

THE ROYAL WHORE

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As I'm sure is the case with many of you this paper started out far differently than it ended. My wife and I celebrated our 50th anniversary in London a year ago tonight. We had our children and grandchildren with us, the latter for the first time.

We took them to the wonderful Cabinet War Rooms, that series of interconnected rooms under the Board of Trade building where Churchill and his wartime cabinet met and conducted war efforts from 1939 to 1945. Don't miss it when you're in London next even if you already have been there. For, in February of 2005, a fine addition was made to the "Rooms". Called simply the "Churchill Museum" it is a few good-sized rooms packed with Churchill memorabilia from his childhood to his death.

Later that week we visited friends in Kent who took us to Churchill's "country place", Chartwell Manor. It is preserved by a trust set up for the purpose in the same condition as when Lady Churchill died. It contains many of his paintings, a brick wall he constructed, dozens of awards, over a hundred honorary degrees and, most interesting to me, a good sized library with first editions of his books.

That settled it. The paper would be about Churchill. I'd always admired his writing, had read many of his books, and could bring fresh material to the club based on these visits.

But, as I started down this path, doubts developed. Surely he's the subject of many Literary Club papers in the past so isn't there a spin off I could develop? As I read more of the history of his time a quote came to mind:

"At long last I am able to say a few words of my own. I have never wanted to withhold anything, but until now it has not been constitutionally possible for me to speak."

Those of you who are students of English royal history will recognize these words as the opening of a radio address given by King Edward VIII, who had assumed the throne on the death of his Father, King George V in January of 1936. Now, on the evening of DECEMBER 11TH, of the same year, barely eleven months later, the King of England, speaking to the largest audience in history, formally announced his abdication. It came after a tumultuous two-week period in

which Englishmen, Scotsmen and Welshmen, and indeed much of the civilized world, had taken sides

English historians seemed to agree that this was the most important speech ever given by a member of the British royal family, as Edward became the first British monarch ever to resign voluntarily. The formal short abdication letter had been signed that morning in the presence of his three brothers.

His place was taken by the oldest of the three, Albert, Duke of York, who took the name, George when he ascended to the throne at midnight on the 11th and immediately bestowed on Edward the title of His Royal Highness the Duke of Windsor. George VI, of course, went on to become the famous wartime King and the father of the present Queen.

Edward was born in 1894 and christened **Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David ...Windsor...**his monogram requiring especially large bath towels. He was raised by a male nanny, his valet, and one of the royal butlers, “Finch” by name. He attended the Royal Naval College and Magdalen College, Oxford, which he left at twenty to accept a commission with the Grenadier Guards. He was soon in the trenches of France and was an inspiration to both officers and non-coms often choosing to eat with the latter, something rarely done by officers, let alone a Prince.

Though he was determined to lead troops in action, Lord Kitchener, Secretary for War, flatly forbade this. As he wrote to the Prince:

“If I were sure you would be killed, I do not know that I should be right to restrain you. But I cannot take the chance of them ever taking you prisoner”

He was often close to action, however, and, after his first night in the trenches he wrote to the King:

“Father, my impressions that night were of constant close proximity to death, repugnance of the stink of the unburied corpses and general gloom and apprehension. It was a real eye opener to me, now that I had some slight conception of what our officers and men have to go through!! The whole life is horrible and ghastly beyond belief.”

It was, of course, a terrible war, probably the worst in history in terms of casualties and deaths per soldier in combat. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme over 19,000 British were killed and 60,000 wounded. This toll was increased by epidemics that swept through the rat-infested trenches. Periodically the men were sent “over the top:” to try and regain ground in the “no mans land” between Allied and German trenches. Over time most ground taken would likely be retaken with great loss of life to the aggressors. And back and forth it went for four years. It was this particularly mindless and dangerous exercise that changed the world’s view of war and Edward’s as well.

He was twenty-four when the armistice was declared and soon found himself in demand by veterans who had heard of his service, admired him and wanted to see him “close up”. He obliged with an active interest and visits to many chapters of two vet’s organizations in the UK, both set up after the war to provide relief and benefit to veterans.

