

26th Oct. 1952

Stacey Coleman.

Clarissa master.

I want to put down a full record of Oct. 24th 1952 while it is still clear in my memory, since it was a truly exciting and notable day in our lives. If some of this seems tedious to read, I hope it will be forgiven. The Queen completely enchanted us, one and all, old and young, male and female. We are, I should think, a pretty critical community of schoolmasters and their womenfolk and schoolboys (where could you find a more critical gathering?) but there is nothing but one universal praise for the Queen. I knew she was charming, as

I had seen her at close quarters at Henley Royal Regatta before her marriage, and again (a more distant view) at the Royal Show when it was held in Shrewsbury and she came with the Duke. But this time her spell was truly magical. And she is beautiful as well. Even the best photographs do her no sort of justice.

Well, it began by our anxiously listening to the weather report at 8.0. Not too promising, but what was forecast for the West Midlands and Wales seemed better than most other places. And so it turned out, we had no serious worry

about the weather. It was a typical October day, - mild, with sun and cloud, and one sharp shower came down when the Queen was indoors, but it never looked like spoiling anything and the place was looking at its nicest.

Sallie and I had breakfast and washed up. All our preparations had been made the night before, so we were free to go out to the place at Meole Brace where the by-pass crosses the main line from the south. Of course we got there far too early. There was a policeman and a small group of people, - a few cars, a delivery van or two, a few cheerful children with flags. Then the signals

went off. Then another long pause, and then the royal train came coasting with just a thread of steam very quietly down the bank. "Craubrook Castle" and "Tainlour Castle", very clean, with the four white headlights that only the royal train carries. Eleven crimson coaches, and a glimpse of the Duke of Edinburgh writing on his knee. It passed slowly towards the town, and we came home. That was the hors d'oeuvre.

Sallie changed her shoes, etc. and I put on gown and hood, and we went in to the school by the Moss Gates where everyone had to show a pass to the police. I was asked to see that

the crowd did not move until after the national
 anthem, so I was not in the place marked for the
 Masters on the plain, but on the other side of Central.
 Sallie was in the place for masters' families, with
 Hilary Griffiths. Everyone waited while the Guard
 of Honour and the Band ^(our own boys of course) (very smart) marched to
 their place in front of the school buildings, - Band
 on the plain, Royal Navy at the right of the line,
 army in the centre (much the largest group) and
 Royal Air Force on the left. Then you heard the
 cheers as the royal car came up the hill, frantic
 yells from some little boys from a prep. school (I
 think) just outside the Moss Gates, and suddenly

complete silence as the great Rolls turned in to the School and stopped at the Statue of Sir Philip Sidney. You saw the little royal standard fluttering on top of the car, and then before you could take it in the Queen was walking with the Headmaster between the perfectly silent lines of boys to a low platform facing the Guard of Honour. She smiled very graciously from one side to the other as she went. Then she was alone on the platform, the Command "Royal Salute - Present Arms!"¹ was given, the Band came in with the National Anthem and the Royal Standard was broken on the flagstaff on the School building. It was a

lovely moment.

Then the crowd moved up to watch her inspect the Guard. She spoke a few words to the officer in command, and then went in to the School House, and the Lord Lieutenant and the Mayor went away (I don't know where they went!) — and all the boys rushed off to change into P.T. kit.

They were back in a moment and fell in — the whole school this time — on the lawn between the Arlington Hall and the School building. Meanwhile in the School House presentations had been made, the Aringtons, the Hardys and the Wolfendens, as ex-headmasters; the Governing Body; General Sir

Bernard Paget as President of the Old Salopian Club,
Col. Raikes, Chairman of the Club, and Gerald Sanger,
the Secretary. Then the Queen came out again
and walked slowly past us to her platform, which
had been moved to face the P.T. She was quite
beautifully dressed in a rich brown coat with a
crisp little hat in a colour which Fannie well de-
scribed as "dead bracken." The Duke had left his
overcoat in the School House and was laughing
and joking with Jimmy Street. You had leisure
to look at them and take them in now while the
boys did their P.T. (and of course they did it
very well, as they always do when it matters).

