

Keeping in Touch..... Number 53

Welcome to this week's KIT. Thank you so much if you sent something in this week. Please keep the articles coming.

The deadline for next week's KIT is noon on Wednesday. Please send anything to c.a.curtis@ntlworld.com. Or ring us on 01480 350787

Philip's £1000 Group Challenge Quiz

Philip has offered £1000 for church funds if we can, between us, answer his 12 questions about the church. Alan will, as last time, collate the answers so please send them to a.k.curtis@ntlworld.com or ring 01480 350787. We need our longer-standing members to get their thinking caps on please. Even if you know only one answer please let us know. You may be the only one who does!! Please send your answers by 2nd May.

Q.1. Spanning the Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian eras, name the prominent St Ives family who continuously superintended the Free Church Sunday School for 100 years. (Clue? All sported walrus moustaches!)

Q. 2. 1979. The original Local Appeal target for your church's reconstruction was set at £10,000. In the event, some £44,000 was raised. The main fund-raisers were two Antiques Auctions, selling a veritable wealth of items generously donated by the membership. Messrs. Ekins professionally ran both events. What were the three prime lots that raised the most money? (A one-word answer will suffice.)

Q.3. V.E. Day 1945. During the town's celebrations for Victory in Europe Day, revellers dressed up Oliver Cromwell's statue. One of them, probably an American serviceman, wrenched off Cromwell's sword scabbard as a souvenir. Who was the metalsmith member of your church, who, voluntarily, made a bronze duplicate and replaced it? Miraculously!

Q.4. 1940/50s. Green, Rook, Walkey, Mason, Yeandle, Smith, Shaw and Downing are the surnames of people, very active in your church, who worked as a team. Doing what?

Q.5. 1979. Who embellished the lettering of the Ephraim White tombstone, dating from 1697, now displayed in the Porch Chapel?

Q.6. 1979. How are church members and Master Carpenters Frank Enfield and Derek White commemorated in your church?

Q.7. 1979. Why would a St Ives Free Church chippy spit on a shilling? Explain.

Q.8. 1631-36. While the seeds of your church were being sewn in private houses, Oliver Cromwell lived in the town. Where and what would his likely Post Coded address have been today?

Q.9. 1970s. Erstwhile stalwart elder, the late Arthur Carrington, had a very hush-hush job with Her Majesty's Government, which earned him a Queen's Birthday Honour. Doing what?

Q.10.1940s/50s. Name three popular venues for your church's annual Sunday School Outings. Easy-peasy for some, perhaps! But what was visited on a very special outing to Greenwich in 1947?

Q.11. 1800s. Before your church was built in 1864, your place of worship was the Church Hall in Free Church Passage – AKA The Independent Chapel, built in 1813. There were no Health & Safety or Fire Regulations in those happy days. So, what was its maximum seating capacity on a good day?

Q.12. For the second time of asking (!), who was Olympiad Sally Gunnel's mother? She was very active in your church in the 1940s/50s.

Philip is confident his money is safe—let's prove him wrong!!

Irene calling.....

NURTURE MOTHER NATURE

Conservation preservation
Mother Nature cannot wait,
She has proven with her power
She can dictate future fate.

Through the years she's sent warnings
Decades long we've seen them grow,
Storms and fires, floods rise higher
What is next we just don't know.

Time to turn the tide with action
No more buried head in sand,
Everyone in every country
Has to alter, make a stand.

Big and little, moneyed or poor
No more sitting on the fence,
Drastic measures must be taken
Immediate and most intense.

Ice is melting, seas are rising
How to make the big cats see?
Arguments go on forever
Power struggles and policies.

Climate change is real, the danger
Only when too late, they'll see
Volcanoes' smoke pollution choke
Mother Nature's wild and free.

cc. IRENE CARTER



Free Will offering

I just wanted to say thank you once more to all who have supported the church financially in the past 12 months or so. I have sent out thank you notes to those who Gift Aid their donations, for their records, for the tax year just finished and please feel free to raise any queries with me. I have also given those I know want to continue with envelopes, their envelopes for the new tax year. Many changed to paying directly into the bank while we were unable to meet in person. If anyone would like envelopes, then please let me know and also whether you would like them posted to you or collect when we are next able to meet up in church. Thanks again

Babs Moore

Everyone I have spoken to who watched Prince Philip's funeral found it very moving and personal.

Char recommends the YouTube recording of Eternal Father Strong to Save.

