

THE VISIT OF H.R.H THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS IN 1957

by

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Introduction

I have quite an interest in the Royal Family and what they did during their early lives, including where in the world all of them have visited. I was planning on doing all the Royal visits to the Falkland Islands because my thought was that not a lot of Royal people had visited the Islands but then I found out early into my research that there has been quite a lot of visits so I made the decision to just cover the first of the two visits that the Duke of Edinburgh has made to the Falkland Islands.

Who Is The Duke of Edinburgh?

Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark was born in Corfu, Greece to Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark and Princess Alice of Battenberg on the 10th of June 1921, the youngest of five children and the only boy. In 1930, due to his parent's separation, he was sent to England to be raised there by his maternal grandmother and uncle. In 1940 Philip had started his career in sailing by serving as a midshipman, then getting his first posting on the HMS *Ramillies* of the Mediterranean Fleet. Then some years later, after building himself up in his career, on the 10th of July 1947 he got engaged to Princess Elizabeth and was married at Westminster Abbey on the 20th of November 1947. Just before his marriage day his name was changed from Lt. Philip Mountbatten to His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

In 1956 he launched the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This rewards children for achievements in personal development and community involvement.

Furthermore during 1956 to 1957 the Duke of Edinburgh went on a four month world voyage to some of the world's most remote parts including South Georgia, Tristan da Cunha, Ascension Island, St. Helena and of course the Falkland Islands. The boat that the Duke of Edinburgh travelled on was called the *Britannia* and on that tour he travelled 72,420 miles. Although the Queen had not joined him on this voyage they had been to many places all over the world together.

Many years after his first visit to the Falklands he returned once more. This visit was from the 7th of March to the 13th March 1991.

What the Duke of Edinburgh did on 7th of January 1957

The Duke of Edinburgh arrived in Stanley Harbour on Her Majesty's Yacht *Britannia* anchoring at 8:30 am; originally the Duke of Edinburgh was to arrive in Stanley harbour on Friday 4th January 1957 and then depart for South Georgia on Saturday 5th January 1957 late at night but then that got changed for the Duke to arrive on 7th January 1957 then depart for South Georgia on the 9th of January 1957. Soon after the Duke of Edinburgh had anchored the Falkland Island Defence force (FIDF) fired a 21 gun salute welcoming him to the Falkland Islands. This must have been a very big celebration for the Falkland Islands at this point due to their not being a Royal visit to the Falkland Islands for seventy five years.

The Duke of Edinburgh landed on the public jetty at 9:00am, wearing a naval uniform and sporting his new beard that he and his private secretary and equerry Lt-Commander Michael Parker had both decided to grow since leaving New Zealand. He was welcomed first by Governor Oswald Arthur, who was to be accompanying him everywhere on his visit, and secondly by members of the Executive Council, Legislative Council and Heads of the all the Churches including their wives.

Then The Duke of Edinburgh walked along the front road (Ross Road) which had been decorated especially with banners, the first one on Ross Road saying "Welcome Your Royal Highness", bunting and flags to make the Duke of Edinburgh feel welcome. That wasn't the only thing the Town were doing to try and make the Duke feel welcome, bigger efforts were made and some of Government Offices had a new coat of paint especially for his visit. The Duke then greeted and inspected the Guard of Honour by the Royal Navy, Falkland Island Defence Force (FIDF) and the Royal Marines. Ross Road had been closed to traffic between the hours 9:00am to 10:00am due to the public of Stanley wanting to greet the new Royal arrival. He then passed the Boys Brigade and Girls Life Brigade, which in those days were an international Christian youth organisation and were on parade each side of the road. Beside them were the local school children and the general public. By the time that the Duke had finished walking along the front road he had arrived at the corner of Dean Street at Arch Green, where there was a car waiting for him to be taken to Government House to get changed and make his way to his next engagement.



