

VISIT OF H.M. THE QUEEN AND H.R.H. THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Friday, October 24th, 1952, dawned bright but watery, and the weather forecast, obtained from Shawbury, with its warning of showers of extreme severity, did little to allay the anxieties of those responsible for carrying out the projected programme. By 9 a.m. the site was sealed off by the Police ; by 10.45 the Press, after swallowing, in some cases with astonishing gullibility, the improbable information retailed to them by certain scholars, were penned reluctantly but inexorably in their enclosure. Shortly after 11 a.m. the sound of the band in the distance proclaimed the approach of the Guard of Honour, and some ten minutes later the whole School was at action stations. By the statue of Sir Philip Sidney, the Chairman of the Governors and the Headmaster could be seen supporting each other with feeble anecdote and nervous laughter. At 11.20 the head of the procession arrived in the shape of a policeman on a motor cycle, who shot through the Moss Gates at a speed which suggested more a fugitive from justice than the representative of law and order. Five minutes later the Royal Party arrived. Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh descended from their exquisite Rolls Royce, and the sun began to shine.

A procession was formed, in which the Lord Lieutenant and the Mayor took part, and advanced slowly down Central to the saluting base placed in the middle of the "Square." With that charming dignity which marked her every movement throughout the day, the Queen mounted the dais. The word of command rang out ; the band struck into the National Anthem ; and the Royal Standard was broken from the flagstaff on the School Buildings. Thus the School paid its tribute of welcome in a manner not unworthy of the occasion.

Her Majesty then inspected the Guard of Honour, and afterwards walked to the School House, where the Governors, ex-Headmasters, and representatives of the Old Salopian Club were presented, together with their wives. Outside the School accomplished with remarkable despatch the first of its quick-changing acts, and within ten minutes every boy was back in his place on the grass in front of the Alington Hall for the Physical Training display.

At 11.45 the Royal Party emerged from the School House. The Queen again mounted the dais, which had been moved to the grass beside the small elm tree planted by Dr. Alington. From this eminence in bright but watery sunshine, Her Majesty watched a display which reflected the greatest credit on all concerned. At the conclusion, R.S.M. Joyce was presented, and then the Royal Party walked to Oldham's Hall.

Here, after their presentation, Mr. and Mrs. Matthews tactfully conducted Her Majesty through the more recently decorated parts of the House, in which a few discreet and reliable scholars had been posted, while the Headmaster hopefully drew the attention of the Household to the more sordid aspects of their surroundings. Ten minutes later the Royal Party emerged to find the Hunt coupled up on the parade ground, the Fives Courts all occupied, and games of football in progress. All these activities were watched by Her Majesty before a threatening shower made a visit to the Carpenter's Shop advisable. Here were presented to the Queen, by her special request, all those School servants who have more than fifteen years' service to their credit: Messrs. Adams, Hartshorne, Dickins, Gregory, Jarrett, Heatley and Robinson. Mr. Simmons then displayed to our Royal Visitors the meagre but not unimpressive achievements of the School carpenters. In the Darwin Buildings a varied array of exhibits had been arranged, mathematical, scientific, artistic, photographic and historical. Most, if not all, of the scientific marvels responded obediently to the Royal fingers, and even Pharaoh's serpent sprang, albeit reluctantly, into malodorous existence.

It was raining when the party left the Darwin Buildings, and the School Porter had the honour of protecting Her Majesty beneath the huge "Bisley" umbrella, which had been refurbished for such an emergency. In the Moser Buildings the School Library was, of course, the main feature of interest. Here the Librarian was presented. Here, too, Her

Majesty graciously accepted from the Headmaster a copy of Mr. Oldham's book on the Shrewsbury School Bindings, which had been especially bound by Mr. Roger Powell. To His Royal Highness was presented, together with the sound records, a copy of the Masque, bound to Mr. Oldham's design. Both the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh then graciously signed the Visitors' Book, and also copies of their photographs for the School. The next item on the programme was the presentation of the staff with their ladies, which took place in the hall. At the conclusion of this ceremony, Her Majesty visited the picture gallery, and over a glass of sherry saw also some of our classical treasures. Shortly after 1.10 the Royal Party left for the School House. Before luncheon the Præpostors were presented together with Mr. Hill and two representatives from the Club. In the dining-hall were assembled fifty boys, five from each House. At the Head Table the Head of the School sat between the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. Three other Præpostors, including the Head of the School House, were also allotted seats in close and awe-inspiring proximity to our royal guests.

After luncheon the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, accompanied by the Household, the Governors, the Headmaster, the Lord Lieutenant, and the Mayor assembled in the entrance hall of the School Buildings. At 2.15 Her Majesty walked through the north door, cut a tape placed just outside it, and advanced on to the terrace to be confronted by the serried ranks of the School standing on the pathway below. The Headmaster thereupon announced that, by Her Majesty's gracious command, three days would be added to the holidays, an utterance which lent even greater volume to the three cheers, called for by the Head of the School, which rang out thunderously across the Quarry. Soon afterwards the sound of the Chapel bell recalled us to more serious devotions. In the interval of waiting, the Royal Party paid a visit to Dayboys' Hall.

In Chapel the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were seated side by side in the front of the nave on two noble chairs kindly and appropriately lent to us by the Vicar of St. Mary's. No one who attended that service is likely to forget the crowning moment of an unforgettable day. After the service Her Majesty walked back to the School House, where the Headmaster's daughter presented a bouquet. Finally the Royal Party walked up Central to the waiting cars. After brief farewells, our Royal Visitors left amid a prolonged roar of cheering. The Royal Standard was lowered, and almost immediately afterwards the rain descended with tropical violence.

