



kate

THE MAKING OF A
PRINCESS

CLAUDIA JOSEPH

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To my parents, who gave me everything, and the man who gives me nothing but trouble

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On 3 September 1660, in a mansion on The Strand overlooking the River Thames, a secret wedding ceremony took place between the Duke of York, the 27-year-old heir presumptive to the English throne, and his sister's lady's maid Anne Hyde. Performed during the night by the duke's chaplain at her father's home, Worcester House, and witnessed by only two people, the marriage of the future King James II and his heavily pregnant 23-year-old mistress scandalised the royal court, which could not accept that a blue blood had married a commoner. After Anne's death, on 31 March 1671, it was written that she 'indeed shewed both her witt and her vertue in managing the affaire so dexterously, that the duke overmaster'd by his passion, at last gave her a promise of marriage some time before the Restoration'. Anne had earned her place in history as the last commoner in this country to marry a king, and she had produced two daughters, Mary and Anne, who would rule the country.

Since that time, Britain's monarchs have rarely veered from the accepted convention of marrying into European royalty, although there are two notable exceptions: the late Queen Mother, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, and Prince William's mother, Lady Diana Spencer. However, both had aristocratic families, and Queen Elizabeth was never expected to become a royal consort; it was only after the abdication of Edward VIII that her husband, George VI, became king.

Now, for the first time in 350 years, another commoner has won the heart of an heir to the throne. When Kate Middleton marries Prince William Arthur Philip Louis Windsor, who is currently working as an RAF search-and-rescue pilot, she will become the first non-aristocrat to marry a future king of this country since the seventeenth century.

The marriage will breathe new life into the monarchy as the Queen enters the twilight of her reign, bringing new blood and a fresh perspective to an institution that faces criticism for being elitist and out of touch. William and Kate have a thoroughly modern relationship – they met as students at St Andrews, where they lived together, and dated for the rest of the decade.

It was on 7 April 2002 that Kate first graced the pages of a British newspaper, having modelled a diaphanous dress on the catwalk during a charity fashion show at St Andrews. Since then, she has become a permanent fixture in the society pages, a style icon – she regularly makes best-dressed lists both in this country and abroad – and one of the most photographed women in the country. The editors of magazines including *Vogue*, *Tatler* and *G* have waxed lyrical about her youth, fashion sense and appeal, and *Hello!* estimates that her image on the cover increases sales by 100,000.

Thousands of words have been written about her, hordes of paparazzi follow her every move, fans blog about her on the Internet and she is regularly discussed on radio and television. She even inspired author Peter York to update *The Official Sloane Ranger Handbook* and has her own unofficial fan club.

Yet, despite the reams of coverage, Britain's future queen remains something of a mystery.

So who is the woman who once so memorably retorted: 'He's so lucky to be going out with me!' and does she share the same gifts of 'witt' and 'vertue' as her predecessor?

Chapter 1

The Harrisons 1837–98

Lying in her wooden and gilt bateau lit in her opulent bedroom below the state apartments at Kensington Palace, four weeks after her 18th birthday, Princess Victoria was woken by her mother, the Duchess of Kent, to be told that she was Queen of England. It was 6 a.m. on 20 June 1837 and her uncle King William IV – who had no legitimate children – had died of heart failure and pneumonia at the age of 71, leaving Prince William's great-great-great-great-grandmother to inherit the throne.

Queen Victoria went on to become the longest-reigning monarch in British history and head of a vast empire, marrying her cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and bearing nine children, from whom both Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip are descended. The family split their time between Buckingham Palace (Victoria was the first monarch to live there), Windsor Castle, where heads of state were entertained, and their holiday homes, Osborne House on the Isle of Wight and Balmoral Castle in Aberdeenshire, both of which Victoria and Albert bought after their marriage.

At the other end of England, 290 miles from the royal court, in a cramped cottage in the Newcastle suburb of Byker Hill, life could not have been more different for Kate Middleton's great-great-great-great-grandmother Jane Harrison, a miner's wife.

While Queen Victoria was mistress of all she surveyed (and a great many parts of the world she had never even seen), Jane's husband James, 41 in the year of Victoria's accession, enjoyed a considerably narrower view. He earned a pittance working down the mines, while Jane juggled the demands of running a large household on a straitened income, bringing up four children and nursing a fifth. The eldest daughter, also Jane, sixteen, helped with her younger brothers (Thomas, nine, James, seven, two-year-old John and the baby, Septimus), but their mother would not have had any time for relaxation and the news of the King's death – which she would have learned about through word of mouth, because Jane, like so many of her peers, could not read or write – would have had little impact on her world.

