

THE QUALITY ROYAL MAGAZINE

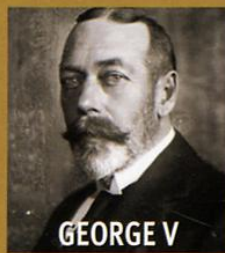
# MAJESTY



## WILLIAM AND KATE 'BRIMMING WITH HAPPINESS'



UNDER ATTACK



GEORGE V



GULF VISITS

THE KING'S  
SPEECH  
THE LAST  
VICTORIAN  
PRINCESS  
AND FINALLY



# THE KING'S SPEECH

The ability of a monarch to speak well in public has always been crucial, says IAN LLOYD. From Queen Elizabeth I addressing her Navy at Tilbury as it prepared to defeat the Spanish Armada to Queen Elizabeth II addressing the United Nations last year, the sovereign is often required to be the voice of the nation

**T**HE ADVENT OF broadcasting in the early 20th century gave the monarchy a potential audience of millions. The BBC's insistence on live transmissions did, however, put an almost unimaginable pressure on the royal family, and particularly on the present Queen's father, George VI.

The King – known as Bertie to his family – had suffered from a crippling stutter since childhood. At the time of his accession in 1936 he was, in the words of *Time* magazine, 'the most famed contemporary stammerer' in the world.

This month a major new film goes on general release in the United Kingdom which will tell the story of the King's affliction and the vital help given to him by Lionel Logue, an Australian speech therapist. In addition, Logue's grandson has co-edited a memoir of the man credited with having helped transform the life of George VI.

Although the royal family has been criticised for brushing unpleasant aspects of life under the carpet, this particular subject has been raised time and again in recent years by the King's descendants. Princess Margaret referred to her father's 'slight stammer' in 1995 during a televised interview to mark the 50th anniversary of VE-Day. In February 2008 the Queen was introduced to a team of speech therapists at a Buckingham Palace reception. Her Majesty told them that her father stammered and asked about the possible causes, wondering whether it might have been related to his being naturally left-handed but being made to use his right hand.

Last year, the Prince of Wales hosted a reception to celebrate the work of Britain's only national stammering centre. Speaking about his grandfather, Charles told his guests: 'His stammer cut him off, I think, in so many ways from his parents and his brothers and sister and drove him into himself, as I suspect so many stammerers will understand. I think above all he experienced that awful fear of feeling different from others.'

Bertie certainly was made to feel different during his



childhood, which, by today's standards, seems incredibly harsh. His father, the future George V, memorably told the Earl of Derby: 'I was afraid of my father, my father was afraid of his mother, and I'm going to make damn sure my children are afraid of me!'

Born Albert Frederick Arthur George on 14 December 1895, Bertie's stammer first manifested itself at the age of eight. The letter 'k' – as in 'king' or the pronunciation of 'queen' – was a particular challenge, and one that was of course not ideal for a royal prince. The stammer disappeared when he was relaxed with friends, and later on with his wife and children, but it returned with a vengeance in group situations, from the classroom to royal receptions. ➤

In 1925 Bertie succeeded his elder brother David, the Prince of Wales, as president of the Empire Exhibition at Wembley. As such he would be expected to speak in front of a crowd of thousands, a worldwide audience of millions, thanks to the BBC, and, even more dauntingly, his father.

'I shall be very frightened,' he wrote to the King, 'as you have never heard me speak. So I hope you will understand that I am bound to be more nervous than I usually am.'

The speech ended in humiliation for the Duke of York. At one point his jaw muscles moved frantically but no sound came out. 'Bertie got through his speech all right, but there were long pauses,' his father noted grimly.

By then, 29-year-old Bertie had consulted nine experts but none had been able to improve the situation. With a major tour of Australia and New Zealand being planned for him and his popular young wife, Elizabeth, some drastic steps were needed.

Step forward Lionel Logue, a self-proclaimed 'common colonial' and 'expert in elocution'. There are differing versions about how the Duke and Logue came into contact; it has been suggested that a royal equerry heard about Logue through a third party. A more intriguing version is that actress Evelyn 'Boo' Laye's singing voice was considerably improved thanks to a breathing technique devised by Logue. The Duke had had a youthful crush on Laye. His wife, the future Queen Mother, would become a lifelong friend of the actress, and it is rumoured to be she who gave the royal couple Logue's telephone number.

Either way, the Duke of York had his first appointment at Logue's office in Harley Street on 19 October 1926. Afterwards the therapist noted: 'when he left at five o'clock you could see that there was hope once more in his heart'. Over the next year Bertie would make 82 visits and spend £197 3s on consultations (around £9,000 at today's rates).

Logue identified faulty breathing as the main problem and devised a series of exercises to help. He would also study the text of Bertie's proposed speeches and replace words that would cause problems, such as those with a hard 'k' or 'g' sound.

