we may be sure, not have been amused. As for the four Georges, they would have found Mr. Dimpleby unnecessary, bewildering and absurd. To reign by courtesy of BBC Television would have seemed to them preposterous.

In a welfare state, at the high tide of the century of the common man, it is quite otherwise. By one of those strange ironies in which history abounds, the acceptance of equalitarianism as a political theory has produced, in practice, not a diminution, but rather an intensification, of social distinctions. Who would ever have believed that, after six years of Socialist government, the crowds ready to pay two shillings and sixpence for the privilege of being shown round the stately residences of impoverished aristocrats would have grown to almost unmanageable proportions? Or that schools like Eton, Winchester and a host of lesser establishments, which specialize in turning out an authentic upper-class product, would have longer waiting lists than ever before, even though their fees have increased to between £400 and £500 a year – in taxable income the whole salary of a middling civil servant or a secondary school teacher? Yet so it has turned out. "All men are equal, but some are more equal than others" – the great

Orwellian proposition applies as aptly to a welfare state as to Animal Farm.

The monarchy likewise has grown more glamorous in circumstances which, theoretically, should have reduced it to the proportion of a Scandinavian dynasty. Bicycles have not, as might have been expected, replaced the glass coach drawn by splendid greys in which the Queen rides on state occasions. Debutantes throng more numerous and eagerly to be presented at court. Mayors and other local dignitaries proudly rustle up grey toppers for the Buckingham Palace garden parties. Labour ministers lay aside their red ties and delightedly attire themselves in knee breeches to attend upon Her Majesty.



BROADCASTER RICHARD DIMBLEBY

Indeed, in so far as there is criticism of the monarchy, it comes from the higher rather than the lower social echelons. When, occasionally, I have consorted with those who mix socially with the royal family, I have been interested in the contemptuously facetious tone with which they are apt to refer to members of the family. It is duchesses, not shop assistants, who find the Queen dowdy, frumpish and banal. The appeal of monarchy is to the gallery rather than to the stalls. Those whose wealth or birth brings them into its orbit are inclined to turn up their noses at a

show so obviously designed to pull in the masses. Their attitude is rather like that of a cultivated Anglican divine toward Billy Graham.

A case in point is Lord Altrincham, a youthful, amiable and earnest peer who recently aroused a furore by writing an article, *The Monarchy Today*, in an obscure monthly he owns and edits called the *National and English Review*. In the course of this article Lord Altrincham complained, among other things, that the Queen's personality had so far shown little sign of developing, that her voice was "a pain in the neck," that her associates were all the "tweedy sort," and that her speeches were platitudinously drafted and monotonously read, so that phrases like "My husband and I have been deeply moved" were highly unconvincing. "The personality conveyed by the utterances which are put in her mouth," he writes, "is that of a priggish schoolgirl, captain of the hockey team, a prefect and a recent candidate for confirmation."



JOHN GRIGG, THE FORMER LORD ALTRINCHAM

Unquestionably, there is an element of truth in Lord Altrincham's observations. The Queen is not, and does not set up to be, other than a rather simple person. Given her upbringing, it is difficult to see how she could be otherwise. I remember one of her cousins

telling me that on VE Day she was allowed, as a special treat, to walk along the Mall. This was the first – and probably the only – occasion in her life that she experienced what the rest of us take for granted- just strolling anonymously along a street, part of a crowd, with other human faces passing by like shadows, unknown, and yet fellow humans, in like case to oneself. A monarch has to be cut off, aloof. The mystique of monarchy requires it. How, in such circumstances, is it possible not to live in a kind of limbo or no man's land, in which there is a certain sleep-walking quality about the gestures, movements and ceremonial that constitute, not the trappings, but the substance of a popular monarch's life?

The more astute among the Queen's entourage are well aware of this dilemma. They are fully conscious of the difficulty of striking a balance between soap opera and dignity, of keeping the monarchy both popular and respected. On the one hand, human-interest stories and Mr. Dimpleby are necessary to insure that the Queen's presence should be immediate to her subjects. On the other, the exigencies of the monarchy require, in Bagehot's words, that a monarch "should not be brought too closely to real measurement; he should be aloof and solitary."