By piecing together historical documents and records, it is possible to construct a picture of Jane's life during the early Victorian era. Her whole world would have revolved around the shift patterns of her husband, who worked as a shifter, or maintenance worker, repairing the horseways and other passages in the mine at Byker Colliery, then owned by Sir Henry Lawson.

James was employed under a bond by Sir Henry, which meant that he had been given two shillings and sixpence (about one hundred pounds in today's money) for promising not to work for another colliery. Despite this, he was not guaranteed employment, but at 41 years old he would have been considered well beyond his prime and would not have complained. He was lucky to have work at all, especially with so many mouths to feed.

Thomas followed his father into the mine as a trapper. Working for up to 18 hours a day, in solitude and complete darkness, he was responsible for opening and shutting the mine traps, or doors, when the underground trams passed, in order to maintain ventilation. Later,

Thomas became a driver, steering the horses that pulled the sledges and wagons from the crane to the shaft of the pit, and his younger brother James followed him into the mine. Despite the hardships – men and boys worked round the clock, except on Sundays, Christmas and Easter, and were liable for arrest, trial and imprisonment if they broke their bond – the family must have counted its blessings.

Life down the pit was brutal and dangerous, and in those days there was no sick pay or compensation for death or injury. While the owners supplied the pit ponies, the miners had to provide their own equipment, including picks, shovels, candles, ropes and explosives. The miners worked in gangs in order to protect themselves from thieving, and fights regularly broke out between rival groups.

Such skirmishes aside, the daily danger of mine working tended to unite the communities. Any report of an accident would mean that the women in the area would gather at the pithead, anxious for information about their men. It was a tradition that would last well into the twentieth century, when pit disasters, although much rarer, were by no means eradicated.

In James Harrison's time, though, the dangers of working underground were ever present. Records indicate that there were more than 30 mining disasters in Durham and Northumberland in the nineteenth century, in which 1,500 men and boys were killed. Of course, these were only the major incidents. Individual deaths were commonplace but are more difficult to quantify, as the death of a single collier barely merited an inquest. Not only were there fires, rockfalls and explosions in the mines, but many pitmen were crushed to death by the trams (four-wheel carriages that carried corves, or tubs, of coal), kicked to death by ponies, fell down shafts or were drowned.

Life was hard for women, too. In Victorian England, they were deemed chattels of their husbands and would have to behave as such. With no hope of contraception, Jane Harrison was almost constantly pregnant. Her sixth baby, a daughter Margaret, was born in 1839, the year after Victoria's glittering coronation at Westminster Abbey. Jane and her eldest daughter would have spent their days cleaning their sparse home, a tiny single-room cottage with an open fire and a ladder to the loft, where the children slept. They drew water at a street pump, washed, darned and mended ragged clothing, cooked for the family on the open fire and heated water in a tin bath for James and his sons when they finished a shift. The little food they bought came from the local 'tommy shop', the name deriving from the coarse bread that eighteenth-century soldiers received in their rations. Tommy shops were run by the owners of mines. Workers were often given some of their pay in tokens that could be used only in the shop, and the prices were inflated. Thus, mine owners made even more profit out of their employees, who often fell into debt. The family sometimes supplemented their meagre income by working in the fields, picking fruit, potatoes or turnips.

It was an unrelentingly tough existence for the Harrisons. Never would they have considered that one of their descendants would marry into the royal family. Indeed, it is a near-miracle that their line survived at all. Many mining villages were decimated by epidemics of tuberculosis, cholera, polio, scarlet fever and diphtheria, which raced through

the densely populated communities, fuelled by the insanitary outside latrines that were shared by scores of people.

While Queen Victoria lived to the ripe old age of 81 – dying at Osborne House of a brain

haemorrhage and being buried beside her beloved Albert at Windsor – Kate's great-great-great-great-grandmother had a pauper's death. Jane fell victim to consumption, an infection of the lungs more commonly known today as tuberculosis, at her home in Byker Hill on 23 April 1845, shortly after her 50th birthday, leaving her husband a widower with four young children.

