

REFLECTIONS AND MEMORIES OF HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II



R.I.P
QUEEN ELIZABETH II
1926 - 2022

Michael Spriggs starts off the memories and reflections on the life of the Queen, by offering us his own...

“When I was asked to venture some reflections on our late Queen, it struck me that amid all the enormous outpourings of grief and affection, so much of her life had been analysed in great detail that I could hardly add any new insights. So, I decided to offer instead my personal take on it all.

It was during a maths lesson at my Prep School in February 1952 when Miss Thomas, Art Mistress came into the classroom in tears to tell us that the death of King George VI had just been announced. As an eight-year-old I didn't really take it all in. I was aware of the late King only from postage stamps and coins.

Then, that June, my father having proudly bought the first television in our village we all crowded round the tiny screen in a darkened drawing room to watch the coronation of HM QE2. It all seemed so incredibly glamorous and remote from my otherwise pretty dreary existence in rural Lincolnshire in the early 1950s – remember, we still had rationing in England until 1954!

What followed was the most extraordinary period of modern times. Queen Elizabeth went from being that shy Princess who had the throne thrust upon her at an impossibly young age and at a time of enormous social and political change to become the Monarch who defined the role of the modern Monarchy. Apart from her remarkable and unswerving dedication to her role, never wavering from her absolute sense of duty or bowing to changing social and political mores, she simply devoted her life to serving her people. Among all the tributes, what emerges for me above all was the recognition of her remarkable personal qualities. She had a particular gift for putting people at their ease. In the course of her 70-year reign she visited over one hundred countries, every Commonwealth state, met every political leader ...but was just as happy chatting to that Lollipop Lady on whom she had just conferred an MBE. Her deep, unshakeable Christian faith was of immense importance and comfort to her. Then her other very human qualities: her sense of humour; her love of horses and the countryside; her utter devotion to her family, no matter what.

Going back to that February morning at Prep School: during the 70 years that followed, since then I knew nothing but the continuing presence and strength of HM The Queen. And throughout all the trials and tribulations of those times, she remained steadfast to her values. She devoted her life to one of service and stuck to her principles with utter devotion. I still cannot believe she is no longer with us. For me, she represented everything that is best about Britain: her presence always gave me the reassuring feeling that, with her at the helm, all would be well in England.

We shall not see her like again. What a privilege to have had such a wonderful Monarch as a guiding light in our lives during her 70-year reign. God bless Her Majesty”.

Michael Spriggs



Joyce writes

“I am old enough to remember the Queen's Coronation and so I am attaching a photo of myself and the little boy next door. We are dressed up as the Queen and Prince Phillip to go to school. We were given a jar of sweets each”

Joyce Bosworth 😊😊

“Although, as a youngster, I had been in the Mall to watch and cheer as the coaches went by on various state occasions, including the Royal wedding, the only time I actually met the Queen was at Westminster Abbey for the Maundy service a few years ago now. She could only spend a little 'personal' time with each of us, just a very friendly smile, a handshake and a few words of greeting and congratulations as she handed us the 'money', but for some, it was obvious she had been 'doing her homework' as she added a question or a couple of more words about what had actually been done to merit the award. The overall impression was one of warmth and affection, as if we truly 'existed' for her.” *Mary Wood*

“My own connection with the monarchy was much the same as anyone else during the early 1940s in Rhodesia. Southern Rhodesia was then part of the Commonwealth. After all my father had been posted to Rhodesia during WW2 to serve in the Royal Airforce. He served King and country with many of his countrymen who were also posted overseas. We stood to sing the national anthem at all and every public gathering.

We sang "God Save The King" during School Assembly at Thomas Bains School in Bulawayo during the late 1940s, until King George died. It was during this time that the children of Rhodesia were encouraged to contribute pocket money towards a diamond brooch for Princess Elizabeth's 21st Birthday, in the shape of our national flower, the Flame Lily. Of course, my sister and I made our contribution.” *Trish Ainsworth*



My daughter, Jay Britton, and I queued up for almost seven hours to pay our respects to the Queen. My late sister Carol and I did the same when the Queen mother died. It was worth every moment and we're so glad to have those memories. Jay is an opera singer and was asked to sing 'God save the King' on 14th September at Millwall football stadium, it was televised on Sky Sports. Another proud memory! *Elaine Britton*

After more than twelve hours sleeping on the kerbside of Trafalgar Square on the day of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, our reward was a first-class view of the fabulous, gilded coronation coach drawn by eight perfectly-matched horses, and only a few yards from us, the shadowy form of a seated occupant executing the familiar wave. So, we did see the queen!