An interesting exchange on this subject took place in 1919 between the Duke of Windsor, when he was Prince of Wales, and Sir Frederick Ponsonby, the Keeper of the Privy Purse. The Prince of Wales had asked how Sir Frederick thought he was getting along. "If I may say so, Sir," Sir Frederick replied, "I think there is a risk of you making yourself too accessible. The monarchy must always retain an element of mystery. A prince should not show himself too much. The monarchy must remain on a pedestal." The youthful heir to the throne did not agree with the sagacious courtier who had served his royal house for three generations:

"I maintained otherwise, arguing that because of the social changes brought about by the war, one of the most important tasks of the Prince of Wales was to help bring the institution nearer to the people."

This exchange expresses the whole problem of monarchy in our time. Monarchy is based on the symbolization of authority, with roots going back to the remote beginnings of tribal life, and nurtured on the sacramental concept which has been Christianity's great and unique contribution to the everlasting problem of how mortal men may build enduring societies. It provides a bridge between what is fluctuating and what is everlasting in human affairs. Kings come and go, but their enthronement and their passing are alike greeted with the cry, "God save the King!"

The question is: Can monarchy continue to perform this function today, when its powers have atrophied and it is subjected to the hysterical, if not morbid, adulation of the masses? In many formerly monarchical European countries – Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain, and so on – the question has been answered in the negative. Only in the Scandinavian countries, Holland, Belgium, and in Greece, fitfully and precariously, has monarchy survived these last turbulent decades. Its survival in Britain, and, in a shadowy way, throughout most of the British Commonwealth, has been a most remarkable feat of adaptation. In order to survive, however, it had to divest itself of all save its purely symbolic functions. The former Empress of India is glad to invite to dinner the Prime Minister of the Indian Republic, Mr. Nehru. As recently as the time of the present Queen's grandfather, the King exercised a considerable influence on public affairs. Correspondence recently published indicates that George V took quite a hand before the 1914-18 war in the Irish question, and that he was an important factor in inducing Ramsay MacDonald to form a National Government in 1931. It is inconceivable that Elizabeth II should likewise use her still theoretically valid royal prerogatives. In principle she retains the right to dissolve Parliament; actually, she would never do so except on the advice of her minister. When, at the time of Sir Anthony Eden's resignation, the decision had to be taken whether to summon Mr. Butler or Mr. Macmillan to form a new government, it was her advisers – notably Lord Salisbury – who

led her to choose Macmillan. Nothing in her temperament or training would have induced her to exercise her own judgment, even assuming – which is unlikely – that she herself had any particular preference or opinion.

The monarchy, then, has become a pure show. It exists ceremonially, as a constitutional convenience, but would no more be able to make itself felt politically than the guardsmen in their bearskins and red coats on sentry duty outside Buckingham Palace would be able to defend it against a serious attack. An objection which is occasionally raised even in the House of Commons is that, this being so, the monarchy is too expensive; that it ought to be trimmed down to conform with Britain's reduced circumstances in the world. Those sour-faced journalists who specialize in being thought independent, but who are often, in relation to their own employers, among the most sycophantic of men, are likely to write in such a strain. We just can't afford, they suggest, to provide the Queen or the Duke of Edinburgh with a ship like *Britannia*, which cost nearly £2,000,000 to build, and whose annual maintenance puts between a third and a half million pounds onto the naval estimates. As a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult to find out just what the monarchy does cost. The following table shows the various items which go to make up the Queen's annual allowance of £475,000 under the Civil List, as well as the allowances to other members of the royal family:

ANNUITIES TO THE ROYAL FAMILY

	£
Her Majesty's Privy Purse	60,000
Salaries of Household	185,000
Expenses of Household	121,800
Royal Bounty, alms & spec. services	13,200
Supplementary Provision	95,000

	475,000
	=====
Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother	70,000
The Duke of Edinburgh	40,000
The Duke of Gloucester	35,000
The Princess Margaret	6,000
The Princess Royal	6,000