A touching story illustrates his devotion.

Visiting a hospital in Belgium in 1923, which treated soldiers suffering from facial disfigurement wounds, he was told there were twenty-eight English veterans in the hospital but, when being introduced, he counted only twenty-seven. After his greetings to the men, individual hand shakes and kind words for all he inquired if one had passed away. No, he was told, but the last soldier’s wounds had left his face in such repulsive condition that the hospital director felt the Prince should be sheltered. Edward insisted on seeing him saying this man, more than any, had a claim on his time. He was taken to the patient’s room where he went up to the man and kissed him.

He visited veterans in their homes, their hospitals, their places of amusement and their meeting halls. He met the widows of those who never returned home and assured them that the Crown was there to help and that he would try to secure funds from Parliament for their benefit.

These Royal visits gave discomfort to the Conservative PM Stanley Baldwin who was concerned that the Prince – and then King- was raising false hopes among former servicemen and poor miners that the government would come to their aid when, in fact, adequate funds hadn’t been

appropriated. Nor were they likely to be in an England where the taxes paid by the ruling rich could hardly be expected to be sufficient to comfort so many poor.

And even in the depths of the depression the rich stayed very rich, considered work and aid to the poor beneath their station, traveled often, entertained lavishly, maintained country and city homes, numerous expensive automobiles and large domestic staffs.

However, it was clear that Edward was cut from different cloth. His concern for the ordinary working man was a trait not seen since Queen Victoria's reign which ended in 1901. His Father and Mother, King George V and Queen Mary and grandparents, King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra had spent their years traveling from one palace to another, rarely meeting their subjects. Indeed, their travels were predictable years in advance:

Buckingham Palace in the winter

Windsor Castle over Easter

Sandringham House in the autumn

Balmoral Castle in the heat of summer

It rarely varied except for an occasional short stay on the royal yacht plus, in his Father's case many hunting trips.

Quoting from the *South Wales Argus* on November 19, 1936 referring approvingly to Edward's disdain of hunting: "His Majesty does not like shooting either stags or birds. In this he is a great contrast to his late Father. With George V all shooting was a passion and he had shot not only stags, pheasants and partridges in Great Britain, but all kinds of wild animals all over the world"

For those of you in the club who are shooters let me pass on some stats on the late King's ability (or perhaps the amount of birds that were planted for driven shoots).

Quoting a letter from a member of the royal household: "At one outing he shot a thousand out of the total bag of four thousand birds" and another account in the summer of 1922 referred to the King having "a fine shoot of 1335 grouse" (Even Dick Cheney doesn't have days like that!)

Edward not only disdained his Father's time spent with gun and rifle, but also felt that his parents and grandparents had done nothing to improve the life of their subjects thus reinforcing the famous English separation of the 2% "haves" from the 98% "have-nots".

And both as Prince and King, Edward traveled often. He visited more than thirty Commonwealth countries. Parenthetically, when I first read this I couldn't believe there were that many Commonwealth countries and checked to find that, at that time there were fifty. Surprisingly, there are now fifty-eight. I have footnoted the present members¹

On a visit to America, where the British royal family still enchanted us, he was given a ticker tape parade said to be close to Lindberg's measured in tons of paper picked up the next day.

And, for the eighteen years between the armistice and his abdication he was the most public persona in the British Empire including his father the King and various prime ministers. He was perfect for the new art form of newsreels, those five-minute "News of the World" shorts shown before the previews in movie theaters throughout the world. As a charming, photogenic and sympathetic member of the royal family he became loved, not just respected, as were his forbears since Queen Victoria.

Let me give you a one-minute review of the three generations preceding Edward's to set the stage for his style.

Edward's great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, had nine children and reigned for sixty-four years, a record that still stands though her great-great granddaughter would break it if she hung on to the throne for ten more years. Victoria brought with her rule upright family values and a largely unsuccessful attempt to lead her subjects to the moral high ground.

