

ROYAL TOUR OF N. LANCASHIRE

There's a great welcome for the Royal car as it approaches Lancaster Castle; even a cat turns out to exercise his proverbial right to look at a King's. It's the beginning of His Majesty's two-days tour as Duke of Lancaster, to commemorate the creation of the County Palatine. At the massive John O'Gaunt Gate of the old Norman Castle (which stands on the site of an even earlier Roman Camp) the Royal car draws to a stop and the Constable of the Castle, the Earl of Sefton receives the Royal party which includes Princess Margaret.

Outside the Castle, according to custom, the Constable offers the keys, one of which was presented 550 years ago to John O'Gaunt, grandfather of Henry V and most famous of the Dukes of Lancaster. The King formally touches them and the ritual is over.

The King is the first reigning monarch to enter the Castle since Queen Victoria's visit one hundred years ago. Through the 600 years, Lancaster and the Duchy (which was soon united to the crown) with proverbial loyalty has stood for the King. In the Shire Hall the special functions of the palatinate are maintained, and the quarter sessions and assizes are held.

In the visitors book is the signature of the King's father.

Leaving the Castle, Their Majesties receive a warm welcome despite the bitter weather as they drive towards the Royal Lancaster Infirmary.

Both the King and Queen take a keen interest in the welfare of their people and especially those in hospitals. Incidentally, it's good to know His Majesty has made a complete recovery from the cold which caused the postponement of his tour.

Cadets form a guard of honour at the Royal Grammar School, where with the Mayor, the Queen meets Ronald Britten, the head boy.

As the King talks to the headmaster, the head boy walks behind with Princess Margaret and, later, as the Royal party leaves, he calls for three cheers.

And so to the Town Hall where a huge loyal crowd cheers as Their Majesties (escorted by the Mayor, Alderman Chirnside) arrive for the civic reception and lunch. And it's an all-Lancashire menu - Morecambe shrimps, Wyresdale chicken, and Lancashire grass cheese.

A tour of Duchy farms in the Lancaster area follows lunch, as the Royal car arrives at Corless Mill Farm on Wyreside.

Mrs. Fox and her husband John are the tenants. In all, the Duke of Lancaster, with properties in Yorkshire, Cheshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire besides Lancashire, owns about 250 farms comprising over 50-thousand acres. The five Lancashire estates cover 12-thousand acres. Here, too, the King met tenants of other nearby farms.

Named after an old water-operated mill, the farm is now electrified. In the incubator room 800 day-old Ancona chicks make their bow.

Next, fine Ayrshire cattle at Kilm Tree Farm Wimmerleigh. A keen practical farmer himself (as far as his multitude of duties will permit) the King asks shrewd questions and can weigh the value of the answers. Farmer Hodgkins has some fine young heifers to show at Myrseough Lodge, nearly 700 years a Duchy farm. After a tour of the farm, the Royal party were guests at a real farmhouse tea prepared by Mrs. Hodgkins.

And so at the end of a long day, through the lovely countryside to the Royal train for the night.

Next morning 85-year-old Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Garlick and their sons John and William are hosts at Wards House Farm. After the group photographs, morning tea with the Garlicks in on the schedule.

Here police officers meet Their Majesties, including Mr. Palfrey, Assistant Chief Constable, Chief Inspector Jackson and Inspector Curns.

At Preston there's none of that morning-after-the-budget atmosphere at the Town Hall as a huge crowd waits to see "The King, Duke of Lancaster," as the proud traditional Lancashire toast goes.

Here it's His Majesty's pleasure to meet representatives from parts of the county it has not been possible to include in the short tour.

Outside, the huge crowd still waits to speed the Royal visitors on their way back to London. It has been a great occasion for Lancashire, and for the King, an inspiration to see that even in these days of stress and change, the age-old loyalties grew ever firmer in Loyal Lancashire.