The Queen has no income tax to pay. Princess Margaret, the Duke of Edinburgh and others do pay tax, but, of course, they can, like everyone else, put in for expenses. It would be surprising if, in their cases, the Inland Revenue were not inclined to indulgence. At the same time, the Queen has a large private fortune inherited from her father, King George VI, and from her grandmother, Queen Mary – how large no one knows, because the wills of royalty are never published, nor are their estates subject to death duty. It should also be noted that the Ministry of Public Works looks after the maintenance of the royal palaces. All this leaves out of account the stupendous value of the Queen's collection of jewels and of the other unspecified bequests which have come to her. She is certainly a very rich woman in her own right. If her large allowance under the Civil List is inadequate to meet her very considerable outgoings, she is in a good position to supplement it from her private fortune.



QUEEN ELIZABETH II, 1957

Compared with the cost of atomic submarines or guided missiles, the monarchy cannot be considered expensive, though there are those who find the ostentation of life at Windsor or Buckingham Palace little to their taste. A more valid criticism of the monarchy is that it is a generator of snobbishness and a focus of sycophancy – both unattractive sides of human nature. The Queen is, of course,

theoretically the fount of honours. It is she who knights superannuated politicians who have been unable to make the grade even for minor office – she who translates a Mr. into an Earl Attlee.

Strangely enough, people still clamour for these baubles, which constitute an inexpensive form of political patronage. Happy the government which can bribe with knighthoods, baronetcies and peerages rather than with jobs and money. It is so much cheaper and less complicated. The Queen would seem to be essential to this procedure. If the honours were conferred by a president or a prime minister, the odds are that they would lose some of their allure. The worthy alderman kneels ecstatically with creaking joints before the Queen to receive the accolade; the aged party hack finds one more canter in him when it is a question of being elevated to the peerage by Her Majesty in person.

The whole hierarchical social system, which has so mysteriously survived political and economic changes incompatible with it, has for apex the throne. The Queen sits on top of the pyramid. It is not surprising, therefore, that her entourage is exclusively upper class, and that even her press relation officers must be out of the top drawer – a circumstance which makes them quite exceptionally incompetent; capable, for instance, of putting out a communiqué at the time of the Townsend affair to the effect that no statement could be expected “at present,” thereby, inevitably, giving the story a huge new shot in the arm.

The impulses out of which snobbishness is born descend from the Queen, at the apex of the social pyramid, right down to the base. Social distinctions, at the lowest as at the highest level, are given validity. The effulgence of royalty shines upon them. If it is considered – as I consider – that such a social set-up is obsolete and disadvantageous in the contemporary world, then the monarchy is, to

that extent, undesirable. If it is considered – as most of my fellow-countrymen consider – that social distinctions and aspirations are a cement making for social cohesion rather than a ludicrously outmoded and ultimately disintegrating expression of social disunity, then the monarchy is a most valuable element in such stability as we now enjoy.

There is no republican party in England today, though there was in the last century, and it included eminent figures like Joseph Chamberlain. When the Queen goes on her travels – to the Commonwealth, to France and Denmark and Portugal, and now to the United States – the vast bulk of the population rejoices in the acclaim which her charming personality is invariably accorded. And we others, who enter a mild dissent, do so more because we are at times nauseated by the unctuous manner in which her welcome is described in the press and on the air in this country than because we consider her other than a highly successful ambassadress.

Yet it would be a mistake to assume from her popularity the security of the throne. The Czar and Czarina were never the object of such fantastic manifestations of adulation as in 1914. Four years later they were shot like dogs in a cellar, and no one in Russia seemed to care much. The Cairo crowds turned out with wild enthusiasm on the occasion of King Farouk's wedding. When, shortly afterwards, he left Egypt for good, every eye was dry. King George VI and his Queen were received in Paris in 1938 with the same rapture as Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh this year. This did not prevent the bulk of the French population from being sullenly anti-British behind Marshall Pétain in 1940. It was Cromwell who remarked to Fairfax as they rode into a cheering town, "They'd turn out with the same enthusiasm to see us hanged."

