

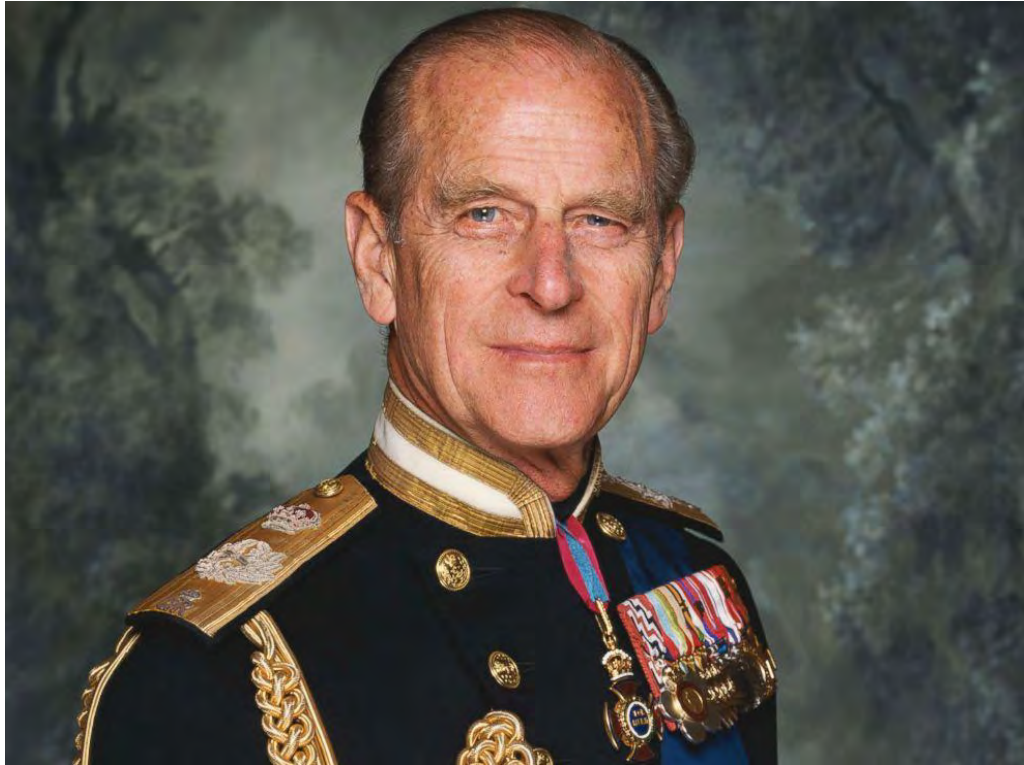


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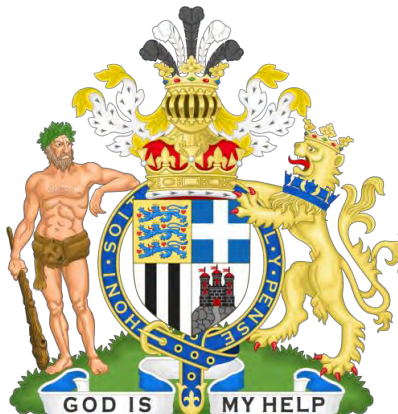
history & heritage notes

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh KG, KT, OM, AK, GCVO, GBE, PC,

[1921 – 2021]



HRH the Duke of Edinburgh was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1954.



We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, born Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark, was the husband and consort of Queen Elizabeth II.

Prince Philip was born into the Greek and Danish royal families at Mon Repos on the Greek island of Corfu on 10 June 1921, the only son and fifth and final child of Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark and Princess Alice of Battenberg - but his family was exiled from the country when he was an infant.

After being educated in France (The Elms, an American school in Paris), Germany (Schule Schloss Salem), and the United Kingdom (Gordonstoun School, Scotland), he joined the British Royal Navy in 1939.

After the war, Philip was granted permission by King George VI to marry Princess Elizabeth. Before the official announcement of their engagement in July 1947, he abandoned his Greek and Danish royal titles and became a naturalised British subject, adopting the surname Mountbatten from his maternal grandparents. He married Elizabeth on 20 November 1947. Just before the wedding, he was created Baron Greenwich, Earl of Merioneth and Duke of Edinburgh. Philip left active military service when Elizabeth became monarch in 1952, having reached the rank of commander, and was formally made a British prince in 1957.

Prince Philip and Queen Elizabeth II have four children: Prince Charles, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew, and Prince Edward.

He is the longest-serving consort of a reigning British monarch and the oldest-ever male member of the British royal family. Philip retired from his royal duties on 2 August 2017, at the age of 96.

Naval Service

Philip joined the Royal Navy in 1939, graduating the next year from the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, as the best cadet in his course. He was appointed as a Midshipman in January 1940 and during the Second World War, he continued to serve in the British forces. He spent four months on the battleship HMS *Ramillies*, protecting convoys of the Australian Expeditionary Force in the Indian Ocean, followed by shorter postings on HMS *Kent*, on HMS *Shropshire* and in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). After the invasion of Greece by Italy in October 1940, he was transferred from the Indian Ocean to the battleship HMS *Valiant* in the Mediterranean Fleet.

