

Death of Queen Elizabeth II

Rosemary Phillis

Queen Elizabeth II passed away peacefully on 8 September 2022. Although in the months leading up to her passing she had looked increasingly frail, her death still came as a shock.

The Queen had reigned for 70 years, so for the majority of local residents, she was the only Monarch that we had known. I remember assemblies at Riverstone Primary School where we would sing "God Save the Queen" and then we would salute the flag after reciting, "I Honour My God, I serve my Queen, I salute the Flag".

In 1970 the Queen and Prince Philip visited Australia. Their route took them along the Windsor Road and students from schools in the district were taken out to watch them drive by. It was an event that has stayed in the minds of all of us who were there at the time.

On the news of her death, around Riverstone, flags at the Cenotaph and the local RSL sub-Branch Hall flew at half mast.

The morning following the announcement, at a meeting of the North West Business Chamber (previously known as the Riverstone, Schofields & Districts Chamber of Commerce), a minutes silence was observed.

Local Facebook pages ran posts with photos of the Queen and these attracted many comments of condolence, memories and respect.

There was an air of genuine sadness in the local community, as the media had commented, for many of us it was like we had lost a grandmother. For older people, such as my mother, they had lost someone who had grown up and aged at the same time as they had.

The local newsagent ran out of printed copies of daily newspapers as people purchased copies to keep for posterity. This is a continuing tradition, the Riverstone Museum has a selection of papers covering Royal people and events, collected by local residents over the years.

On the day of the Queen's Funeral, three of the free to air television stations broadcast the funeral and processions, ad free. I can't remember another event of such length being broadcast this way. Our family, like millions around the country, sat in front of the television and watched the funeral for hours. To me it felt like I was farewelling another grandmother. Vale Queen Elizabeth.



1970. Students line the Windsor Road at Vineyard. Photo: John Cole.