

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP  
LONDON

15 March 1994

Sir

**VISIT OF HM THE QUEEN AND HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH TO  
THE CAYMAN ISLANDS**

1. I have the honour to report that Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh paid a most successful visit to the Cayman Islands from 26-27 February 1994.

2. The visit came eleven years almost to the day since their first visit to the territory. That visit is still remembered by the Cayman Islanders and this second visit will undoubtedly remain in their memories for as long. It was a most happy occasion; the programme went like clockwork and it was clear that both The Queen and The Duke enjoyed visiting one of the remaining Dependent Territories where everything works and where they were truly welcome.

3. I estimate that there were more than 3000 people gathered on the main street overlooking George Town harbour to welcome the Royal couple when they landed by barge from the Royal Yacht Britannia which had sailed into view shortly after 8 a.m. on Saturday 26 February escorted by the frigate HMS Lancaster. After the usual formalities and presentations the motorcade proceeded to the Legislative Assembly, The Queen and The Duke riding in the Rolls Royce which was purchased by the Cayman Islands Government for this occasion subsequently to become the Governor's official car. After inspecting a Guard of Honour drawn up by the Royal Cayman Islands Police, the Royal Party entered the Assembly where Her Majesty read the Speech from the Throne. All members of the Legislative Assembly and their spouses were presented in the Speaker's Room and we then proceeded to what I consider to be the highlight of the visit: a public investiture on the steps of the Assembly when Cayman's first knight, Sir Vassel Johnson, Kt., CBE, was formally dubbed in front of a large crowd. When he turned after having spoken a few words with The Queen he bowed to the crowd and a roar of approval went up. His honour was Cayman's honour. It was a moving moment. Thirteen men and women received their honours in front of their peers on this memorable occasion

4. There followed the first of several walkabouts when Her Majesty and The Duke were able to talk to ordinary people with minimum security. Here and everywhere else during the visit the crowds behaved impeccably and the Queen clearly enjoyed meeting the people who made no secret of the fact that they adored her. From the main square the motorcade proceeded to the National Museum to view an exhibition commemorating the "Wreck of the Ten Sails", Cayman's most dramatic wreck when nine British merchant ships, one of them the Britannia, and an escorting frigate, HMS Convert, went aground on the reef off the east end of the island exactly 200 years ago. It was here that The Duke is reported to have remarked that "most Caymanians are descended from pirates" though neither I nor anyone I have spoken to actually heard him say it. Thence to Government House where 700 guests were waiting on the lawns for an official reception; this was followed by luncheon for 40 leaders of Cayman's financial industry and which allowed Her Majesty and His Royal Highness to hear at first hand about the tremendous developments which have taken place, particularly in the eleven years since their last visit.

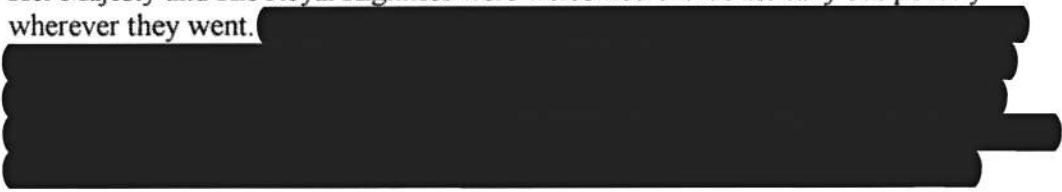
5. In the afternoon the Royal Party went to West Bay where the Queen opened the Ed Bush Sports Centre which boasts a grandstand and facilities of a standard acceptable to the international football authorities so that Cayman can now host international football matches. In a moving speech the Minister for Community Development, Culture, Youth and Sports, the Hon McKeeva Bush, referred to Cayman's loyalty to and love for The Queen which words were greeted by a rousing cheer from the 2000 people present. And back to Britannia along streets lined by waving people. That evening the band of the Royal Marines beat retreat in the main square before a crowd of over 2000 people, followed by a fireworks display sponsored by local traders and a banquet for 50 guests on board the yacht; a further 200 people were invited on board for a reception on deck following the banquet. These two events on board Britannia plus the three at Government House meant that over 1000 people were entertained at functions either given or attended by Her Majesty.

