



What's up with Elizabeth?

THE BRITISH ROYAL FAMILY TODAY

Towards the end of March, the Czech Republic expected a prestigious visit from the UK. The Prince of Wales, Charles, and his wife Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, were to spend a few days in the country.

The British royal family still enjoys widespread popularity and recognition. Almost everyone has heard of them and the Queen is probably the most famous woman in the world. But how do people in the UK feel about 'the royals'? And what exactly does the Queen do?

The Queen's agenda

The Queen has many important **formal duties**¹ but in most cases follows the advice of the Prime Minister.

- As Head of State, the Queen represents the UK abroad and invites other world leaders to visit the UK.
- As Head of the **Armed Forces**², only the Queen can declare when the UK is at war or when war is over.
- As Head of the Church of England, she appoints bishops and archbishops.
- As a political **entity**³, the Queen has to read and sign government and Commonwealth documents every day.

Finally, the Windsor royal family spends a great deal of their time travelling up and down the country in support of different charities and regional projects.

Anti-monarchists

There are British people called 'anti-monarchists' who do not believe there should be a royal family. A frequent criticism is that the British people should not have to pay for the royal family through their **taxes**⁴, particularly during a credit crunch*. Another is that Buckingham Palace should be open to the public more often, in order to pay for the building repairs that are necessary.

Australia said yes

There are critics outside of the UK as well. In 1999, the Australian government called a referendum to decide whether the country should become a republic with a president, rather than having the British Queen as the Australian Head of State. In the end, Australia voted for the British Queen.

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In 2005, after graduating from university, Prince William spent time teaching English in Uruguay, the sort of work many young British people do. In 2009, Prince Harry visited New York to help a number of charities.



Queen Elizabeth II in a nutshell

Date of Birth: April 21, 1926

Nickname: Lilibet

Married to: Philip Mountbatten in 1947

Coronation: June 2, 1953

Children: Prince Charles, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew, Prince Edward

Privileges:

She is the only person in the UK who doesn't need a passport.

The Queen's official cars don't have number plates*.

St George's Day

On April 23 the English celebrate St George's Day.

St George was a brave Roman soldier who protested against the torture of Christians by Romans and died for his beliefs. He was the patron saint of soldiers. On the eve of the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, the king, Henry V, called on St George and after the victory St George's Day became as important as Christmas. Later, many English forgot about this national day but in recent years people are beginning to recognise it again.



VOCABULARY

¹ **formal duties** ['dʒu:ti:z] – formální povinnosti

² **Armed Forces** – ozbrojené síly

³ **entity** – osoba

⁴ **tax** – daň

GLOSSARY *

credit crunch – a situation where it is difficult to borrow money from banks (to get credit)

number plates – an identification number on cars