¹ As of 2001 the complete list of over fifty Commonwealth Countries included: Antigua & Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji Islands, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Her oldest son, Edward VII, assumed power on Victoria's death in 1901. He was then sixty and had spent his adult life thumbing his nose at his Mother's moral code. He indulged himself in women, food, drink, gambling, sport and travel. His wife, Alexandra turned a blind eye to his extra-marital activities, which continued well into his sixties and found him implicated in several divorce cases.

Next came King George V, the hunter, who left a far different stamp. As his own official biographer felt compelled to admit, his rule was distinguished *"by no exercise of social gifts, by no personal magnetism, by no intellectual powers. He was neither a wit nor a brilliant raconteur, neither well-read nor well-educated, and he made no great contribution to enlightened social converse. He lacked intellectual curiosity and only late in life acquired some measure of artistic taste"*.

Now our hero, Edward VIII succeeded George V and was a far different man not only in his concern for commoners but also for his enjoyment of good parties, fine wine and beautiful women.

He was the most sought after bachelor of his era, surpassing even Rudolph Valentino among young females of all ages and nationalities. He spoke fluent French and German and passable Italian and Spanish, which helped immeasurably when he was charming, fine ladies abroad.

In January of 1923 the New York Times front-paged a story announcing that Edward was to marry Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon one among many he had been seen dating. A week later Buckingham Palace pointed out that the Lady's engagement was not to Edward but to his brother Albert, called Bertie and later King George VI. Thus confusion was understandable. He had dated Lady Elizabeth in the past year but his Brother won out. She, of course, became the mother of the present queen and the very popular Queen Mother who died at the age of 101 in March of 2002.

In addition to squiring around his future sister-in-law, Edward had, during the past three years, been linked romantically with at least four members of royal families in Romania, Spain, Sweden and France. His well publicized affairs seemed to delight his subjects as much as his visits cheered them.

So why was this popular and talented leader of the royal family now abdicating?

Let us hear some more of the speech:

“..You must believe me when I tell you that I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as King as I would wish to do **without the help and support of the woman I love.**

And I want you to know that the decision I have made has been mine and mine alone. This was a thing I had to judge entirely for myself. The **other person most nearly concerned has tried up to the last to persuade me to take a different course.**”

The “other person” referred to was not, of course, any of the princesses mentioned above but one Wallis Warfield Simpson, an American who was divorcing her second husband and who carried with her a lot of baggage – both literally and metaphorically.

Edward had first met her at a party five years earlier and it had blossomed into a serious affair after Gloria Vanderbilt’s sister Thelma Furness, who had been the Prince’s closest friend, traveled to New York asking her friend Wallis to “look after the little man”. Three months later, on her return “her friend” had captured the Prince.

Their late night dinners and weekends together increased until it was clear that he ranked her ahead of all other suitors, the worst possible outcome from the point of view of the Archbishop of Canterbury who would have to place a crown on this man’s head some day. As the Archbishop wrote: “It was bad enough that Edward knows little and, I fear, cares little for the Church” adding later that he had serious doubts that he could bring himself to consecrate the king at the coronation ceremony as it was unsuitable for the nominal head of the Church of England to marry a divorced woman let alone one twice divorced with both former spouses still alive.

It seems clear that many who worried at the prospect of the affair turning into a marriage hoped the relationship would cool when the Prince became King, however, his resolve only strengthened. She, on the other hand was daunted at the prospect of becoming Queen writing in her memoirs that:

“I told him I didn’t want to be queen. All that formality and responsibility...I told him that if he stayed on as King it wouldn’t be the end of us. I could still come and see him and he could still come and see me. We had terrible arguments about it. But he was a mule. He said he didn’t want to be king without me and that, if I left him, he would follow me wherever I went.”

But why abdicate? After all Home Secretary, Sir John Simon, commented that the King was “the most widely known and most universally popular personality in the world.” He should be able to marry whomever he wished whenever he wished. Certainly some would object but most would be pleased that their King, now forty-two, was happy.

His popularity notwithstanding, the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, breathed a sigh of relief at the King’s abdication. For the previous month the PM had been busy making it clear to the King that his loyal government would oppose the king’s marriage to a twice divorced woman.

