

# The British Royal Family

Britain has been ruled by kings and queens for over a thousand years. Royal families have always been popular with visitors, but is today's Royal Family just a tourist attraction? / ALASTAIR S. EDWARDS (UK)

# What does the Royal Family actually do?

Members of the Royal Family do most of their work in the areas of public and charitable service, and help to make the country stronger.

Younger members of the Royal Family who go to school or are in military training – such as Prince Harry – don't have full-time official duties<sup>1</sup>, but they play a role in important national events<sup>2</sup> and celebrations.

#### Visits and events in the UK

Each year the Queen and other members of the Royal Family make nearly 3,000 visits to different places in the United Kingdom. They open new buildings, meet local people and visit businesses, schools, hospitals and other public buildings as well as community projects, military units and charities.

### Visits and events abroad

Members of the Royal Family often represent the Queen and the nation in Commonwealth or other countries to strengthen<sup>3</sup> Britain's diplomatic and economic relations.

## Charity

The Royal Family also plays an important role in supporting<sup>4</sup> and encouraging<sup>5</sup> the public and charity sectors. Some members of the Royal Family have also established their own charities - for example, The Prince's Trust and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, a charity which provides advice and help for people acting as carers<sup>6</sup>.

The Royal Family also supports the work of the Armed Forces<sup>7</sup>. Members of the Royal Family have official relationships with many units of the Forces, and often visit soldiers, sailors and pilots at home and abroad. So the Royal Family is very busy and in addition to all this, they receive and answer over 100,000 letters and e-mails each year!

## The Queen

The most important member of the Royal Family is Queen Elizabeth the Second. The Queen is Head of State in the United Kingdom, and she is also the monarch of 15 Commonwealth countries, including Australia, Canada and Jamaica. She is the UK's constitutional mon-

arch, which means she does not 'rule' the country, but has important ceremonial and formal roles. She is also Head of the justice system, Head of the Armed Forces and Head of the Church<sup>8</sup>. In Government, the Queen opens each new session of Parliament, closes Parliament before a general election9, and agrees to all new laws10 made in Parliament. She also names the Prime Minister and meets him (or her) every week.

The Queen and her family never vote<sup>11</sup> or stand for election. The Queen must be neutral so that she can represent all people in the country.

#### **Honours**

Only the Queen can give titles of honour<sup>12</sup>, including knighthoods\* and awards for bravery\*\*. Honours are given to all kinds of people - sports personalities, artists, politicians and doctors - but also ordinary people who work hard for their country. Some famous people who have received honours are Sean Connery (Scottish actor), Bob Geldof (Irish singer) and Cliff Richard (British singer).

# How much does the Royal Family cost?

The monarchy only costs 69p a year for every person in Britain. But Queen Elizabeth II has made about £1.4

## DID YOU KNOW?

Queen Elizabeth's full name is 211 words long! Here is the short version of her title:

Queen Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God Queen of this Realm and of Her other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

# MATURITA OUESTIONS

- The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy. What does that mean?
- Who is the UK monarch today?
- What does the Royal Family do in the UK?
- What does the Royal family do abroad?
- Do the British like the Royal Family?
- Would you like to have a gueen, too?

billion for charity. Also, tourists coming to the UK to see the royal palaces bring in countless millions. Some people say that a republican head of state would be less expensive, but the German presidency costs about the same as the Queen, and how many tourists go to Berlin to see the president?

# What do British people think?

43% of people in the UK think that the Royal Family is worth the £36.1 million it receives each year from the taxpayer<sup>13</sup>. 66% of people think that Britain is a better place with a Royal family, and only 14% think that the country should become a republic. 42% say that Charles, Prince of Wales should inherit<sup>14</sup> the throne, while 38% feel that it should pass directly to his son William, the Duke of Cambridge, instead.

It seems the British Royal Family will survive another century. Prince George, William and Kate's first child, born in 2013, will most probably become king. But he'll have to wait for his father and his grandfather before he can start trying on the crown!

#### LANGUAGE NOTE

- **knighthood** the highest award given by the Queen – the title is Sir for a man or Dame for a woman
- **bravery** (noun), **brave** (adjective) not frightened of anything; heroic, strong

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# VOCABULARY



- ¹ **duty** ['dju:tɪ] povinnost
- <sup>2</sup> **event** [ɪ'vent] událost
- <sup>3</sup> to strengthen [ˈstreŋθən] posílit
- 4 to support [səˈpɔ:t] podporovat
- <sup>5</sup> to encourage [ɪnˈkʌrɪdʒ] povzbuzovat
- <sup>6</sup> carer ['keərə] opatrovník
- <sup>7</sup> **Armed Forces** (of the United Kingdom) [a:md fɔ:sɪz]
- ozbrojené síly (Spojeného království)
- <sup>8</sup> Church (of England) [t[3:t[] církev (anglikánská)
- <sup>9</sup> **election** [I'lek∫n] volby
- <sup>10</sup> **law** [lɔ:] zákon
- <sup>11</sup> **to vote** [vəʊt] volit
- <sup>12</sup> title of honour ['taɪtl əv 'pnə] čestný titul
- <sup>13</sup> **taxpayer** ['tæks,peɪə] daňový poplatník
- <sup>14</sup> **to inherit** [ɪnˈherɪt] zdědit