

THE UK MONARCHY

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy even though¹ there is no written constitution, in fact the British constitution is based on "common" and statute law (written laws passed by Parliament and based on convention).

The Queen reigns but does not rule.

In 1215 the Magna Charta established limits to the power of the monarch and the Bill of Rights in 1689 guaranteed free elections.

The British people look to the Queen as their Head of State. Indeed she is the symbol of national unity.

The monarchy is the most ancient secular institution in Britain, its continuity was interrupted only after the Civil War by the republic of Oliver Cromwell which lasted from 1649 to 1660.

The Crown is hereditary, and is passed to the sovereign's eldest child, irrespective of whether it is the son or daughter.

The Queen has a central role in state affairs², not only in ceremonial functions such as opening Parliament, or bestowing honours³, but also because of her weekly meetings with the Prime Minister who informs her of current political affairs and gives her copies of all Cabinet papers.

The State Opening of Parliament is a great parliamentary occasion. Every October/November the Queen comes to Westminster. She travels from Buckingham Palace to the Houses of Parliament in a gold carriage⁴, the Irish State Coach. In the House of Lords she sits on a "throne" and reads the "Queen's Speech" which is prepared by the Cabinet, and sets out the

Government's plans for the following year.

On this occasion the Queen wears a crown and other jewels that come from the Crown Jewels.

Elizabeth II, the present Queen, is also Head of the Commonwealth, Head of the Church of England and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

The Queen is certainly one of the richest women in the world. The Royal Family's prosperity comes from two sources: government funds and their own personal wealth. Parliament has had financial control over the monarch since the 17th century.

THE BRITISH NATIONAL SONG OR ANTHEM¹

God save our gracious Queen, Long live our noble
Queen, God save the Queen, Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious, Long to reign over us, God
save the Queen.

THE SOVEREIGN: Her Most Excellent Majesty
Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great
Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories, Queen and
Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

Exercises

- What do these numbers refer to?
a) 1215 b) 1689 c) 1649-1660
- Complete the following sentences.
1. The United Kingdom is _____.
2. In 1215 _____ Carta _____
the power of the monarch.
3. The Crown is _____.
4. The Queen _____ centra
affairs.
5. Every _____ / _____
to _____.
6. In the _____ of _____
the _____ and reads the _____.
7. _____ It is also _____
of _____ of _____ and _____.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Queen is
Britain with a
history is the
an "official" to
the crown has
relationship of

Exercises



1. What do these numbers refer to?

a) 1215 b) 1689 c) 1649-1660.

2. Complete the following sentences.

1. The United Kingdom is _____.

2. In 1215 _____ Carta established _____ to the power of the monarch.

3. The Crown is _____.

4. The Queen _____ central _____ in _____ affairs.

5. Every _____ / _____ he _____ comes to _____.

6. In the _____ of _____ she _____ on the _____ and reads the _____.

7. _____ It is also _____ of the _____ head of _____ of _____ and _____ in _____.