

# Film maker wants your royal visit memories

Are you, or were you, a fan of Queen Elizabeth? Have you met her, or presented Her Majesty with a bouquet of flowers on one of her 13 royal tours to Australia?

Were you in a country town, a regional centre or a capital city when the Queen came to visit? Do you have a cherished memory to share? Did you snap photos or shoot the odd reel of film or video?

Australian film-makers are now on the hunt for your stories and archive. Electric Pictures is producing *A Royal Romance* — a documentary for a prime-time ABC audience that takes an informed and affectionate look back at Queen Elizabeth's unique relationship with Australia.

In 1954, Australia was gripped by Cold War fever, the Labor Party was about to split over communist influence in the trade unions, floods and a cyclone devastated both Queensland and NSW and Bill Haley and the Comets' *Rock Around the Clock* was topping the charts.

On February 3, in the middle of a blazing hot summer, a 28-year old Queen Elizabeth II stepped ashore on Sydney Harbour — the first reigning monarch to visit Down Under. Her much-loved father, King George VI, had died only two years earlier.

Throughout the country, arches were built, decorations erected and fireworks let off for gala events. A unique agency was created within the Prime Minister's Department to handle all arrangements for the tour. The Postmaster-General's office created a special Royal edition 7½-penny stamp. In cinemas, *God Save the Queen* was played before the start of every movie and patrons dutifully rose to their feet. The Commonwealth Film Unit made a feature-length colour film about the tour, which was screened in cinemas around Australia and Britain.

It's hard to imagine those scenes now,



55 years later, when many Australians are actively debating the idea of a republic but in the Australia of 1954 the royals were greeted like rock stars. They were a young, handsome couple, considered modern and stylish. Enormous crowds greeted them everywhere; school children, ex-servicemen and women, sportsmen, miners, trade-union leaders, farmers, lord mayors, everyday

Australian mums and dads and their children — even left wingers and communists. A staggering three quarters of the Australian population (7.5 million people) made an effort to see the Queen, sometimes more than once. The record viewing was 23 times by a devoted fan from Brisbane.

During their two-month stay, the Queen and Prince Phillip wound their

way around the country visiting war memorials, rocket ranges, people in hospitals, indigenous people, town halls, parliaments, open-cut mines, sheep and cattle stations, garden parties, horse races, cricket matches and the Great Barrier Reef.

They were a symbol of national unity and Australia's historic ties to Britain and its fading sense of empire.

Documentary director Trevor Graham says, "*A Royal Romance* is like travelling in Dr Who's Tardis, back to the era of my parents' generation, to revisit their enthusiasm for the Queen and what she meant to that postwar generation of the 1950s. Equally it's an opportunity to look at how Australia and Australians have changed since the first royal tour and to ask what the continuing relationship with the Queen means for us today".

The first Australian documentary on this subject for many years, *A Royal Romance* is history brought to life in a winning blend of nostalgia and analysis, anecdote and charm that captures the changing mood of the nation and retraces the Queen's reign for the last 55 years. Beyond the politics, the brouhaha and rights and wrongs of our current constitutional relationship with Queen Elizabeth, many Australians maintain a soft spot in their hearts for their aging monarch.

If you have a cherished memory to share, Electric Pictures would like to hear from you. Director Trevor Graham is looking for compelling eyewitness anecdotes, snaps and film or video footage to tell this significant story about Australia's relationship with Queen Elizabeth.

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## Brits offer homes to expatriate service personnel

Royal British Legion Industries, which manages the Royal British Legion Village at Aylesford, Kent, in the south of England, has vacancies.

Housing & Welfare Manager Richard Macintyre says, "We are 40 miles from London and have excellent links to the motorways for London or the south coast.

"Royal British Legion Village is set in 60 acres of parkland in the grounds of Preston Hall, a Victorian mansion. We offer housing for former armed-forces personnel, their families and dependants. There are 78 dwellings for family housing, supported accommodation for disabled former armed-forces personnel, assisted-living sheltered housing for the elderly and temporary housing for people wishing to repatriate to the UK on a permanent basis."

**Prince Phillip Lodge** was built in conjunction with the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League to help former armed forces personnel to repatriate to the UK permanently.

Service users can stay up to six months, in which time they will be given assistance to find their own accommodation as well as benefit applications. The Lodge consists of six self-contained two-bedroomed apartments. All are fully furnished with bed linen, kitchen white goods, crockery and cutlery etc. They are tastefully decorated



Mountbatten Pavilion, one of the residential establishments on offer.

throughout and have door entry phone systems for extra security. We have vacancies in the coming months.

**Mountbatten Pavilion** comprises 24 bedrooms (5 ensuite) with a communal dining room, lounge with digital TV and video, for former armed-forces servicemen. Service users can stay up to three years while they receive welfare support with training, employment and getting their lives together before receiving help in finding permanent accommodation. The service is managed by the welfare officer, who also provides full support to the service users along with other RBLI housing. Meals are provided in house and we have a silver award from the Council

for this service. Because of our success in helping people move on, we have vacancies.

**Queen Elizabeth Court** provides assisted living or extra care, sheltered housing. The new complex consists of 40 one- and two-bedroom self-contained flats for ex-armed forces personnel or their dependants who are 65 and over and in receipt of between one and two hours of personal care per day.

This is a new concept for RBLI and offers registered in-house domiciliary-care service, assisted bathrooms, landscaped gardens, communal café and on-site hairdressing salon. Also by appointment, chiropody, aromatherapy and alternative-therapy services are

available. All the flats are decorated to a high standard and have a flush floor shower room. The bedrooms are large enough to take twin or double beds (single in the second bedroom). To inquire about vacancies, contact Queen Elizabeth Court on +44 1622 717463.

**Family Housing** is provided in 78 two-, three- and four-bedroom bungalows and houses in the village for ex-armed forces personnel and their families.

As with all RBLI housing, support by the Welfare Officer is available as part of our welfare support of service users.

**Gavin Astor House** is a 50-bed nursing home providing 24-hour care. This purpose-built two-storey building set in parkland is well decorated and has private rooms with ensuite facilities. Call Gavin Astor House office on +44 1622 791056 for more details.

If any ex-armed service personnel are interested in any of our housing please do not hesitate to contact us for full admission criteria and information.

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