PRESENTATIONS TO H.M. THE QUEEN AND H.R.H. THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

The following is a description of the books graciously accepted by Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh.

The book for the Queen was a copy of Mr. Oldham's work on *The Bindings in Shrewsbury School Library*. It was bound by Mr. Roger Powell, the foremost living English binder, and special stamps were cut for it.

On the upper cover are the Queen's Arms and the date of her visit with, in the corners, a stamp representing Smokers' Trees. On the lower cover are the arms of our Founder and the date of the foundation with, in the corners, a stamp representing the Sidney statue.

The "doublures" (insides of cover) are decorated with lions and fleurs-de-lis from the School Arms, with, in the centre of one :—

INTUS SI RECTE NE LABORA

and in the centre of the other :—

SCHOL. REG. EDW. VI. AB ELIZ. I. AUCT.

The presentation inscription is engrossed on a vellum leaf.

The book for The Duke of Edinburgh was the Masque, specially printed, by kind permission of the author, on large paper, and illustrated with photographs of the War Memorial and of eleven scenes from the Masque.

It has been bound by Messrs. Birdsall & Son, of Northampton, and bears on the covers and back lions and fleurs-de-lis. The presentation inscription is stamped in gold on the doublure.

The School colours, blue and white, have been used for both books.

His Royal Highness also accepted a set of the records of the Masque.

A ROYAL MESSAGE

After the Royal visit, the following letters were exchanged :—

THE SCHOOLS,
SHREWSBURY,
25th October, 1952.

DEAR MAJOR FORD,

May I request you to convey to Her Majesty from the Governors, Masters and Scholars of Shrewsbury School the expression of their humble duty and service? Deeply conscious as we were of the signal honour conferred upon the School by a Royal Visit, we have been yet more deeply moved by the interest which Her Majesty so graciously showed this day in the life and work of the School. May I beg 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?

I beg to remain,

Yours very sincerely,

J. M. PETERSON.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE,
27th October, 1952.

MY DEAR HEADMASTER,

Both Her Majesty and The Duke of Edinburgh very much enjoyed their day at the School and were much impressed with the tone and efficiency of everything which they saw, and particularly perhaps, by the smartness of the Guard of Honour and the spirited playing of the Band and the remarkable co-ordination of the mass display of Physical Training. What impressed Her Majesty most, however, was the obvious happiness and the naturalness of the boys, shown, among other things, by their rousing singing in Chapel; and she was very glad to be able to meet several of them.

The Queen finally wishes me to thank you personally for your hospitality and for a visit to which both Her Majesty and The Duke of Edinburgh look back with particular pleasure.

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD FORD.

THE SCHOOLS,
SHREWSBURY,
28th October, 1952.

DEAR MAJOR FORD,

May I ask you to convey to Her Majesty our humble duty and the expression of our deep gratitude for the gracious terms in which Her Majesty has referred to her visit to the School. It had been our earnest hope that the visit which brought so much joy and happiness to our whole community might possibly afford our Royal Visitors a pleasant relaxation from affairs of State. The knowledge that this was so adds immeasurably to our humble gratification, and our abiding joy in the recollection of the great honour paid to the School.

I beg to remain,

Yours very sincerely,

J. M. PETERSON.

A BRIEF IMPRESSION

I had seen her twice before. The first time was on that golden July day at the first Henley Royal Regatta after the war, and I think it was the sight of the Princesses coming up the course in the umpire's launch, escorted by Leander and Zurich that first convinced many of us that the war really was over. And then there was the Royal Show at Shrewsbury, a fine occasion, too, but the thing was more formal, the scale was bigger, and the glimpse of the Princess was more distant. On October 24th, 1952, she was coming as Queen, and she was coming to the School. You felt you were something more than a unit in a throng of spectators: you were in some degree her host; and you were not quite sure how you comported yourself when you had a Queen as your guest.

It was her first walk down Central that established the key of the whole day. Everyone was shy; the occasion was still formal; but the Queen's grace prevailed at once, and even before she reached the platform from which she received the Royal Salute you felt the current subtly change. You knew that this was going to be a day not only memorable but happy. And indeed it was. Everyone will have his own gallery of memories, and my own are of no importance except to me, but I think we all must have been stirred by the tableau—Queen, Guard of Honour, Royal Standard floating out over the Regia Schola Salopiensis. And who can fail to have been moved by the Service in Chapel? "We humbly beseech thee to bless our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth. . . ." How familiarly the words run, how easily you let them slip by as a rule. But on that afternoon you looked up the aisle and it was different. The ceremony on the Terrace (I hope it will be always called Queen Elizabeth's Terrace) gave me an odd sensation, for I suddenly became aware that it seemed quite natural that the Queen should be walking about on our site. The first novelty had worn off, and you no longer felt that you must worm your way to a place from which you could get a better view. You had time by now to relax, to notice how the Duke played his part so naturally, to study the Queen's dress. And you noticed how grandly the cheers re-echoed from the far bank of the Severn.

I was very fortunate, for I had a small solo to play. And I was so entirely charmed that I nearly forgot to concentrate on what the Queen was saying. "Her gesture, motion and her smiles. . . ." It is the radiance of the smile that the photographs almost all fail to recapture. We must all have found, as I know many people in the town did who only caught a passing glimpse of her, that she is far more beautiful than we knew, and that since her accession to the Throne, she has indeed gained a Sovereign serenity. I only know that I understand now, as I never understood before, what the word "homage" ought to mean.