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Alice: Princess Andrew Of Greece



Synopsis

"In 1953, at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Princess Alice was dressed from head to foot in a long gray dress and a gray cloak, and a nun's veil. Amidst all the jewels, and velvet and coronets, and the fine uniforms, she exuded an unworldly simplicity. Seated with the royal family, she was a part of them, yet somehow distanced from them. Inasmuch as she is remembered at all today, it is as this shadowy figure in gray nun's clothes..."Princess Alice, mother of Prince Phillip, was something of a mystery figure even within her own family. She was born deaf, at Windsor Castle, in the presence of her grandmother, Queen Victoria, and brought up in England, Darmstadt, and Malta. In 1903 she married Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark, and from then on her life was overshadowed by wars, revolutions, and enforced periods of exile. By the time she was thirty-five, virtually every point of stability was overthrown. Though the British royal family remained in the ascendant, her German family ceased to be ruling princes, her two aunts who had married Russian royalty had come to savage ends, and soon afterwards Alice's own husband was nearly executed as a political scapegoat. The middle years of her life, which should have followed a conventional and fulfilling path, did the opposite. She suffered from a serious religious crisis and at the age of forty-five was removed from her family and placed in a sanitarium in Switzerland, where she was pronounced a paranoid schizophrenic. As her stay in the clinic became prolonged, there was a time where it seemed she might never walk free again. How she achieved her recovery is just one of the remarkable aspects of her story.

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Customer Reviews

Though a bit heavy on some of the details this book is an extremely fascinating look at Princess Alice, mother of Prince Philip, consort to Queen Elizabeth. She was a dynamic and very interesting woman of humble means who ended up dedicating the majority of her life to the service of others. Very good read.

Being a collector of books on Queen Victoria and her descendents, I've read quite a few. I've never read anything by Hugo Vickers before. I have to say I was pretty disappointed. I understand that the sources of information must have made it difficult for Mr. Vickers to come up with a story that could flow, but I agree with another reviewer who said that a lot of it is no more than a list of events. The first few chapters in particular seem to be just a spewing of random facts, put down in no particular order, leaping and hopping all over Europe through various families. Characters in the book are often not clearly identified. As someone pretty familiar with Queen Victoria and her family, I knew who they all were but I kept thinking that someone who didn't would have a very tough time figuring out who's who. While the family charts at the back help, with there being so many of them, often sharing the same names, it's not easy to find one name and then work out how that person relates to others. The footnotes were helpful in some cases, but often pertained to people who were far from important to the flow of the Princess' story and really didn't need the elaboration. Also, the pictures were quite disappointing. I love looking at pictures of that huge and fascinating family and find it amazing that with all the royal resources at his disposal, these were the best he could manage. Having said all that, I will give Mr. Vickers the credit for helping me get to know the life of a Princess I knew very little about before. A lot of WHAT she did is here. WHY she did it - her thought processes, emotions and motivations remain somewhat obscure to me. I understand to a degree why that is; she didn't give an interview for the book! Yet the whole thing left me with a nagging feeling that someone else could have taken the same facts, the same sources and resources, and come up with a much better book. Regarding the Princess herself, I think it's quite possible that at least some of her supposed mental illness was in fact a very real and valid exploration of spirituality

that at times went off the rails. Today she would not be judged or treated anywhere near as harshly. A hard person to understand in her entirety, I don't feel this book offered all that much insight. As an irrelevant aside, her life shows something I see over and over with UK and related royal families - a tendency to constantly, endlessly travel! Some of the chapters in this book seem to just be a list of trips that Alice took: to visit, to vacation, to attend family events like weddings, funerals and sickbeds, and apparently just to not sit in one place for more than a few weeks. I suppose when you're royalty and you have other people making your travel plans and booking your transportation, taking off for a few weeks or a few days to another country is no big thing. They never seem to stop. Bottom line for me, this was a small hole in my book collection that I'm glad to have filled. I now have knowledge about a descendent of Queen Victoria I didn't have before. However, I'm also glad I paid so little for it because although there are lots of facts to learn, it's not great reading.

Learned a lot about the history of Prince Phillip's family, mostly about his mother, of course. Apparently, emotional and mental instability are not just the province of the poor and down trodden. The upper echelons of society also have their "quirks." Her story speaks of her struggles and the efforts of her closest relatives to see her through her problems, not always with good results. Her strength of will to survive and overcome the mental and emotional issues of her life is amazing and uplifting. Her dedication to helping others is also truly awesome. Reading about his mother made me have a better understanding of Prince Phillip and his eldest son, Charles. Good story, would recommend to anyone interested in England's royal family.

I would imagine that most people outside the ranks of royalty enthusiasts have never heard of Princess Alice of Battenberg, Princess Andrew of Greece. If anything, they know her as Prince Philip's mother. And that's a pity, because Hugo Vicker's new biography reveals that Alice Battenberg was a truly remarkable individual. Alice was a great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria, which must have seemed her only interesting point at the time of her birth. Her father was morganatic (half-royal) and her mother a princess from a minor German state. Her first years were spent among her multitudinous family (Vickers provides footnotes and trees to help sort everyone out), in the background and unnoticed. Alice's marriage was hardly a glamorous match. Prince Andrew was a younger son of the King of Greece and while charming, not all that interesting. Alice lived quietly until the 1920s, when a revolution in Greece and her own personal troubles caused her a certain notoriety. Vickers does a good job of covering Alice's physical and emotional ailments and is most successful in describing her growing religious faith. In this Alice is similar to her two Russian

Aunts, Tsarina Alexandra and Grand Duchess Elizabeth. During World War II Alice protected a Jewish family at grave risk to herself, so that she was later declared Righteous Among the Gentiles by Israel. After World War II Alice continued to live in the background, now overshadowed by her only son, Prince Philip, who became the consort of Queen Elizabeth II. She remained a loving and wise part of the Royal Family however, as memories of her from her grandchildren and other relations attest. Alice, Princess Andrew of Greece deserves a place in the library of anyone interested in royalty as well as anyone who cares to read about honorable and decent people.

I found Princess Alice to be a fascinating woman. Her mental illness in my opinion was not mental illness at all but the thoughts of a woman born before her time. She wanted to be allowed to have her faith, she wanted a better world for women. Her son (HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh should be proud of his mother.

I chose this book for it's historical importance. You do not always get "the rest of the story" without digging deeper. I have been interested in the Royal Family forever. Their connection to the "Continent" in all aspects, has been a time line worthy of investigating. This topic of the Lady in question is very enlightening in as much as it pertains to the Victorian era and the character of Her Majesty in general. From other readings I have gleaned much about all the players on the board who made up the past and present of the phenomena which we know as the Aristocracy. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the above references to the Kings and Queens of the 19th century.

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