I would recommend the lone piper playing the Flo'ers of the Forest—a lament only ever played at funerals or memorial services.

Robin has forwarded this photo of the planters in front of church courtesy of St Ives in Bloom.

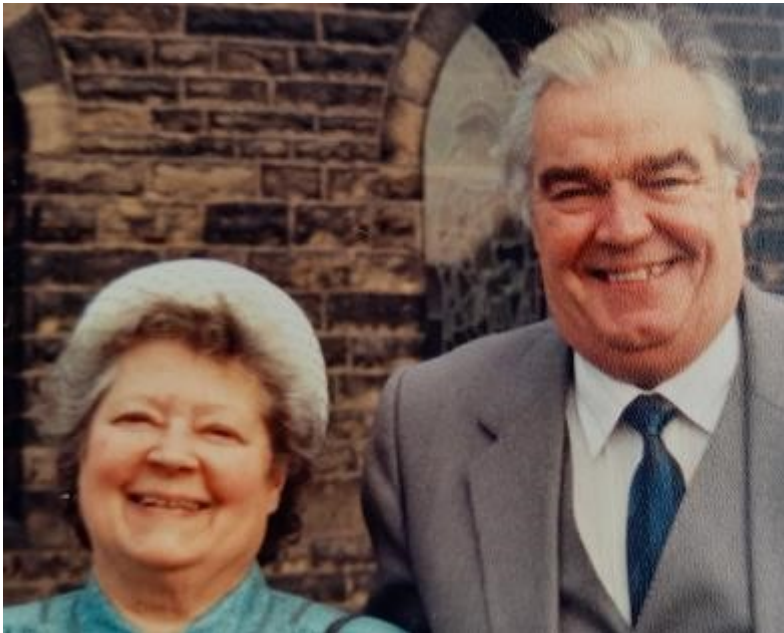


My Father's Last Diaries by Sally Runham

Dad received a diary every birthday in November ready for the next year. Other school staff in the family use academic-year diaries, but Dad had a hardback, one page a day calendar-year diary. The last two years of his life were 1997, the year when Mum died aged 69 of cancer, and 1998: he died less than twelve months later of heart failure. I cannot think why I have kept these two diaries in filing cabinets in the garden shed for over twenty years except for occasionally checking key dates. Recently, I brought them indoors, and can now see why dementia patients need such artefacts to trigger memories.

The diaries have no daily blog and little revealed of feelings during these two years when life for this devoted couple was fading rapidly. Teasing out small details, seemingly irrelevant, allow me to see his smile, remember him patiently teaching my young children, or his reprimanding them with his deep authoritative voice. He died when my eldest was 12 and that was too soon. Looking back, he was wonderful support for a working mother and, had he lived longer, would certainly have helped mentor my daughters through the challenges of secondary school. Appointments at hospital, visits by carers, financial payments, and birthdays (ages in brackets – very useful even now!) of his ten grandchildren are all listed. He did not live to see his eleventh grandchild born, nor the death of his twelfth, thankfully.

Both 1997 and 1998 covered quite a few social events at church and in peoples' houses. An Epiphany tea party in Bluntisham, playing the organ at Fenstanton, Houghton Chapel or Rheola Care Home for ministers, lay preachers, and ordinands. From 19 May 1997, came the fateful day, when Mum went to the doctor's and was subsequently referred to Hinchbrook. "Two months" became seven months. Later in the year began endless visits by the cancer care people, and generous pastoral care from ministers and elders of the Free Church and Fenstanton URC. The diary paints a picture of those who meant such a lot to my parents in their hour of need. The diaries 'show' Dad loved his time in St Ives, and greatly valued the people in the three church congregations which, with friends and burgeoning family, formed their social life for a contented decade.



Victor and Marjorie Jones

Ed. Alan was their Elder for part of that time and always enjoyed his visits to this gracious couple.

An extract from Philip Simpson's memoirs from the time he choreographed all Royal visits to Cambridgeshire. The Prince was his favourite Royal.

HRH PRINCE CANTANKEROUS

It can't be much fun having to walk three paces behind one's wife for seventy or so years. But such was the destiny of Prince Philip when he married into our Royal Family in 1947.

Nor can it be much fun having to be on one's best behaviour at all times when on official duties in the public eye. If one isn't, then one can wager one's best pair of regal, cotton socks that the popular Press will be there to report every gaffe, slip of the tongue and off-beat comment.

