

Contents



<i>Introduction</i>	7
<i>Timeline of Princess Margaret's Life</i>	10
<i>Sisters and Daughters</i>	17
<i>Romance and Rumour</i>	40
<i>On Official Business</i>	55
<i>Countess Snowdon</i>	70
<i>The Glitterati: Famous Friends</i>	90
<i>Mustique Madness</i>	117
<i>The Royal Reputation</i>	127
<i>Kensington Palace</i>	155
<i>Picture Credits</i>	169
<i>Bibliography</i>	171

Sisters and Daughters



Princess Margaret Rose was born at Glamis Castle, her mother's ancestral home, during a raging storm, on the evening of 21 August 1930. She was the first royal to be born in Scotland for 300 years and the last whose birth had to be legally witnessed by the Home Secretary to verify she was a genuine royal baby. As the second daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York, she was fourth in line to the throne.

Her early years were spent mainly in the York's London townhouse at 145 Piccadilly and Royal Lodge Windsor, but life changed completely when her father became King George VI after the abdication of her uncle, Edward VIII, in December 1936.

The new King and his family moved into Buckingham Palace and Margaret was given a bedroom overlooking the Mall. She found the long, draughty corridors and hundreds of rooms, echoing and unfriendly. With their parents otherwise occupied, the young princesses spent an increasing amount of time with nurses and their nanny and governess, Marion Crawford, usually known as Crawfie.

Always a precocious child, and a fast learner, as a baby Princess Margaret began to hum the waltz from *The Merry Widow*. Her maternal grandmother, Lady Strathmore, who was carrying Margaret as an infant down stairs on one of these occasions said, 'I was so astounded that I almost dropped her.'

Although their parents were at pains to protect their young daughters from the growing constitutional crisis and gossip about King Edward VIII – or Uncle David as he was known to the girls – some of the rumours must have reached their ears. When a puzzled Princess Margaret asked her elder sister what all the fuss was about and why Prime Minister Baldwin was constantly visiting their home at 145 Piccadilly, Elizabeth replied, ‘I think Uncle David wants to marry Mrs Baldwin and Mr Baldwin doesn’t like it.’

It was Crawfie who broke the news to her charges that their Papa was to be King and they were to move to Buckingham Palace. At the age of six, Margaret at first was more concerned about their name change: ‘I have only just learned how to spell York and now I am not to use it any more. I am to sign myself Margaret all alone.’

The change meant that the princesses were to see a lot less of their parents. In view of this, King George had two large rocking horses placed outside his office so that he could hear his daughters rocking to and fro while he worked.

After their father’s coronation in 1937, seven-year-old Margaret asked if this meant Elizabeth would have to be the next Queen. When her older sister nodded, ‘Yes, someday,’ Margaret commiserated, ‘Poor you.’

With Elizabeth being groomed as the heir to the throne, Margaret felt increasingly left behind.

‘Now that Papa is King, I am nothing,’ she said.

King George in particular was concerned that she shouldn’t feel relegated to the background as the younger ‘spare’ – as he had been as a child. As a result, Margaret was

often over-indulged by her parents and she could be wilful and competitive.

The daughter of one of the Palace courtiers at the time claimed, ‘She was his [George VI] pet ... she was always allowed to stay up to dinner at the age of thirteen and to grow up too quickly.’

When talking about his daughters, the King described Elizabeth as his pride and Margaret as his joy. He also said of his youngest daughter, ‘She is able to charm the pearl out of an oyster.’

Margaret could always make her father laugh, even when he was trying to tell her off, interrupting him on one occasion to ask, ‘Papa, do you sing, “God Save My Gracious Me”?’

A Royal Childhood

Growing up, the princesses were close, although four years apart in age. They enjoyed singing showtunes together, with Margaret playing the piano. Both laughed at the same jokes and were good mimics, though Margaret’s wit was sharper and less gentle than her older sister’s.

Their cousin Margaret Rhodes wrote, ‘Princess Margaret was the naughty one. She was always more larky. She used to tease the servants. There was a wonderful old page and, as he carried the plates around the dining room, Margaret used to stare at him, trying to make him laugh. But she never got herself reprimanded. She got away with everything.’

The young Margaret also had an imaginary friend named Cousin Halifax, who was given the blame for many of her 'little troubles'.

'I was busy with Cousin Halifax,' she would say to explain why some task had been overlooked.

Not that some members of staff weren't tempted to tell her off. One Palace courtier remembered, 'There were moments when I'd have given anything to have given her the hell of a slap.' Another commented simply, 'She was a wicked little girl.'

Favourite tricks were to jump out from behind pillars on unsuspecting Palace staff and to replace sugar with salt. Royal nanny, Crawfie, wrote, 'More than once I have seen an equerry put his hand into his pocket, and find it, to his amazement, full of sticky lime balls ... Shoes left outside doors would become inexplicably filled with acorns.'

'Isn't it lucky that Lilibet's the eldest,' Margaret said, alluding to the fact that Elizabeth was always better behaved.



Crawfie described Margaret as a practical joker, 'a born comic' who could be disruptive, fond of 'light-hearted fun and frolics ... amusing and outrageous ... antics.'

The 1950 publication of Marion Crawford's memoir *The Little Princesses* horrified the royal family and she was