

Philip and Elizabeth – Portrait of a Marriage by Gyles Brandreth. Century 2004.

The marriage of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and Queen Elizabeth the Second is one of the most pored over in the world as well as being one of the most enduring. Following unprecedented access as both observer and interlocutor Gyles Brandreth has produced not only a superbly written portrait of the marriage but a wonderful and much deserved panegyric of Prince Philip, a man whose constant and wilful misunderstanding and misrepresentation by the British Press ranks as a most serious stain on the reputation of the Fourth Estate.

Brandreth tells the story of the childhoods and single years of Philip and Elizabeth, and in most cases allows the contrasts that are all too obvious to draw themselves. Through the personal story that unfolds we see how the character of both has been shaped, and also how they have achieved the successful melding of their different personae so as to become such a formidable partnership.

Brandreth peppers his text with footnotes, sometimes asides on what he has written above, sometimes, amusingly, 'advertises' for places he mentions, at others supplementary historical information. His approach to his subjects is warm, positive and friendly, but it is never fawning and at times is strikingly honest. He also makes rich use of his opportunities to demolish most convincingly some of the nastier myths and rumours about the Duke.

This is a wonderful book for a royalist, or for anyone who seeks a greater knowledge and understanding of a marriage that has been part of the fabric of our lives and a unique model of selfless service to our country.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh