

DELICIOUS DESSERTS

**8
PAGE
COOKERY
PULL-
OUT**

THE
**People's
Friend**

38p

THE FAMOUS STORY PAPER FOR WOMEN

EVERY THURSDAY No. 6418 JANUARY 23, 1993

**JOIN
THE
QUEEN
AND
QUEEN
MUM
At
Sandringham**



**SPARKLING NEW STORY SERIES
NOSTALGIC "GRACIE FIELD
HOLIDAY OFFER**

THE QUEEN'S HOLIDAY HOME

With his own never-before-published photographs, IAN LLOYD takes us behind the scenes at Sandringham, with some personal anecdotes of the Royal Family in their favourite spot for winter holidays.

THE sun is beginning to set behind the church clock-tower in the tiny village of West Newton. An old man closes the door of his allotment to wheel his bicycle to the drive at the end. As he does so, he sees a limousine glide to a halt outside the white-fronted church hall.

Inside the hut, the ladies of the local WI are holding their monthly meeting, and they are conscious of the fact that two members are missing . . .

The grey-haired lady in the brown fur coat, followed by her mother, in blue, are late. However, the Vicar's wife, Diana Hall, isn't going to complain since the elder of the two arrivals is their branch president.

In fact, she's been president for over forty years, although she's probably better known to the rest of us by her other title, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

Today she's brought The Queen along. One extra guest isn't going to hurt.

They enjoy being neighbourly, and most of all they enjoy their winter break at the home they're said to love best — Sandringham.

Sandringham House was bought in 1861 for Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, by his worried parents, Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. They paid £22,000 for seven thousand acres in the middle of the marshes and barren heaths of East Anglia.

They tried to convince Bertie that because of the rail link from Lynn to London, he would be conveniently near to the capital. But as Elizabeth II once said, "At Sandringham

Framed portraits of three kings and three queens look down on the WI meetings — every one signed.



Welcome, Your Majesty! The Queen arrives for tea with the WI at West Newton.

I feel a great deal more remote from London than Balmoral." Victoria hoped that her son would feel similarly remote from the high life that he seemed to enjoy only too well.

Victoria was to be sorely disappointed, because whenever Bertie left for Sandringham he would usually take the high life with him. Every time he and his wife Alexandra



Sandringham by J. Campbell Kerr.

All photographs by Ian Lloyd unless otherwise stated.

set off from Liverpool Street Station, thirty guests usually followed them.

BERTIE and Alix moved into the house in 1863, had it extensively rebuilt four years later, and it remained virtually unchanged until Alix died in 1925.

In fact, Sandringham still has a strongly Edwardian atmosphere about it. Paintings of Bertie, Alix and their children are dotted around the drawing-room, and much of the decor has remained unchanged.

Sandringham had 365 rooms until The Queen had 91 demolished. It also boasted a dairy, a slaughter-house, greenhouses, stables, kennels, a monkey-house, an aviary, and even its own power-station.

Edward designed Sandringham to be his own Versailles, a place for fun and relaxation. Friends enjoyed hospitality on a scale so lavish that it's difficult to imagine today.

After a lavish 3-course breakfast the guests were treated to a snack of turtle soup while they watched the shooting on the estate. Lunch at two-thirty was followed by tea at four, a nine-course dinner at half-past eight, and supper of grilled oysters before bed at one-thirty.

Just in case they felt peckish during the night, the Prince thoughtfully provided them with a bedside dish of roast beef!

Queen Victoria regarded Sandringham as little better than Sodom and Gomorrah and only visited the place twice in forty years, once when Bertie was very ill. Victoria complained that Norfolk was "rather wild-looking, flat, bleak country", and she wouldn't have been amused to be contradicted by the present Queen.

Remember the documentary "Elizabeth R"? "How any-



A keen royal gardener seeks out tips at Sandringham Flower Show.



On her way home after a delightful chat with the WI.

The lake at Sandringham. Alix's summerhouse, the "Queen's Nest", was built in 1913.

body can say that Norfolk is flat round here I don't know!" The Queen exclaimed.

"Dear old Sandringham, the place I love better than anywhere else in the world," wrote the Queen's grandfather.

George V didn't actually move into the big house until his reign was nearly over, since Alix held on to all 365 rooms for her own use, while the King and Queen Mary stayed in the cramped villa on the estate — York House. George's house parties were far more sober affairs than his father's, concentrating largely on shooting.

His successor, Edward VIII, didn't particularly like Sandringham, and his only notable contribution to life there was to return the clocks to Greenwich Mean Time.

Canon Hall's sermon looks as if it took a trick today!



Leaving the flower tent at Sandringham Flower Show — with a few free samples, by the look of it!

