

Auld Enemy is

By Ian Lloyd
Royal writer

Royal rebel's love match Mike is the perfect result

ROYAL weddings are like buses. You wait ages for one and along come two at the same time.

Three months after two billion watched the wedding of William and Kate, the Queen's eldest granddaughter Zara Phillips will marry her fiancé Mike Tindall in Edinburgh's Canongate Kirk next Saturday.

Royal sources claim Zara was "desperate" to be married in Scotland — a decision that "thrilled and delighted" her mother, the Princess Royal.

Anne has always felt most at home north of the border and is involved with dozens of Scottish organisations, whether it's Chancellor of Edinburgh University or Patron of Scotland's rugby team — the latter a standing joke with her soon-to-be son in law who plays for the "auld enemy" England.

According to Mike the decision to marry in Edinburgh was down to Zara — "When she was a kid at Gordonstoun School her mother would be staying at Holyrood Palace (where they'll have their reception), so that's why she thought of it."

Zara enjoyed her schooldays at Gordonstoun, Moray, where she gained A levels in Biology, Geography and PE.

The pupils, staff and locals never made an issue of her royal background and in return she never tried to pull rank.

On one occasion she invited a Chinese friend to stay "with my Gran in the Highlands". When the car drew up outside Balmoral and "Gran" herself appeared, apparently the poor girl nearly fainted!

Zara has always shared her mother's love for Scotland.

Mother and daughter enjoy riding on Deeside and Anne was the last royal bride to marry in Scotland.

In December 1992 she and Tim Laurence wed at Crathie Kirk, a short drive from Balmoral, in typical no-nonsense style.

With 400 guests to be accommodated, Zara and Mike decided on Canongate and Mike is keen the capital should benefit from the day.

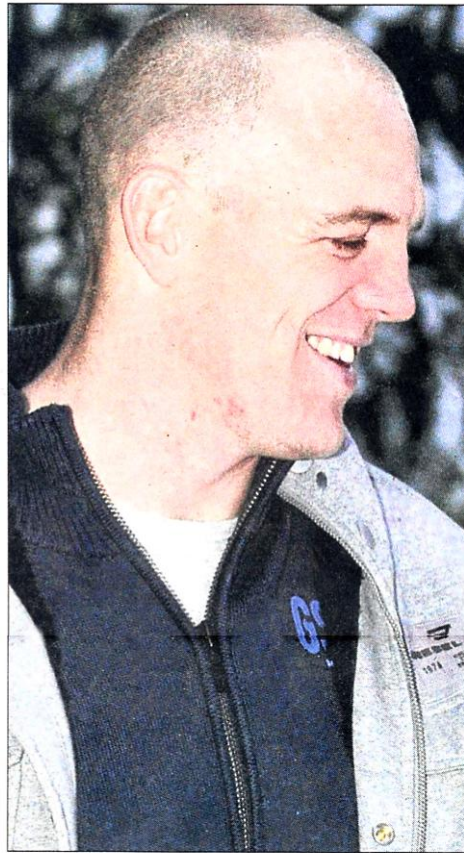
Someone who has no doubt the wedding will do just that is Mike Cantlay, chairman of VisitScotland, who said, "This is a huge opportunity. It will help to showcase Edinburgh around the world."

Mike adds, "The Royal Family are proud of their Scottish links and go to great lengths to promote Scotland."

In contrast to the usual royal wedding venues of Westminster Abbey and St George's Chapel, Windsor, where Zara's brother Peter was married in 2008, 17th-Century Canongate is one of the simplest buildings in Edinburgh.

The Kirk's website makes no bones about pointing out "when they come in people are sometimes disappointed as a first reaction because there is nothing very grand or elaborate about the place".

Again this will suit the no-nonsense style of mother and daughter — Anne refused a selection of Old Master paintings from the royal collection when she moved into her Gloucestershire mansion, opting for simple watercolours, and Zara and Mike's house has been called "homely but not in the least bit posh".



■ Zara and Mike look very much in love after announcing

The minister conducting the service, Rev. Neil Gardner, is known to favour the traditional Church of Scotland service.

Normally Canongate will cost a couple around £300 to use as a venue — £75 for the organist, £25 for the church officer and a suggested donation of £200 to the church, although it has been claimed the Princess Royal has offered a far more substantial amount.

The couple will leave their flowers there for parishioners to view at the Sunday service.

The entire royal family is expected to attend with all eyes being on William and Kate, who won't want to overshadow Zara's big day.

Mike's England team mates are all expected — including former player Austin Healey,



■ Mike Tindall had the diamond and platinum engagement ring made by a jeweller.



■ Zara Anne Elizabeth, the Princess Royal's second child, was born on May 15, 1981.



■ Bridesmaid Zara (left) at the 1994 wedding of Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones to Daniel Chatto.



■ In 2007, Zara received an MBE for services to equestrianism, from her grandmother the Queen.



Zara's best friend



their engagement on December 21 last year.

who played Cupid for the couple during the New Zealand rugby tour of 2003 when he gave Mike Zara's telephone number.

Healey admits, "It was a complete lie but I knew they'd get on."

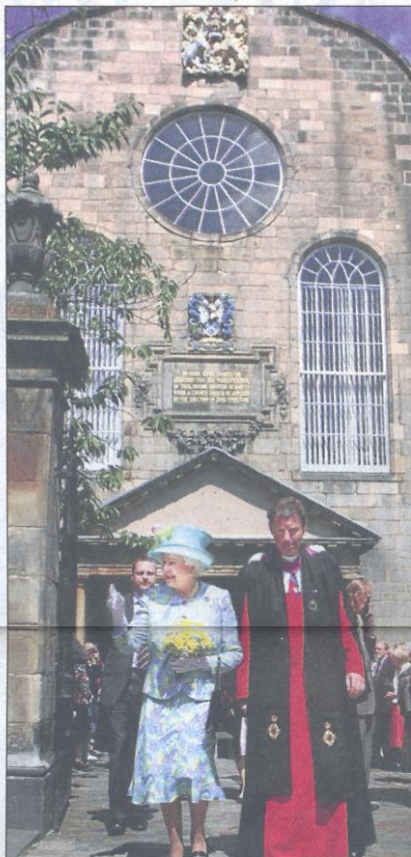
The reception will be held in the State Apartments at the Palace of Holyrood. Courtiers are allegedly said to be worried about the speech from best man, Iain Balshaw, another teammate. However,

Mike refutes the story that the palace is to censor it.

After a meal there will be a party. But one guest not expected to hang around for the end is Her Majesty.

Having welcomed Mike into the family she is expected to be helicoptered away before her palace starts to rock!

The newly-married Tindalls and their friends and relations will then party the night away.



■ The Queen with Rev. Neil Gardner following a service at The Canongate Kirk in Edinburgh.



■ The simple decor inside the church.

Toytown triumphs

■ Zara's well-known for her success as an event rider on her horse Toytown (right).

The pair have won both individual and team gold medals together.

Toytown (19) is a chestnut gelding standing at 17 hands. He has a distinctive white blaze and white spots.

However, given his age, it's unlikely Toytown will be in contention for the 2012 Olympics — though Zara is hoping to compete.