After his wife's death and the expiry of his bond, James joined thousands of families heading 20 miles south of Newcastle to the pit villages of County Durham. They may well have been amongst the first passengers on George Hudson's new Newcastle to Durham Junction Railway, which opened amidst great acclaim in 1844. Certainly, by 1850 they were living in a miner's cottage in Low Row, one of four streets in the tiny village of Low Moorsley, seven miles north-east of Durham.

There, Kate's great-great-great-grandfather John and his younger brother Septimus joined their father down the pit at North Hetton Colliery, owned by the 2nd Earl of Durham, George Lambton, whose father had been a prominent Whig politician and whose great-grandmother had been mistress to the Prince of Wales, later George IV. The Earl, who was the great-grandfather of former prime minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home, made his money from mining on the lands around his Lambton Castle and proved equally as hard a taskmaster as Sir Henry Lawson.

Although the 1842 Mines Act prevented children under ten from working in the mines, the two boys would have joined the workforce the moment they reached double figures. There was a hierarchy down the mines and they would have begun as trappers and drivers before graduating at the age of 17 to become putters, pushing the corves of coal on trams from the coalface to the crane or shaft. The work was just as dangerous as it had always been. In 1851 one of John and Septimus's colleagues, John Straughan, a 12-year-old driver, was killed when his head was crushed between two moving trams. At nearby Hetton Colliery, 23 stonemasons died in an underground explosion in 1860, and all the horses and pit ponies in the stables perished as flames rampaged through the mine.

At the age of 21, the Harrison boys reached their physical prime and became hewers, the men who actually cut the coal at the face, in tunnels so small they had to work on their hands and knees. Although the job was dangerous, it was sought after, as hewers were the best-paid workers. Perhaps the extra money (the family also took in two lodgers, joiner George Dixon, 33, and William Mitcheson, a 36-year-old labourer) allowed the Harrisons to move on, because soon they had a new home two miles down the road, a miner's cottage in the village of Sherburn Hill.

John was by this time making his own way in the world: he had moved into a cottage just around the corner from his father's. On 7 April 1860, he married his girlfriend Jane Liddle, a 20-year-old miner's daughter from the village, who was already four months pregnant on their wedding day.

In August of the same year, Septimus, 23, wed a girl from the neighbouring village of Houghton-le-Spring, Elizabeth Jenkyns, 19, who was heavily pregnant, at the same church.

Their son James was born the following month. They moved into another miner's cottage in Sherburn Hill, meaning that the three families were all within walking distance of each other.

John and Jane's first child, Jane Ann, was born in September, followed by a son, Anthony

in 1862, and another daughter, Margaret, in 1863. The family would have been far too busy to mourn the death of Queen Victoria's beloved Prince Albert in 1861, celebrate the wedding of William's great-great-great-grandfather the future Edward VII to Princess Alexandra in 1863 or follow his liaisons with society beauties such as actress Lillie Langtry or Camilla Parker Bowles' great-grandmother Alice Keppel.

By the 1860s, Kate's great-great-great-great-grandfather James had long since retired from the pit. It can be surmised that following his retirement he spent a good deal of time in the local pubs, for he died of liver failure in 1866 at the age of 70. His illiterate daughter Jane, who cared for her father during his final two weeks, signed his death certificate with a cross.

After James's death, his family moved away from Sherburn Hill. While Septimus moved six miles down the road to the village of Brandon, John moved with Jane and their children to Hetton-le-Hole, four miles away. They were part of migration to the town: in 1801 there were just 212 people living in Hetton, but by 1861 the population had increased to 6,419. John worked at Hetton Colliery, once owned by former bankrupt and speculator Arthur Mowbray. In 1822, it had become the first colliery to have its own private railway, an eight-mile track from Hetton to the River Wear at Sunderland, designed by George Stephenson, the 'Father of Railways'. This was the first line in the country not to use horsepower.

Life at the coalface was hard, but John and his family, who lived on Downs New Houses in one of the 1,318 stone cottages in the town, had a better lifestyle than their parents, as the town had chapels, schools, pubs and shops, as well as a wide range of tradesmen, including blacksmiths, tinsmiths, stonemasons and joiners, printers and publishers, even a physician. Above all, the town had something that previous generations of the Harrison family had never experienced: a school. At least one of the children was registered in the 1871 census as a scholar, a tiny sign that the forces of social reform that would eventually change Britain forever were beginning to make their presence felt.