On 1 February 1941, he was commissioned as a Sub-Lieutenant after a series of courses at Portsmouth, in which he gained the top grade in four out of five sections of the qualifying examination. He was involved in the Battle of Crete, and was mentioned in dispatches for his service during the Battle of Cape Matapan, in which he controlled the battleship's searchlights. He was also awarded the Greek War Cross of Valour. In June 1942, he was appointed to the V and W-class destroyer and flotilla leader HMS *Wallace*, which was involved in convoy escort tasks on the east coast of Britain.

Promotion to Lieutenant followed on 16 July 1942. In October of the same year, he became first lieutenant of HMS *Wallace*, at 21 years old one of the youngest first lieutenants in the Royal Navy. During the invasion of Sicily, in July 1943, as second in command of HMS *Wallace*, he saved his ship from a night bomber attack. He devised a plan to launch a raft with smoke floats that successfully distracted the bombers, allowing the ship to slip away unnoticed. In 1944, he moved on to the new destroyer, HMS *Whelp*, where he saw service with the British Pacific Fleet in the 27th Destroyer Flotilla. He was present in Tokyo Bay when the instrument of Japanese surrender was signed. In January 1946, Philip returned to the United Kingdom on the HMS *Whelp*, and was posted as an instructor at HMS *Royal Arthur*, the Petty Officers' School in Corsham, Wiltshire.

After his marriage, Philip returned to the navy at first in a desk job at the Admiralty, and later on a staff course at the Naval Staff College, Greenwich. From 1949, he was stationed in Malta (residing at Villa Guardamangia) after being posted as the first lieutenant of the destroyer HMS *Chequers*, the lead ship of the 1st Destroyer Flotilla in the Mediterranean Fleet. On 16 July 1950, he was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and given command of the frigate HMS *Magpie*. On 30 June 1952, Philip was promoted to Commander, though his active naval career had ended in July 1951. In 1952, Philip became a freemason when he was initiated into Navy Lodge No.2612, under the United Grand Lodge of England.

Duties and milestones

As consort to the Queen, Philip supported his wife in her new duties as sovereign, accompanying her to ceremonies such as the State Opening of Parliament in various countries, state dinners, and tours abroad. As Chairman of the Coronation Commission, he was the first member of the royal family to fly in a helicopter, visiting the troops that were to take part in the ceremony. Philip was not crowned in the service, but knelt before Elizabeth, with her hands enclosing his, and swore to be her "liege man of life and limb".

For six months, over 1953–54, Philip and Elizabeth toured the Commonwealth – including Australia and Brisbane

In 1956, the Duke, with Kurt Hahn, became founding chairman of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award to give young people aged 14 to 24 "a sense of responsibility to themselves and their communities". In the same year, he also established the Commonwealth Study Conferences. From 1956 to 1957, Philip travelled around the world aboard the newly commissioned HMY *Britannia*, during which he opened the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne and visited the Antarctic, becoming the first royal to cross the Antarctic Circle. The Queen and the children remained in the UK.

Philip was patron of some 800 organisations, particularly focused on the environment, industry, sport, and education. A keen sports enthusiast, he played polo until 1971, and helped develop the equestrian event of carriage driving.

His connection with the Club

One of the consequences of the 1954 Royal Tour to Australia was the decision to make Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, a life member. That decision was passed by a special meeting held on Monday 8 March 1954. Another indication of the prevailing imperial sentiment can be gained from the attendance figures; 51 members were present and another six sent apologies for a meeting that must have been, surely, a mere formality. At the meeting, the president, Wing Commander A F McSweyn, told members that the Club had written to Prince Philip's private secretary asking whether 'His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, [would] honour the Club by accepting life membership'. Needless-to-say, the members hoped that, during the Royal Tour, the Duke of Edinburgh might be able to visit the Club but the chairman told members that no notice could be given to them of such a visit because the Club itself would receive only a short notice.

On 11 March, 1954, from the Government House, Brisbane, Commander Michael Parker, the Duke's private secretary, wrote to the Club secretary, Major Booth: *'His Royal Highness has asked me to say that he would be delighted to accept life membership of The United Service Club of Brisbane and would be grateful if you would convey his appreciation to the President and Committee'*. Then, five days later, Commander Parker wrote again: *'The Duke of Edinburgh was hoping very much that he would be able to visit the United Service Club, Brisbane, in the few days we are here, but unfortunately it now seems clear that it will be impossible to fit in. I know His Royal Highness is extremely sorry about this, but I feel sure you will be very understanding, although somewhat disappointed.'*



Prince Philip in Brisbane, 1954

The life membership was a way of formally recognising Prince Philip's visit to Brisbane, if not to the Club. The committee meeting following the Royal Visit read letters of thanks from members of the Royal Tour party who had been given honorary membership while in Brisbane.

As an aside, Club Membership records describe Prince Philip's occupation as "retired" and address as "Buckingham Palace, London".



Prince Philip served as Captain-General of the Royal Marines for 64 years from 1953 to 2017

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh died peacefully at Windsor Castle on 9 April 2021.

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents