

Minister at Canongate shares his memories of the Queen

By Rev Neil Gardner, minister at Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh, the kirk of Holyroodhouse, and Edinburgh Castle.

“The Queen would like to see Neil for a chat this afternoon, but only if he has time’.”

That was the message conveyed from the Palace of Holyroodhouse to Canongate Kirk office during Royal Week 2021.

And yes, obviously, I did have time, and now find myself cherishing the memory of that chat more than ever.

The gentle manner in which the royal summons was issued – “but only if he has time” – was rather typical of the genuinely unassuming attitude that was for some an unexpected hallmark of The Queen’s character.

“You’d better answer that,” Her Majesty once famously told a flustered woman in a line-up whose mobile phone had started to ring at just the wrong moment.

“It might be someone important.”

And my personal favourite came when The Queen once referred to somebody (was it Roy Jenkins?) as “far too grand for the likes of me!”

I can’t help thinking there was something rather Scottish about Her Majesty’s capacity not to take herself too seriously – even as she faultlessly fulfilled the most serious of roles

– that can be traced not just to her Scottish ancestry but to the many happy times she spent in Scotland throughout the course of her very long life and reign.

It can safely be said that she had time for Scotland and its people, and relished the casual chats just as much as the more formal encounters. And Scotland had time for her, thanks not least to that gently self-deprecating approach that struck such a chord in this particular corner of Her Majesty's Kingdom.

As now with the rest of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth we mourn her passing, and give thanks for her unique life of duty and devotion, let us give thanks too for those qualities and characteristics that The Queen shared with us and which stood her in such good stead for so long.



Edinburgh. Corstorphine Old Parish Church Thursday August 18th 2022: Installation of Chaplains in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen Revd Neil Gardner