

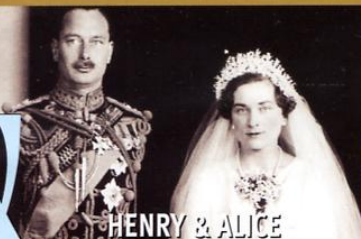
THE QUALITY ROYAL MAGAZINE

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THE WAITING GAME

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THE WAITING GAME



William makes for the presentation ceremony as Kate Middleton walks away after watching him play polo at Cirencester Park on 7 June 2009

OPPOSITE PAGE: The prince accompanies his father and stepmother to a service commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain at Westminster Abbey on 19 September

PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

Will it be 2011? Or the following year, perhaps? As the media continues to guess the date of the next big royal wedding, it's very much a case of business as usual for the couple on whom all eyes are turned. IAN LLOYD looks at some interesting royal precedents

ALL THE WORLD loves a lover, or so the saying goes. That is certainly true when one is the future King William V and the other may one day be his queen. For Palace, press and public, the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton – when and if it happens – will give a much-needed boost to the monarchy, to flagging newspaper circulations and to the nation fighting recession as well as war.

Facing undoubted pressure to decide their future, the couple could at any time hoist a white flag over Clarence House and concede: 'OK. We give in. We'll name the day!' But instead they have opted to play one of the lengthiest royal waiting games, perhaps mindful that some of William's relations under similar pressure tended to marry before truly getting to know each other's personalities. Those who held their nerve and waited have often achieved the more successful unions in the House of Windsor.

One suitor who had no choice but to wait was William's great-grandfather, the future King George VI. He asked to be introduced to Lady Elizabeth Bowes Lyon at a ball at London's Ritz Hotel in July 1920, and for him it was love at first sight. Yet Elizabeth was lukewarm in her response, noting in a letter to a friend: 'he is quite a nice youth'. Later in the summer, when he invited himself to her family home, Glamis Castle, she wrote: 'Prince Albert is coming to stay here on Saturday. Ghastly!'

Bertie, as the prince was known within his family, grew more in love with Elizabeth every time he saw her. He proposed to her three times over the next three years and was rebuffed each time until 14 January 1923 when, according to Elizabeth's father, 'he proposed continuously' until 11.30pm, by which time his exhausted intended finally said yes.



Queen Mary managed to both help and hinder her second son's romance. While she maintained to a friend: 'mothers should never meddle in their children's affairs', at the same time she saw to it that Elizabeth's 'very serious suitor' James Stuart was packed off to America to work in the oil industry, leaving the path free for Bertie.

She changed her tune, however, when Elizabeth started to prevaricate about an engagement. Queen Mary considered it 'a tiresome matter', adding that she and the king 'feel ruffled at Elizabeth's behaviour'.

The British press didn't help by jumping the gun about a royal engagement – and identifying the wrong prince. 'Scottish Bride for Prince of Wales', trumpeted *The Daily Star*, much to Elizabeth's annoyance. She was equally upset by society gossip, and when she and Bertie were invited to the Pytchley Hunt Ball she nervously asked the prince: 'Do you think we will start all these horrible people talking again?' ➤



PICTURES: PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

When she finally accepted Bertie's proposal, her prince pointed out to a friend that it had 'been right to play the waiting game because I know she would have said no, had I pressed her for an answer before now'.

Elizabeth Bowes Lyon had had plenty of time to decide if she wanted to take on the thankless task of being a royal wife, though whether she would have done so had she known she would one day be queen consort is debateable.

The present Queen was also forced to wait, mainly due to her extreme youth. She was only 13 when she became reacquainted with her distant cousin, the fair-haired, blue-eyed Prince Philip of Greece, during a royal visit to Dartmouth Naval College in 1939. She blushed deeply and, like her father before her, fell deeply in love at first sight.

While it would be another seven years before the public learned that romance was in the air, news circulated in royal circles almost straightaway. In January 1941, when Elizabeth was still not 15, the diarist Chips Channon was told about it over lunch with Philip's aunt, Princess Nicholas of Greece. He duly noted: 'He is to be our Prince Consort, and that is why he is serving in our Navy.'

Bertie and Elizabeth, by now king and queen, were deeply concerned about their daughter's infatuation, probably fearing the influence of Lord





CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: The Duke of York and Lady Elizabeth Bowes Lyon pose for an official engagement photograph, 1923

Princess Elizabeth and Lt. Philip Mountbatten RN at Buckingham Palace, 10 July 1947

William and Kate at RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire, in April 2008 after he received his wings from the Prince of Wales

Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips on 30 May 1973; only days earlier their romance was denied officially



PICTURES: PHESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

Mountbatten, Philip's overly-ambitious uncle. They organised dance parties at Windsor Castle to introduce her to a series of home-grown aristocrats that Queen Mary dubbed 'The Bodyguard'.

The formidable royal matriarch realised her granddaughter had inherited her father's tenacity when it came to affairs of the heart: 'She would always know her own mind,' Mary told a friend. 'There's something very steadfast and determined in her - like her father.'

The date of Elizabeth and Philip's private engagement remains shrouded in mystery, though he later let slip that it occurred when he stayed with the royal family at Balmoral in the autumn of 1946. On Sunday 8 September, record crowds, hopeful of news, lined the road to Crathie Kirk longing for a glimpse of the happy couple. Prince Philip walked to church but Princess Elizabeth stayed at the castle, nursing a 'slight cold' to avoid the limelight.

