

The world was watching Edinburgh

Former police officer turned crime writer, Lee Cockburn, has revealed the proudest moment of her 24-year career with Police Scotland and before that Lothian and Borders Police.

She was the officer appointed to take operational command of the late Queen Elizabeth II's lying at rest at St Giles' Cathedral in September 2022.

The 56-year-old, whose fourth novel, Sylph or Satan, has been released by Clink Street Publications, was on leave when details of Her Majesty's final visit to the Scottish capital were revealed.

One unexpected phone call later she found herself charged with overseeing the safety of, not just the 33,000 people who queued for hours to file past the late monarchs' coffin, but also members of the Royal Family, including the Queen's children, King Charles, The Princess Royal, Prince Edward who is now The Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Andrew, as they observed a private vigil for their mother during the 24 hour period.

The mother of two, recalled: "After the sad news of her Majesty the Queen's passing, I was rota'd for a weekend off and was a little disappointed I wasn't needed for duties in relation to The Queen's movements and service. Then, as I was

walking the dog on Cramond beach with my mum, I received a call asking if I was available to cover Inspector duties at St Giles' for the full duration of The Queen's presence there."

Working from noon to midnight for four-days, Acting Inspector Cockburn would also be responsible for ensuring no harm came to visiting dignitaries and politicians, and found herself on the frontline with her team securing the cathedral and the city's Royal Mile.

She said: "I was so honoured, I would have done it for nothing. I admit I was a little nervous at being given such a responsibility but jumped at the opportunity to play my part in such an historic event, which also allowed me to show my own respect for Her Majesty."

Cockburn quickly found herself briefing her team, reminding them that "the world was watching Scotland's police officers". She said they should, "ensure they offered the best of ourselves" by presenting a well-turned-out professional example.

The thriller writer who was given special dispensation to write her first three crime novels – Devil's Demise, Porcelain Flesh of Innocents and Demon's Fire – while still a serving police officer, said: "On that first day, when I looked up the Royal Mile towards Edinburgh Castle as we awaited the funeral procession, the hairs on my neck stood on end as the sheer enormity of the occasion hit me. I was standing to attention in full uniform, with marksmen in position of the roofs above me and my officers lining the route."

She continued: "As the Queen's funeral cortège passed by St Giles, the crowd fell into complete silence, with my officers facing the oncoming procession all standing to attention. It was a spectacle to see and very emotional. I felt tears come to my eyes and struggled to remain composed. There was such sadness in the air."

Once the cortège had passed the thousands that had gathered began to move off. Later, when the Queen's coffin was brought from Holyrood Palace to St Giles', thousands again queued for hours for an opportunity to pay their final respects to the Monarch. Once more, Cockburn was there, her 6ft 1in frame easily spotted in TV footage as the Royals arrived and left the cathedral.

"I watched over them and made sure my team were ready for any eventuality and that everyone was respectful, calm and safe at all times. It was a very solemn day. I recognised many people in the queue and even shared a hug with my old history teacher. I also tried to keep the spirits up of those that had waited in the cold for hours and made many new acquaintances, the cathedral staff, TV news readers, Lords and Ladies, all gathered in mutual grief."

She added: "As I sat on the police bus that took us back to base after those four back-shifts, I reflected with pride and sadness of being a part of such a momentous chapter in Scottish history and felt so privileged to have been given the opportunity to do so."



Edinburgh, UK. 12th September 2022. The hearse carrying Queen Elizabeth II arrives at St Giles' Cathedral for the lying at rest. PHOTO Tom Duffin.



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SYLPH
OR
SATAN





Edinburgh, UK. 12th September 2022. The hearse carrying Queen Elizabeth II arrives at St Giles' Cathedral for the lying at rest. PHOTO Tom Duffin.