Popularity, like patriotism, is not enough. History shows that institutions survive only to the degree that they fulfil an authentic purpose. The British monarchy does fulfil a purpose. It provides a symbolic head

of state transcending the politicians who go in and out of office, who, as Lear so wonderfully said, "ebb and flow by the moon." It expresses that continuity which has enabled Britain to survive two great revolutions – the French and the Russian – and two ruinous and destructive world wars, without being torn by civil conflict. But this function must not only be fulfilled. It must be seen to be fulfilled. The Queen, in other words, must be put across, not only as a charming wife and mother who dresses pleasingly, if not always elegantly, who wins hearts wherever she goes, and who presides gracefully over a lunch or dinner table even when her guests include politicians, dons, writers and Commonwealth statesmen, rather than her own intimates, sharing her own simple, unintellectual tastes. She must be put across, as well, as a useful unifying element in a society full of actual and potential discord.

Are her present advisers and courtiers capable of doing this? Frankly, I doubt it. In my opinion, she needs new men around her – men who understand what the mid-twentieth century is about, and what is the role of a constitutional monarch at such a time; men who can deal with the ink and television side of her existence subtly and sensibly, without losing sight of the great symbolic utility of the institution she embodies; men who are living in the present rather than in terms of a social order which, if it notionally still exists, disappeared forever when power ceased to reside in a hereditary elite grouped round a hereditary monarch.

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ED: This article was first published in the Saturday Evening Post in the United States of America on October 19th 1957. However, press articles severely criticising "the Royal Attack" had appeared in Britain as early as Sunday October 13th 1957.

*(see Richard Ingrams Muggeridge – The Biography)
Text was republished by the BBC in the UK magazine The Listener in 1981.*

Reflections on Muggeridge and the Monarchy

by David Williams

Flying into America in the immediate aftermath of his article appearing, Malcolm Muggeridge answered the question thrown at him by a US reporter at the airport “Mr. Muggeridge, does England really need a Queen?” with an emphatic “Yes”. He went on “The monarchical institution in England is immensely valuable and the present incumbent is a very delightful exponent of that institution”. However, despite these defensive words, Muggeridge was at heart republican in sentiment.

In the article, Muggeridge makes passing reference to Lord Altrincham and his article *The Monarchy Today* published in a small circulation monthly *The National and English Review*. However, the timing of the publication of this other highly controversial discourse on the monarchy is noteworthy – it came out in August 1957 and Altrincham, second baron, editor and owner, did not even think to increase the print run. However, once the popular press got hold of the article the effect was seismic – the story quickly became front page news all over the world. Shortly before his death, the former Lord Altrincham, (who reverted to plain John Grigg after renouncing his inherited title in 1963, explained in a “forty years on” 1997 *Spectator* article that the principal reason it created a sensation was that it contained direct criticism of the Queen (as well as considerable praise) at a time when the general treatment of her in the media ranged from gushy adulation to Shinto-style worship. He said “This most unhealthy climate had prevailed since her accession, and had been intensified by the secular religiosity of the Coronation in 1953. It was completely out of keeping with the traditional British attitude to the monarchy, which has always combined strong loyalty to the institution with a readiness to judge individual members of the royal family, favourably or unfavourably, on their merits.”

In his own 1957 piece for the *Saturday Evening Post*, Muggeridge greatly

develops these reflections and there can be no doubt that his thought processes were greatly influenced by the views recently advanced by Lord Altrincham in *The Monarchy Today*.

