

Mike Meets the Queen

It seems a lifetime ago now, but the memory is still fresh and clear in my mind. I'm not a royalist, but there is no doubt that this was a special day, especially as it was to honour the work of the school and help publicise the fund-raising campaign to build much needed facilities at the school.

I became involved with the project to research and write a history of the Royal School for the Blind, Liverpool.

This was to mark the bi-centennial celebration of the oldest school of its kind in the world. As patron, the Queen was invited to visit the School in the anniversary year, 1991. Prior to the visit I was asked to prepare an exhibition on the History of the School using illuminated display boards and archives and artefacts. I was to introduce this to the Queen, while talking about the foundation of the school. This was to last about 10 minutes.



The Queen arrived outside to be greeted by the then local M.P. for Mossley Hill, David Alton.



When the Queen entered the School, my room was to be her first point of call. I was alone in there, very nervous and desperately trying to remember what I was going to say.

As no one is allowed to walk in front of the Queen, as she entered the room, for a moment we were alone in the room - a weird moment.

The Queen was swiftly followed by the press who gathered at one end of the room ready for the first introduction of the day.



As I took her hand all the cameras went off - famous for a nano-second!

I then had to give the Queen a brief resume of the school's history and the archive on show.



I was impressed by how much the Queen knew about the school already.

The Queen showed great interest in the archives, asking pointed questions throughout.





After she had made a full tour of the School, the Queen was presented with a special leather-bound copy of my book as a memento of her visit.



Later we received a thank you letter from the Palace, with a special thank you for the book.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

26th March, 1991.

Dear Mr Smyth

On our return to London at the end of our two days in Liverpool and Greater Manchester, The Queen asked me to write to you to thank you for your part in her most interesting visit to the Royal School for the Blind.

Her Majesty was very pleased to be able to be present at the School to celebrate your very special achievement of a Bicentenary. The tour gave The Queen the best possible insight into the work now being undertaken by the School in what must be a very difficult field. Her Majesty was full of admiration for the imaginative way the School is run and for the diligence and patience of all your staff. She was very pleased to be able to offer her support for the work that you do at the School.

Finally, The Queen has asked me especially to thank you for the handsome History of the School which you presented to her to mark the occasion of her visit. This will be a happy reminder of the time she spent with you.

Yours sincerely
Robin Janvrin
(ROBIN JANVRIN)

John Smyth, Esq.