This, however, was not my only memory of that occasion. Earlier that chilly dawn, wakening bleary-eyed from a short snooze, I recall the babble of the excited crowd being broken for a few brief seconds before it exploded into thunderous applause. The message of the newspaper boys became clear « Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing conquer Everest » *Anne Fauquet*

"I was lucky enough to meet Her Majesty in the Officers Mess, Combermere Barracks, Windsor, in the late 1970s. I can't remember the year exactly but sometime after Mountbatten was murdered in August 1979. Perhaps 1980. I was Paymaster to the non-ceremonial part of the Life Guards - the fighting troops armed with scorpion recce vehicles- and the Regiment was due to swap Barracks with the Blues and Royals in Detmold, Germany. This happened every 2-3 years.

Just before the visit, our Commanding Officer briefed us on hand shaking etc., and added that if he introduced you to HM by a name other than your own - say *Snodgrass for example* - then you were Snodgrass for the day.

Strangely, he managed to remember my name is Smith...*I wonder how*. It might have been interesting to be a Snodgrass for the day. After the introductions, we assembled on the lawn outside and had our photos taken with her. Foolishly I forgot to order up a copy of the Photo.☹

I tried the Windsor photographers some years ago to see if they might have a copy but to no avail. Perhaps I'll try the Regimental Museum. I keep forgetting how long ago it all happened. I also had lunch with Lord Mountbatten a year to the day before he was murdered...☹

Rumour had it that after visiting the Mess, Her Majesty went to British Home Stores in Downtown Windsor, to do some shopping..." ☺ *Peter Smith*

My father was the Queens guard on HM's Royal train. He met lots of royals and was so proud. I know I have a picture of him standing beside the train, but it's in a box somewhere up in the loft.

Below are pictures of my mother when she met Prince Charles and Princess Diana. They opened the new day centre in Lambeth, where mum lived and spent time.

Prince Charles (*now the King*) is speaking to Mum, who's sitting down as she suffered with crippling rheumatoid arthritis.

Dianna showed great interest in her crochet. They were so kind and mum felt very honoured. *Jackie Fowler*



I remember the Coronation. We had a street party, well actually it was in the square near Trinity Church where we lived in down-town Rotherhithe – *see very old pic below*. I can see my sister and brother and my parents, but not myself - *I must be there somewhere!* I was about eight, and the youngest of three; our childhood was built around the church, the school, and our wonderful neighbours. It was such a happy day. Everyone's mum made something for the table. My mum was the school cook and she made lots of cakes all decorated with red, white and blue icing. *They didn't last long...*

I remember fish paste sandwiches and sausage rolls and jelly and custard in those little wax dishes. I'm not sure where I watched the ceremony, but I do recall how beautiful she was; and the gold coronation coach with black horses - I saved up all my pennies to buy a toy replica of it from Grinny's shop in Silver Walk. I vaguely remember it costing seven shillings and sixpence. At Redriff school, all the children got something with the Queen on it. There were mugs, pens and pencils and tins of sweets. Thank you, ma'am, God bless you for all those happy memories. *Marilyn Catchpole Dossat*



It was in 1948 when I was ten and my father was the Director of the Royal Naval Staff College in Greenwich, that a newly married Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten was doing the Staff College course; and with his wife Princess Elizabeth, they were invited to lunch at our house in the College. Before lunch I was introduced to them and allowed to hand round small eats to the assembled company; and then allowed back when coffee was served. When the time came to go it was planned that the couple should make an informal visit to the National Maritime Museum, which was just across the road from the College, and my frequent haunt, because I wanted to join the Navy too.

As they were saying goodbye, the Queen asked me if I liked the museum and I told her I loved it!

"Ah" she said, "the last time I was there; was when I was ten, I was with my father (King George VI) in 1936 when he opened it. You had better come along with me and show me all the things you like." So aged ten I accompanied them across the road and for the next hour and a half walked round with them, gushing about the exhibits, much to the displeasure of the then Museum Director, a Mr Carr. We still have the visitors book with the signatures of Elizabeth R and Phillip, written in it. Even at twenty-two she was such a very Gracious Lady. *Hugh Hutton*

The Queen's Coronation Day

Dad and Mum bought a 7-inch screen PYE television, we watched the build up to the day but not on the day. We were invited to watch on a big screen at Silverlands, a large house nearby.

Dad had enough petrol to drive towards London early that afternoon. Sad to say it was easy to park south of the river on the bomb sites. We took the tube as close as possible to Buckingham Palace. I was with Dad, my sister with Mum. We walked through the park to the end of The Mall. I remember a wooden fence which we were against. Mum was being pushed forward; Dad couldn't move. He tried to lift me up but he had a dodgy arm from a road accident. I was hoisted up onto the shoulders of a member of the 'All Blacks' Rugby team who were over in England. The crowd were calling out, "We want the Queen". The balcony doors opened; the Queen came out with Prince Philip along with the other members of the Royal Family. The cheer went up. I had a grandstand view. Since then, I've always had a soft spot for the 'All Blacks' Rugby team.

We returned home to a pig roast on the farmer's field at Chertsey (Surrey) and were given our Coronation Mugs by the Leader of the Council.

A full day... we slept well! *Pauline Cecchin*



Flowers laid in Green Park, London. © Gill Field