After the vehemence of the pillorying of Lord Altrincham in the media in August 1957, it would be hard to claim that Muggeridge had received no forewarning of the likely furore that might follow the appearance of his own article two months later on a very similar theme. Lord Altrincham was a convinced monarchist with real concerns over the direction the monarchy was taking, but both men clearly underestimated the venom and vitriol any criticism of the monarchy and the young Queen, would be bound to generate. Empire Loyalists quite as passionate in defence of the monarchy then as religious fundamentalists are today in defence of their God, targeted both men. Each was publicly assaulted in the street and subjected to other harassment and abuse in the rows that followed publication of their respective articles. If Muggeridge had felt safe in the fact that publication was in another country in a magazine not readily available to UK readers, he underestimated the anger felt at its timing and also the real danger from words and phrases being extracted and negatively reported, removed from their original context. Of course, newspaper editors had long felt constrained in the extent to which they could directly criticise the monarchy, control effectively exercised through their titled owners - all highly placed on the social invitation list and intent on staying there. The appearance of the articles in other publications gave editors the excuse of reporting criticism of the monarchy as a news story - what had been said about monarchy elsewhere being gleefully seized and the words “banal” and “frumpish” oft repeated across the press without regard to the original context of the words. It was therefore assumed to be a critical description being made directly by Muggeridge of the Queen. It would be almost a quarter of a century before the article could be read in full in the UK.

Inevitably, we tend to look back on these critical articles on royalty early in the Queen's reign to see whether, with the benefit of hindsight, they held any lessons for the future that were not sufficiently heeded at the time. Were they prophetic? In his last paragraph Malcolm urged a shake-up of her advisers and courtiers, advocating new men better able to develop the role of a constitutional monarch in a television age. It would be difficult to determine whether the Royal Family needed more coverage or less – there have been serious attempts to use television to give an insight into the work and play of the Royal Family. In this process of deliberately using the media to rouse interest in the monarchy, one could see a sleeping dragon awoken whose appetite could never be satisfied. It is hard to determine whether sound and sensible advice has always been available from the secretaries and courtiers in Royal Household, or whether there has been too much resistance to change from the Royal Family when new ideas were tentatively and respectfully proffered. With some older members of the family coming from a totally different era, they may at times have been their own worst enemies - discouraging the expression of views by the Household unlikely to meet with royal approval. This is the situation suggested in the film *"The Queen"* in the aftermath of the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales. It was also suggested by John Grigg who claimed to have received private approbation and congratulation from within the Royal Household following his 1957 article. Indeed, Lord Charteris of Amisfield, Private Secretary to the Queen in the 1970s, later confirmed publicly that Grigg had done the monarchy a great service at the time with his article.

Of course, neither author making their points so trenchantly back in 1957 could have had any inkling of the troubles that lay ahead for the Royal Family. As Malcolm had predicted, with cameras ever present, every movement choreographed by a tight script, they had indeed become a royal soap opera with a growing cast of characters, and an intriguing storyline followed daily by millions. For others it was a classic fairy tale.

With no lessons apparently learnt from history, the intense media coverage was to put the spotlight on an embarrassing succession of romantic and marital problems. Princess Margaret, Princess Anne, Prince Charles and Prince Andrew all found that the Royal Family seemed incapable of permanently absorbing newcomers successfully into their highly anachronistic and publicised life-style. More recently, this seems to have extended to Prince William's thwarted friendship with Kate Middleton. Cracks, where they opened up have been subject to the full public prurient gaze. Where exactly, we asked, did the blame for all this lie - we were not at fault.

Neither Malcolm Muggeridge nor John Grigg are around today to reflect on the turn of events. In many respects surprisingly little has changed in fifty years – crowds still peer through the railings at Buckingham Palace, BBC voices still speak in hushed, reverential tones at national events involving the monarchy. However, the freedom to cover the institution has changed – it is now possible to write critically without much risk of being punched in the face by Empire Loyalists, if not metaphorically by Establishment. We are far less deferential.

In one particular respect Muggeridge was perhaps particularly perceptive. The monarchy still holds its popular appeal with the masses. It was the masses who in 1997 embarrassingly cried tears for Diana, who placed flowers in such staggering quantities outside Buckingham Palace to the extent that the rank smell of tons of rotting vegetation quickly overcame the scent of freshly laid arrivals, who even today hopefully queue through the night to reserve their spot in the hope of a ten second glimpse of royalty passing by, and who crowd into the Mall in London in their thousands to shout good wishes on royal anniversaries or birthdays.

