

Christ Church Freemantle

Sunday 18th April – Third Sunday of Easter

We must all have been affected by the sad news of Prince Philip's death last week, and our deepest sympathies go out to the Queen. I've also been affected by the footage illustrating his life. In one interview Prince Philip was asked about his nationality, a question along the lines of "Do you feel Greek?" and he replied that he didn't feel any particular nationality but rather that "I was just there" (I may not have this 100% accurately). This answer describes my previous impression of him – he was just there – I've never given him much thought. The TV coverage included quite a few of those events where you remember exactly when and where you were at the time. As a result, I've been thinking about those times in my life, and they are my theme for this thought for the week.

The first such event was the wedding of Princess Anne. I had a Saturday job in a bookshop at the time, and as I remember we worked in the morning of the wedding but had the afternoon off. The thing that jumped out at me from the TV coverage last week was her dress and in particular the high neckline. I'd completely forgotten that, but at the time it was discussed at length.



The second Royal event I've been thinking of, though I don't think I've seen footage of it, was the Silver Jubilee in 1977. The actual date was in February but it was celebrated with street parties in June. I was living in a student flat in South London, and the main road was closed with a long row of trestle tables for the party food directly below my window. It was a lovely sunny day, with lots of people milling about and music echoing through the street. I don't remember attending the party – I guess I was too busy revising for exams!

Next was the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana: that Emanuel dress – the image is unforgettable. I had moved up to Glasgow and had been given contact details of an (Anglican)



church group who invited me to watch the Royal Wedding with a few others, my first social engagement, just a few days after arriving. I made some very good friends, and was invited to a party a few weeks later where I met my husband, Craig.



Surely everyone can remember where they were when they heard the news of Princess Diana's terrible death. I had arrived late for the Sunday morning service at St Mary's, and had slipped into the children's area with my daughter. The clergyman was talking about what had happened and I had to ask one of the other parents to find out who had died. I would say that, prior to the pandemic, Princess Diana's death was the most extraordinary national event that I've lived through. First that it happened as it did, and then the massive display of public grief. One of my colleagues went up to London to lay flowers.

The Queen is a few years older than my mother, sadly no longer with us. As a child I'm sorry to admit that I regarded the Queen along with other adults of my parents age, as rather



fuddy-duddy, not keeping up with fashion, etc. Fashion in my teenage eyes being maroon loons, platform shoes, cheesecloth kaftans, Afghan coats, maxi skirts one day, midi skirts the next, then hot pants. With hindsight its not surprising that she let these trends pass her by.

I do remember looking at pictures of the Queen with fresh eyes one day and seeing her as a stunning young woman. Only a few weeks ago I saw a recording of her in a zoom meeting arranged as part of National Science Week. She looked extremely glamorous I thought, enthusiastically discussing the excitement of seeing the surface of Mars. And now after all the TV coverage my image of Prince Philip will be that of a handsome young man, and I have a better understanding of his outstanding contribution to national life.

Ruth Pickering