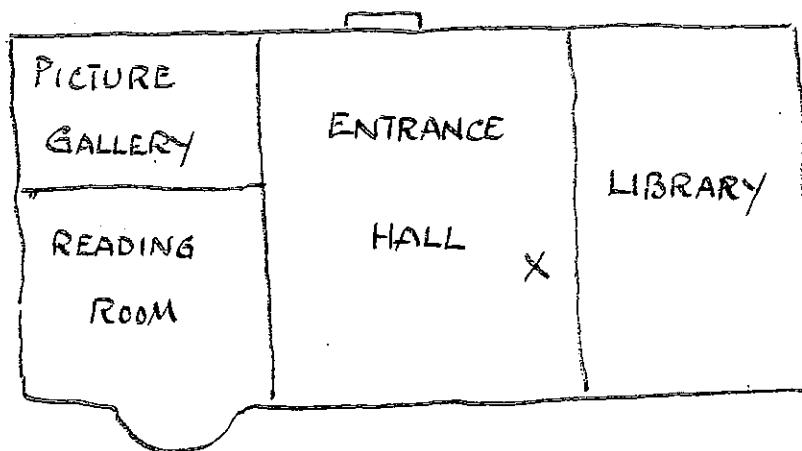
When it was over the Queen called up the R.S.M. who commanded the P.T., and spoke to him, and then she walked away to Oldham's, where Bill and Helen Matthews took them round the house, and by all accounts that went off very happily even if Bill tipped the Queen's hat askew while trying to open a door for her to pass through!

By this time the boys had done another quick change, some into games clothes and the rest into blue, and by the time the Queen came out of Oldham's a "normal" day's sport was in full swing. Football and files, and the Hunt were just about to start a new cross-country run

called "The Queen's". So the royal party strolled
around and watched the various games, and they
went in to the Darwin Buildings to see other boys
who had scientific exhibitions arranged for them,
and into the carpenter's shop, where the Queen spoke
to each boy about what he was working on, and
all the school servants, groundsmen, boatman etc.
who had a certain length of service to ^{their} his credit
were presented to the Queen and the Duke, - with
their wives. All were enchanted, of course.

By now we masters and our wives had
made our way to the Moser Buildings and were
assembled there in the Reading Room, leaving the

entrance hall empty. (I could see out into the hall.)



The Queen came in and stood a few moments in the entrance hall, admiring the flowers which Sallie, Hilary and Heather Ruiney had arranged, and fixing her hat more comfortably in the most natural and womanly way, yet without the slightest loss of dignity. And then she went into the Library, where she and the Duke accepted presentation books (of which I am enclosing a description), signed their

names in the Visitors' Book, and looked about at some of the treasures. The Queen worked the model of the crane which laid the foundation stone of the Moser Building when King George V pressed an electric button in the Square, and the Duke prowled round in the highest spirits. Then they came out into the entrance hall, and stood where I have put a X on the plan, and we and our wives came out from the reading room and were presented by the Headmaster. We bowed and shook hands and the ladies curtsied and shook hands, and the Queen said "how do you do?" and the Duke said "good-morning", but we had

been instructed to make no reply. So we passed
in turn into the Library, where I had to leave
Sallie, because I had been told off by the Headmaster
to have ready a selection of last term's classical
exhibition in the picture gallery. So I went in there
while the younger members of the staff were being
presented, and waited. In a few moments the
Headmaster brought the Queen and the Duke in,
and said "Mr. Colman is our Senior Classical master"
and withdrew. Sir Offley Wakenau (the Chairman
of the Governing Body) was in the room for part
of the time, and one of the equerries was hovering
about, but for about five minutes I was pretty

nearly alone with the Queen and the Duke. I admit I was scared stiff for a moment, but we had been told that it was not true that you must never initiate a conversation, so I plunged in and explained in two sentences what the little exhibition was meant to illustrate. The Queen's eye fell on a MS by W. Kennedy (of the Latin Grammar), and she exclaimed "Latin grammar!" in a tone of some dismay.

EDC "Was your Majesty made to suffer under Kennedy's Latin Grammar?"

Q. "No, I don't think so."

Duke of E. "I was. Weren't there two? A brown one that was more elementary, and a

Sort of green one that was more advanced?"

So he helped me out, and we chatted on this and that. Then Freddie Mann came in with a glass of sherry on a silver salver, and I said "Will your Majesty take a glass of sherry?" and Her Majesty did. She walked about the room with her glass in her hand, sipping it and looking at some of the books. She stopped at one book, an annual of the British School at Athens, and to the Queen

the Duke said, "They have just asked me to be patron of the British School at Athens."

Q. "When we were in Greece, I wanted to see Mycenae, but they told us there was nothing to see there. But now they have

dig up a great deal more."

(O.S.)

BOC, (pointing to the portrait of A.J.B. Wace in the Annual)

"Yes, your Majesty, and that is the archaeologist who made the recent discoveries."

Duchess of E. (to the Q.) "They didn't say there was nothing

to see, but that there was nothing new to see.

And there wasn't then"

Then the Queen asked me if I had been to Mycenae and I had to say that although I had been in Greece

I had never been at Mycenae. The Queen said she

knew it was difficult to get at. Then she said "I

can never remember names. We went to a place

near there, - I can't remember the name."

BOC "Truys, your Majesty?"

Q. "No, that wasn't it. It had a very fine

amphitheatre".

DC (inspired) " Was it Epidaurus, your Majesty? "

Q. (pleased) " Yes, that was it, Epidaurus." [Full marks for the classical side of Shrewsbury School!]

DC " Yes, that is the best preserved Greek theatre there is

Q. " Yes. My husband had an uncle who has had a bad operation on the throat and can't speak above a whisper. We put him on the stage there and we could hear what he said when we were right at the very back of the theatre."