The Duke talking to the Boys Brigade

The Duke actually raced in the Sailors Race; he rode Mr Les Hardy's horse called Italia which was a big success because he came in first place, which must have made him very happy. He was in competition with the Lt--Commander and Britannia's Captain. After his victory he travelled back to Government House for some lunch with invited guests.



The Duke on Mr Les Hardy's horse Italia

At 2:30am he left Government House and drove to the King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH). Due to this Ross Road and Dean Street were closed once again to traffic between 2:15pm and 3:50pm, also Reservoir Road and St. Marys Walk junction. His visit started with him being greeted by the Senior Medical Officer, who then showed him around the Hospital, with the members of staff helping the Duke understand the wards, and he had a talk with some of the patients. After leaving the hospital he then drove to Infant Junior School via Reservoir Road, Ross Road and Villiers Street.

On arrival at the Infant Junior School he was welcomed by the Superintendent of Education (Director of Education) and the Senior Mistress of the Infant Junior School, via the east entrance. At the time of The Duke of Edinburgh's visit it was the school holidays, so the school children were asked to show up at the schools; the Senior School students were asked to line up in the playground, while the Infant Junior School students were seated at their desks in the classrooms. This must have been one of the most special parts of the Dukes visit to the Falklands due to the Duke at that time having two children of his own (Charles and Anne), and not seeing them for a quite a long time it would have reminded him of them.

After the school inspection the Duke then travelled to Sappers Hill to watch an exhibition of peat cutting near the water tank. This exhibition had been especially arranged for the Duke's visit. During this he got close up to Dick Henricksen in action and he must have had a real fascinating experience on how Stanley homeowners had to work to heat their homes.

Next he was driven to the Rifle Range to see the last few minutes of the shooting competition between a team from the Royal Yacht and the Falkland Island Team. The Duke then presented the winners with an award. He then travelled back to Government house for some tea. He certainly seemed to be well fed on his visit!

Later at 4:45pm the Duke of Edinburgh was driven from Government House to visit the Gymnasium to see an exhibition of agriculture which included sheep and fleeces from twelve farms with the Farm Managers and Head Shepherds in attendance. There was also a display of horse gear. This event was organised by the Sheep Owners Association. There were also exhibitions from wool spinners, weavers, and dyers so that the Duke could see what the wool could be turned into. That was organised by the Spinners and Weaver's Association. The exhibition was then later opened for the general public between 2:00pm and 3:00pm the next day (Tuesday 8th January).

When The Duke left the Gymnasium he drove to Arch Green to plant a tree to commemorate his visit to the Falkland Islands. When the Duke arrived he was welcomed by the Chairman and members of the Town Council including their wives. Unfortunately this particular tree has not stood the test of time as there is no tree now in this position on Arch Green today.



The Duke planting a tree at Arch green

Next the Senior Chaplin escorted him to the Cathedral. The Duke was on his way to go back to the Public Jetty, so that he could then board the Royal Barge, which took him back to the *Britannia* for a dinner party that he threw as a celebration of his visit to Stanley, the dinner party started at 8:00pm.

After the dinner party the Duke then returned to the Public Jetty at 10:13pm where he was driven to the Town Hall for the Colony Ball. Doors opened at 9:15pm and closed at 9:55pm. When the Duke arrived he was greeted by the Chairman of the Town Council and his wife once again. When the Duke entered the Town Hall and made his way down the stairs to the dance floor area the National Anthem was played as a sign of welcome. On the dance floor there was a special place near the stage especially for the winners of the races that had taken place earlier that day. As the Duke got onto the stage he was accompanied by members of the Executive Council, the Legislative Council, the Town Council and the committees of the Sheep owner's Association and the Joint Sports Associations accompanied by their wives. The Ball was organised by the Stanley Sports Association and this event was limited to 700 tickets and 250 of them were reserved for people coming in from Camp – people had