On 25 July 1874, Kate's great-great-grandfather, named John like his father, was born. Within five years of his birth, the Harrisons' family had swollen to ten children, forcing them to move to a new home in the town's Lyons Street. Their happiness, however, was short-lived. On 23 December 1881, Jane died of tuberculosis at just 42. Her husband, who was by her bedside when she died in their home, was left a widower with ten children aged between two and twenty-one.

The following year, John's eldest child, Jane Ann, left home, marrying a 21-year-old mine worker from the village, John Anderson, at the local parish church. Margaret, 19, became the woman of the home, caring for her father and younger siblings.

It was a hard life with very little reward for those on the bottom rung of the ladder, the antithesis of the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by Queen Victoria and her children. In 1887, Victoria marked 50 years on the throne with a sumptuous banquet served on golden platters, a procession through London in a gilded carriage, a glittering ball and a thrilling firework display.

The following year, 18-year-old Isabella died of the same disease as her mother. There was still no treatment for tuberculosis and it cut a swathe through working-class homes. Once again, her father sat by the bedside of a dying loved one. He was grief-stricken at having lost his wife and a daughter within seven years of each other, and within five months he too was

dead from the same disease, most probably caught at his daughter's bedside. The date was 2 January 1889 and he was just 54 years old. Before a year had passed, his 17-year-old son James, who worked as a coal putter, would become the family's fourth victim of tuberculosis within a decade.

Kate's great-great-grandfather John was an orphan at the tender age of 14. He and his two unmarried sisters were forced into lodgings. But the family's run of bad luck did not end there. At about 11.30 a.m. on 13 December 1895, John's eldest brother, Anthony, was killed in a mining accident. The father of two, who was a hewer at Hetton Coal Company's Eppleton Colliery, was hailed as a hero after trying to rescue two of his colleagues, deputy John Brown and putter Robert Lawns, but he paid with his life. He was commended in the 1895 Mines Inspection Report:

I should like here to say a word or two in appreciation of the courage and gallantry shown by the men who were amongst the rescuers. The three hewers, as well as the manager, under-manager, overman, and back-overman, all showed that they possessed the qualities which in the past made pitmen famous for heroism in the time of danger; such conduct as theirs should not go without commendation, and I am pleased to have the opportunity in this report, to show my appreciation of it, and I regret that one of them should have lost his life in the plucky attempt made to rescue Brown and Lawns.

Such a run of tragedy seems extraordinary by today's standards and would be enough to destroy lesser men. But John Harrison had lived a tough life in which illness and death were by no means unusual.

At the age of 22, on 23 February 1897, John married domestic servant Jane Hill, 21, the daughter of a joiner at the colliery, at Houghton-le-Spring Register office. They moved into a miner's cottage on Chapel Street in the suburb of Hetton Downs. Eleven months later, they celebrated the birth of their first child, Jane, named after her mother and grandmother. For the young couple, it marked a new beginning. Another generation of the Harrison family had been born and it was the end of the nineteenth century, the dawn of a new era. The next century would bring terrible wars and extraordinary advances that could never have been foreseen. The Harrisons could not possibly have realised, either, how much their personal fortunes would change and how close they would come to the gilded world of royalty.

Chapter 2

The Harrisons 1901–53

It was 2 February 1901. The weather was bitterly cold and snow was falling. Queen Victoria had died 11 days earlier. Prince William's great-great-great-grandfather Edward VII rode behind his mother's coffin as the cortège snaked its way through the streets of London. Its final destination was St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. After a state funeral attended by the great and good of the Commonwealth, Victoria's body lay in state for two days before being laid to rest beside that of Prince Albert in the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore House.

Queen Victoria's death heralded a new age. Eighteen months later, Edward VII and Alexandra were crowned king and queen by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Westminster Abbey – a little later than expected, as the 59-year-old monarch was diagnosed with appendicitis shortly before the date originally set for the coronation. The King donated Osborne House, where his mother had died, to the state and lived at Sandringham House in Norfolk, as he had done before his accession. His son George – Prince William's great-great-grandfather – and his wife Mary, who by then had four children, including the future Edward VIII and George VI, lived in York Cottage on the estate.

