

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

PRINCE PHILIP was a third cousin of Her Majesty The Queen, and this close family connection meant that they had met on several occasions in the years prior to their engagement. Their first significant meeting took place in July 1939 at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, where the Prince was a special cadet. King George VI was undertaking an inspection, accompanied by Queen Elizabeth and their two daughters, Princess Elizabeth, aged 13, and her sister Princess Margaret, aged nine. Prince Philip hosted the young Princesses and joined the royal party for tea on board the Royal Yacht *Victoria and Albert*.

The cousins kept in touch and in 1943 the Prince spent Christmas with the Royal Family at Windsor Castle. He attended the annual pantomime, *Aladdin*, in which Princess Elizabeth took the title role. Prince Philip also joined in the family celebrations, including charades and dancing after dinner on Boxing Day.



Prince Philip showing the 13-year-old Princess Elizabeth around the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, in 1939

The Prince's presence at Windsor over Christmas was reported in the press, fuelling rumours about a romance between himself and Princess Elizabeth. Soon afterwards, Prince Philip's cousin, King George II of Greece, asked King George VI if the Prince might be considered as a suitor for his daughter. Initially the request was put on hold as Princess Elizabeth was deemed too young. From 1946 onwards Prince Philip was a frequent visitor to Buckingham Palace and during



Prince Philip's Coronation robes were made of red silk velvet and black-and-white ermine

in London to take part in the Coronation procession. Several of these trips were undertaken by helicopter, a new mode of transport for the Royal Family.

Prince Philip was the first to pay homage to the newly crowned monarch during the Coronation Service. He wore naval uniform under his Coronation robes. Following the crowning, the Prince approached Her Majesty, knelt before her while his Page assisted with the long robe, and pledged his allegiance to The Queen with the words:

I Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, do become your liege man of life and limb, and of earthly worship, and faith and truth I will bear unto you, to live and die against all manner of folks. So help me God.

He then rose and kissed her left cheek. It was this moment that Terence Cuneo depicted in his official painting of the Coronation.

The Archbishop of Canterbury offered a prayer for Prince Philip:

multiply thy blessings upon this thy servant PHILIP who with all humble devotion offers himself for thy service in the dignity to which thou hast called him. Defend him from all dangers, ghostly and bodily; make him a great example of virtue and godliness, and a blessing to The Queen and to her Peoples.

The artist Terence Cuneo based this painting of the Coronation on sketches he made from his seat high above the choir in Westminster Abbey, capturing the moment when Prince Philip paid homage to The Queen



Windsor Castle Restoration

On 14 November 1992 a fire started by an electric light too close to a curtain in the private chapel at Windsor Castle burned through the north-east corner of the State and Semi-State Apartments. Royal Household staff and contractors working at the Castle escaped with minor injuries. A small number of works of art, too large to be removed, were lost, along with almost all the interiors of several State Rooms, including St George's Hall, and some service areas.

In early December Prince Philip convened and chaired the Restoration Committee to oversee the reinstatement of the building while the structure was drying out following the fire service's dousing of the flames. The Prince expressed his support for a full restoration of the nine affected State Rooms, rather than a redesign, based on the fact that the paintings and works of art almost entirely survived and their previous placement was well recorded. Most of the movable works of art had been removed from the Castle prior to the rewiring project during which the accident had occurred. The chapel had been used regularly for private services, christenings and weddings, but as it was situated between St George's Hall and the private and Semi-State Apartments, this resulted in an inconvenient processional route through the chapel on formal occasions. The fire provided an opportunity to reassess this layout.

