



While **Jo Wood** is enjoying the attentions of rag trade millionaire Christopher Wicks, she's certainly not yet ready to contemplate anything serious, and who can blame her after all those years with raddled Ronnie?

She is telling friends that there's "nothing earth-shattering" about her friendship with Manchester-born Wicks, not least because he lives in Los Angeles. Besides, as she gently dips her toe back into the dating game, Jo has other potential suitors to assess. She has been sifting through piles of letters received from aspiring partners eager to prove to her that not all men are two-timing, sex-crazed creatures.

"Jo feels mentally ready to accept invitations from gentlemen," is the sweet way one of her confidants puts it. "She's delighted that so many chaps want to take her out and she has been on one or two dates, besides Chris Wicks. She now has a secretary to help with all her mail."

I understand that even Jo has been taken aback by some of the suggestions made by her more excitable correspondents. The salacious missives are of course being put out with the rubbish as Jo clears up Homewood House, the Surrey home she was awarded in her divorce, which she is now hoping to sell for £13.5 million.

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The man who knows the people you'd like to know...



FINE ROMANCE: Jemima Khan with new love, American Luke Janklow

Picture: DAVID M BENNETT/Getty Images

Jemima in love with hot Luke

GOODNESS knows why it took her so long to get over her three-year amour with Hugh Grant, given his sulks and impertinments, but happily Jemima Khan is now settling into her replacement romance with American bibliophile Luke Janklow.

On a flight to Spain, where she is spending Easter at her mother Lady Annabel Goldsmith's farm in the hills above Marbella, fellow passengers couldn't help but notice the attention ("giggling, hair-stroking") reports one fascinated flier being paid to Jemima by her bearded beau, while her two sons (from her marriage to Imran Khan) and Luke's son from a previous marriage played happily behind them.

Luke, 42, has been courting heiress Jemima, 36, for the past 10 months, making frequent visits to see her in London from New York, where he works for his father's literary agency.

The two first met when Jemima was seeking advice about publishers for the novel she is writing (a work still in progress).

Long-haired Luke, who parted from his wife Julie last year, is breathlessly described by his admirers in America as "the hottest straight man in publishing", although some contemporaries find him rather fussy. At a recent party held in his West Village

townhouse, he was so anxious not to damage the marble staircase that guests were given pairs of cloth booties to put over their shoes.

Still, he's popular with Jemima. And she is certainly a hit with Luke's father Mort Janklow who, despite his reputation as a tough agent, is said to be "a sucker for a posh Brit". Indeed in a recent magazine interview Mort described his love for this country, although he voiced the view that its residents were "still in denial about their class obsession".

This vacation is the first time Jemima has introduced Luke to the comfort of her family's 250-acre farm in Spain.

She has sensitive memories of the rural retreat, where her honeymoon with Imran was interrupted by the furore over a photograph that was being hawked around seedier publications in Britain showing the couple canoodling on a sun terrace, with Imran wearing only a sombrero.

Jemima's father, the billionaire Sir James Goldsmith, was incandescent and bought the pictures, issuing dire threats to the offending paparazzo if they ever saw the light of day.

But by then many of Fleet Street's finest had seen the snaps, with some female scribblers particularly admiring Mr Khan's pert bottom.



With her big sister Kate in line to become a princess when she finally marries Prince William, **PIPPA MIDDLETON** is relishing her unofficial post as lady-in-waiting and social fixer for the couple.

It's Pippa, who works for south London-based events company Table Talk, who often books restaurant tables for the pair and is the one who hired a court at Queen's Club in West Kensington when they wanted to play tennis the other day.

It's the socially aspirant Pippa, not Kate, who belongs to Queen's, having persuaded her parents to pay the £11,000 required to own a share of the club (plus an annual fee of £2,000 for off-peak membership). She is only too well aware of its royal patronage (the Duchess of Gloucester, Princess Michael of Kent and Prince Edward are all playing members).

Given that the club's outdoor courts are surrounded by the windows of several mansion blocks, Pippa opted for an indoor court so there would be no unseemly repeat of the Middletons' experience on their Christmas holiday in Cornwall, when Kate won damages after a snapper took pictures of her rubbing her racket during a family tennis game.

I'm told by a fellow player at Queen's: "After their game William delighted the girls serving in the club shop by popping in to buy a pair of shorts and a T-shirt with the club logo on it."

