

Moderators pay their personal tributes to Prince Philip

Two former moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland remember the Duke of Edinburgh.



Very Rev Dr Lorna Hood, Chaplain-in-Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen and former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, writes: "I found my first visit to

Balmoral daunting and was so overawed that I was terrified that I would be unable to string a sentence together. The Prince's equerry, Dan, who came to fetch me, was so reassuring and said just to be myself. After meeting the Queen, Prince Philip arrived very quickly on the scene. He could not have been more courteous and went out of his way to make sure I was comfortable, as I've no doubt he was aware that all visitors to Balmoral, especially those from a working-class background, would be apprehensive.

"The visit went well with only three other guests present. On the Sunday evening there was a BBQ and arriving back the Queen said her farewells. The lady in waiting thanked me for "being myself" and apologised that Prince Philip was walking the dogs but she was passing on his good wishes. The next morning at breakfast – the Queen and Prince Philip don't join you for breakfast – the door opened and there was Prince Philip. The other guests were quite surprised and as we scrambled to get to our feet he said, "No no I just wanted to see the minister – I didn't get a chance to say goodbye last night. Safe journey and remember the short cut I told you about. "Interestingly, when I returned a couple of years later, he did ask me if I had taken the short cut.

"On my second visit I was more relaxed until I discovered I was the only guest. However once again everything was fine and on the Sunday evening we were joined at the BBQ by three former equerries. Prince Philip cooked lamb chops and, as I was seated next to him, he was pressing me to have yet another chop. With the Queen trying to dissuade him, he persisted until I finally gave in. He turned to the Queen with that twinkle in his eye and a smug grin. The Queen just raised her eyebrows as I gulped down yet another lamb chop.

"I had an old broken watch as a prop for my children's talk. Telling them it was priceless because it belonged to my grandfather and the bash on the back was due to the explosion that killed him down the mines. At lunch afterwards Prince

Philip wanted to know all about what happened and more importantly the consequences for my father and the family. That led to a discussion about the condition of mines and the lack of support to those families who overnight found themselves in poverty. I told him how it meant my father could not take up the bursary he had won but had to leave school for a job at age eleven. He was visibly angry and patted my arm in a sympathetic gesture.”



Very Rev Professor Iain Torrance, former Dean of the Chapel Royal in Scotland, and former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in Scotland, writes his own memories of the Duke: “I was fortunate in that I first met The Duke in May 1977 when my father was Moderator and preached in Glasgow Cathedral at the Silver Jubilee of The Queen. And the

following year he presented my father with the Templeton Prize.

“I became a chaplain to The Queen in 2001 and The Duke on seeing me at Balmoral immediately reminisced about my father. When I became Moderator in 2003 he joked that he hadn’t known it was a hereditary office! This was how he was – he was funny, challenging, constructive and welcoming.

“I told him about Iraq where I had visited as Moderator. I was co-chair of the dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. He was very interested and he knew all about the Orthodox Church and their differences with the Oriental Orthodox. Later I became president of Princeton Theological Seminary and we built a new library with vast digital resources so that it could be the reference library for colleges all over Africa. He understood this vision – he understood digitising, distance education and the growth of Christianity in Africa. He was always interested in new trends and technologies, the environment and education.

“Our last face to face meeting was in September 2018 when I was a guest at Balmoral. He teased me about how quickly I could get changed. I countered that a clerical collar is faster than a black tie.

“For more than 40 years I admired him, prayed daily for him and The Queen, felt encouraged by him and benefited from his welcome and kindness. I hadn’t expected it, but he wrote when I was appointed a knight bachelor in 2018.

“I saw his hard work, his energy and his total, rocklike support for The Queen. There was no one like him and I will always thank God for providing such a figure for such a time.”