The principal speech of the Australasian tour was at the opening of Parliament House in Canberra in May 1927. The Duke acquitted himself well and in a letter to his father wrote: 'Logue's teaching has really done wonders for me. I have so much more confidence in myself now, which I am sure comes from being able to speak properly at last.'

On his return to Britain, Bertie intimated to Logue that this new-found confidence had helped to eradicate another stumbling block, that of his relationship with his father.

'Up here,' he wrote from Balmoral, 'I have been talking a lot with the King and have had

no trouble at all. Also I can make him listen, and I don't have to repeat everything over again.'

So successful was the Duke of York's treatment that from 1932 to 1936 Bertie had only one or two consultations, and these were at Logue's suggestion. What brought the two men back into more regular touch was the Duke's accession to the throne, following the abdication of his elder brother, Edward VIII.

Three days later the Archbishop of Canterbury, in a broadcast to the nation, made an unhelpful reference to the new King's stammer: 'When his people listen to him they will note an occasional and momentary hesitation in his speech. But he has brought it into full control and to those who hear it need cause no sort of embarrassment, for it causes none to him who speaks.'



**CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: Australian actor Geoffrey Rush plays the part of Lionel Logue**

**A portrait of the real Lionel Logue in his office at 146 Harley Street in London's West End**

**In a scene from the film the Duchess of York is at her husband's side as he makes a speech**

**Evelyn Laye, with whom the then Prince Albert was said to be 'rather more than a little in love'**



STUDIO CITY



PRIVATE COLLECTION

What did cause embarrassment were Archbishop Lang's crass attempts to introduce Bertie to the nation and the ensuing whispering campaign about the King's fitness to rule. This grew in intensity in February 1937 when it was announced that the Coronation Durbar, scheduled to take place in Delhi later in the year, had been postponed. It never did take place. In April, Logue was summoned to Buckingham Palace to help George VI prepare for his Coronation Oath in Westminster Abbey as well as a live broadcast to the Empire later that same day. He took the opportunity to criticise Lang's unfortunate remarks. 'Are you gunning for him too?' laughed the King. 'You ought to hear what my mother says about him.'

The rehearsals were a mixed success. At one, just six days before the coronation, things went badly wrong and Bertie became almost hysterical. As always Queen Elizabeth was on hand and managed to calm him down. 'He always speaks well in front of the Queen,' Logue noted in his journal. For this and subsequent broadcasts, Logue would remain in the room with the King, who spoke standing up to aid his breathing. The Queen would always wish her husband good luck before moving to an adjacent room. When the ordeal was over, she was the first to return and congratulate him.

The verdict of the press after the coronation broadcast was universally supportive. 'Slow, deliberate and clear, his voice betrayed no sign of fatigue,' commented the *Daily Telegraph*. The *Daily Express* compared his voice favourably with that of his father. ➤

George VI makes one of his first broadcasts as King in 1937



LOGUE FAMILY ARCHIVE

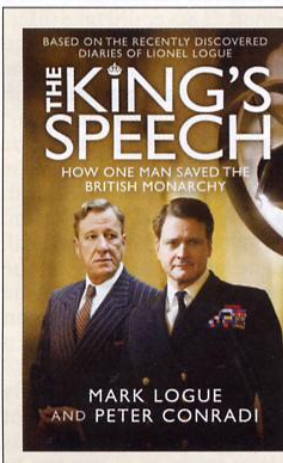
Lionel Logue returned to help King George VI with his speeches for the State Opening of Parliament and his Christmas broadcast. This pattern would continue for the next six years, with Logue foregoing Christmas lunch with his family but instead having the privilege of sharing the royal table – even if rationing meant boar’s head and prunes on the plate rather than the usual turkey and trimmings.

Shortly before Christmas 1944 the King contacted Logue to say he felt confident enough to cope with his annual broadcast without the need for the therapist to be present. Instead the Queen and Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret would sit with him on this occasion, suggesting that the terror of broadcasting still bothered Bertie to some extent.

Logue remained in touch with George VI, exchanging letters and gifts for the rest of the monarch’s life. Bertie died at the age of 56 in February 1952; the man who helped him so much died the following year.

Among the possessions found after Logue’s death was a letter from the Queen Mother thanking him for all his hard work. ‘I think that I know perhaps better than anyone just how much you helped the King, not only with his speech, but through that his whole life & outlook on life,’ she wrote. ‘I shall always be deeply grateful to you for all you did for him.’

*‘The King’s Speech’ will be released in cinemas throughout the United Kingdom on 7 January.*



MAJESTY READER OFFER

THE KING'S SPEECH

An intimate portrait of the British monarchy at a time of its greatest crisis, as seen through the eyes of therapist Lionel Logue, an Australian commoner who was proud to serve – and save – his King. Softback.

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