

Prayers for 25th April 2021 Jan Teale

I wonder how many of you were glued to the television last Saturday to watch the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral? I certainly was. St George's chapel at Windsor is an awe-inspiring building isn't it? It set me thinking about St George himself – who he was and what he did. With 'his day' near the end of the month on 23rd April, it seems a good time to think about him.

Little is really known about George, but it is believed he was a soldier living in Palestine at the beginning of the fourth century. The emperor Diocletian was beginning a series of persecutions of Christians, so George died for his faith about 304AD in a place called Lydda (in these days, a place very close to Israel's Ben Gurion airport). There were already churches in England dedicated to him well before the Norman Conquest.

The main thing that we think we know about George is that he killed a dragon. We don't really know if this is so – it could well be a case of mistaken identity with St Michael who himself wore armour, as George did, when he slew the devil. Or it could be that he was confused with Perseus (of ancient legend) killing a sea monster in a place near Lydda. Icons drawn and painted have a lot to answer for!

What we do know is that George replaced Edward the Confessor as patron Saint of England following renewed interest in him after soldiers returned from the Crusades. King Edward III made George Patron of the Order of the Garter, which seemed to confirm George as England's patron saint.

The Collect for 23rd April, St George's Day, sums up very well his contribution to our history and our faith. For our prayer I can think of nothing better than to use an extract from that collect:

God of hosts, who so kindled the flame of love in the heart of your servant George
that he bore witness to the risen Lord by his life and by his death:
give us the same faith and power of love
that we who rejoice in his triumphs
may come to share with him the fullness of the resurrection.

And we pray for the recently departed and for all who are ill, whether at home or in hospital, or who may be sad and lonely, especially those who have lost family and friends recently and for whom life will never be the same again. We pray also for those whose anniversaries are commemorated in our memorial book this week: Walter Alban Watts, Edna Whitaker, Eva Dyson, Arthur Clare, Margaret Marshall and Hilda E Starling.