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The Times

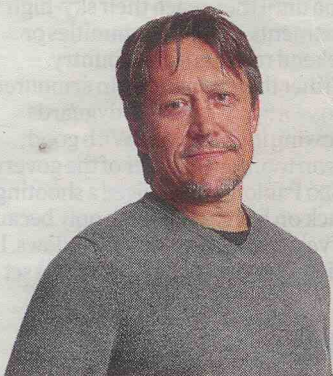
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# The sort of hands-on, helicopter parenting that can't be criticised

## Robert Crampton



Still ten weeks or so out from the big day, and already I'm struggling to contain my excitement over the impending royal birth. The papers are filling up nicely with all manner of rumour, half-truths, flannel, maybes, possibilities and, no doubt, outright lies. The amount of coverage is going only one way from here on in. Feverish, I believe, is the word.

Before things get really fraught, I thought it may be a useful service to readers to take stock of speculation so far. Good idea? Read on.

Well, the breaking news over the weekend is that, as befits a military man schooled in the adage that prior planning and preparation prevents



FAYE STORER / AP

piss-poor performance, Prince William is reading *Commando Dad: Basic Training*, by Neil Sinclair, a former Royal Engineer commando. I rather like the sound of Mr Sinclair and his book. Anyone who describes binning a full nappy as bomb disposal has to be a decent bloke.

Among "royal watchers" — royal watchers are people paid by the media to hold pompous opinions about the Royal Family, or spread gossip about the Royal Family, we don't much mind either way — the consensus is that William reading *Commando Dad* is a good thing. Reading the manual — or indeed any book on childcare, the genre being, begging Mr Sinclair's pardon, the dullest on the shelves, even worse than mind-body-spirit — William is demonstrating his wish to be a "hands-on dad". Royal watchers are very keen on hands-on dads.

The hands-on-ness of William's future paternal style is thought to be even more guaranteed than it was, now that we know his Sea King duties on Anglesey will end with the arrival of his first-born. He will not, it is assumed, stay on Anglesey. He may not stay in the RAF. Dad-wise, the second-in-line's hands, thus freed from his chopper, will be very much free to be on.

William's wife, meanwhile, is exercising the time-honoured prerogative of a new mother-to-be by engaging in a shopping frenzy, aided and abetted by her mother, Carole. My sense, reading the press on Carole Middleton, is of a woman whom many

snob commentators simply long to eviscerate, but who inconveniently fails to give them an excuse by doing anything they can call common.

She seems all right to me, Carole. Kate is said to have said she is moving back to her mum's place in Bucklebury for the birth and for at least six weeks afterwards. After that length of stretch with the in-laws, William will either have become doubly fond of his mother-in-law ... or he won't have.

Kate and Carole have bought something called a Moses basket for almost three hundred quid. If I were William, I'd be taking all the overtime going while still in honest employ. And the couple's preferred buggy — obviously, by couple I mean Kate and her mum, not Kate and William — could come in at about £1,000. The colour of what I read is a "statement pushchair" is (possibly) light blue. This indicates the baby is a boy.

Or maybe not. While receiving a cuddly toy from a woman in Grimsby recently, Kate was quoted as saying, "Thank you, I'll take that for my d..." before stopping herself. Conclusive? Hardly. Could be she meant she was going to give the toy to her doorman. Or dustman. Or dermatologist. Those possibilities have not stopped a flood of new bets on Alexandra as the new arrival's name.

Large sums are being wagered. It strikes me that William, suitably disguised, should get himself to Ladbrokes for some easy cash. The way she's spending, he's going to need it.