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THE ROYAL VISIT TO WALTON HALL

OPEN FORUM 45

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WYNNE
BRINDLE:

The Royal Standard flying from the flagpole outside Walton Hall, the cavalcade of cars, the unprecedented crowds, the hundreds of flag-waving children and the summer weather all combine to make the Royal Visit on the 27th June the highpoint of the tenth anniversary year. Forecourt in front of the hall was hardly big enough for the Jubilee Rolls to swing round.

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were received by Major J.D. Young Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, who then presented the vice Chancellor Lord Perry of Walton and Lady Perry.

The Royal couple then went inside Walton Hall where the Lord Lieutenant presented local dignitaries and the vice Chancellor presented some of his key staff.

Afterwards in the porch a brief encounter with Baroness Lee, Jenny Lee, whose association with the O.U. goes back more than ten years to 1965, when she was asked to set up the University by the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson.

The Royal visitors then began their one hour tour of selected parts of the campus, which was decked out for the occasion as never before. The Queen escorted by the vice Channellor and Lady Perry formed the first party, and in the second group the Duke of Edinburgh was escorted by the University secretary Anasstassius Christodoulou. A feature of the Royal visit was its informality with the Queen and Prince Philip each stopping to chat with people lining the route.

The first section of the tour was in the specially erected marquee beside Walton Hall, this housed exhibits by faculties and departments research groups and the B.B.C. The first thing the Queen looked at was the O.U. Consultancy Service stand showing how distance teaching methods pioneered by the O.U. are made available to new institutions all over the world.

The vice Chancellor then introduced Bruce McDowell manager of the Universities data processing unit, and then indicated the students progress display. This enabled him to explain the O.U. Study system encapsulated in this snail chart. The straight path shows the admissions procedures, while the circular path illustrates the annual repeating cycle of study, assessment and examination.

Next Lord Perry introduced John Greenall Director of Information Services, who was manning the special stand originally designed for this years Ideal Homes Exhibition. On the stand the Queen spoke to Sylvia Dyllan a science and technology undergraduate with a distinction in T100. The SLO1 Home Experiment kit was one of the things she showed her Majesty. This map indicating the O.U's thirteen administrative regions with their regional offices and study centres, some of which can record and replay television programmes, was one of the things shown to Prince Philip by Robert Beavers, director of regional tutorial services. The display also showed the scatter of student numbers, part-time staff and full-time staff, Mr. Beavers emphasised the key role of study centres in students lives. Meanwhile the Queen's party had reached the energy research group's exhibit. Prince Philip discussed educational technology with David Hawkrige director of the institute and found some of the jargon laughably obscure.

"Now I know where it comes from".

"No

"Oh so try doing it on these two".

The Queen's Party then moved on to the faculty of Educational Studies stand, Lord Perry presented the Dean John Rayner.

And then the sub Dean John Chapman who explained some of his work on children's reading development and the way in which material is designed to teach the teachers in this field.

At the BBC Open University Productions stand the vice Chancellor presented Donald Gratton controller of Educational Broadcasting, Nancy Thomas the BBC's O.U. Information officer and Dr. Jim Stevenson assistant head of the O.U. production centre. Don Gratton outlined the BBC's role and its partnership with the O.U. and the way in which it provides all the television and radio programmes for the courses, and programmes about the University like this one.

He then explained that many broadcasts for students were in the early morning because the University's increasing need for air time, he mentioned that a most reassuring trend was the world-wide sales of the O.U.'s teaching programmes.

The crowds which were estimated to number almost six thousand were not disappointed and had a good view of the Royal couple.

The long walk from the marquee down to the newest building on the site linked the B.B.C.'s O.U. Production Exhibition Stand with this new production centre, being built on the campus. Lord Perry guided the Queen into the lobby of the production centre which is not yet finished and introduced Bob Rowland head of the O.U. Production Centre, and John Ware, the architect of the building, who explained the lay-out of the building with the aid of a model.

BOB
ROWLAND:

We are just under here, and this building we've been
for two years altogether, this is the..... television studios
sound studios for sound recording programmes with all the technical
facilities for tape recording and so on. Scenery construction, and
outside broadcast here on location, recording, and these are just
photographs of construction. And all this takes place at Alexandria
Palace now.

Now.

Yes, and then we're moving here in 1981.

This is the studio area, and this is the office area.

But where is all this being done now?

Alexandra Palace.

They're moving out of there are you?

We're moving out of there in about two years time, so all the staff....

WYNNE
BRINDLE:

When completed the new production centre will have the capacity for making substantially more television and radio programmes for the Open University than the present centre at Alexandra Palace. There will be increased studio space and it will be altogether more self-contained.

The Queen was unable to lock around the building as it is still under construction.

The return walk through the crowd to the operations building took the Queen past a disabled third year student in a wheelchair, Christine Lane, whose a quadruplegic and blind from birth. Incredibly she achieved a distinction in Maths foundation course M100 and has also passed D101.