6. The second day's programme began with a service at the Elmslie Memorial Church, a short walk from the quayside which was again lined by a large crowd to welcome the Royal couple when they stepped ashore. His Royal Highness read the lesson and immediately after the service the motorcade set off on a tour of the island which enabled Her Majesty to have a walk-about in each major township. First stop was the formal opening by Her Majesty of the Queen Elizabeth II National Botanic Park, a fine example of eco-tourism and which has been three years in the planning. The opening of the park demonstrated to The Queen and The Duke that Cayman has far more to offer than the clear seas and fine beaches for which it is world famous. In his welcoming speech the Minister of Tourism, Environment and Planning, the Hon Thomas Jefferson, emphasised Cayman's commitment to preserve the environment, both marine and terrestrial, and outlined the efforts which were being made in this respect. The party divided at this point and His Royal Highness toured the Park, visiting the iguana breeding project which has been funded by the Worldwide Fund for Nature to replenish stocks of the endangered Grand Cayman Rock Iguana of which less than 200 remain in the wild. The Duke then returned to George Town to meet those involved with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and to present gold awards to six young people. While en route he stopped briefly at a bird sanctuary which I have established

with funds raised by my Governor's Fund for Nature and which the National Trust has honoured me by naming "The Governor Michael Gore Bird Sanctuary". Her Majesty continued her tour of the island stopping to meet the people of North Side, East End (where she also viewed the site of the Wreck of the Ten Sails, now a National Historic Park) and Bodden Town. A farewell lunch at Government House attended by those most directly involved with the visit and as the Royal Party set off for the final parade and handshakes the heavens opened so the departure was a wet and hurried affair without the usual formalities.

7. The Hon Mark Lennox-Boyd, who accompanied The Queen as Minister-in-Attendance, has reported to you, Sir, on the "rapturous welcome that was extended to Her Majesty". He also commented that the visit made one conscious of a wider consideration: "There is no-one in any position of authority who wants independence. They have managed their economy and other affairs very successfully indeed, and they believe that their future and continuing success will be best secured by remaining a dependent territory. This attitude will not change in the foreseeable future." I fully concur with these views. In the margins of the visit Mr Lennox-Boyd also held useful meetings with Executive Council, during which he discussed a wide range of subjects of mutual interest, and also visited the Turtle Farm and gained a better understanding of Cayman's position under CITES.

8. I had expected the older people to rejoice in the visit but for the younger people to be somewhat indifferent. This was not the case. Everyone was clearly delighted that their Queen had decided to revisit the Islands; no-one raised any contentious issues and Her Majesty and His Royal Highness were welcomed enthusiastically but politely wherever they went.



9. The efforts which the Cayman Islands Civil Service, the Royal Cayman Islands Police and the politicians, not to mention the hundreds of ordinary people, put into ensuring the success of the visit was commendable. I believe I can be forgiven for blowing Cayman's trumpet when I addressed the people shortly after Britannia sailed. I said: "The people of the Cayman Islands have joined together over the past several months to ensure that the welcome given to The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh would be a true Caymanian welcome. It proved to be just this. A great deal of effort went into the preparations for the visit. Caymanians were determined to show that though the population of the Islands is small, we are equal to any nation in welcoming our sovereign. Indeed now that The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh have departed and all the arrangements went like clockwork we can, I believe, be forgiven for thinking that we do it rather better than most... The obvious signs of the people's loyalty to The Queen and our love for perhaps the most remarkable lady of our time, was evident to all. We will remember the warmth of her smile, her genuine interest in the people with whom she had a chance to speak. And all against a background of minimum security on this beautiful island so that both Her Majesty and His Royal Highness were able to mingle freely with the people."

10. Coverage in the local press was ecstatic; in the UK and foreign press minimal. Sadly the old pressman's edict "good news is no news" remains true. The only international coverage focussed on the Duke of Edinburgh's reported remark about Caymanians being descended from pirates. But this caused no offence locally because, just as Australians prefer to be descended from convicts rather than warders, Caymanians are not averse to being labelled as descendants of pirates. And I often pull their legs that the Wreck of the Ten Sails came about as a result of Caymanians having learnt from their Cornish forefathers! Cayman was very much a "welcome home, you are amongst friends" visit and did not have the same political significance as the visits to Guyana, Belize and Jamaica, between which Cayman was sandwiched and on which the press focussed rather more. It is therefore sad to conclude that Cayman will derive little in the way of publicity from this visit within the UK and Europe at a time when we are seeking to stimulate the economy through foreign investment.

11. Cayman was honoured by two CVO's, which were awarded to the Chief Secretary and myself, and two MVO's, to my Staff Officer and the Senior Information Officer, and a generous allocation of gifts and signed photographs, more than might be expected for a community of 30,000. This was, I believe because it was obvious from the time the recce team visited from Buckingham Palace last November that the visit would be a resounding success. I congratulate my staff and the Caymanian people for making it so.

12. I attach a copy of the programme for the visit.

13. I am copying this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Georgetown, Belmopan, Kingston, Nassau, Washington, Head of DTRS Bridgetown and to Governors in Hamilton, Anguilla, Tortola, Grand Turk and Montserrat.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MEJ Gore', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

M E J Gore