

The Royal Visit, October 24th

These impressions of the Royal Visit are written while the memory of it all is still fresh and while it is still possible to recapture the emotions that filled us as we watched and shared in what must always be a memorable day in our annals. First, let it be said that the arrangements were wholly precise and efficient, that there were no awkwardnesses, and that if a minute or two were lost on the time-table here, they were recovered there. The weather, too, played its part loyally—though the barometer was low and clouds were threatening; the sun shone at all the right moments and the programme was carried out in its entirety.

Her Majesty and His Royal Highness were welcomed in an impressive silence. We shall never forget the opening scene as the Headmaster escorted the Queen down Central to the dais facing the School Buildings, with the Guard of Honour under Major Powell "present and ready for inspection." Then the Royal salute and the Royal Standard broken over the School Buildings, while the Queen—a slight and lonely figure—stood with all eyes upon her while the Band played the National Anthem. After the Guard of Honour (and how very smart they looked!) had been inspected, the Royal party moved off to the School House, where the Governors, the three ex-Headmasters and the officers of the Old Salopian Club, with their respective ladies, were formally presented.

From now on informality "kept on breaking in." Her Majesty and the Duke, escorted by the Chairman of the Governing Body, the Headmaster and Mr. Street, saw the School engage in various activities. First it was Mast P.T. (we do this rather well nowadays), followed by a visit to one of the Houses, Oldham's Hall being selected for this honour. Fives and football were played, and one boy scored a goal at exactly the right moment. The Hunt staged a special run—henceforth to be known as the Queen's Run—which "threw off" from the Moser Buildings as the Royal Party passed. This, with its pageantry and the amazing speed with which it started, gave our visitors particular pleasure. Her Majesty wondered whether this speed was maintained throughout, but the Headmaster reassured her. The tour included a visit to the Carpenter's Shop, where boys were busy at work, and where by special request School servants were presented, and to the Darwin Buildings, where exhibitions of science, art and photography were shown and where an engaging series of experiments was performed, the Duke showing particular interest in these matters.

Then to the Moser Buildings, where in the Library Mr. Oldham was presented. It was here that the Headmaster offered for Her Majesty's gracious acceptance a copy of Mr. Oldham's *Shrewsbury School Library Bindings*—superbly bound by Mr. Roger Powell in School colours and decorated with specially cut stamps of the Queen's arms, the Founder's arms, lions and fleurs-de-lis, Smokers' Trees

and the Sidney statue. His Royal Highness accepted a copy of Paul Dehn's *Masque Call-Over*, illustrated with photographs of the scenes, in a blue and white binding decorated with lions and fleurs-de-lis. After this the Masters and their ladies were presented, and all were regaled with sherry. The Royal party were shown the Moser pictures, and showed great interest in the Classical Exhibition set out by Mr. Colman.

Then came luncheon at the School House, a function admirably organised. The flowers were beautiful and the service a model of efficiency. At Her Majesty's special request the senior boys from all Houses were invited to lunch with her, and it is pleasant to record that James Hill and two members of the Club in Liverpool were also present. The Queen sat between the Head of the School and the Senior Praepositor, and the conversation flowed merrily.

After luncheon, with the School gathered just below, Her Majesty formally opened the Terrace, a fine and dignified addition to the loveliness of the site. Then at last came the cheers from every throat and a spontaneous manifestation of the loyalty and affection of the School. The Queen was so clearly moved by this that it must remain doubtful whether she actually took in the glorious view that the Terrace commands! It was on the Terrace that the Headmaster announced that Her Majesty had asked for three days to be added to the holidays.

To finish the proceedings a short and never-to-be-forgotten Service was held in Chapel. The singing was all that had been hoped for and expected, and those near Her Majesty could see that she was deeply moved by the singing of the National Anthem.

The last we saw of our Royal visitors was as they walked from the School House to their car by the Sidney statue, with the Queen carrying a bouquet of scarlet carnations presented to her by Fiona Peterson. The Royal party had arrived in silence, but they departed amidst a tumult of cheering and shouting. Two boys, it is recorded, "thumbed" the Royal car for a lift as it passed through the School Gates—much to Her Majesty's surprise and amusement!

So ended a memorable day in the history of Shrewsbury School. All those who, by virtue of the duties assigned to them, came into close contact with Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh, were charmed by their friendliness and the obvious interest that they took in all that they saw, and it is certain that all who were present on the site that day fell under the spell. One cannot do better than conclude this account with a quotation from a letter sent to Buckingham Palace by the Headmaster, in which he begged leave "to assure Her Majesty of the ever loyal, dutiful and affectionate devotion to Her throne, Her person, and Her family of all Salopians present and to come."

Owing to financial stringency the Committee have to announce with regret that as a temporary measure, the publication of the *Newsletter* is to be reduced to two editions a year. The next number will appear in May, 1953.