

Royal love crowned in pomp and glory

On the 60th anniversary of the Queen's wedding, CAROLYN CASH reports on royal love matches

As the Queen and Prince Philip celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary today, they can savour the victory of their love over cynics and courtiers who tried to break up their romance right from the start.

Prince Philip is the Queen's one and only love. He has a reputation as a ladies' man despite his marriage, although no one has ever written a kiss-and-tell book on any extra-marital affairs.

Sources claim Lord Louis Mountbatten played matchmaker. He accompanied the royal family in an informal visit to Dartmouth Naval College to join the cadets in a morning service in 1939. It was cancelled because of an outbreak of mumps and chicken pox. Instead, Philip played host to the two princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret.

Author Richard Hough wrote: "Royal reporters, biographers and gossip columns have, for 40 years, pinned down this royal visit as the occasion when romance first sparked between the 18-year old prince and 13-year-old princess. In fact they had met several times already, as members of the same family do."

Elizabeth was heir to the British throne. She was "breathtakingly pretty" with flawless skin, a good figure and a "radiant smile".

Philip was penniless with no kingdom or no real home. His family had fled when revolution broke out in Greece. He, like Elizabeth, is also descended from Queen Victoria.

Speculation about the romance continued despite denials from Buckingham Palace. Elizabeth's parents and the Royal Household initially objected. Many courtiers viewed Philip with deep suspicion, especially since he was not British.

Sir Alan Lascelles, the King's assistant private secretary, dismissed Philip as a "penniless foreign princeling". But Elizabeth stood firm in her decision to marry the man she loved and George VI finally granted permission.

The official notice pinned to the railings of Buckingham Palace on July 10, 1947, read: "It is with the greatest of pleasure that the King and Queen announce the betrothal of their dearly beloved daughter, The Princess Elizabeth, to Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten, RN, son of the late Prince Andrew of Greece and Princess Andrew (Alice of Battenberg), to which union the King has gladly given his consent."

Not everyone was happy; politician and author Henry "Chips" Channon wrote in his diary: "I deplore such a marriage: he and ... Elizabeth are too inter-related."

George VI wanted a quiet affair, as Britain was still gripped by its post-war austerity. The Labour government insisted upon a full State wedding to provide light relief for the people. It was a great public relations exercise for the government and the Royal Family.

Elizabeth saved ration coupons to buy material for her gown. Couturier Norman Hartnell designed the dress. He was inspired by Botticelli's *Primavera* (Spring) — suggesting promise of growth and renewal after hardship and austerity. Queen Elizabeth, who was later called the Queen Mother, lent the princess a diamond-fringe tiara.

Post-war food rations were an obstacle for a spectacular wedding cake. Australian Girl Guides donated most of the ingredients, as Princess Elizabeth was the chief ranger of the British Empire. Girl Guides in Melbourne carefully packed and loaded the ingredients in 1947 aboard the Stratheden.

Girl Guide and Sea Ranger badges were placed on the cake's top tier as a tribute to its donors.



Romance in train . . . the Queen, then Princess Elizabeth, with Prince Philip on their wedding day in 1947

(The Australian Guide Headquarters received some cake as a token of thanks in February 1948.)

Elizabeth and Prince Philip received 1347 wedding presents which were displayed at St James's Palace. Crowds queued in the cold weather to see the gifts. Only 150 guests, out of 1200, joined the royal family for a wedding breakfast at Buckingham Palace — mostly relatives and selected close friends. Thousands lined the route to Westminster Abbey and many camped overnight to reserve places. Celebrations were held nationwide.

The newlyweds honeymooned at Broadlands, Mountbatten's estate in Hampshire, and at Birkhall, on the Balmoral estate in Scotland. The newlyweds never had much privacy, however. They were always accompanied by their personal servants and security personnel.

Philip resumed his naval career after the wedding. They had five years of a close-to-normal life. And friends at the time observed that the newlyweds couldn't keep their hands off each other.

Past royal marriages were mostly arranged to form alliances and

produce heirs. But some marriages lasted years after the treaties were broken. Such royal traditions go back to the Middle Ages, when child marriages were common.

One of the happiest royal unions happened when Prince Edward, the future King Edward I, married Eleanor of Castile in 1254 when he was only 15. She was two years his junior. The marriage was probably consummated years later — Eleanor was 20 when she had her first child. So devoted a wife was she that she accompanied the king on a crusade between 1270 and 1273.