And how apposite that this very logo is a crown above the monogram **QC**. The perfect gift from the Prince to the girlfriend who will one day be Queen Catherine.

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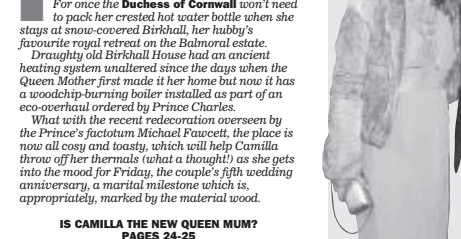


VEGGIE: McCartney

It's not only **Sir Paul McCartney** who refuses to eat anything with meat in it. When he goes on his UK tour this summer he is insisting his huge entourage go veggie as well. "We will serve some 480 vegetarian meals a day to keep the crew going," trills McCartney's spokesman.

The former Beatle has said he stopped eating meat after watching lambs frolicking on his farm in Scotland as he and his wife Linda ate a Sunday lunch of roast lamb.

He also credits the Disney film *Bambi* as the inspiration for his interest in animal rights. Says his aide: "He still wells up when he watches that movie with his grandchildren and it comes to the bit when the deer's mother gets shot."



IS CAMILLA THE NEW QUEEN MUM? PAGES 24-25

For once the **Duchess of Cornwall** won't need to pack her crested hot water bottle when she stays at snow-covered Birkhall, her hubby's favourite royal retreat on the Balmoral estate.

Draghty old Birkhall House had an ancient heating system unaltered since the days when the Queen Mother first made it her home but now it has an eco-overhaul ordered by Prince Charles.

What with the recent restoration overseen by the Prince's factotum Michael Fawcett, the place is now all cosy and toasty, which will help Camilla throw off her thermals (what a thought!) as she gets into the mood for Friday, the couple's fifth wedding anniversary, a marital milestone which is, appropriately, marked by the material wood.

The **Duchess of York** has been to Abu Dhabi to give a speech on entrepreneurship after being invited by the frightfully rich ruler to deliver her thoughts on the subject of "Opportunities in the Economic Downturn". Amazingly, hard-up Fergie gave her talk for free.

Charming cleric **Terry Walto**, the Archbishop of Canterbury's former envoy, is keeping himself busy on the celebrity circuit. In return for a donation to charity, the bearded Goliath, who spent four years in captivity as a Beirut hostage, obliged property developers Richmond Villages by cutting the ribbon on a retirement complex near Wantage, Oxfordshire, where rooms start at £850 a week.

"Life should be cherished, whatever your age or state of health," declared Terry, who will be 71 next month but is not yet ready for God's waiting room. He can command £5,000 for his after-dinner speeches, amusing audiences with anecdotes such as his short time in the Army. He had to leave the Grenadier Guards on medical grounds; an allergy to the dye in the uniform led to an unfortunate swelling.

I'm intrigued to learn that among the first to ring Sam Mendes on hearing of the collapse of his marriage to Kate Winslet was **Nick Clegg**. And no, it wasn't a desperate act of cold-calling by the vote-seeking Liberal leader.

Clegg (who fancies himself as an actor, ever since he appeared in a play about AIDS with Helena Bonham Carter) has long been chummy with Mendes, who is a patron of his party. Indeed Miss Winslet is also a Lib-Dem supporter. Or was. As one of her showbiz colleagues puts it waggishly: "Kate might feel let down by her husband's interpretation of the 'liberal' aspect of the party's ethos. She certainly believes he's been rather too liberal in his mentoring of Rebecca Hall."

As they answer their doorbells to the canvassing calls of prospective Tory candidate Susan Wade Weeks, the male voters of York Central may show a little more interest when they learn their putative MP is the mother of that fragrant actress **Honeyesuckle Weeks**, shortly to be seen in a new series of Foyie's War. They might perk up even more knowing that while Honeyesuckle will continue playing a prim Army driver in the series, she has been working on a decidedly ranchier role in a remake of the spooky classic *The Wicker Man*, which started the late Edward Woodward and Britt Ekland. Roedean-educated Miss Weeks, 30, has to spend much time dancing naked in the woods for the new film, *The Wicker Tree*, and she teasingly says of her frolicking: "I get to ride stallions, and I don't mean horses."