been invited from all over the Falkland Islands and some were collected by ship from remote farms because it was quicker for them to come to Stanley by boat rather than ride in by horse. People were keen to come to the prize giving and Colony Ball to get a glimpse of The Duke of Edinburgh. In addition tickets were also issued to each household in Stanley. The Duke of Edinburgh presented prizes for some of the winners of the major trophies at the two-day Stanley Sports Meeting and the special meeting held earlier that day. The Duke had actually won an award for the Sailors Race so he was presented his trophy by the Chairman of the Stanley Sports Association, there was great applause in the room, as you would imagine the Duke getting this award must have been a huge honour to witness, seeing as, he had just arrived at the Falkland's that very morning. After the prizes were presented there was a dance held. The Duke had decided to stay for an hour to watch all of the fun of a traditional Falklands Dance, then later into the night he headed back to Government House, where he stayed for the night instead of going back on board the *Britannia*.



The Duke at the Town Hall

That was the end of the Duke of Edinburgh's first day in the Falkland Islands.

What the Duke of Edinburgh did on 8th of January 1957

The Duke of Edinburgh started his second day on the Falkland Islands by first of all leaving Government House at approximately 9:30am, going to the Public Jetty and getting on board the *Alert* to go out to a Beaver Aircraft (a type of aircraft that lands

on the water not on the ground). It was planned that if the weather was too windy for flying then instead the Duke would have visited the Aircraft Hangar. The purpose for this flight was for the Duke to fly over the Great Britain at Sparrow Cove and also some settlements including Port Louis and Fitzroy. However he did actually land at Goose Green Settlement and he visited Darwin School. When I was doing my research at the Library, the Librarian found a document, including a submission to Dundee Press from the Head Teacher of Darwin School, Mr David Masterton Honeyman, which detailed the visit well. In this submission he said *“When the Duke of Edinburgh visited the Falkland Islands on his return from the Olympic Games in Australia, two boys of the Darwin Boarding School had the honour of speaking to the Duke. The first boy was Terence Morrison, aged twelve, who had a prize in the pony race at the Stanley Sports Meeting at which the Duke had also rode in. When Terence came to be presented with the silver cup, The Duke had asked him about his pony “Paint”. Did he think it was so quick? How old was the horse? Did Terence ride much? Where was his home? When Terence told him he rode often, and came from Darwin, the Duke then asked him if he attended the new school at Darwin, and being told that he was a boarder there, the Duke asked him how he liked it. “Fine, Sir” replied Terence. Another boy who met the Duke was Peter Greenway the son of the Medical Officer at Fox Bay on the West Falkland. He also was asked by the Duke where he went to school, and on telling him that he and his sister both attended Darwin School, the Duke was really interested to know how they liked it.”*

The text also mentioned that The Duke of Edinburgh had spoken to Mr Honeyman on board the Britannia when he had been on board for a tour, while they were on this tour the Duke seemed to be very interested in how the school system worked and asked a lot of questions regarding the school and the children.

The whole Beaver flight took around 70 minutes in total, and the Duke returned to Stanley where he was picked up and then driven back to Government House for smoko. After this short break he then drove to the Racecourse for the second time in two days .. The reason why the Duke was visiting the Racecourse again to see an exhibition by three working sheep dogs. These were the three dogs from the open championship held the previous Sunday (6th January 1957) and involved each dog having to collect sheep and put them in a pen all in the allowed twelve minutes time frame with a three minute break between dogs. The dog owners that were included in the event were called Peter Robertson, David Barton and Ewan Morrison. By the time that the Duke of Edinburgh left the Racecourse it was 12:05pm.

