

The timetable for the visit was planned to the minute and coordinated with what was happening on stage. This was to enable maximum involvement and exposure for all those taking part and we knew exactly where anyone would be at a given time to meet the HRH.

HRH was due at 10.30am and at 10.10am we were told to be ready for his imminent arrival as he was running early. All very well but this would destroy our well planned and timed itinerary – no one would be in the right place at the right time. A quick word and somehow he was delayed en route arriving only a few minutes early to a magnificent trumpet fanfare by ex Guards musician, Graham Wright. The children from St Mary's were out front, each with a Union flag and immediately he disembarked and despite the horrible weather HRH went over to say hello to the children.

The formalities of the first presentation line up quickly over, I was delighted to discover that HRH had read some of the literature we had provided and was fully aware of our aims and achievements with Barn 2000. He was a good listener and certainly put me at ease as I walked through introducing him to the various groups assembled



throughout the theatre. Wherever HRH went he was determined to speak with as many people as possible and never seemed hurried or flustered despite his short and critical timetable. He enjoyed meeting the dancing girls and children from Caterham Prep in the dressing room and seemed really flattered to be asked to operate our new wheelchair lift complete with wheelchair and incumbent, Jo Starmer, for the very first time.

THE NEW WHEELCHAIR LIFT

Following the tour of the accommodation he returned to the bar to meet more guests and sign a photograph of himself and the visitor's book of the day.



A few minutes in the auditorium watching the last of the entertainment and following my short welcome speech I was delighted to ask HRH to join me on stage for the official unveiling of the oak plaque commemorating his visit and the opening of Barn 2000.



THE UNVEILING

HRH thanked us for the warm welcome and paid tribute to all those who had played a part, not just in Barn 2000 but in the continuing prosperity and success of the Barn generally for so many years. Following the unveiling Terry Rolph, president of the FOBs presented HRH with a framed FOBs membership badge and conferred upon him Honorary Life Membership of the FOBs. A replica of this framed badge now hangs in the bar together with the plaque and the signed photograph of HRH.

As I walked with HRH through the auditorium to the Foyer he again said how much he had enjoyed the visit and meeting so many dedicated enthusiasts. The weather had worsened but HRH was undaunted and made straight for the children lining the entrance with their flags. Jack Chilcott from St Mary's School presented HRH with a floral tribute, made by Brenda Tuckfield, for the Duchess and like a fairy prince he was suddenly gone, whisked away to another visit.

For many Barn 2000 supporters and sponsors the day was a once in a lifetime event and the champagne reception that followed was thoroughly enjoyed too.

The Royal Visit was a culmination of many years of hard work and particular thanks must go to all those who helped organise the day in any way whatsoever. There were many more involved than can be listed here but they all "did their bit" to ensure that the day went smoothly.

I have had the pleasure of managing Barn 2000 from inception to completion, including the Royal Visit and it has been a totally worthwhile experience shared with so many who have supported in many different ways since those heady days of the launch in 1997.

Thank you to you all, and long may the Barn endure.

Bruce Reed