

The
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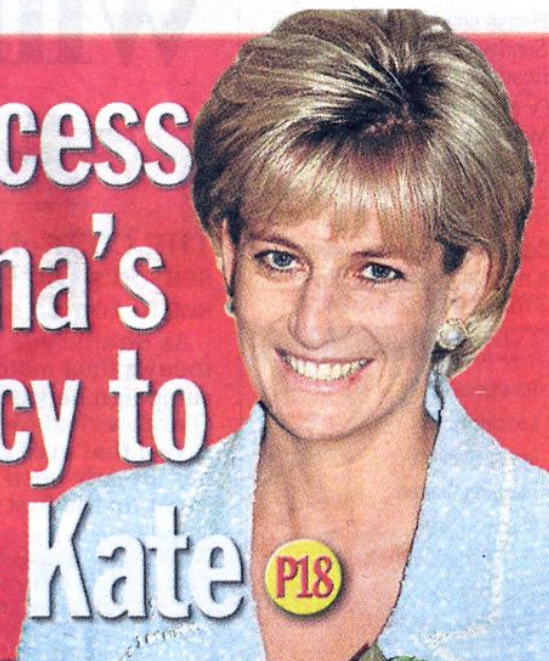
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Princess
Diana's
legacy to
bride Kate



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**By Ian Lloyd
Royal Writer**

Ghost of Diana is an inspiration and a warning for new princess

AT exactly 10.10 am on Friday, Princes William and Harry will leave Clarence House in one of the royal Bentleys.

They will then begin the five-minute journey along the Mall, through Horse Guards Parade, Whitehall and Parliament Square before arriving at Westminster Abbey

It's possible they will at some point think of that sunny September day 14 years ago when they walked behind their mother's funeral cortege as it made its way on the same route, to the same destination.

In a 2007 interview William said of Diana, "We think of her every day." Earlier this week it was reported that the prince took bride-to-be Kate Middleton to see his mother's final resting place in the grounds of Althorp House, her childhood home.

The prince has, of course, also honoured his mother's memory by giving Kate Diana's magnificent sapphire and diamond ring when he proposed to her.

For Kate the visit to the grave and her engagement ring, are poignant links with the iconic woman she never met, and who meant so much to the man she is about to marry. She must at times be thinking "What would Diana make of me? Would she approve? Would she think I'm good enough for William?"

Superstar

"I would have loved to have met William's mother," Kate admitted on the day her engagement was announced, adding, "She's an inspirational woman to look up to."

The ghost of Diana may inspire Kate, but it also acts as a useful warning. Diana was the original royal superstar and Kate is the nearest thing we have to that today, and both she and William have discussed the huge pressure his mother was under as one of the world's most famous women.

The couple admitted last November that they were trying to "learn from the lessons of the past."

Diana, aged just 20, arrived at the altar, in her own words, "as a lamb to the slaughter." Neither she nor the Royal family had the least idea that the massive hype surrounding the 1981 wedding of Charles and Di would never abate.

By the end of the same year, the Queen, in an unprecedented move, called all the UK newspaper editors to a meeting at Buckingham Palace to ask them to give her pregnant daughter-in-law some peace. It didn't work, and the rocky relationship between press and princess was never resolved.

William can recall the



■ Kate must sometimes wonder if Diana would have approved of her marrying William.

worst excesses of the paparazzi hounding his mother. He has already voiced his concerns when Kate has been harassed by the media. Two years ago Kate successfully sued a photographer who snatched photos of her playing tennis on Christmas Day.

Only two weeks ago, her mother Carole contacted

as a Search and Rescue pilot. This will also give them breathing space, away from the press, palace and public, which Diana never had.

Kate has the advantage that she is almost a decade older than Diana was when she joined the Royal family. She also has the confidence gained from

read some of her step grandmother, Barbara Cartland's romances on honeymoon while Charles perused the works of his mentor Sir Laurens van der Post, and those of the psychologist Carl Jung.

Besides her lack of education, Diana also bemoaned her unhappy, fractured childhood. After the birth of two daughters and the death of an older brother just hours after birth, Diana's parents were desperate for a son to carry on the Spencer earldom.

"I was meant to be a boy," the princess later lamented. She was also deeply affected by her parents' separation when she was just six.

Diana would have been delighted that Kate comes from a happy family and that William has been made to feel so welcome by the Middletons.

So much so, the prince reportedly calls Michael "Dad".

Diana would have wanted to take Kate to one side and give her some words of wisdom about coping with royal life.

William has done his best to pass on what he knows would be Diana's concerns, but also, in her absence, he has asked his aunt Sophie Wessex and his step-mother Camilla to give Kate the pep talks that no-one gave his mother.

Diana was so proud of both William and Harry but had a special concern for her elder son, as he would one day inherit what she called "the top job".

She would no doubt be happy that he's so clearly in love. She would also be pleased her daughter-in-law has been given the time and freedom to evolve into the role of a princess and the support she never had.

Above all she would be thrilled that, when it comes to marriage, the son who is "so sensitive like me" has made the right choice.

“ Diana was the original royal superstar and Kate is the nearest thing we have to that today ”

the Press Complaints Commission after being bothered by photographers on mopeds as she shopped with her other daughter Pippa.

Once the wedding is over, William and Kate plan to return to Anglesey for much of the time, while William continues his job

her time at Marlborough School and then St Andrews University where she gained a 2:1 degree in History of Art, beating William's 2:2 in Geography.

They are intellectually equal as well as soul mates.

Diana on the other hand, admitted to being "as thick as two short planks" and