

ISLE OF MAN

Pretender to the Throne

Acting as a stand-in for the Queen isn't the most lucrative job in the world, but it does have its perks

The Swan tends to get pretty jammed during the Isle of Man's annual TT motorcycle race, and this year is no exception. The place is awash in leather jackets, tatty Ts and half-slurped pints of lager. Most people are glued to the action on TV, but a few have their eye on a white-haired lady in the corner, who is sipping a small whiskey and resembles the Queen of England.

Ella Slack, 71, is known affectionately on the island as "Her Majesty," mostly because she has spent much of the last 25 years pretending to be Elizabeth II. "Prior to big events featuring Her Majesty, run-throughs determine the best camera angles and security arrangements," Slack says of the elaborate dress rehearsals she does for the BBC, in which she walks the same routes the Queen will walk, delivers the same speeches and waves at imaginary crowds.



Slack, who has similar physical dimensions to the British monarch (if not the same features), started playing Elizabeth when she was head of the BBC's sports and events division in the late 1980s. "I was the right age and size," she says, "so I gave myself the job."

While Slack is no longer employed by the BBC, she still keeps fairly

busy—she was on hand for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the Olympics opening ceremony in 2012. She doesn't get paid for the work, and in the years she's been doing it she hasn't met her alter ego, but the job does have its benefits. "I'm not treated like a queen," she says, "but I do get a free cup of tea now and then."

—JOHN SCOTT LEWINSKI

BEIJING

Cutting Remarks

China's answer to Gordon Ramsay whips a class of would-be chefs into shape

Eight fretful Westerners stand around a long table in a tree-shaded Beijing courtyard, struggling with their dumplings. The students are here to learn cooking techniques from Chunyi Zhou, the petite 42-year-old founder of Hutong Cuisine, which CNN has called one of the world's great cooking schools.

Zhou, who hails from a long line of chefs, may lack the global recognition of foodie darling Ching-He Huang, but she commands plenty of respect in China's culinary circles, along with a



little trepidation among her students. "Hold the knife like a crab," she says to a Canadian woman named Viki, frowning at the fragments of scallion and ginger on her board. "Thinner!" she yells at a student rolling dough. "We're making dumplings, not a pie!"

Finally, with the fillings chopped and the casings rolled out according to Zhou's specifications, the dumplings are ready for boiling. After eight minutes, they are plated, and Zhou moves slowly along the line, sampling each one with vinegar and chili dipping sauce. "Hao chi!" she says at one point—"Delicious!"—eliciting broad smiles from the would-be chefs. And then, in a heartbeat, things go from sweet to sour. "Call that minced?" the chef barks at an American man, causing him to rock back on his heels. "You should go back to school and learn English!"

—MARK ANDREWS