

Monarch: The Life and Reign of Elizabeth II

By Robert Lacey

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For more than fifty years, Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor -- who became Elizabeth II, Queen of England on February 6, 1952 -- has been loved and loathed, revered and feared, applauded and criticized by her people. Still she endures as a captivating figure in the world's most durable symbol of political authority: the British monarchy.
In *Monarch,* a meticulously detailed portrait of Elizabeth II as both a human being and an institution, bestselling author Robert Lacey brings the queen to life as never before: as baby "Lilibet" learning to wave to a crowd in the Royal Mews; as a child "ardently praying for a brother" so as to avoid her fate; as a young woman falling in love with and marrying her cousin Philip; and as the mother-in-law of the most complicated royal of all, Princess Diana.
Updated with new material to reflect the 2002 Golden Jubilee and the passing of the Queen Mum -- and featuring dozens of photographs, a family tree of the Hanoverian-Windsor-Mountbatten families, and a map that charts the location of royal castles -- *Monarch* is an engaging, critical, and celebratory account of Elizabeth's half-century reign that no reader of popular history should be without.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
As a child, Princess Elizabeth longed "to live in the country with lots of horses and dogs." That dream came to a crashing end when her uncle, King Edward VII, followed his heart instead of his head, giving up the throne for an American divorcee. The princess's fate was sealed: not only was she destined to become Queen of England, but as Lacey shows in this skillfully constructed biography, nearly every upheaval of her otherwise quiet and dutiful 50-year reign would be the direct consequence of impetuous relatives putting personal needs above royal responsibility. It's all here: the romantic debacles of Di, Fergie, Margaret, Ann, Charles and Andrew, as well as Prince Philip's unfailing ability to insert his foot in his mouth ("How nice to be in a country that is not ruled by its people," he said to Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner in 1969). Through it all, there have been two constants: the Queen is pragmatic and restrained, and the media is all over every mucky story. Lacey, veteran royal historian and biographer (The Queen Mother's Century, etc.), writes with the cooperation of the Palace, and his portrait is sympathetic, but he also offers an incisive analysis of the development of royal media coverage (which started with Queen Victoria and the invention of the camera) and the relationship between the two powerful entities, setting this apart from and far above the average by-the-numbers royal bio.
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From Library Journal
Although Lacey discusses Queen Elizabeth II's formative years and family life, his 16th book is not so much a biography as an examination of "the diminishing boundaries of [the royal family's] personal privacy" in the 20th century. Significant events, such as King George VI's death, Charles's and Andrew's doomed marriages, and the queen's financial status, are considered in light of how they are treated by the media and viewed by the public. Also highlighted are Mass-Observation, a volunteer organization used to measure the public's response to the royal family, and the intrusive tabloid press. Prince Charles cites the media's aggressive role in his rushed (and unfortunate) choice of a bride, and Lacey shows that Diana's own on-again, off-again relationship with the paparazzi served only to emphasize her insecurities. Plodding in parts, Lacey's work reveals little that is new about the queen, but it is a mature and thoughtful discussion of the public's evolving relationship with the British royal family. Recommended only for large public libraries with a special collection on the British monarchy. Isabel Coates, Canada Customs & Revenue Agency, Ont.
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From Booklist
Readers made curious by the increasing press coverage here in the U.S and abroad of the celebrations occurring this spring and summer to mark the Golden Jubilee of Britain's queen Elizabeth II will be satisfied by William Shawcross' *Queen and Country* [BKL Mr 1 02], which provides an excellent overview. This new book by Lacey, a best-selling royal biographer, will please readers wanting a more in-depth look at the reign of the queen. The author tells, as compellingly as if writing fiction, the story of a "private and straightforward woman" who is nevertheless one of the most widely recognized individuals in the world. Exhibiting from childhood "an unflurried capacity to accept her unusual lot in life," the future queen grew up serious and conscientious--and, as she often insists, not as an actress who puts on publicity stunts. She learned the performance of a no-nonsense monarch at the knee of her father, George VI, but just as her mother, the much-loved Queen Mother, brought a certain style to the royal family, so did Prince Philip when he married the future Elizabeth II. Her daughter-in-law Diana also injected new lifeblood into the family, and Lacey is particularly edifying in his look at what went on behind palace doors when the Princess of Wales died and the royal family had to react to the outpouring of public grief. Motherhood may be the queen's weak

point; nevertheless, she will be remembered for maintaining the integrity of the crown. A lively, fluid biography certain to be much requested. *Brad Hooper*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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