

Reflections on Queen Elizabeth II

Tonight I will attend a service of remembrance in Wokingham.

It will bring on again that sense of loss we feel . The only monarch we have ever known, a constant in our changing lives, is to be buried tomorrow. A funeral brings a finality, an ultimate reckoning that someone treasured will not return. Never again will we see her on our tv screens or at an event we attend. There will be no more wise words or amusing encounters with Paddington Bear.

In my mind will flood the poignant images and memories of the short service and opening vigil in Westminster Hall. As I stood there with other Privy Counsellors I was overwhelmed by the sadness, the solemnity, the silence awaiting the arrival of the Gun carriage. No-one spoke. I wanted to think about our late Queen and take in the austere beauty of the Hall awaiting its dead sovereign. The grey stones of the walls and floor needed the explosive colours of the flag draped over the coffin and the gold, yellow and reds of the uniforms of those to guard her to bring it to a stunning magnificence. That mighty room was dominated by its new centrepiece, where all eyes were fixed.

The sun rushed through the yellows of the North window, commemorating her Diamond Jubilee. The tolling bell and the orders of the military occasionally broke the silence. No-one entering that place could be in any doubt that we marked the passing of a great lady, who in death as in life was seen in regal magnificence. No-one stirred, spell bound by the scene and the silence.