A quite interesting idea had floated to the surface in the weeks prior to the speech. While the King was visiting the poor in depressed Wales, Wallis was invited to lunch at Claridges by Esmond Harmsworth, Chairman of the Newspaper Proprietors Association representing himself and Lord Beaverbrook. These two controlled many of England’s papers and they had a suggestion that was hoped would solve the PM’s objection to the marriage.

Harmsworth proposed that she and Edward enter into a morganatic arrangement. Wallis would marry the King but would remain a private citizen and, should they have any children, they would not be in the line of succession. She would be a Duchess and rank just below the three Royal Duchesses. Important to the English she would be “Her Highness”, not “Her Royal Highness”... and, she would not be entitled to curtsies.

Wallis was amazed at the idea and said she’d have to pass it on to the King for his consideration. In her memoirs she said that, after hearing the proposal she “knew less than ever of the marvelous workings of the British political mind.”

When the King heard from Wallis he asked Harmsworth to try it out on the PM who, when hearing it, made no commitment. However, according to the historian A.J.P. Taylor, this put the

ball in the government's court. The King was now asking them for something whereas previously, they had been asking him for something – not to marry this particular woman.

The next day the King summoned Baldwin and asked if he'd considered the Morganic proposal. The PM replied that he was not yet ready to respond but that, if the King wished a "horseback opinion", he believed the government would not assent to the arrangement. He went on to ask the King if he wished to submit the proposal formally, adding that this would also require putting it before the Prime Ministers of the Dominions. Edward asked that he do so and realized, as Baldwin left Buckingham Palace, that he had perhaps taken a greater risk than warranted. The battle for the throne had begun.

While the stories of Wallis and the King had been circulating for months in American newspapers, the English papers and the BBC had kept a lid on the romance. There were rumors, of course, perhaps starting with English tourists who had returned from America, but it was not until December 2nd that the Fleet St. news tape carried the headline that the Bishop of Bradford, one Dr. Blunt, had reproved the King's conduct and suggested that he should "give a more positive sign of his awareness of God's grace".

The King's defenders leapt to his side. A Scotsman wrote "If your Majesty desires that the Bishop of Bradford be bayoneted I shall if you will so command, be happy to do the deed....even though I am, at heart, a pacifist".

A letter written to the Bishop began, "I think you may be fairly described as a toad."

The Bishop's remarks, as mild as they were, opened the gates a bit and the British press roared through. Two days later the stories were throughout Britain and the Empire. The lines were drawn. The *Times*, *Morning Post* and *Daily Telegraph* were against the marriage. The *Express* and the *Mail*, controlled by Beaverbrook and Rothmere, supported it, as did the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Sketch*.

Beaverbrook commented: "We have all become King's men or Cabinet men". It was as if the whole country was back in the 1600's with King Charles and Cromwell. Indeed, the same terms were used in the press and picked up by the public three hundred years later. The royal supporters were Cavaliers and the opponents Roundheads.

Baldwin forced a decision through his cabinet that either the government must accept Wallis as Queen or the king must abdicate...there would be no compromise. The next day the King accepted a delegation of the high commissioners for Canada, Australia and South Africa. To his chagrin they made it clear that the dominions as well would never accept Wallis as queen.

Hitler, meanwhile instructed Herr Goebbels to forbid any German newspaper or radio station from mentioning the crisis for he considered the King an ally who had expressed support for both Germany and Italy in past years, seeing them as a bulwark against an aggressive Communist Russia. To make matters worse in Britain, Oswald Mosley, head of the British Nazi party came out for the King.

On December 4th Wallis, fearful of violence against her and convinced that she could only hurt Edward with her presence, departed under an assumed name on the Channel ferry to stay with friends in Cannes. Her maid arrived the next day with sixteen trunks and thirty-six suitcases. So much for the earlier reference to literal baggage. What about the metaphorical baggage she carried?

Her first marriage at age twenty-two, in 1919, was to an attractive naval officer, Winfield Spencer. She went with him from Pensacola to Shanghai where the US maintained a naval presence. And there she discovered she had married an alcoholic, and a mean one at that. She left him in 1923 and returned to America where, after a year, she was persuaded by Win that he had reformed, pleading with her to return. In March of 1924 she set sail from New York for Hong Kong, a trip that took over six weeks. Wallis later called it “the original slow boat to China”.

It was in China, according to the British SIS dossier, that she was introduced to the famous “singing houses” of the Crown Colony, luxurious brothels where the residents were trained in certain lesbian techniques as well as new and varied methods of giving men pleasure. The dossier contained witness’s testimony that Wallis had been taught “perverse practices” going in to some detail on her mastering the art of Fang Chung, part of the Taoist tradition which allowed her to “arouse even the most moribund of men while at the same time delaying ejaculation”. This was supposed to help prolong life and health.

This same China secret file also contained information about Wallis's involvement in drug dealings obtained from Chinese who claimed to have dealt with her. One commented that, even during her marriage to Win she was a notoriously kept woman and that she was bedded down by wealthy men including a Chinese General. One of the many books about Wallis told of a scandal among Navy wives at the time. She was having a rather open affair with Italian Count Ciano a keen supporter of Mussolini who later became his son-in-law and Italy's foreign minister. According to the wife of Admiral Milton Miles Wallis became pregnant by Ciano and had an abortion. This caused her severe gynecological problems and prevented her from becoming pregnant in the future.

Ciano, himself, could be the subject of a literary club paper. He never trusted Hitler, and worked against Italy allying itself with Germany. Eventually he turned on his father-in-law, Mussolini, was tried for treason by a Fascist court, and, in 1944, executed by a firing squad.

It may be worth noting in Wallis's defense, that her memoirs downplay the Ciano affair and other friendships in China and, a biography of her written by an American, Greg King, claims that there isn't a shred of evidence to support the existence of the SIS dossier. However, another American biographer, Leslie Field, was working at Buckingham Palace in the eighties and claims to have talked to palace insiders who had examined the dossier in detail. These anonymous sources told her it was even worse than the speculation and that the contents were quite believable.

While all this alleged whoring around was going on, Wallis had determined that Win was, if possible, even a worse alcoholic than before. She left him once again, this time for good, and set sail back to the states in the spring of 1925 to establish residence in Virginia where she filed for divorce on the grounds of desertion. It was granted in December of 1927 but she had, while waiting, grown restless in the horse country and started spending time with friends in New York City.

It was through one of her friends there that she met the Ernest Simpsons, he a handsome American businessman who had interests in England as well as America, and she the attractive daughter of a Massachusetts Supreme Court judge.

Simpson, now 29, had left Harvard in his senior year, sailed to England to join the Coldstream Guards and become a British subject. He had a good job at a ship brokerage firm opened by his father and kept homes in both London and New York. He was by all accounts, happily married and had a young daughter.

His wife was quoted on Wallis:

“From the moment I met her, I never liked her at all. She moved in and helped herself to my house, my clothes and finally, to everything.”

Indeed Wallis and Simpson soon were seen visiting galleries and museums and openly flirting at popular restaurants in New York. A year after they met, her divorce was granted and Simpson, still married, asked Wallis to become his wife as soon as his divorce was completed.

They were married in July of 1928. Wallis wrote to her Mother:

“I am very fond of him and he is kind which will be a contrast. I can't go wandering on the rest of my life and I really feel so tired of fighting the world all alone and with no money. Also, 32 doesn't seem so young when you see all the really fresh, youthful faces one has to compete against.

Three years later, through friends in London, she had met the Prince of Wales who, within another year invited the Simpsons to a weekend at Belvedere Castle after which he became a frequent guest at the Simpson's dinner parties for they felt obliged to entertain to keep up appearances. Ernest often protested to Wallis the cost of her lavish parties for the crash had badly hurt his savings and the boat brokerage business was in trouble.

