



ROYAL NAVY GALAXY

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First Sea Lord Tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

I am deeply saddened to be writing to you today after the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Her loss will be felt across the Service and she will be deeply missed by us all. I know many of you had the opportunity to meet her during her reign and that you appreciated greatly her warm engagement.

This will be a deeply momentous time for the nation. Very few of us have known any other Monarch. In the coming days we, as a Service, will perform our final duty on her behalf. Whether taking part in the funeral procession, assisting the huge numbers of mourners expected in London, or behind the scenes, many of you will be called on to support. I am in no doubt that you will answer that call with dignity, with pride, and perhaps - understandably - a sense of sadness. Whether you are immediately involved in the next week, or covering gaps by those who are, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on Her Majesty's remarkable life, and in particular her close and personal connections with the Royal Navy.

Service, dedication and respect were watchwords that guided her life. All the tributes we have heard since her death pay testament to her commitment to the Nation and the Commonwealth.

On her 21st birthday in 1947, as the Princess Elizabeth, she addressed the country and declared that her whole life, whether it be long or short, would be devoted to the service of her people. The commitment she made then never wavered, and her service to all peoples, not just those of the nations to whom she was Monarch, drew no distinction in its care or impact.

Her Majesty's experience of Naval Service life began when she married the then Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten shortly after the War. She often remarked she had such happy memories of her early married life as a young wife in Malta, where Prince Philip was then based. She was immensely proud of the Duke of Edinburgh's outstanding successes in the Royal Navy including

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command of HMS Magpie. It was a particular source of pride for her to be able to bestow the office and title of Lord High Admiral on His Royal Highness on the occasion of his 90th birthday in 2011, marking his years of devoted support.

Her Majesty has played a central role in the life of the Royal Navy for over 70 years. Having launched the battleship HMS Vanguard in 1944, she would go on to launch the Royal Navy's first nuclear submarine, HMS Dreadnought, on Trafalgar Day 1960, and most recently the aircraft carrier which carries her name. Her Majesty also spent extended periods at sea with Her Navy: from the Royal tour to South Africa in 1947 in HMS Vanguard, to her many happy times aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia. Alongside her, Prince Philip gave decades long service as Captain General of the Royal Marines and in 2006 Her Majesty bestowed the titles of Commodore-in-Chief on other members of the Royal Family to reaffirm these close bonds.

Her Majesty had particularly close links with the frigate HMS Lancaster - the Queen's Frigate - to whom she was the Ship's Sponsor as Duke of Lancaster, and also the aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth. And it was particularly poignant for Her Majesty to approve that one of the next generation of nuclear submarines be named after her late father, HMS King George VI.

More than anything else, though, it was her support for the women and men of Her Fleet that was most clear to see, evident from the photos published after every visit to a front line unit or support establishment, or indeed when we received an invitation to a Royal event. She was always interested in what those she met had to say, delighted in our stories and empathised with our emotions, and our families were never far from her thoughts. She recognised the unique part that each and every one of us – whether civilian or military – played in making her Royal Navy what it is, and encouraged us all in being the best we can be.

Her generosity, pride and support for her Armed Forces was consistent throughout but, as the daughter, wife and mother of naval officers, she had a special affinity with the Royal Navy. We were the more fortunate for it, and she has shaped us for the better.

As a Service, and individually as citizens, we owe her a debt that we can never repay.

May she rest in peace.

God save the King!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Key". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.