The large well-lit design studio occupies virtually the whole of the first floor of the operations building. Here most of the Universities printed course materials are planned and prepared through lengthy discussions between academics, publishing editors and graphic designers, or members of the course teams, the O.U's unique contribution to University course making. The director of operations, Peter Girling, conducted the Queen to a small display of correspondence material laid out in the centre of the studio, this showed a range of work by the various specialised artists, technical illustrators, cartographers, and graphic designers. The university produces the majority of its printed course materials but relies on outside contractors for printing.

The director of operations in fact coordinates all the relevant departments, publishing, design, media development and the warehousing and distribution of all course materials.

Finally, Her Majesty had a word with Jonathan Davis one of the dozen or so coordinating graphic designers who explained that he was laying out photographs for a course unit.

Downstairs the tour took the royal visitors into student records where the vice Chancellor introduced Douglas Jordan, head of this section of the registry. He then explained to the Queen that students records were kept both on computer files which may be viewed on electronic display monitors and on microfilm.

He showed the Queen a perspex jacket which contained microfilm records and then indicated the row of display units linked to the University's main computer.

At this point the Duke of Edinburgh's party arrived. Douglas Jordan introduced Blossom Marshal one of the operators who was due to retire the next day.

The Queen commented on the student records being displayed.

This was the scheme for servicemen and their families in Northern Germany operating at three British bases.

"These are the servicemen".

(off mic conversation with Lord Perry)

Her Majesty then looked at a map showing those of her prisons twenty-nine in all which operate the special home office scheme enabling prisoners to study O.U. courses. Both parties then walked through into the admissions office where the admissions officer, Brian Salter, was introduced, and the vice Chancellor then explained how places are allocated based on regional quotas, sex and occupation, according to the first come first served principle.

This is the office where tens of thousands of application forms from prospective students pour in during enrolment period. The women sort and check applications for accuracy, and they are then fed into the computer. And it's also from here that letters offering places to successful applicants are sent.

(off mic chat with Lord Perry and the Queen)

The last stage of the conducted tour led the Queen out of the operations building along the covered walkway besides the new 'K' block and past a splendid new mural by J. Muir, and then on into a small foyer of the venables building. The first display shown to the Queen was a biology project explained by Jenny Simons.

(off mic chat between the Queen and Jenny Simons)

Then Chris Pinches of Technology explains cyclops.

(off mic chat between the Queen and Lord Perry)

The Royal visit to Walton Hall ended with a formal luncheon in the Queen's honour attended by one hundred and sixty guests, in addition to members of the student body and key University staff, there were representatives of Milton Keynes and other local authorities in the area and the B.B.C. The luncheon ended with a brief speech from the vice Chancellor, to which the Queen replied.

The speeches appropriately summed up the significance of the occasion for all those present and for all those listening to the relay across the campus.

MASTER OF CEREMONY:

May it please your Majesty Lord Perry of Walton, vice Chancellor of the University will give an address of welcome to her Majesty.

LORD PERRY:

Your majesty, your Royal Highness my Lords Ladies and gentlemen, it's a privilege and a very great pleasure for me to welcome your Majesty and your Royal Highness to the Open University. This is a momentous occasion for all the members of the University, Staff, students and graduates alike. Well we began not like other new Universities as

the petted child of a proud and caring local community, we began as a new national idea and met hostility, scepticism and ridicule. All of us here staff, students and graduates alike, had to fight for acceptance for academic respectability, for recognition as part of the established educational provision of this country. We have gradually come to realise that we're winning that fight, but your agreement to visit us here today Your Majesty, will undoubtedly be seen as a further and most significant recognition. The attendance of so many members of the University and of their families, is a mark of just how important this occasion is to them. We very much hope that you have enjoyed seeing during your all too brief visit, something of the way in which the University works. We thank you most warmly for coming, may I ask of your Majesty to do us the further honour of saying a few words to mark both the occasion of your visit and of our tenth anniversary, thank you.

M of C

Vice chancellor your Royal Highness, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen her majesty will be graciously pleased to reply.

H.R.H. The
Queen:

Mr. vice Chancellor, thank you for your welcome, we have both been looking forward to seeing something of this fascinating experiment in higher education. Perhaps experiment is no longer the appropriate word to use on this your tenth anniversary. But the experiment was a success is proved by the fact that academics and educational administrators came to this pleasant setting in the new town of Milton Keynes, to see what is happening, to learn, and to pay you the compliment of imitation. The Open University is a product of the communication revolution, or perhaps explosion might be a better expression. For it deals with very large numbers of students by exploiting communications in the service of education. By making higher education available on a vast scale and particularly to those who have for one reason or another not availed themselves of it earlier in life, the Open University has flung open the doors of learning and culture to all who wish to enter.

However, as you yourself Mr. Vice Chancellor have said, this is not the easiest way of obtaining a degree, so my congratulations to the thirty-three thousand graduates are doubly sincere. The fact that so many have succeeded through part-time study while in full-time employment is a great tribute to their determination and dedication. The success of the first ten years is a credit to all the staff and I'm quite confident that the future will be even more successful.