But by 1933, after five years of marriage she was bored with Simpson and was thrilled, on sailing to America to visit her favorite aunt, to receive a telegram from the Prince wishing her well and telling her to hurry back. On her return she picked up the royal relationship with fervor. According to Edward's equerry in memoirs published fifty years later:

“The techniques Wallis discovered in China did not entirely overcome the prince's extreme lack of virility. It is doubtful whether he and Wallis ever actually had sexual intercourse in the

normal sense of the word. However, she did manage to give him relief. He had always been a repressed foot fetishist and she discovered this and indulged the perversity completely. They also, at his request, became involved in elaborate erotic games. These included nanny-child scenes: he wore a diaper, she was the master. Thus through satisfying his needs she earned his everlasting gratitude and knew that he would be dependant on her for a lifetime”

What may be more important to the historians studying pre-war English-German relations is the friendship she had established with Hitler’s special advisor on foreign affairs and later foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop. It began in 1934 when she and the Prince attended a party at the German embassy where she first met the minister.

After the war papers were discovered that indicated that Ribbentrop, along with Hitler and Eva Braun, were fascinated by Wallis. Some months after the party Wallis began receiving a daily delivery of seventeen red roses with a note of admiration from Von Ribbentrop. Rumor had it that she had spent seventeen nights with the foreign minister. Meanwhile the Fuehrer was playing films of her apparently taken by British newsreel companies and sent to him via diplomatic pouch. It was a mutual attraction for the King and Wallis firmly supported Mussolini and Hitler believing Fascism better than Communism in Western Europe.

Edward, now the Duke of Windsor, left England soon after his speech to stay with Austrian friends. Wallis, meantime stayed in southern France trying to avoid the ever present press. Her second divorce was granted in May of 1937. A month later she and the Duke were married in France.

Wallis later recalled to Gore Vidal that she “woke up on the morning after their wedding and David (as the Duke was called by friends and family) was standing beside the bed with this innocent smile, saying, ‘ And now what do we do?’ My heart sank. Here was someone whose every day had been arranged for him all his life and now I was the one who was going to take the place of the entire British Government trying to think up things for him to do....such a waste”.

On October 22 they accepted an invitation from Hitler to join him for tea at Berchtesgaden. The Fuehrer sent a private train to pick them up with Rudolph Hess as their guide. Both German and English histories of the visit make little of it for the conversation, even when Hitler and the Duke were alone, was mostly pleasantries. Yet an avalanche of criticism hit them the next day. They

were accused of being taken in by the very forces that threatened peace, that they were dupes and meddlers in foreign policy best left to the elected government.

As relations between Germany and England deteriorated in the late thirties the Windsors repaired to France, as Buckingham Palace let it be known that the Duchess would not be welcome in England. The Duke's sister-in-law, later the "Queen Mum", reputedly referred to Wallis as "that royal whore."

After the war began and France fell Edward was appointed Governor General of the Bahamas. He and Wallis sat out the war in Nassau, returning to Paris in 1946 where they lived unhappily for years in "de facto" exile from the UK. In 1966, the Duke was quoted in an interview in the NY Herald Tribune re. his pre-war German sympathies:

"My forebears were German and there was much in that country's character that I admired. I acknowledge now that I let my admiration for the good side of the German character dim what was being done to it by the bad. I thought that the rest of us would be fence sitters while the Nazis and Reds slugged it out. I felt that the immediate task was to prevent another conflict between Germany and the West that would bring down our civilization."

Meanwhile his niece, Elizabeth, became queen in 1952 and strove to restore good relations with her relations. Though the Duke and Duchess maintained their official residence in Paris they were told they could visit royal relatives in England and, in turn be visited by them. There was increasing interest by the Queen in her uncle's health, and, indeed, in Wallis. Her last visit to the Duke was in May of 1972 when she, the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Charles visited him in Paris. He died ten days later and was buried with great ceremony at Windsor Castle. Wallis walked with the casket.

After fourteen lonely years in Paris, beset with increasing health problems, Wallis died in April of 1986, two months short of her ninetieth birthday. Cincinnati's own Reverend Jim Leo, serving as the Duchess's pastor in the American Episcopal church of Paris was quoted by the French press as saying that death "came round the corner as a very gentle friend, and she was content, she was happy."

Her funeral took place at St. George's Chapel at Windsor and was attended by one hundred seventy five invited guests. Sixteen members of the Royal Family attended including the Queen, her husband, Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Even the Queen Mother, who had despised her sister-in-law for half a century attended.

According to witnesses, she appeared "unusually serene".