



PRINCE WILLIAM
& PRINCESS KATE

THE
FUTURE
KING &
QUEEN

WITH BIG TRANSITIONS ON
THE HORIZON, THE ROYAL
PARENTS PREPARE TO STEP UP
By **SIMON PERRY**



READY TO LEAD
The royal parents
(in 2017) are “very
poised and seem
very comfortable,”
says a guest who
attended the
Dec. 11 diplomatic
reception.

WPA/PA IMAGES

Think of it as the ultimate office holiday party: 1,000 guests, all dressed to impress and awaiting an audience with the boss. At the annual Buckingham Palace diplomatic reception on Dec. 11, the boss was Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth—but her grandson Prince William and granddaughter-in-law Princess Kate couldn't help but command the spotlight. Entering the glittering palace ballroom in order of precedence, Elizabeth came first to the sound of trumpets, followed by her son Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla, and Kate and William. For the next 90 minutes William and Kate, both 37, spoke expertly to as many partygoers as they could. "They are gracious and natural and yet able to really connect," says a diplomatic source who attended the party. "They have refined the art of small talk. They found something to say about each country as they chatted." And with each careful step, the husband and wife of eight years worked in subtle unison. "They combine grace and regal presence with a lovely human touch," says the guest. "It really does feel like they're a team, working in support of the Queen."

Behind raising their three young children, the job of supporting the Queen, 93, is the most important one the couple hold—and they're doing so with the kind of smooth assurance that comes only from years of study. "On that evening they were literally following the Queen," says a



THE NEXT GENERATION

Prince Louis, who has just started talking, made his balcony debut in June (left), while Prince George accompanied sister Princess Charlotte on her first day of school in September.



well-connected source. "They are learning on the job, and it sort of seeps in, like osmosis." Indeed, the training is constant—and ever-evolving. "They are being prepared every day," says royal biographer Ingrid Seward. "There was no school for princesses when Princess Diana was around, and there is no school today for monarchs. They learn by observing and by experience."

And unlike almost any other job on earth, this one is William's destiny by birth and Kate's by marriage—no matter what challenges it may bring. As talk has resurfaced of the Queen stepping aside in

'They are being prepared every day'

—INGRID SEWARD ON WILLIAM & KATE

favor of Charles, 71, within two years (see box, page 48), both the Cambriges are doing more on her behalf. Most recently William was among the key influencers in the conversations surrounding the resignation of his embattled uncle Prince Andrew. "William is one of the decision-makers in the family," says another well-placed source close to the royal household. "He's a thinker."



In many ways William was given a stronger foundation than his father. Charles grew up distant from his mother and found himself in an unhappy marriage to Diana by the time he was William's age. By contrast, even in the midst of his parents' bitter split, William had a nurturing childhood and years later gained the crucial support of Kate's parents, Carole and Michael Middleton. "He is better set and better grounded than any predecessor one can remember," says royal historian Robert Lacey.

He also has a strong partner in Kate, whose unwavering poise and calm balance her husband's more intense side. "They look after each other but in different ways," says a friend. "Some people might say it's an old-fashioned marriage, but it seems to work." Are they equals in the marriage? "Yes and no—I think in a very traditional British kind of way, yes," says the friend.

PRINCE WILLIAM

A LIFETIME PREPARING TO BE KING

FROM AN EARLY AGE, WILLIAM HAS BEEN GROOMED TO LEAD THE MONARCHY



HOW TO IMPRESS ON THE PALACE BALCONY

A lifetime of Buckingham Palace balcony appearances began in 1984 in the arms of Prince Charles.



HOW TO SERVE

William (in a parachute regiment beret in 1986) joined the army in 2006. He briefly served with the Royal Navy before joining the air force.



HOW TO HAVE THE COMMON TOUCH

Princess Diana (with William and Harry at a homeless shelter in '93) showed her boys "that life happens beyond palace walls," William told the BBC on Dec. 16.



HOW TO FIND JOY ON THE JOB

William loved his three years as a helicopter rescue pilot in the Royal Air Force. In 2011 he proudly showed around his grandmother, with whom he is close.



HOW TO BESTOW A KNIGHTHOOD

In 2013 he undertook his first investiture—with a ceremonial sword!—on behalf of the Queen, something he had been coached on by dad Charles earlier that fall.



HOW TO STEP IN FOR THE QUEEN

William gave an audience—his first at Buckingham Palace—to President Faure of the Seychelles on Oct. 22.

A GUIDE TO THEIR ROYAL FINERY

OSTRICH-FEATHER HAT

It signifies the Order of the Garter, the world's oldest order of chivalry.

LOVER'S KNOT TIARA

Kate regularly wears the tiara made famous by Princess Diana.