For over seventy years the clocks on the estate had been thirty minutes fast (apart from one week in 1889 when Queen Victoria visited!). This was devised by Bertie to maximise the hours of light — or, some say, to take account of Alix's notorious unpunctuality.

When Edward abdicated, he sold the Sandringham estate to his brother Bertie, who became King George VI.

"I have always been so happy here and I love the place," he wrote to his mother, Queen Mary.

With the help of his wife — and fifty-eight gardeners, of course — he created a private garden at the side of the house. It was designed to include pink roses, shasta daisies and herbaceous borders, all neatly separated by box hedges.

Sadly the King didn't see his garden flourish. He died in his sleep at Sandringham, after a good day spent out on the estate.

THE wind blows keen from the Wash and the spring is said to be unendurable in that part of Norfolk," wrote a shivering lady-in-waiting in 1863. The Royals are, of course, a hardy bunch, and the present Queen and her family choose to spend the coldest part of the year at Sandringham.

The Queen has always spent January and early February there, but recently, because of the work at Windsor Castle, she's also celebrated Christmas at Sandringham. Since last November's dreadful fire, it looks as if that practice may go on for a few years more.

Sandringham is more of a family home than a stately home. From her desk near the window of her sitting-room, The Queen looks out on the gardens that her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have created. Beside her there are photographs of her mother and her

Continued overleaf.

The Queen and Prince Philip at Sandringham.



Camera Press/O'Neill.



Continued from previous page.

children, and on the walls surrounding her the paintings she and Prince Philip have collected over the last forty years.

Just as Edward VII did, The Queen personally ensures that her guests are looked after during their visits. On arrival, guests are usually taken into tea with The Queen in the drawing-room.

Nearly 150 full and part-time staff work on the twenty-thousand-acre estate. Sandringham is a private house and its upkeep comes directly from the Queen's private fortune.

Elizabeth II may be one of the wealthiest people in the country, but she's certainly not extravagant, so during many of their shorter visits to Sandringham she'll stay at Wood Farm, two miles from the "big house." The farm's often used by The Princess Royal and her children or Prince Edward and his friends when they want to spend a quiet weekend shooting or riding round the estate.

The younger royals quite often travel to Sandringham by train. If Prince Charles is travelling with his children, an extra carriage is tagged on to the scheduled train from London.

Recently Princess Anne even slept on the train at King's Lynn station. Although she was only eight miles from home, she realised she'd waken her mother if she drove up to the front of the house!

When Prince Charles was a baby, the King wrote from Sandringham to Princess Elizabeth. Charles, he said, "is the fifth generation to live there and I hope he will get to love the place."

The prince certainly feels at home there, and frequently invites friends to stay on the estate with him. The Princess of Wales is also on home ground, since she was born at nearby Park House and christened at Sandringham Church.

THE Queen recently said that she was delighted to be spending Christmas at Sandringham again, where three generations before her have followed the same pattern of decorating a tree taken from the local forest, wrapping and laying out the family's presents in the ballroom, and walking through the grounds to the church of St Mary Magdalene, about half a mile from the house.

Royal Christmasses have always been tremendous fun. Edward VII would entertain the family by turning the

Above: The garden, with its "rooms" edged with box.

A happy meeting is over. With the royal guests are Mrs Norah Annison and WI Vice-President Mrs Diana Hall.



handle of a barrel-organ he'd installed. He allowed tricycle-racing in the ballroom, and had been known to slide down the staircase on a tin tray, and to stuff mince pies with mustard to give to unsuspecting guests. In his biography of George V, Kenneth Rose gives a hilarious descriptions of the royals sitting down for dinner wearing paper hats (although George refused to do so, and for that matter neither does the present monarch).

Imagine being the poor servant who had to dish sprouts on to Queen Mary's plate while she was seated bolt upright wearing a bishop's mitre. Next to her the Prince of Wales was sporting a penguin's head, and the Duchess of York (now our Queen Mother) had chosen a poke bonnet.

King George VI and Queen Elizabeth continued the tradition. Together with their two daughters, they'd finish the evening by leading a conga round the house.

These days the family still enjoys traditional party games. The Queen Mother plays canasta, and some of the men play billiards. The Queen settles herself down to do a crossword, and later on joins the family in the ballroom, which can be converted into a cinema.

One of the perks of the job is that Her Majesty manages to see many of the latest films before some of them are even on general release. She does have her favourites, and being Queen allows her to pick and choose. It's said that she (and therefore her family, friends and staff) watched The Beatles in "Yellow Submarine" four times!



The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Kent at church (the Kents used to live on the Sandringham estate).

Below: All those people waiting to see the family go to church!



Cameras, flowers and gifts in every hand!

NEXT WEEK
Ian Lloyd returns to Sandringham for some of the special highlights in the royal year there.