Then we talked for a moment about whether the ancients understood the principles of acoustics better than modern architects do, and the Queen strolled over to look at a water colour by David Cox of Windsor Castle with some red-coated

cavalry riding by. She asked Sir Offley a question about it, and he appealed to me. She was puzzled by the cavalry's headgear. I suggested that about the time of the Guinea War the British army did wear a sort of pill-box hat (though I wasn't too sure about the Horse Guards.) Meanwhile the Duke had been looking at a photograph of Professor J.E.B. Mayor - a remarkable Victorian worthy with a fine beard - and he was fascinated by the knitted cuffs the old gentleman was wearing. "Aren't they the sleeves of his knitted waistcoat?" I asked. "No," said the Duke, "they come out from under his shirt-sleeves" (which was perfectly true!)

"It's a pity people don't wear beards like that now."

It was time for them to go to lunch. The Queen put down her glass and must have gone out in to the entrance hall while I was studying Mayo's picture with the Duke, I think. There was a brief scurry of people, and they were gone, - and Freddie Mann brought me a very welcome glass of sherry. Of course they had no interest (how should they?) in the exhibition. But how charmingly they carried it off! He was cheerfully easy like any young naval officer, and she was perfectly fascinating. You almost forgot to concentrate because you were just looking at:

her, and listening to her remarkably charming voice. Her complexion is lovely, and her eyes very bright and expressive.

Lunch in the School House seems to have gone in great style. There were fine boys present from every house, and the Queen sat between the Head of the School and the next Senior praepostor. She is reported to have done justice to her chicken and the Sweet, and it seems to have been quite unconstrained and easy. There was hardly any time after lunch before we were all assembled on the top of the School Bank above the river, where a fine new terrace has been made running

the length of the School building, facing over the river and the town. The Queen came through the main hall of the building, cut a ribbon and stepped out on the terrace. The Head of the School called for three cheers, and three prodigious cheers went up, that echoed back from the other bank of the Severn. Then the Queen walked slowly along the Terrace, and the Headmaster announced that she had commanded three days to be added to the Christmas holidays - (much applause!) The boys had been forbidden to take photographs until after lunch, but now every camera was out. The

Chapel bell began to ring, and while we all scuttled off to Chapel the Headmaster took the Queen in to Dayboys' Hall to wait until it was time to make her entrance.

The front pews had been taken out and seats placed, on the left for the Mayor, the Lord Lieutenant and Sir Offley Wakeman, and on the right for the Queen and the Duke. As my stall is on the left I had a good view of the Queen up and across the aisle throughout the service. It was a short evensong, - processional hymn, lesson read by the Head of the School, Magnificat, prayers read by the Headmaster, the Founder's Day hymn, the blessing given by the Bishops of Lichfield, the

Dresden Amen, and one verse of the National Anthem, which we all sang, I think, with real feeling. Then she came down the aisle and out to the School House.

We all gathered in a great mass near the Sidney Statue where the Rolls was waiting. Then they came out of the School House, the Queen carrying a lovely bouquet which the Headmaster's little daughter Fiona had presented, and walked across the lawn. Cheers broke out and everyone crowded round the car, they got in and very slowly the cars moved off, - (I just saw the Royal Standard sliding down the flagstaff) - there was a last glimpse of the Queen smiling

and the car turned to the right out of the gate amidst enormous applause, and off they went past the house to circle the town and cross the river by the Welsh Bridge. You could hear the cheering die away along the Roman Road, and then the crowd melted away.

The Queen sent back a message to the Headmaster by James West, who as Mayor saw her into the train, that she really had enjoyed her day. She told him earlier that she did like that sort of occasion, when she had not got to make a speech. And they certainly both looked thoroughly happy all the time. They both charmed everyone, and especially the Queen. And they left us two splendid signed

portraits.

I'm sure I have left out a lot. I see I have said nothing about the flowers in Chapel, where Sallie did the two altar vases and Hilary and Heather did two great vases at the Chancel rails, and very beautiful they looked. And I have forgotten to say how the Queen told the Headmaster that she was much amused by hearing one of our boys say just as the Rolls stopped for her to step out "Cool, wizard car!" It struck her how entirely natural that was as a young boy's first reaction - the car claimed all his attention for the moment, - and she was pleasantly tickled.

Well, it was a grand day. Nothing went wrong, but it was all good fun and as usual the boys rose to the occasion. I think we all shared

Something of Hugh Brooke's feeling after the Queen had gone, when he said "I'm going round trying to find someone who will utter a syllable against the Queen, so that I can have the joy of punching him in the eye!"

The Headmaster is writing to the Palace to ask if the Terrace may be called after the Queen.