

*King Henry the Fifth, King Henry the Fourth IV Parts I and 2, the three parts of King Henry the Sixth, King Richard the Second, King Richard the Third, King John, King Lear...* it is obvious that Shakespeare was fascinated by royalty. The great thing is that his monarchs, who range from saintly to villainous, from inadequate to heroic are understandable, fallible human beings.

Shakespeare 's company performed before Queen Elizabeth three or four times a year and at least three times as often for King James. Within days of arriving from Scotland the King granted them a royal charter, enabling them to be renamed "The King's Men". He appointed them Grooms of the Chamber, resplendent in red livery when on duty at Court.

When I acted the part of Macbeth at school (Gordonstoun is about ten miles from the "blasted heath" on which Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches), I did not realize , as I do now, that King James was fascinated by witchcraft and claimed descent from Banquo. Shakespeare was not above a bit of flattery where royalty was concerned.

It seems certain that Shakespeare and his King must have known each other well.