

JAMESTOWN 2007: SOME SEE MONARCH'S VISIT AS CROWNING MOMENT

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Local British-royalty fans, past and present, wait on pins and needles for a peek of Queen Elizabeth II.

When the queen touches down in Hampton Roads, the giddy factor seems to rise.

She's got old-school worldly respect. She's got new-school celebrity worship.

And this week, seeing British Queen Elizabeth II will be a life highlight for countless local residents.

Perhaps no one demonstrates that thrill more than 19-year-old Valerie Hopkins, one of a handful of College of William and Mary students who have been told they'll share an audience with the queen during her visit to the college Friday.

Hopkins, the student assembly's vice president, said she had been trying to figure out a way to meet the queen for months. She's even pestered a friend working in the British Embassy to make it happen, she said.

"There'll be nothing else of this magnitude while I'm in college," a giggling Hopkins said. "I still can't believe it." She said friends had joked about transferring to William and Mary to grab a glimpse of the queen.

And it looks as if the queen will be adding a title to her lengthy list of honorifics. The senior class president plans to make her an honorary member of the class of 2007, said Hopkins, a sophomore herself. "All I'll probably be able to say to her is 'How do you do?' and 'Congratulations,'" she said.

Even still, not all locals are as lucky as Hopkins. Many will be able to see the queen only from afar, including Andrew D. Greenwell. He's recovering from open-heart surgery and will wistfully watch the royals on TV, he said.

It won't be easy: When the queen visited the United States in 1957 to mark the 350th anniversary of Jamestown, Greenwell was a student at the University of Maryland. He saw the queen personally as she watched a college football game from the stands in College Park, Md.

Only his recent surgery could keep him from that delight again, said the 77-year-old Hampton resident -- whose grandfather attended the 1907 Jamestown commemoration.

"It's almost like seeing Mother Teresa," Greenwell said, referring to the late Nobel Prize-winning nun. "It's inspiring to see people like that. We hear plenty of horrible things, but seeing a person like that -- it's refreshing, it's uplifting."

The excitement over the visit by Elizabeth and her husband, Prince Philip, to the Williamsburg area has simmered for months and, of late, has begun noticeably bubbling over.

With it, the rumor mill has been working overtime -- so much so that the owners of the Williamsburg Winery's as-yet-unopened hotel had to quash rumors that they would house the royal entourage while it was in town.

Instead, the queen and her companions likely will stay at the Williamsburg Inn, as they did in 1957.

Also keeping with the queen's last visit will be a carriage ride down Colonial Williamsburg's historic Duke of Gloucester Street, scheduled for the evening of May 3.

Those who planned the queen's trip aimed to provide as much visibility of her as possible, a CW spokesman said. But the energized crowds along the promenade bring with them the added concern of security.

In 1957, that was Oscar Gardner's problem. Gardner -- then a sergeant with what was known as Colonial Williamsburg's Police Department -- was one of four officers who walked alongside the carriage. He was in the front, by the horses, he said.

By that time, Gardner was familiar with dignitaries walking his streets -- starting for him with President Harry S. Truman in 1948. For the queen's 1957 carriage ride, the only bump in the road was a renegade photographer who wanted a closer shot and refused to stay behind the ropes.

Gardner, now 85, said he and the other officers simply blocked the photographer with their bodies until he got discouraged and sneaked back into the cheering crowd.

"I think security will be harder now," said Gardner, who suggested the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy as the moment when the rules changed. "There'll be more officers, and people will be checked more. We didn't check anyone then."

In part to mitigate huge crowds during the queen's visit to Richmond, officials will set up giant viewing screens. But to see the queen better in Williamsburg, viewers will want to get as close as they can.

This can result in dangerous crowd dynamics, said Chris Stuart, vice president of Top Guard Security in Hampton. Top Guard was hired by the First Landing Foundation to protect an area of Fort Story over the next three months.

Stuart cited the April 16 Virginia Tech massacre in showing how difficult it was for security and police officers to predict the potentially dangerous actions of someone who was mentally ill.

"Their concern will run the spectrum from someone like that to an international concern and everything in between," Stuart said. "There's no day off from planning and worrying."

But even the eager anticipation shown by British-royalty buffs doesn't worry Stuart too much. CW will be dealing with a "more educated, more sophisticated" bunch, he said, with the smallest likelihood to develop a mob mentality in any event.

As those royal-family fanatics might be aware, the queen is scheduled to visit the re-created fort at Jamestown Settlement, while Prince Philip is expected to check out the replica ship Susan Constant on the morning of May 4.

The couple will then head to Historic Jamestowne before the queen lunches at CW's Governor's Palace and visits William and Mary. Meanwhile, Prince Philip plans lunch in Norfolk, leading up to an afternoon reception aboard the battleship Wisconsin.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. *

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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