The rest of us probably treat such displays of royal devotion with some distain and embarrassment. We are not one of them and wonder whether they not have rather better things to do with their time. Yet the presence of even minor royalty lends

importance and occasion to that charity black tie event we attend. All present from the great and the good strive to get close to royalty, to be introduced, maybe to shake hands. Not out on the streets, we may discretely watch national events on television, wish forlornly for the honour of an MBE or an invitation to attend a Royal Garden Party. At the theatre we glance up to the Royal Box. We take trips to view the interior of Buckingham Palace, Hampton Court and Windsor Castle (strictly for the architecture and the paintings you understand.) The republican French, Germans and the Americans seem just as fascinated as we are by our Royal Family, with palaces firmly on their tourist trail. No wonder if the Royal Family today regard their privileged position as A-list celebrities not so much with wonder as with derision, daily witnessing sycophancy, deference and subservience from unlimited numbers of admirers. From time to time, they will rightfully wonder at our collective sanity and no doubt privately and deservedly make jokes at our expense.

As a race, the British may be more pragmatist than monarchist, failing to see an elected Presidential system or any other alternate form of constitution worthy of emulation. None has worked as consistently well and as cheaply as our own. There are plenty of Presidents who have become dictators or been otherwise corrupted by power. Power, Muggeridge claimed, cannot corrupt the monarchy - they have none and need none.

Ironically, in the fifty years that has passed since Muggeridge wrote his article, the Queen has perhaps suffered most through being one of us – a home owner, a daughter, a wife and a mother. As a home owner, she faced the distress of having Windsor Castle seriously damaged by fire – and saw the necessity to open up Buckingham Palace to popular internal gaze. She has had to balance her constitutional role with receiving advice, welcome or unwelcome, from her husband and her very experienced mother, allowing both to retain their personal dignity and self-respect. And as a mother, she has had to deal with all the frustration that arises from being in a royal household – the lack of privacy, absence of anonymity, restrictions in choice.

It is quite usual for the rest of us to envy the lifestyle of royalty but we now know the downside inherent in such duty with its constant public exposure and harassment. For all the trials and difficulties of the media age – half a century on we are no nearer becoming a republic. The monarchy as an institution has survived remarkably unscathed and the Queen is just as much loved and admired now as she was fifty years ago. Muggeridge was right. Not only does England still need its Queen today, but equally of course, so does Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and indeed the entire Commonwealth.

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How the Death of Princess Diana changed the life of Britain

by Ann Simpson

In death, as in life, Diana, Princess of Wales, has symbolised the conflicting imperatives of a shallow age. Her deification began long before that fatal car crash, but its dreadful news sparked flagrant hypocrisy in certain quarters as some of her most virulent critics suddenly discovered the media potency of grief.

So, over the decade, the litanies of “sainthood” have continued. But in a sense Diana’s death wasn’t the end but a beginning. In terms of drama, her manipulated haunting of the House of Windsor might outrun *The Mousetrap*.

From the start the media defined Diana, and during her 16 public years, it often seemed she needed its feverish attention to

prove her existence to herself. Despite the pleas for privacy there were coquettish leaks to favoured news hounds about where she would be on certain days if they wanted "a nice picture". As she told us ruefully in that Panorama interview of November 1995, the Princess of Wales was the media's "best selling item".

The candour of that interview was ground-breaking, an indication of how Britain's social mores were shifting. Here was the not-yet-divorced wife of the heir to the throne, referring to Camilla Parker-Bowles and the intolerable *ménage à trois* which, from the start, had afflicted her union with Charles: "Well, there were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded."



Hearing that from Diana's lips, the public could forgive her own admission of adultery. She was a woman wronged, wanly beautiful, damaged, and painfully thin.

Did Diana change Britain? No. But more than any other royal or public figure, she sensed changes in the country, and placed herself in the vanguard of its journey from buttoned-up nation to one wanting to "let it all hang out". In once stuffy Britain, feelings were in the ascendant while reserve was dismissed as a character flaw.

In that climate Diana's natural empathy with victims, crowds and starry people became her surest weapon against a family so out of step with the public mood, it didn't appear to understand the meaning of compassion and inclusiveness.

