

Australia and the Monarchy

David Hill

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Australia and the British monarchy have always made for an odd couple: the young, rebellious, egalitarian nation wed to an ancient symbol of power and social inequality. Even today, an invitation to meet a member of the royal family remains a pinnacle of social achievement. What is the magic the royals hold over Australians?

Since Captain James Cook first claimed New South Wales for King George III in 1770, the pulse of the nation can be measured by the strength of its attachment to an aristocratic bloodline on the other side of the world. Queen Victoria was more revered in Australia the longer she reigned, even though she'd never seen the place and showed little interest in it. When her son Prince Alfred visited in 1867, on the first royal tour the country had seen, he was received rapturously, and nearly assassinated. In 1954 Australia was gripped by royal fever when newly crowned Queen Elizabeth II landed on its shores for the first time; the republican movement grew in the late twentieth century alongside Australians' adoration for Princess Diana; and now, with the popularity of William, Kate, George and Charlotte, the monarchy looks set to enter the hearts and minds of a new generation of Australians.

As one of our most popular writers of Australian history, David Hill guides us with panache through this most peculiar state of affairs.



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