

*Philip: His Turbulent Early Life* is a superbly researched account of the first three decades of the Duke's life. Gyles Brandreth's *Philip and Elizabeth: Portrait of a Marriage* is a witty overview of the royal couple's life together and benefits from access to many 'new' sources including the Duke's alleged *amoureuuses*. Basil Boothroyd was the first to interview the Prince about his life in detail for his *Prince Philip: An Informal Biography*.

Over the years, I have also seen the Duke in action during more than 500 public and private engagements and several state visits abroad.

I would like to record my thanks to Joe Little, managing editor of *Majesty* magazine, for reading the manuscript and offering advice, to portrait painter Richard Stone for recalling his sittings with the Duke and to graphologist Tracey Trussell for analysing the Duke's handwriting for me. Finally I am indebted to Simon Wright, commissioning editor of The History Press, for agreeing to publish the book and for coping with the author's tardiness during this oddest of years.

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November 2020

Before Clarence House was ready for them to occupy in the summer of 1949, Elizabeth and Philip lived with the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace. Growing stir-crazy, from time to time the Duke and his old navy friend Mike Parker would escape for 'an evening stroll'. More than once they were locked out and Parker had to give Philip a leg-up over the palace wall. On another occasion the two men took a dip in the Buckingham Palace swimming pool after a late dinner. The member of staff detailed to look after the pool locked it up, little imagining anyone would be using it at that hour. It took much hollering before another member of staff was alerted to rescue them.<sup>3</sup>

It was a case of old habits dying hard when the Prince and Parker went in search of nightlife after the Edinburghs had moved to Clarence House. Finding himself locked out of his own home, Philip resorted yet again to a leg-up over the gates. Told about the escapade the following morning, Princess Elizabeth commented drily: 'Serves them right!'<sup>4</sup>

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# IT'S NOT FOR ME, IT'S FOR A FRIEND

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One of the perks of being a royal prince is that autographs are, by tradition, not given out other than on official signed photographs or Christmas cards.

Philip avoided them even before joining the firm. As a prince of Greece, he was a mild celebrity in Scotland when he

attended Gordonstoun School, and his activities, from playing in the hockey team to carrying out patrol duties for the Elgin coastguard, appeared in the local press. One day when he was approached by a tourist eagerly waving an autograph book he signed it 'Baldwin of Bewdley', the title given to former prime minister Stanley Baldwin when he was ennobled after leaving office in 1937.

According to one approved biographer, Philip's reluctance to sign 'comes from an abhorrence of being regarded as a "celebrity", most hollow of twentieth-century accolades.'<sup>1</sup>

Once at a dinner at St George's House, Windsor, the assembled guests signed their menu cards and passed them round the table. They eventually accrued next to Philip's coffee cup and when he was prompted to sign them he retorted: 'I am not a pop star!' Another time, while visiting an RAF base in Germany, the commanding officer ambushed him into signing the day's programme as he was about to board his aircraft. 'This is not usual,' said Philip in full Lady Bracknell mode before grudgingly signing and storming off.<sup>2</sup>

When his signatures do make it onto paper, what do they tell us about the man who wrote them? Leading graphologist Tracey Trussell says, 'The tall, regal, confidently large sized, and vertically composed arrangement of letters, usually firmly underlined, packs a prestigious image and transmits exactly what you would expect from royalty.' The first letter 'P' dominates the signature. 'The large size conveys pride and commands respect,' claims Tracey, 'and the stylish "bloated" loop, located in the upper zonal region, tells us he is undoubtedly achievement orientated and cerebrally charged, with a mind that is always one step ahead.' The final 'P' of his name also stands out with its broad loop, 'which is an indication of someone who can be outspoken and blurt things out without thinking. Stubbornness

can be seen in the hooks at both the beginning and end of his name. The slight left slant of the writing is a nod to irreverence? It would seem that ‘you are what you write’ clearly applies in the Duke’s case.<sup>3</sup>

His cousin Lady Pamela Hicks points out that his signature reflects the land of his birth. ‘I think it’s rather marvellous he signs himself with the Greek “P” even if he doesn’t have a drop of Greek blood in his veins.’<sup>4</sup> Lady Pamela is referring to the Greek letter ‘phi’ which later became ‘ph’ as in ‘photo’, ‘anglo-philic’ and of course ‘Philip’, written as a circle with a vertical line through it – Φ – which is how Philip usually signs himself on his paintings.<sup>5</sup>

As a fan of the now defunct magazine *Punch*, Philip attended one of its legendary weekly lunches. It was a tradition for the editor to ask the most distinguished guests to carve their names on the Victorian wooden dining table. Alongside the scratched signatures of Mark Twain and Charles Dickens, the Duke etched his letter ‘phi’.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the rejection of his family by the Greek government and the assassination of his grandfather King George I on Greek soil in 1913, as a youngster Philip very much honoured the country in his signature. At school in Cheam he sent the headmaster, Harold Taylor, Christmas cards from ‘Philippos’ with the Greek version written underneath.<sup>7</sup>

Although he has been approached for autographs several times, there is no record of his ever being asked for a ‘selfie’, so historians can only imagine his response on that one.