

25 ways

DIANA SHAPED THE ROYALS

It's been 25 years since the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales – a day the world will never forget, writes **Kerry Parnell**

The Prince and Princess Of Wales at a desert picnic in the UAE in 1989. Photo: Georges De Keerle

It has been 25 years since Diana, Princess of Wales died on August 31, 1997, and over that quarter of a century, the royal family has changed dramatically, thanks to the People's Princess and her lasting legacy.

Diana was just 36 when she died in a car crash in the Pont de l'Alma tunnel in Paris. Her sons, Princes William and Harry, have now become older than she ever was, aged 40 and 37 respectively and Diana's vision for the future was one they have seen through.

"I want them to have an understanding of people's emotions, people's insecurities, people's distress, and people's hopes and dreams," she said in that infamous interview with Martin Bashir for Panorama, in 1995.

To mark the anniversary, here's 25 ways in which Diana changed the royal family forever.

SHE MADE IT NORMAL TO GRIEVE OPENLY

When Diana died, there was an outpouring of grief of a type never seen before – with the gates of Kensington and Buckingham palaces becoming a sea of flowers. The era of the stiff upper lip, as William later said, was over.

SHE CUDDLED CHILDREN

Considering the Queen only did the first walkabout in Australia and New Zealand in 1970, it was a big leap when newlywed Diana started cuddling children on her public outings, a decade later.

AND SHE GOT DOWN TO THEIR LEVEL



Diana with her sons at Kensington Palace. Photo: Tim Graham

As well as cuddling them, Diana famously crouched down to talk to children, sharing personal information with them and making them feel special. Catherine continues to do this.

SHE TOOK OFF HER GLOVES

It sounds silly now, but Diana dispensed with gloves, so she could touch people properly. Gloves, and formality, would become a thing of the past.

SHE EMBRACED AIDS PATIENTS

When Diana touched and hugged AIDS patients in the late 1980s, it was radical, but she knew the power she had to change public perception and bring solace.

DIANA CHAMPIONED CAUSES OTHERS WOULD NOT

She also campaigned for the homeless and mine-clearing charities, literally walking through a minefield in Angola for the Halo Trust. William and Harry later took on her charities.

SHE SHOWED WILLIAM AND HARRY REAL LIFE

Diana was keen her sons saw all sides of life and took them to meet AIDS patients and homeless people, off camera. This had a profound effect on both of them.

SHE MADE IT OK TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Diana was extremely open, even about her bulimia. It paved the way for William and Harry to start their Heads Together mental health initiative and share their



Princess Diana holding the child of an HIV patient in London in 1996. Photo: Jayne Fincher

emotional journeys – something Harry, in particular, continues to do.

HER DEATH MADE THE QUEEN BREAK PROTOCOL

One of the most symbolic changes came when the force of public opinion made the Queen lower the flag to half-mast over Buckingham Palace, breaking protocol, but moving with the times.

... AND SHOW EMOTION

It also forced a shocked Queen to make a much more emotional speech than she had ever done, saying, "What I say to you now... I say from my heart. I for one believe there are lessons to be drawn from her life and from the extraordinary and moving reaction to her death."

HER LEGACY LIVES ON THROUGH THE WIVES

Much was made of Diana being a "commoner", yet she was aristocratic compared to

the women her sons married – Catherine, whose mum Carole was an air hostess and Meghan, a Hollywood actress.

SHE TOOK THE ROYALS TO AMERICA

Although the Queen has always been welcomed in the US, Diana brought rock-star qualities with her when she visited. It paved the way for William and Catherine's rapturous reception in Hollywood in 2011 and later Harry and Meghan.

AND SHE CONSIDERED MOVING THERE

Diana loved the US so much, her butler Paul Burrell said she wanted to move there. Harry did just that.

HARRY CONTINUES HER COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRESS

Diana courted press, often tipping off columnists about her whereabouts herself, but was also tormented by it. This

complex relationship continues with Harry.

SHE STARTED NEW WEDDING VOWS

Does any bride vow to "obey" their husband anymore? That's thanks to Diana, who was seen as extremely modern for refusing to say that when she wed Charles in 1981.

SHE WAS A HANDS-ON MUM

Diana was a young, fun, hands-on mum, pictured splashing in the pool or taking them to amusement parks. She parented in a loving, modern way and every royal mother who followed, did the same.

SHE PICKED NEARBY SCHOOLS

While the Queen had been home-tutored and Philip packed off Charles, Andrew and Edward to Gordonstoun in Scotland, Diana chose Ludgrove Prep, then Eton, near Windsor.

WILLIAM AND CATHERINE CHOSE EVEN MORE EGALITARIAN SCHOOLS

Diana's thoughts on schooling were taken further by William and Catherine, who chose London day school Thomas's Battersea for George and Charlotte.

SHE FLEW WITH HER BABIES

Unlike the Queen, who left baby Charles at home when she travelled, Diana refused to be parted and took infant William with her on their Australian tour in 1983. William and Catherine did the same with George in 2014.

SHE 'WROTE' THAT BOOK

Diana recorded tapes for Andrew Morton's seminal book *Diana: Her True Story*, in 1992. She was determined to get her voice heard and 30 years later, Harry is about to do the same with his autobiography.

THE QUEEN BECAME MUCH MORE FUN

Diana would never have believed the Queen would one day agree to "skydive" into the Olympic Stadium, or take tea with Paddington, but Her Majesty became much more fun as the years went on.

SHE SET A FASHION TEMPLATE

While the young Elizabeth and Princess Margaret were all glamour in their day, Diana was a fashion phenomenon. This continued with Catherine, and Meghan.

SHE WAS DOWN-TO-EARTH

Much is made about her misery, but Diana also had a lot of fun and wasn't afraid to show her silly side, messing about with Fergie on the ski slopes. This would be echoed by her children.

SHE WAS PHILANTHROPIC

Diana didn't just attend events to raise awareness, she went one step further when she sold her gowns for charity in 1997 in New York.

SHE PLANNED TO MAKE DOCUMENTARIES ...

Before her death, Diana was excited to be starting to make documentaries, her first being on illiteracy. Harry and Meghan continued this vision.