John Harrison would have read about the coronation in the newspaper or heard the news at the local pub. But he would have given little thought to the lives of the royal family and could never have guessed that his great-great-granddaughter would one day be so close to the country's rulers. He had more pressing matters on his mind, such as raising enough money to make ends meet. John was not long married to Jane, and the couple lived in a cramped cottage in Chapel Street, Hetton Downs, with their three-year-old daughter Jane and baby son Ernest. Jane's sister Sarah Hill lived with the family and helped out with the daily chores, but it was still a tough existence and the couple hoped that their children would be able to make a more comfortable future for themselves.

They had a second son, John, in 1902, but it was their fourth child – Kate's great-grandfather – who was to make his mark. Born on 23 June 1904, he was named Thomas after Jane and Sarah's father, who was a carpenter and joiner. A devoted grandfather, he spent many hours with the young boy and when his grandson was barely out of short trousers, he began to teach him the rudimentary skills of his profession.

Thomas was just five years old when King Edward VII collapsed, suffering from bronchitis while on holiday in Biarritz. A heavy smoker – he is reputed to have smoked 20 cigarettes and 12 cigars a day – he then suffered several heart attacks following his return to Britain. He died on 6 May 1910, his wife Alexandra and mistress Alice Keppel at his bedside. He had just been told by his son George, Prince of Wales, that his horse Witch of the Air had won that afternoon at Kempton Park. 'I'm very glad,' the King replied. They were his final words.

George V and Queen Mary were crowned at Westminster Abbey on 22 June 1911. Afterwards, the King and Queen travelled to India, visiting their subjects. During the trip, the King indulged his hobby of hunting, shooting 21 tigers.

Three years later, on 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated by a Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip. The event sparked the beginning of the Great War. Life would never be the same again. Thomas Harrison was too young to fight in the First World War, but it had a major impact on his formative years, as Hetton-le-Hole, which had a population of 13,673 at the turn of the century, became a shadow of its former self. Hundreds of miners from the area volunteered for the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Durham Light Infantry, while the women and children had to adapt to life without them.

At first, Thomas's father John, who had just celebrated his fortieth birthday when war broke out, remained at home, looking after his young family – he now had another two children, Wilfred, seven, and Norman, five – but eventually he was forced to enlist. In March 1916, the British government, in response to the rising losses on the Western Front – Britain lost 75,000 men at Ypres and 60,000 at Loos – and the dwindling number of volunteers, introduced conscription for single men between the ages of 18 and 41. By May, the order had been extended to married men. It was just two months before John Harrison's 42nd birthday, an accident of birth that would change the course of his descendants' lives.

John enlisted with the Duke of Cambridge's own Middlesex Regiment in the neighbouring town of Houghton-le-Spring. The 43-year-old corporal was killed in the trenches just three months before armistice, on 24 August 1918, one of 201 soldiers from Hetton-le-Hole not to return from the battlefields. His name is inscribed on a war memorial outside the working men's club in the town – a granite plinth and statue of a soldier resting on a reverse rifle with his head bowed. It bears the inscription: 'Erected by the members of Hetton and District Working Men's Club in memory of fellow members who died for their country in the Great War 1914–1918'.

The conflict finally drew to a close at 11 a.m. on 11 November 1918. That day, a declaration of peace was read to the community of Hetton-le-Hole. Thomas was 14 years old. His world had changed irrevocably. Spurred on by his father's death, he was apprenticed to his maternal grandfather – now the only male role model in his beleaguered family – and became the first Harrison to learn a trade.

Not long after the war's end, the royal family suffered a bereavement of their own. While Thomas lost his father, George V lost his son. Prince John, his sixth and youngest child, died of an epileptic seizure on 18 January 1919. He was a year younger than Thomas. The Queen wrote to her husband: 'The first break in the family circle is hard to bear but people have been so kind and sympathetic and this has helped us much.'

The interwar years were not good ones for the North-east. The war had damaged Britain's trading position with regard to exports such as textiles, steel and coal. Heavy industry went into decline and mining bore the brunt of the slump. In 1923, 170,000 miners were employed in Durham alone. Over the 16 years before the outbreak of the Second World War, many of them lost their jobs as demand for coal decreased. A series of strikes crippled the country and

Britain slumped into a depression. Miners concerned about dangerous working conditions, reduced pay and longer hours took part in the 1926 General Strike in support of the Trades Union Congress, as well as holding two national coal strikes. Finally, the 1929 stock market

crash brought the Great Depression. Demand for British products collapsed and levels of unemployment increased from 1 million to 2.5 million. The industrial areas of the North were hardest hit, especially the collieries. Mining was no longer a job for life.