No pope or politician, no sovereign or president, no sports hero or Hollywood dreamboat could command the recognition factor of Diana. In an Aids clinic, land-mined battleground, or impoverished African village, she was instantly familiar. And while we measured every word, every inch of weight gained or lost, every cellulite pucker behind the knee, this princess warmed victimhood with a celebrity glow.

She danced. She worked out, fell under the often flaky spell of New Age diet gurus, and lost her heart to dim but opportunist men. But her instinctive, sensational way with clothes did more for the British fashion industry than the Windsors ever could.

Deference was dying long before Diana. In 1957, Lord Altrincham wrote in a small-circulation magazine that the monarchy "lamentably failed to live with the times". He was publicly humiliated and excrement was pushed through his letterbox.

That year, the broadcaster Malcolm Muggeridge observed that society's "nonsensical adulation" of the Windsors had turned them into actors in a soap opera. Muggeridge, a fearsome polemicist, was the first to use that phrase of the royals. His letterbox was fouled, his house vandalised, his life threatened, and his contracts with newspapers and the BBC ripped up. He was spat on in the street, and he received messages expressing pleasure at the death of his son in an accident. Royalist worship clearly contained a primal rage which, 40 years later, would turn on Buckingham Palace because of its frigid response to the death of Diana.

Apart from Princess Margaret, the royals had been frumpishly out of touch with the raciness of Swinging Britain in the

egalitarian Sixties. But then, with the Queen Mother's encouragement, Lady Diana Spencer passed through the portals of insufferable protocol as consort to Prince Charles. In Diana, the Crown had found not just the required sexual innocent but a needed symbol of modernity. What it eventually got was the virgin who refused to be sacrificial, whose popularity almost brought rebellion to its gates. That wretched marriage was perhaps the Queen Mother's only public mistake.

If Diana's life didn't change Britain, her death certainly did. In that week before her funeral, much of England seemed foreign. Day and night the grief in London was almost Mediterranean, even Middle Eastern, in its intensity.

Amid the powerful symbolism of the funeral procession there was the vision of an old imperial state, fraying at the edges, being forced to change by the popular will, but with the pomp and circumstance intact. The sound of horses, the rasp of the gun-carriage on asphalt, the occasional extravagant sob from the crowd: these only heightened the engulfing stillness. The Princess of Wales once said she would not go quietly: the silence wreathing her last journey was thunderous.

Yet the royal faces seemed those of a family gripped in the harsh armour of restraint. If they had been going to the scaffold, the Windsors would not have looked any different.

The funeral millions proved that Britain had irrevocably altered. The masses were polyglot and multi-national. For many, Diana's last romance with Dodi al Fayed - fleeting and wilfully dangerous - was emblematic of this altered state. On the eve of her marriage, Toxteth and Brixton burned with the rage of inequality and neglected minorities. Now the fabric of mourning was woven peaceably from many over-lapping ethnic strands.

When the Queen left the palace for the abbey, in the demanded lowering of the

Union flag to half-mast, the monarch was making her third concession to the people. The first had been the family's belated return from Balmoral. The second was her address to the nation, with its dignified, unprecedented humility.

And today, another sign of change: the woman who was the truly hated figure in this tragic story, Camilla Parker-Bowles is a duchess, married to the prince who always called her the love of his life. By and large the public has forgiven both of them, through either indifference or a generosity of spirit which the tabloids, with their *Hate-Camilla* campaign, never anticipated.



PRINCE CHARLES AND CAMILLA WED

The gaffe of inviting Camilla to the memorial service was perhaps an honest attempt to demonstrate inclusiveness. But letting in the daylight on an institution defined by chilly formality will never be simple. The Queen, despite her good intentions to absorb the lessons from a deceased life, may adapt but she will never change.

As guests gathered for Diana's memorial service in the Guards' Chapel at Wellington Barracks on August 31st, many remembered the words of the Dean of Westminster Abbey, who, 10 years ago, counselled that we should use the funeral rites to "let the dead go". But in a godless age, a goddess may never be allowed to rest in peace.

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