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tableau. So it would appear that even when inhabitants of this isle are dwelling in the exact same geographical spot it's the differing agendas and intentions, ideologies and inclinations that, at best, see people not registering one another or else taking up a position of seemingly steadfast and unbridgeable difference.

Another image, from 2011 this time, *Watching the Royal Wedding, Hyde Park, London* is – at least, for anyone less than sympathetic to the monarchy – a sight for sore eyes. The thousands of people, or rather subjects, arrayed in front of giant screens showing the royal, somewhat grainy, Buckingham Palace balcony snog. Many are holding camera phones aloft, making their own record of this episode of bread and circuses. The Union Jack flags with hearts at their centre and a portrait of Wills and his new missus

dotted throughout the crowd. For me this is an image of a malign and deeply depressing con.

But that sort of intemperate talk isn't going to resolve anything, is it? Not when the country is so polarised about so many urgent issues that will determine the UK's future for generations to come. I should take a step back, get some perspective. This is often what Roberts' photographs both evoke and enact for the viewer. I need to take up a position that admits not everyone shares my views. Mind you, the wedding thing's about to happen all over again so come May I'll probably be seething.

In the photograph titled *Griffin Youth Club event, Blackburn* six women are ranged laterally across the frame. Standing and sitting in front of a fence behind which is a strip of green and a

1) Annual Eton College Procession of Boats, River Thames, Windsor, Berkshire, 17 June 2016

2) Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Shoreham Air Show, West Sussex, 15 September 2007

3) Download Festival, Donington Park, Castle Donington, Leicestershire, 13 June 2008

grey, empty car park or schoolyard. Beyond that temporary Heras fencing surrounds a half-built structure. Estate housing recedes into the distance.

Kerb stone, double yellow lines and school zone road markings 'adorn' the foreground. Is it rapt attention on some of the women's faces or a frowning disbelief at the entertainment on offer? That two of them appear to be cradling or massaging their necks contributes to a tenseness in the image. It's a tableau that suggests if this is an event then it's not much of one. The main action is out of shot.

What we're left with is a paucity that speaks volumes. Plastic chairs have been dragged out and 'arranged' beside the bus stop, a limp refuse sack tucked in the fence for litter. Postures are strained and clothes – jeans and tees mostly –

elemental. The only male sits on the kerb: signature bright white trainers, baggy trousers, a hoodie that partly obscures his face and on his shirt the legend: 'I'm Big in Japan'.

Everything in this photograph seems to point elsewhere. There is an air of abject half interest. As yet unaware of phrases like 'household income' or 'declining living standards' it's only the toddlers who are engrossed in their play, paying no attention to the diversion on offer.

Even before reading the notes that conclude successive sections throughout *Merrie Albion*, it barely comes as a surprise to learn that 34.9% of Blackburn children live in poverty, one of the worst