The next destination for the Duke was a visit to Meteorological Station and radio stations, the route that the Duke took was Ross Road, Philomel Street North, Crozier Place, Hebe Street and then finally Davis Street. As the Duke left the Governor’s car he was welcomed by Mr Carring, the Chief Meteorological Officer. Mr Carring

talked about the duties and how important it was for the people on the Falkland Islands to receive the weather to organise farm work and other duties. After a while Mr Carrington explained how they got their information, this then led to the department releasing a weather balloon up into the sky on its journey. At this point in time this was used as one of the main ways to collect information for forecasting. Mr Carrington's job was considered a very important job in the Falkland Islands. Now that the radio station was getting more modern they could at that point start to broadcast the weather information at regular times of the day or week Island wide. By the end of the tour the Colonial Secretary and Sir Ramon Priestly (who was one of the Scott Antarctic Expedition people) had also joined the group.

After the Duke left the Meteorological Station and radio stations he returned to Government House for lunch with invited guests. After lunch the Duke had planned to spend the afternoon for recreation of his own, but this did not happen and he decided as an extra he would watch a football match on the pitch which is just a short walk from Government House. The match was Falkland Islands XI versus HM Royal Yacht Britannia and was organised by the Falkland Islands Football League with kick off at 3:00 PM. The winners of the match were given a cup that was presented by the Falkland Islands Government.

Also during that same afternoon the Duke went on an outing with the Governor that included them going on a horse ride and the Duke getting close to some Gentoo penguins. It was said that the Duke was an avid horse rider. The gear that the Duke rode on was traditional Falkland Islands made from cowhide with a sheepskin on top. After this the Duke was then brought back to Stanley in the Agriculture Land rover driven by Edward Fern, an Agricultural Officer. Another fascinating thing that happened during that afternoon was that The Royal Marine Orchestra from *Britannia* held an Orchestral Concert in the Town Hall.

After this event had finished the Duke then left for the Public Jetty on the Royal Barge. Between the hours of 7:00pm to 9:00pm the Duke held a reception for invited guests on board. The reception was held in the dining room and the Duke mingled with his guests mostly discussing events that he had attended during his visit to the Falklands. The dress code for this event was lounge suit and if you were one of these people that got invited on board for a reception it would have of course been a huge honour and something I'm pretty sure you would never forget. The number of guests invited to this event was 172 people. Once the event was over, the *Britannia* set sail to West Falkland going through the sound, for the second part of the Duke's visit to the Falkland Islands.

What the Duke of Edinburgh did on 9th of January 1957

At 8:30am the *Britannia* anchored at Fox Bay East with the HMS *Protector*, the total journey from Stanley to Fox Bay was a 120 mile journey. On board the HMS *Protector* there were the Colonial Secretary, the Colonial Treasurer, The West Falkland Member of Executive Council (Mr H.C Harding) and dignitaries. All of these people when they arrived proceeded to Mr Clement's House, who at that point was the Farm Manager. The Duke left the *Britannia* via a boat and the journey to the jetty at Fox Bay East took approximately fifteen minutes. It was arranged that if the weather was quite bad then another boat called the *Philomel* was on hand to bring him in or at least try to help. When the Duke finally arrived at the port he was wearing a suit, raincoat and hat. He was welcomed by Mr Wickham Clement the manager (who would be responsible for the organisation of the Duke's visit), his wife, also the Government Medical Officer, Doctor and Mrs Greenaway. The Duke then proceeded past the wool shed. One of the main things that the Duke saw was drafting in progress, this is where sheep get sorted into different types just before shearing. In 1957 there were 12,000 sheep at Fox Bay alone. There were only two types of sheep at that point, these breeds were a cross between sheep types, the reason for this was to keep the wool as fine as possible. During this experience of drafting the Duke had asked many questions including the methods used for this type of activity and comparing them to the methods used back in the United Kingdom.