JUBILEE MEDALS

William was awarded a gold medal for the 50th anniversary of the Queen's reign and a diamond for her 60th.

ROYAL VICTORIAN SASH

For personal service to the monarch, Kate is a Dame Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order.

"They have different roles, but they come together as a team."

That teamwork was on display on the couple's triumphant tour of Pakistan this past fall. "They are a great double act," says a senior royal source. "People make much of William giving the big speeches, but Kate is there too, asking questions of presidents and their wives. These things are easier when they are side by side." The Foreign Office, which decides where all royals should travel on behalf of the U.K., sees the couple as a "massive asset; the perception of them is strong," an insider says, and at least two major overseas tours are already in the works for the duo next year.

The couple have also adopted a divide-and-conquer strategy recently, with Kate's blossoming confidence allowing her to go her own way—as was the case on Dec. 3, when the royal mom attended a NATO reception at Buckingham Palace while William completed a solo tour of Kuwait and Oman. "Kate is in her element right now," says the friend. "She has persevered with what she believes in, not just in terms of her work but also her attitude. She has been true to herself [but] knows the importance of the institution and her role to play. She knows that being a member of the royal family is a bit like having a contract: You sign on the dotted line, and you deliver. She's very respectful of her role and the responsibility that comes with it."

With increasing travel and work commitments come the pressures on their own family, especially as older children George, 6, and Charlotte, 4, become more aware of their parents' away time. (Little Louis is 19 months.) And occasionally something's got to give. When Kate recently had to cancel an appearance with

INSIDE THEIR CHRISTMAS FOR A CAUSE

The couple joined British baking queen Mary Berry on the BBC TV special *A Berry Royal Christmas* to highlight addiction, mental health and homelessness and hosted a party for those who work and volunteer to help the needy over the holidays. During a visit to the London-based charity the Passage, William described how he brings awareness of homelessness to his own children. "I point it out, and I explain why," he said. "They are like, 'Why can't they go home?'" Kate also shared how cooking at home was important for her kids to learn to be "as independent as possible." William likes to cook too, she said. "He's very good at breakfast. In our university days he used to cook all sorts of meals. I think that's when he was trying to impress me."

William at an evening event for the Tusk Conservation Awards because of a childcare issue, a source close to the royal household says, "she said, 'I can't make it because of the kids.' That is good for other mothers out there."

"They are a great double act"
—SENIOR ROYAL SOURCE

They try to be role models in other ways too. Just as they encourage other parents to enjoy time outside with their children, William and Kate prioritize outdoor outings, including a pro soccer game in October, where George could be seen exuberantly cheering on Aston Villa. "It was natural and lovely," an aide says. "That's just how they are. They know what's coming [as they near the throne] and want to give their kids as normal a start as possible."

That includes warm Christmas festivities at Anmer Hall, the family's country home in Norfolk, where they're a short drive from Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip's residence at Sandringham House. While Prince Harry and Meghan Markle have opted to spend the holiday apart from the royal family, William and Kate will take their place

alongside the Queen—with George and Charlotte possibly making their Christmas Day debut as well. At home for holidays and birthdays, Kate likes to handle the baking, she told former *Great British Bake Off* host Mary Berry on a BBC special that aired Dec. 16 in the U.K. "It has become a bit of a tradition," Kate said. "I sort of stay up until midnight with ridiculous amounts of cake mix and icing. I make far too much, but I love it."

After the New Year it will be back to school and work, with William expected to develop an environmental project and continue his mental-health campaign and Kate to pursue her longtime focus on supporting families with young children. As they near 40, both royals are also keenly aware of the passage of time—and how much closer it brings them to the throne. "The monarchy is approaching a very challenging period of change," says Lacey. "Charles is going to have his work cut out coping with the transitions. It's good to have that reassurance in the new generation that there is someone stepping up to the plate."

With reporting by **Monique Jessen**

WILL THE QUEEN RETIRE AT 95?

At the end of a trying year in which her son Andrew, 59, has left royal duties amid scandal, the question has been raised whether Elizabeth will step aside in favor of oldest son Charles. It's unlikely. She made a solemn vow when she was 21 to serve all her life and sees her rule as "a religious anointing in the eyes of God," says royal biographer Ingrid Seward. "She will do it until she's not fit to." Nor will Charles step aside for his son William. Says royal author Robert Lacey: "We have two monarchs determined to stay in place until they are carried out."

The Queen and Charles at the opening of Parliament on Oct. 14.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY MATT PORTEOUS/SHINE TV LTD./BBC; KENSINGTON PALACE/GETTY IMAGES; VICTORIA JONES/PA IMAGES; JAMES WHATLING/NUNN SYNDICATION; MAX NUNB/VINDIGO/GETTY IMAGES