Edward's father, Henry III, had 36 years of wedded bliss. He was a loving and faithful husband to Eleanor of Provence. Henry did not meet his bride until she arrived in London for their wedding in 1236.

Eleanor supported her husband during internal strife in England. But her popularity suffered when she lavishly entertained relatives from abroad at taxpayers' expense. She was strong-willed, greedy and pleasure-loving — but a devoted wife and mother nonetheless.

Another pairing of children that led to royal bliss was that of Edward

III and Philippa of Hainault (in modern-day France), who was considered a possible bride for Edward when she was eight.

Favourable reports were sent back to England. In 1327, Edward saw 15-year-old Philippa in person when he was 14, accompanying his mother to Hainault. Marriage preparations began. A papal dispensation was sought in September 1327 because they were second cousins.

Philippa arrived in London in December, only to discover Edward had gone north. She rode to meet him and they married at York Minster on 24 January, 1328.

After 1340, when Edward embroiled the nation in what would become known as the Hundred Years War (fought over his claim to the French throne), Philippa accompanied her husband during his campaigns or acted as regent when Edward was abroad. Her kindly nature soothed tempers between her husband and eldest son.

Queen Anne, who ruled from 1702-14, was happily married for 25 years to George of Denmark, a second cousin once removed. They married in 1683. Anne endured 18 pregnancies, mostly stillbirths or miscarriages. Their only child to survive beyond infancy, William, Duke of Gloucester, died of smallpox in 1700 at the age of 11.

Both Anne and George suffered poor health. She nursed and loyally defended her husband through illness, including asthma.

He was the butt of many jokes, but was the first husband of a reigning queen to pay homage publicly to his wife — like Prince Philip some two centuries later.

BIRTHDAYS

EDWIN HUBBLE

Born in Missouri in 1889, the astronomer was first to discover galaxies beyond our own and provided evidence of the expansion of the universe. He died in 1953. A space telescope and a moon crater are named in his honour.



ROBERT KENNEDY

Born in Massachusetts in 1925, he was a younger brother of US president John F. Kennedy. He became J.F.K.'s attorney-general and then a senator but like his brother before him was shot dead, while campaigning for the presidency in primaries in 1968.

BO DEREK

Born Mary Cathleen Collins in 1956. She became a pin-up icon after her performance in the 1979 film *10* with Dudley Moore. She later appeared in some B-grade films and in TV series.



COURTNEY MURPHY

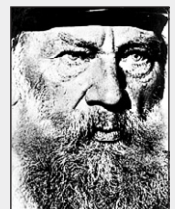
Born in 1979 in Perth, Western Australia. He played in a pub band, Murphy's Lore, with his brothers Chris and Kieran before winning fame as a finalist on *Australian Idol* in 2004. He appeared in the arena version of *Grease* in 2005. He is now working on an album.

ON THIS DAY

1759 A British fleet of 23 ships puts a French squadron on the French coast out of action at Quiberon Bay. This ends French plans to invade Britain during the Seven Years' War.

1910

Russian author Leo Tolstoy, suffering from domestic strife and pneumonia, dies of heart failure at 81 at a railway station.



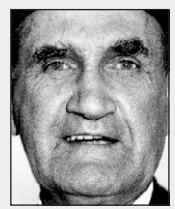
1940 The minesweeper HMAS Goorangai sinks, with the death of all 24 of her officers and men, in Port Phillip. The first loss of an Australian naval ship in World War II comes in a collision with a merchant vessel.

1945 A tribunal at Nuremberg, Germany, begins trials of 23 Nazi leaders, including Hermann Goering, for war crimes.

1974 In the first crash involving a Boeing 747 jumbo jet, a Lufthansa airliner stalls after take off at Nairobi airport in Kenya, killing 59 people.

1980

Former Country Party leader John McEwen (right) dies in Melbourne, aged 75. He promoted exports but feuded with Liberals such as William McMahon who objected to high tariffs.



1997 AMP Society policyholders vote in a marathon Sydney meeting to float the firm on the stock exchange.

2003 Pop star Michael Jackson is arrested in California on child molestation charges. He is later acquitted.

cl@ssmate

ACTIVITY: Write an account of one royal romance from history, either in Britain or elsewhere.

WEBSITE: The official site of the British Monarchy: www.royal.gov.uk — contains information on royalty past and present.

BOOK: *The British Monarchy For Dummies* by Philip Wilkinson (Wiley, \$44.95). An overview with some insights into royal marital affairs.