The Duke then carried on with his tour by going to inspect the new recreation centre, followed by the Government wireless station and finally the wool shed. After the Duke had seen all of these places he was then going to speak to the farm workers and their families, during his walk to meet these people Mr Clements sheep dog had followed them. All the farmers had dressed up very smartly for this special occasion. The Dukes next visit was to the Radio Station, this may have been one of his favourite places to visit as his interest in scientific items was known. At Doctor Greenaway's house the Duke then did another inspection but this time on the surgery, this inspection would have been quite a serious one due to Fox Bay being quite isolated also, seeing as there are loads of duties that are very dangerous indeed. Smoko was then presented at the Manager's house for the Duke. At 12:45pm the Duke held lunch on the *Britannia* for invited guests, some of these guests were Mr and Mrs Clement, the Governor, Mr and Mrs Denton Thompson (Colonial Secretary), Mr and Mrs Trean (Colonial Treasurer) in total there was seventeen people invited on board. After the lunch was over the guests then sailed back to Fox Bay East at approximately 2:00pm.

This was the end of the Duke's visit to the Falkland Islands and *Britannia* soon left Fox Bay to set sail to South Georgia – the next stop on the Duke's World Tour.

After the Duke had left the Falklands and Dependencies he left this message to the Governor. *“As I leave the Falkland Islands and the Dependencies I want you to know how much I have enjoyed the last ten days and the many interesting things I have seen in these Islands. Please thank the Falklands Islands Legislative Council for their very kind message of farewell on my departure and I would be most grateful if you would express my gratitude and appreciation to all the people who had a hand in making my visit such a pleasant and enjoyable experience, to all the people of the Falkland Islands for their welcome, the leaders and members of the FIDS bases and the whaling companies of South Georgia. I send you all my very best wishes for a happy and prosperous future. Phillip”*

It was also noted that the Duke said after his departure of the Falkland Islands that he found the Falklands very similar to Scottish coast islands.

Again whilst I was carrying out my research at the Library I was given a book called “To the Falklands at the Toss of a Coin” By Brian Wilde. The author of the book used to be a Sheep Farmer at Fox Bay Farm, including the time when the Duke had visited there, in his book there is a very detailed chapter about what duties he had to do during the Dukes visit. For example he mentions that for the Dukes visit, the settlement of Fox Bay needed a bit of a spruce up, so a couple of men from Stanley were engaged to paint the settlement houses on contract. The only houses that were not painted were the cookhouse, cowman and gardeners cottage; this was because they expected the Duke would not be bothered in looking at these buildings. When the day had arrived all the gang had the day off but were expected to turn to about eleven o'clock to show the Duke an exhibition of shearing and how the sheep fleeces were dealt with. Also the gang had to produce a bale of wool just as the Duke arrived. Finally in the book Brian mentions that his fellow foreman Mike had tried to arrange a boat race between the crew of the *Britannia* and the crew from Fox Bay East. Sadly due to weather conditions it was decided not to go ahead with this. I found the chapter in the book very interesting due to the author being an eye witness of this key event, also it shows how much the Islands wanted to impress the Duke by organising buildings to be painted for example. Finally the chapter tells us how committed the author was to his job, for example when he ran from one place to another just to impress the Duke on how things really worked on a sheep farm in the Falkland Islands.

It is also interesting to note that a helicopter from HMS *Protector* carrying a news broadcaster and a photographer was also there and the reason for this was to get live coverage of the Dukes visit to West Falkland for United Kingdom press. The reporters had also covered the time the Duke was in Stanley and other places he visited.

Conclusion

In my opinion I think the Duke of Edinburgh sure did have a very busy visit, looking at his schedule he really did have a lot of events to attend. However he must have enjoyed his visit in 1957 because the Duke did in fact return to the Falklands for his second between the 8th March to the 13th March 1991, the reason for this was a civil and military programme, and included new places of interest to him whereby he went on a fishing expedition to Chartres on West Falkland and a wildlife expedition on both Carcass Island and Pebble Island.

To commemorate the Duke's visit in 1957 a Postage Stamp collection was issued which showed scenes from his visit to Falkland Islands along with South Georgia and the British Antarctic Territory.

Every child that was of school age was given a souvenir medal to commemorate the Royal Visit also a Union Jack Flag, it would be interesting to see how many of these medals exist today.

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