

15 September 2022

A tribute to the Queen from our Executive Director, Ben Freeth MBE

When I met the Queen at the Investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace in October 2010, what impressed and amazed me most was her genuine interest in others, and the way she did her homework in finding out about who she was going to meet beforehand. It was clear to me that she was devoted to serving others.



Receiving an MBE from the Queen at Buckingham Palace on 13 October 2010

She knew that our house on Mike Campbell's family farm in Zimbabwe had been burnt down in 2009 and she asked all about that. She had a real interest in Zimbabwe and wanted to know how things could be made better for everyone.

I was so struck by her genuine, hospitable spirit and by the way it extended to all of her staff as well. They knew exactly who we were when we arrived at the Palace and greeted us by name so graciously, warmly and welcomingly. I thought that I would feel totally out of my depth, but the warmth made me feel remarkably at home!

Memories of the Queen will continue to reign over us, and over the hearts of many of her subjects for years to come.

Her first visit to Southern Rhodesia was in 1947, shortly before her 21st birthday, as the world was recovering from Hitler's war. Southern Rhodesians had responded magnificently and the country had been the first dominion to join Great Britain in declaring war to fight the Nazi war machine. They distinguished themselves admirably wherever they fought and gained the respect of all who fought with them.

On one of the days of the Royal visit, the future Queen was taken to the iconic Matopos Hills outside Bulawayo to climb up to World's View where Cecil John Rhodes, the UK-born founder of Rhodesia, is buried. There is a picture of the wartime king, George VI, striding out ahead up the steep granite rocks.



The young princess Elizabeth is a little behind. She realised that the Queen, her mother, was wearing shoes that were slipping on the granite and were not suitable. She immediately took off her own shoes so that her mother could wear them and ascend safely, and she then proceeded to ascend and then descend in her stockinged feet.



The spontaneous humility of the future great Queen stayed with her for the rest of her days.

The Queen had a genuine faith in Jesus Christ, which showed in her bearing and in her speeches. Her devotion to service and her thoughtful and welcoming spirit were a reflection of those of Jesus. On the world stage she was unashamed of her faith. Her example as such is, I believe, unparalleled. It can - and should - be an inspiration to us all.

May God grant Charles III a similar faith and love for God and for his people.

Ben

BEN FREETH MBE