However, there was a huge building boom after the war – a third of all houses built before 1939 were erected in the previous two decades – and tradesmen were much in demand. Grateful for his grandfather's carpentry training, Kate's great-grandfather Thomas spent the years between the wars moving around the north of England to find work. By 1934, the 29-year-old house joiner was living in the village of Easington Lane, a few miles away from Hetton-le-Hole, and going out with a girl from Tudhoe, a village just south of Durham. Elizabeth Temple, who was a year older than Thomas, was the daughter of a farm worker who had turned his hand to gardening after the war. A 'fallen woman', she had an illegitimate daughter, Ruth, from a previous relationship.

Even so, times had changed and the young couple would have enjoyed a very different romance from their parents and grandparents before them, travelling to Durham and Sunderland for dates, going to dance halls and jazz clubs, spending the evening at the pictures, listening to the wireless or gramophone. Within months, they had fallen in love and both their families were delighted when they got engaged. They were married on 12 May 1934 at the parish church in Tudhoe, with Thomas's brother Albert and Elizabeth's sister Maggie as witnesses. Ruth was barely a year old.

After their wedding, the couple moved back to Thomas's home village of Hetton-le-Hole, where a year later, on 26 June 1935, Kate's grandmother Dorothy was born. It was Dorothy's pursuit of property, prosperity and respectability that would lead Kate to the throne of England. But she was helped by a number of political events that drove her family south, towards the royal family.

Dorothy was barely six months old when King George V died at Sandringham at 11.55 p.m. on 20 January 1936. A heavy smoker, he had suffered from a series of persistent breathing problems, including emphysema, bronchitis and pleurisy. According to the diary of the royal physician, Lord Dawson, the King's final words were 'God damn you', mumbled to a nurse as she administered a sedative. Dawson admitted giving him a lethal injection of cocaine and morphine that night to hasten his death and relieve his suffering.

The Harrison family would have been glued to the wireless again at the end of the year, when George V's son Edward VIII, having caused a constitutional crisis by becoming engaged to Wallis Simpson, an American divorcee, decided to renounce his right to the throne. On 11 December 1936, his abdication speech was broadcast throughout Britain and the Empire: 'you must believe me when I tell you that I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as King as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love,' he said.

That burden of responsibility was passed to his brother, King George VI, who had never expected to inherit the crown. His wife Elizabeth, the late Queen Mother, never forgave her

brother-in-law for removing her family from their peaceful existence at 145 Piccadilly and throwing her daughters Elizabeth, ten, and Margaret, six, into the limelight.

Kate's grandmother was a toddler when William's great-grandfather ascended the throne

and just four years old when Hitler invaded Poland. But her parents would have listened with a sense of impending doom to Neville Chamberlain's broadcast at 11.15 a.m. on 3 September 1939, stating that 'this country is at war with Germany'. Like his father before him, Thomas could not avoid service; unlike his father, though, he survived the war. Ironically, those who worked in reserved occupations, including coal miners, were exempt from military service on the grounds that they were essential to the war effort at home. How Thomas must have rueed his step up the social ladder.

While the men of Hetton-le-Hole went off to war, many of the women became 'Aycliffe Angels', taking a 25-mile bus journey for 12-hour shifts in the ammunition factories in Newton Aycliffe.

Sunderland was one of the most heavily bombed areas in England during the war because it was the largest shipbuilding centre in the world. Family life in the region was thrown into chaos as air-raid shelters were dug, blackout curtains fitted, beaches closed and railings removed and melted down to build ships and tanks. Families were issued with gas masks and ration books of coupons. They huddled around the radio in the early evening to listen to the BBC Home Service and were enthralled to read about the morale-boosting visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to a Sunderland shipyard after a series of heavy bombings in 1943.

For once, the Harrisons' lives mirrored those of the royal family, who insisted on staying in Britain during the war. The King and Queen split their time between Buckingham Palace and Windsor. On one occasion, they narrowly escaped death when two German bombs exploded in one of the courtyards while they were in residence at Buckingham Palace. Afterwards, the Queen memorably stated: 'I'm glad we have been bombed. Now I can look the East End in the face.' In total, the palace suffered nine direct hits during the war, and one of their loyal policemen died as a result. PC Steve Robertson, who was on duty at the palace on 8 March 1941, was killed by flying debris when the north side of the building was struck by a bomb. The royals insisted on adhering to the limits imposed on their subjects by rationing, to the extent that when Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady, stayed at Buckingham Palace, she remarked on the restrictions on hot water.

After the war, Thomas and Elizabeth Harrison moved down from the North-east to the outskirts of London with their children Ruth and Dorothy. Kate's grandmother was now within easy travelling distance of both Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace, but the family certainly did not have the money to enjoy the lifestyle the capital had to offer. That would come to the next generation.

Now, having reached an era when we can learn about the Harrisons from first-hand information, we have a more detailed picture of just how impoverished they were. Virtually penniless, they lived in a run-down house on Bankside, on the edge of the Grand Union Canal in Southall, west London.

Ann Terry, who is the couple's great-niece – the niece of Dorothy's husband Ronald – would go and stay with them when she was a child during the '50s. She and her cousins Harry Jones and Pat Charman have keen memories of the poverty in the Harrisons' household.

'Thomas was a very dapper little man with a moustache,' Ann recalls. 'He and his wife Elizabeth were just ordinary people. They had nothing to be snobbish about. They had a

smallholding where they kept chickens. But Dorothy always thought she was one above everybody else. I don't know where she got her airs and graces from.'

'They came from nothing,' adds Harry. 'They were complete commoners, as poor as poor can be.'

Pat remembers feeling intimidated by Dorothy, despite going to a grammar school herself. 'She lived in one of the most scruffy streets you could imagine, on a canal bank,' she says, 'and went to an ordinary secondary modern school. But she had a way of making you feel uneasy.'

Kate's grandmother Dorothy was a 12-year-old schoolgirl when William's grandmother Princess Elizabeth married Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten in a glittering ceremony at Westminster Abbey on 20 November 1947. Dorothy had yet to even meet her own Prince Charming, but a couple of miles down the road lived the man who was destined to be her future husband.

George VI died in his sleep on the night of 6 February 1952, after 16 years on the throne. He was just 56 years old and was battling lung cancer when he suffered a coronary thrombosis. His daughter Elizabeth, who was about to embark on a tour of Australia, flew back from Kenya for the funeral ten days later. Her coronation took place at Westminster Abbey in June of the following year. Crowds lined the streets of London to catch a glimpse of the new monarch as she made her way to and from Buckingham Palace in the golden state coach. Others listened to live coverage of the event on the radio or watched it on television.

Thomas Harrison had now lived under five monarchs – remarkable when you consider that his grandfather had been born, lived and died under Queen Victoria. Thomas, though, had more pressing matters on his mind than princes and princesses. He had to earn the money to pay for two weddings. His eldest daughter Ruth was 19 and working as a shop assistant when she married machinist Ivor Pritchard, 25, at the Holy Trinity Church in Southall on 4 April 1953. Four months later, it was the turn of his other daughter, Dorothy; she married Ronald Goldsmith. And it was her ambitions and aspirations that would ultimately lead the family to the gilded gates of Buckingham Palace.

Chapter 3

The Goldsmiths 1837–1918

Working from dawn to dusk as a carpenter to feed his wife and five children, John Goldsmith would have greeted the dawn of 28 July 1837 as any other, by getting ready for work. Waking early in his tiny terraced house in Maidstone, he dressed in a hurry, downed a mug of tea and rushed out of the door, barely glancing at the headlines in the local newspaper, which on that day pronounced the election of the town's new MP, Benjamin Disraeli, a notorious and debt-ridden philanderer who was one day to be Prime Minister and a great friend and ally of Queen Victoria.

Kate Middleton's great-great-great-great-grandfather John Goldsmith would have been too busy earning a crust to pay much attention to the political events of the day. Like Kate's other maternal great-great-great-great-grandfather, Goldsmith came from an impoverished working-class background. However, their experiences of life were light years apart. While John Harrison lived in a mining community in Durham, John Goldsmith had grown up in the county town of Kent. Maidstone, on the banks of the River Medway, was in 1837 a dirty and insanitary town. Although it had gas lighting, it was yet to have modern drains or sewers. The town was, however, prosperous, supplying the capital with hops, linen, paper, ragstone and gin. The brewing and paper-manufacturing industries boomed and others grew up, including food processing and bottling mineral water. As a result, the population was growing rapidly – it increased from 8,000 people at the turn of the nineteenth century to 20,000 half a century later – and Maidstone had its own police force and a corn exchange, where grain was bought and sold. As the population increased, the roads between the main thoroughfares became crammed with houses for the working class and the town expanded towards the county jail as the upper classes moved into the suburbs on the estates of the 2nd Earl of Romney, a landowner and parliamentarian who lived in the stately home Mote House. According to an edition of *Gardener's Chronicle* that appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century, Mote House's impressive gardens employed 25 staff members, were home to exotic plants and included a kitchen garden that supplied the house with oranges, peaches and grapes.

