

Constitutional monarchy

The Queen's success rested on her firm understanding of the principles of constitutional monarchy in a democratic state. She took seriously her leading role in the great occasions of each year and of her reign.

Every year saw her distribution on Maundy Thursday in spring, her Remembrance day acts so we do not forget all those who gave their lives in war, Trooping the colour in summer and her unifying Christmas message. There was the annual rhythm of the sporting events she liked to attend and time spent in Balmoral and Norfolk outside London.

The reign brought us royal weddings and state funerals, Jubilee celebrations and one off events from the Olympics to World Cup competitions where she would play her part. She hosted Heads of State visiting from abroad and travelled to many countries as our leading Ambassador.

She opened Parliament and set out the government's plans in the Queen's speech from the throne. Written in neutral language it is heard in silence by all parties. MPs then return to the Commons to debate it, support or criticise it, putting living politics into the measured plain prose of the original.

Her success in avoiding political controversy was absolute. She did not find herself in papers based on leaks of partisan or one sided views she was alleged to have let slip in private because she did not allow herself such views. In conversation she was brilliant at being interested in whoever she spoke to without letting slip a viewpoint of her own that some would disagree with and think too political. She did ask the occasional question that made the news, as when she asked why the economic experts had not foreseen the coming economic crash in 2008. She spoke for most of the country when she asked that.