

No slowing Mrs Thatcher

By Nicholas Wood
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After a week in which the long arm of human frailty had briefly brushed her shoulder, Mrs Margaret Thatcher heads for a weekend at Chequers today with her colleagues reflecting on the futility of even suggesting she might slow down.

At the age of 62 and within a few weeks of becoming the longest serving Prime Minister this century, she still subjects herself to a gruelling 14-hour daily schedule.

But on Tuesday night at a reception at which the Queen was host the superwoman mask slipped a fraction. She complained of feeling dizzy, and left 20 minutes early. The following day she was back to the rudest of good health.

It was, of course, just a slight stumble. Yet there are deeper factors at work. With Mrs Thatcher apparently determined to seek a fourth election victory in the early 1990s, frustrated would-be successors and rivals scrutinize her health bulletins with a solicitude that does not always do them credit.

Yesterday, at Westminster there was speculation about

A routine 16½-hour day

Tuesday, November 24, 1987

6.am: Wakes to BBC Radio 4. Listens to news and *Today*.

7.30am: Prepares cooked breakfast for Mr Denis Thatcher, limits herself to orange juice, black coffee and vitamin C tablet. Leafs through newspapers.

8.30am: Studies digest of press cuttings.

9am: Downstairs to her office for meetings with staff, advisers and Cabinet colleagues. Mr John Moore taken ill there at about 10.30am.

1pm: Light lunch at desk while studying papers for Commons questions.

2.40pm: Arrives at Commons and goes to her study.

3pm: Arrives on government front bench.

3.15pm: Plunged into 15 minutes of heated questions concentrating on the Birmingham hole-in-the-heart baby and nurses' pay.

3.30pm: Holds meetings with backbench Conservative MPs.
6pm: Arrives at Buckingham Palace for a 90-minute audience with the Queen — slightly shorter than usual.

8.15pm: Back at Downing Street for supper, then changes for the reception.

9.30pm: Arrives at Palace.

10.30pm: Feels unwell. Returns to Downing Street 20 minutes earlier than planned. Has, for her, an early night.

what had so temporarily laid her low. Some looked to her punishing daily schedules, others, closer to her, pointed to the events of previous days.

On Thursday, she visited the scene of the King's Cross fire and on Sunday she was in Enniskillen, standing at the town's cenotaph for half an hour in a freezing wind and rain to mourn the dead of two world wars and the 11 slain by

the IRA a fortnight earlier. Later that day she was holding talks with M Jacques Chirac, the French prime minister.

For Mrs Thatcher, last Tuesday was a day much like any other, beginning at 6am with the BBC Radio 4 programme *Today* and expected to end past midnight with a Scotch and the last of the Red Boxes.

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