In contrast, John, who was 56 in 1837, lived in a cramped tenement in Wheeler Street, near the prison walls, with his wife Rebecca, 14 years his junior, and their five children. The street was also home to The Greyhound pub, which had a pleasure garden. There, John and his two elder sons, Charles, 19, and Richard, 17, who were both labourers, surely enjoyed many a pint while Rebecca cared for the younger children – two daughters, Mary Ann, twelve, and Sophia, eight, and a son, also named John, ten, who was Kate's great-great-great-grandfather. There was a British School for 200 boys in the street, where youngsters were taught to 'reverence the scriptures', 'respect their parents and instructors' and be 'honest, sober and useful in society'. These schools, the brainchild of Quaker Joseph Lancaster, were

run by the British and Foreign School Society and were intended to provide an affordable elementary education for the children of the poor. It is unlikely, however, that the Goldsmiths would have been able to afford even the penny a week for their sons to learn to

read, write and do arithmetic.

It was a tough existence and the family mixed with people who had no qualms about breaking the law, becoming close friends with one family in particular, the Hickmotts, who were no strangers to prison. A builder's labourer and thief, Samuel Hickmott and his older brother Thomas gained notoriety in 1837 when they went on the run after being indicted for stealing three lambs from a Sussex farmer called Samuel Pix. They were finally arrested two years later at Brighton railway station, were tried at Maidstone Assizes in January 1840 and transported to Australia that April.

Samuel's son Edward was, like his father before him, an inmate of the new Maidstone jail, which had been opened on the north of the town in 1819. After being released, he met the Goldsmith brothers on a building site where he was working as a bricklayer. He soon captured the heart of their sister Mary Ann, by now a pretty teenager. They tied the knot at Trinity Church, Maidstone, on 30 May 1842. She was just sixteen years old and he was five years her senior. The following year, she gave birth to the first of her six children, Mary Ann. Some years later, however, her husband was working on the other side of the world, in India, leaving her to bring up their children.

Sadly, John Goldsmith did not live to see any of his grandchildren grow up. After a long battle against stomach cancer, he died on 7 June 1847, at the age of 66. His wife Rebecca was at his bedside.

The following year, it was the turn of the couple's youngest daughter, Sophia, to marry into the Hickmott family. She would have been deemed a scarlet woman in those days; the 21-year-old was living in sin with her brickmaker fiancé, Henry Hickmott, in Hackney, east London, and was heavily pregnant with their second child when they tied the knot at the parish church on 18 June 1848. Within a year, the couple followed in the footsteps of Henry's convict father and emigrated to Australia with their two daughters, Emma, a toddler, and baby Eliza. They boarded the ship *Emily* at the Port of London on 4 May 1849 and arrived at Port Adelaide three months later on 8 August.

Perhaps John Goldsmith travelled to London to wave his sister off on her voyage. We know that before long the lure of the capital would prove too great. By the time John had turned 21, in 1848, he was the only one of his siblings still living at home. His two brothers, Charles and Richard, had made their way to London to find work as brickies and his sisters, Mary Ann and Sophia, had married and moved far away from home. To the impressionable young labourer, the bright lights beckoned. While his widowed mother Rebecca, who was now working as a charwoman, moved to nearby Tovil and took in a lodger, John moved up to London, taking a room in a house in Green Man's Lane, Hounslow, close to his elder brothers.

In the capital, John met laundress Esther Jones, who was the daughter of a workmate and five years younger than him. They fell in love and got married on 23 September 1850, at the Parish Church of St John the Baptist in Hoxton in the East End of London. Both were illiterate and signed the register with a cross. They moved in with her parents. Within weeks of the

wedding, Esther was pregnant with their first child and Kate's great-great-grandfather, named John after his father and grandfather, was born at Esther's parents' home on 6 July 1851. There was to be a nine-year gap before they had another child, but then another five came

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