The next day's newspapers published a denial from Buckingham Palace: 'Princess Elizabeth is not engaged to be married. The report published is incorrect.'

A month later Philip was seen helping the princess take off her fur coat at the wedding of his cousin Patricia Mountbatten to Lord Brabourne. It was clear to everyone by then that they were a couple, but they would have to wait another eight months for an official announcement to be made, on 10 July 1947. Two days earlier, Elizabeth wrote to tell a friend: 'Something is going to happen at last.'

The first marriages of the Queen's three eldest children all ended in divorce, and amongst the contributory factors in each case was the difficulty for the newcomer to live life in the royal goldfish bowl. At least Philip, as a Prince of Greece in his own right, was to a certain extent used to it. ➤



PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

Mark Phillips, who married Princess Anne in November 1973, had very little idea of what life in the royal family entailed. He was a house guest at Sandringham the previous winter and attended the Queen's Silver Wedding anniversary service in November 1972, but apart from that he probably didn't know what he was letting himself in for.

From the age of 14 Princess Anne was linked to a whole succession of possible suitors, from an Austrian prince to a former page of honour to the Queen. She found the constant media scrutiny 'intensely irritating'.

Anne and Mark decided to play a cat and mouse game with the press, and on at least one occasion she wore a wig and dark glasses to avoid reporters. Only once did she let her guard down, when she kissed Mark as he departed from Harwich to join his regiment in Germany. The palace was forced to issue the first of several denials of a romance. These continued even after the couple were privately engaged, some five weeks before the official announcement on 29 May 1973.

The failure of the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales would have more far-reaching consequences. Again their courtship was relatively short when compared to that of William and Kate, and again the royal partner did not take part in official life until after the wedding, so it was impossible to ascertain just how well Diana would cope with the constant – and almost smothering – attention of press and public.

Prince Charles had been influenced by his great-uncle, Earl Mountbatten, who urged him to find a girlfriend with no 'past' so that no embarrassing 'kiss and tell' stories could emerge from ex-lovers. Diana appeared to fit the bill, and while the prince was clearly happy, he made the unsettling revelation to a friend at the end of 1980 that he did not yet

love her, but she was lovable and warm-hearted and he was sure that he could fall in love with her. He was basing his optimistic outlook on the marriage of his grandparents, whose love for each other grew as they shared their working life and a happy home life with their two daughters.

Photographers spotted Lady Diana Spencer on the Balmoral estate and press speculation turned into frenzy. The prince's official biographer, Jonathan Dimbleby, noted: 'the tabloid media was more insistent than in any previous sighting. The pressures on the prince began to seem like a tidal wave sweeping him to an inevitable destiny.'

Prince Philip counselled his son that he should not delay a decision for much longer, for to do so would cause lasting damage to Diana's reputation. Charles admitted that he was in a 'confused and anxious state of mind' as a result of what he regarded as an ultimatum. It was in this, inauspicious, condition that he offered his hand in marriage.

Five years later, it was with a sense of *déjà vu* that the royal family went through the same process of media triumph at exposing a new royal romance – this time Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson – followed by the snowballing pressure of constant attention from reporters and photographers.

Although Andrew and Sarah had known each other since childhood, it was only at Royal Ascot in June 1985 that their romance was kindled after the Princess of Wales invited Sarah to join the royal house party at Windsor Castle. At the time Sarah was still dating former racing driver Paddy McNally and that romance only fizzled out later in the autumn. Yet by March 1986 Andrew had proposed and been accepted, although as one of her friends noticed: 'Sarah was petrified about what she was letting herself in for.' Like Diana, she felt she was 'a lamb to the slaughter'.



PICTURES: PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Charles and Diana's engagement provoked a worldwide media frenzy, the likes of which we may never see again

William at the controls of a Sea King helicopter. He is now a fully-qualified Search and Rescue pilot, having graduated at RAF Valley on 17 September

The prince attends the 100 Women in Hedge Funds Philanthropic Initiatives gala dinner, in aid of Centrepoint, at Middle Temple Hall in London on 30 September

By the time Prince Edward met Sophie Rhys-Jones in the summer of 1993, he had witnessed the marriages of all three of his siblings end in separation. But this time things would be different. A year into their relationship, Sophie joined the royal family for the wedding of Princess Margaret's daughter Sarah Armstrong-Jones to actor Daniel Chatto and sat with Edward rather than with the main congregation.

Edward and Sophie's romance was kept deliberately low-key. There were occasional ill-founded rumours in the press of a wedding date scheduled for Edward's 30th birthday in March 1994 or an engagement to be announced on Sophie's 30th the following January.

Eventually the press spotlight turned elsewhere and the couple were allowed to get on with their own lives. Unmarried Sophie was even allocated rooms at Buckingham Palace, a sign of a more relaxed – and less protocol-obsessed – attitude from the royal family and their advisers.

The press and public got so used to the status quo in the relationship that everyone was caught out by the announcement of an engagement on 6 January 1999.

'It's impossible for anybody else to understand why it has taken me so long,' Edward explained to reporters later that day. 'But I don't think it had been right before and I don't think Sophie would have said yes. Hopefully the fact that she has said yes means I've got the timing right.'

Prince Edward's words echo those of his maternal grandfather almost 80 years earlier, and just like King George VI he has a successful marriage. The ultimate prize of a happy future together clearly comes to those who wait, and William and Kate seem content to continue this royal trend. ■