Such has been the lot of Prince Philip for decades. It must be awful having to function impeccably under a public microscope. One slip of the tongue or witty remark can make the front pages of the tabloids.

Just imagine what it's like being the spouse of our Queen on any particular day. You'd rather be out and about on the moors knocking pheasants out of the sky. Alas you can't. You have to accompany Her Indoors at No.1 The Mall, to a Civic Visit to the City of Peterborough.

All day you will have to be on your best, three-paces-behind, behaviour visiting the cathedral, a new geriatric hospital and then attend a civic lunch at City Hall. In the afternoon you'd rather be having a well-earned nap in the Rolls back to the palace. Alas you can't. There's a new recreation centre to admire.

Throughout the day, you will have line-up after line-up of dignitaries presented to you and you will be required to say something interesting to each and every one of them. And betwixt each venue there are the walkabouts. Perhaps meeting ordinary people might provide light relief on an otherwise stodgy programme. Alas it doesn't. As you walk along the crowd barriers, the flag-waving public aren't particularly interested in you and your witty off-the-cuffisms. They're more interested in Her Indoors working the hordes on the other side of the road. She gets all of the flowers and adoration.

"B***** this for a game of soldiers!" you mumble to yourself.

Then you hope and pray that the lip-readers aren't about. And you develop a slight knot in the stomach when visualising what tomorrow's red-tops will say about your contribution to the Royal Visit to Peterborough.

It's not all gravy being a Royal.

Nor is it a bundle of fun when, on the chopper flight back to the Palace, the Private Secretary briefs you on tomorrow's delights. You were hoping to nip up to Sandringham to see how the restorers were getting on with that early Victorian landau carriage you recently acquired. Alas no, you can't. You have to be a three-paces-behind host at a palace banquet for the President of a diamond-rich African state and one of his many wives. And as sure as zebras are horses in striped pyjamas, you'll have to sit next to her – on your best behaviour - as she slurps her way through the soup with the wrong spoon.

I repeat. It's not all gravy being a Royal.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that one's Royal Sense of Humour has to be unleashed like steam from a kettle at times. One simply can't help oneself.

In Scotland, speaking to a driving instructor in Oban, he asked: "How do you keep the natives off the booze long enough to get them through the test?"

"Do you still throw spears at each other?" he once asked of an Australian Aborigine.

He once flinched when listening to a noisy steel band at a School for the Deaf in Cardiff. "No wonder you're all deaf!" he said.

"You managed not to get eaten, then?" he asked of a British student who had been trekking in Papua New Guinea.

These then are examples of Prince Philip's reported so-called gaffes. The tabloids have termed him a racist. I call them witticisms and one can hardly call the husband of the Head of State of a quarter of the world's population a "racist." Surely not!

Working for the Royal Family for ten years, I was able to observe one aspect of Prince Philip's character that has rarely been portrayed. And that is his love of, and affinity with, young people. He is not the crusty, "cantankerous old s**" that the popular press would have its readership believe. Since 1956 his Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme has encouraged the positive development of millions of young people throughout the world. A "cantankerous old s**" just wouldn't have bothered.

Permit me to relate one unreported incident where Prince Philip went out of his way to make the day of 1400 teenagers. One day in 1983 he was in Cambridge in his capacity as Chancellor of the University when he found that he had a free afternoon. Could a visit to a local school be arranged, he asked? A visit to a Village College in the middle of the Fens was hastily arranged and I had to help supervise the Press party. (Such as it was at such short notice.)

Normally Royal Visits required months of planning and stage management to present the host organisation in its best light. In this case, there wasn't time. Prince Philip visited every classroom, science, arts and sports facility - showing a genuine interest in everything he saw and the youngsters he chatted with. He was in his element.

With the visit over, a helicopter of the Queen's Flight landed on the school's sports field to ferry HRH back to London. But the aircraft developed a mechanical fault and its standby ground crew estimated that it would take an hour or more to rectify.

Did Prince Cantankerous blow a fuse? Did he insist that other transport be provided? Did he adjourn to the headmaster's study to down a gin and tonic or two? In the event, he did none of these.

"Muster the children in the quadrangle," he said. "I'll do a walkabout."

In the next ninety minutes he chatted to EVERY teenager casually gathered in groups on the perimeter of the quadrangle. I know; I was there. He really made their day. And they probably made his.

HRH Prince Cantankerous indeed!

Copyright Philip Simpson