

THE ULTIMATE FAMILY

*The Making of the
Royal House of Windsor*

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Her petulant decisions and her personal insistences are bound to raise the question sooner or later of whether she should retire from public life.

The Snowdons' failure to live up to the high hopes built around them ushered in a fairly dismal period for the whole royal family. Not merely had they lost their former glamour, but they began to appear fallible and accident-prone to a startling degree. Almost all the criticisms that had mushroomed round the Court in the late fifties, to be briefly stemmed by Princess Margaret's marriage, now returned with a vengeance – despite the birth of a fourth and final child to the Queen, Prince Edward, on March 10, 1964.

Public disappointment was by no means the only reason for this sour mood towards the Court. The sheer insensitivity of royal advisers to changing attitudes within the nation also played its part, and throughout the Sixties the undeniable impression grew of a monarchy that was out of touch with the times and even culpably indifferent to popular opinion.

Typical of this was the egregious stupidity of the royal entourage in managing to ensure that in 1961 the royal visit to achieve by far the most publicity was not Her Majesty's important state appearance in N'Krumah's Ghana, but the elaborate state trip to the Indian sub-continent, which would always be remembered for the fuss about the tiger shoot. In Udaipur, Prince Philip, the ecologically-minded future President of the World Wildlife Fund, shot a crocodile. In Rajasthan as guest of the Maharajah of Jaipur, he despatched a nine-foot male tiger 'with a single shot through the head'. And in Nepal, both Prince Philip and the Queen were actually permitted to take part in a tiger-shoot which also bagged one of the world's most valuable and rarest animals – an Indian white rhinoceros.

When this was first reported in the press and to the outrage of animal lovers round the world, Commander Colville blandly stated that, in Nepal at least, Prince Philip had not actually shot anything himself as he had been suffering from a painfully infected trigger-finger. But instead of leaving it at that, several members of the royal party cheerfully claimed responsibility, with Prince Philip's private secretary, Admiral Bonham-Carter, admitting he had bagged a tiger, and Lord Home, then Her Majesty's Foreign Secretary, blithely sharing the rhino with the Queen's own private secretary.

Sir Michael Adeane and I both hit the rhinoceros, and I am certain it was my shot that killed it. We are sharing it. I am having the horn and the front feet, and Sir Michael is having the back end. I am not certain what I will do with the feet. Probably make them into wastepaper baskets.

His Lordship gave no hint of what he was doing with the rhinohorn, famous for its aphrodisiac properties, and presumably he failed to realise that his future wastepaper baskets had belonged to one of at most forty creatures which were all that then remained of an entire endangered species – or that his ‘bag’ had been a female with a calf, which must have died without its mother. But the Earl’s ignorance appeared as unacceptable as his unconcern, and the incident did untold and unnecessary damage to the royal reputation as caring conservationists. Worse still, it smacked of royal hypocrisy, for not only had Prince Philip come out strongly in the past in passionate defence of wildlife, but the Queen herself was patron of the British Fauna Preservation Society.

The British can be every bit as sentimental over animals as over their royal family, and the Palace postbag had rarely seen so many angry protests. Others were published in the press, of which the following is fairly typical:

There was sadness in our crowded suburban train when we opened our *Evening News* and saw the picture of the animal destroyed as part of the ‘entertainment’ laid on for the royal visit to Nepal. Staid businessmen were so revolted at the display of barbarism, that they were actually moved to cry out loud!

The fuss, of course, subsided, but more significant and vocal protests were to come when, hard to imagine as it must seem today, and barely a month after the tenth anniversary of the Coronation, the Queen and Prince Philip found themselves being booed in public. The occasion was the visit of Prince Philip’s uncle, King Paul of Greece, in 1963. Few objected to bumbling King Paul, but his wife, Queen Frederika, was a vehement and tactless lady whose apparently pro-Nazi sentiments had been widely reported in the past.

Whatever her real feelings – which to be fair were not that clear – the royal Greek connection was an area for the Mountbatten-Windsors to proceed with caution. Instead, the whole royal party