OPPOSITE: American artist George Weymouth was commissioned to paint this portrait of Prince Philip as Chair of the Restoration Committee. He is depicted in the fire-damaged St George's Hall beside one of the props holding up the remnants of the carved interior, with a roll of architectural plans under his arm. Sunlight, reflecting a sense of future hope, floods in through the archway that leads to the Long Walk. Using artistic licence, Weymouth turned this archway 90 degrees



Prince Philip broadcasting his Christmas Day message while on royal tour aboard HMY *Britannia* in 1956



Christmas Broadcast that followed, she spoke of his absence: 'If my husband cannot be at home on Christmas Day, I could not wish for a better reason than that he should be travelling in other parts of the Commonwealth.' The next day the first iceberg was sighted. Taking advantage of his voyage to the southern hemisphere, Prince Philip attended the Antarctic Symposium in Melbourne. At Lyttelton in New Zealand he met the explorer and conqueror of Everest, Sir Edmund Hillary, and toured the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition ship *Endeavour*. The crew of *Britannia* received 'Red Nose' certificates to celebrate crossing the Antarctic Circle; veteran sailors who had done so before were given a 'Purple Nose'. The certificates were designed by Seago, and Prince Philip assisted with the inking and printing.

Gibraltar was the last point on the itinerary before the Prince joined The Queen at Lisbon airport for the State Visit to Portugal. Despite the remoteness of much of the tour,



ABOVE: Prince Philip befriends penguins in the Antarctic in 1957, during his tour in *Britannia*

RIGHT: Prince Philip takes his turn with an inked roller to produce 'Red Nose' certificates that were awarded to HMY *Britannia*'s crew for crossing the Antarctic Circle, 1956





In 1988, during an official visit to Mexico, Prince Philip visited the Sierra Chincua reserve and witnessed the migration of the monarch butterfly. The Prince had previously remarked, 'words alone cannot hope to convey the extraordinary nature of the monarch's life cycle'

engagements from the 1960s onwards related to his work with the WWF, the BTO and the Zoological Society of London, of which he was President from 1960 to 1977 and subsequently an Honorary Fellow.

The Prince was also committed to the wellbeing of local communities. In 1977 the grant-giving Prince Philip Trust Fund was established to support the residents of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Under the Prince's chairmanship and through fundraising activities such as car rallies on the



LEFT: Prince Philip visits a panda sanctuary during the State Visit to China in 1986

ABOVE: This watercolour of a noisy scrub-bird was presented to Prince Philip by the Premier of Western Australia in 1990. In 1961 the Prince had written to a previous Premier to comment on the allocation of land for building that included the habitat of the endangered bird. The development was moved and the site is now a nature reserve, where the birds today number approximately 600

Long Walk of the Great Park, the fund grew considerably. By 2020 it had given out over £2,000,000 in grants to more than 1,600 projects and good causes, helping children and young people, those in social need, the elderly and people living with disabilities, as well as supporting the local arts scene and improving access to sports. The Earl of Wessex has since taken over the chairmanship and an additional £100,000 was distributed during 2020 to assist the local community during the Covid-19 pandemic.

SPORTING INTERESTS

PRINCE PHILIP enjoyed a variety of sporting interests from a young age, particularly during his time at Gordonstoun. In 1949 Prince Philip recalled how his earliest instruction in sailing ‘stood me in good stead during the years of the war’. Himself a capable sportsman, the Prince’s patronages often reflected his own sporting pursuits, the support of young people becoming involved in new sports, and the governing bodies behind events such as the Olympic and Commonwealth Games and the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI).

Equestrian

Prince Philip learned to ride horses as a young boy and his earliest equestrian memories were of riding at the beach near Constanța on the Black Sea with his young cousin Michael, King of Romania.

OPPOSITE: Prince Philip at a polo match, 1966





ABOVE: His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh retired from solo public engagements at the age of 96 on 2 August 2017. During a lifetime of public service, he carried out 22,234 solo engagements, made 637 solo overseas visits to 143 different countries, chaired 1,638 meetings, gave 5,496 speeches and wrote 14 books. His diverse interests and patronages were always reflected in the work he undertook in support of The Queen.



OPPOSITE: Her Majesty The Queen announced that her beloved husband, Prince Philip, had died peacefully at Windsor Castle on 9 April 2021. This private photograph taken by The Countess of Wessex shows The Queen and Prince Philip enjoying the view at the top of the Coyles of Muick, in the Scottish Highlands near Balmoral Castle, in 2003.