Which may explain the watchful presence on the film set of her husband, **Lorne Stormonth-Darling**, 46 (left), with whom she is "trying" to start a family. "I'm keen on the name *The Wicker Tree* as a first girl," she says decisively.





This boy is handsome, charming and heir, along with his sister Holly, to the £3billion Virgin empire. And he's single after parting from his girlfriend. So girls, what's not to like about Sam Branson?

Well, for one Sam, 25, is now interested only in, can one put this delicately, "quick" encounters, as he doesn't want to get entangled in another serious relationship after ending his four-year romance with the well-connected (and well-hyphenated) actress Isabella Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe, left.

"He's on his own and available but any loving will have to be on a pretty casual basis," reports a chum. "He's travelling a lot and doesn't want to be tied down."

But amid all this boisterous talk of being footloose and anything but a Virgin, there's another reason for Sam Branson's reluctance to be tied down. I hear eventually he plans to get back together with the gorgeous Isabella, who is five years his senior and has her own career to pursue; she has just been filming a horror film in Scotland.

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Picture: SUZAN/Emiles



Red-blooded males who were devastated when they learned that GEMMA ARTERTON had married in secret two months ago will be delighted to learn that the shapely actress will be seen to full caravaceous advantage in the film Tamara Drewe when it opens in the UK shortly. One of Gemma's opening scenes as the lovelorn journalist Tamara (created by the newspaper cartoonist Posy Simmons) has her climbing over a low stile in the Dorset countryside, clad in a skimpy top and figure-hugging tiny denim hot-pants. Gemma tells me: "Stephen Frears, the director, wanted me to go for the shortest and tightest pants I could find, and I was only too happy to oblige. It's a ridiculously provocative scene, which is just what he - and I - wanted. "In fact, Stephen 'screen-tested' me wearing several different pants before he agreed on the ones that you'll see. I did bog for them after we'd finished shooting but the wardrobe people wanted them back. But there's a possibility they will be auctioned for charity at the end of this year, which would be fun."

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Who's Pete can't bear the breeze

AFTER YEARS of exposure to throbbing music on stage as The Who's guitarist, Pete Townshend has developed real problems with his hearing. Now he has had to spend a fortune on replacing the windows of his Georgian house in London because he complained the high-tone pitch of the wind whistling through the gaps of his old ones was "driving me mad". Ironically it was the sound of the air currents encircling the tall house, with spectacular views overlooking the River Thames on Richmond Hill, that inspired a former owner, Mary Hayley Bell, wife of the actor Sir John Mills, to write the novel Whistle Down The Wind, which was made into both a classic film and an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical. But for Townshend, who bought the house, called The Wick, in the Seventies from fellow rocker Ronnie Wood, the sound of the wind rattling through the period bow windows was so distracting that he has spent tens of thousands having them altered, after he and his partner Rachel Fuller decided they loved the £14million property so much they did not want to move. "Pete can't hear certain pitches at all now because of his tinnitus but other sounds, such as the high tone of the wind, can drive him to distraction," says a close friend. "He really didn't want to sell the place, so he had to have the alterations and the double glazing done. It was a big job, because there are three storeys of beautiful bow windows at the back." Chiswick-born Townshend, whose musical passion began at 12 when his grandmother gave him a Spanish guitar, has said of his tinnitus: "It hurts and it's frustrating." He is



RATTLE AND HUM: The Wick has a famous past but the wind has been driving owner Pete to distraction

also partially deaf in one ear from an explosion when the late Keith Moon blew up his drum kit live on stage. Earlier this year Pete, 65, warned that he would no longer be able to perform with The Who if his hearing got worse but Roger Daltrey has subsequently revealed the band planned to embark on a world tour next spring. "Pete, being the addictive character he is, if he gets carried away he turns his volume up to the old levels and that's when it causes trouble," said Daltrey. "That's one of the problems with rock 'n' roll once the adrenaline kicks in."



Are all female celebrities turning into knits? The fact that Madonna and Keely Hawes have taken up knitting has been noted in this column recently. Now I learn that croch-haired chanteuse Annie Lennox is clicking away with needles and yarn. Miss Lennox, the daughter of an Aberdonian boilermaker, finds knitting "soothing and therapeutic". But the singer (who, lest we forget, had 18 singles and albums in the Top 10 with the Eurythmics) admits her skills are limited. "I can't do sweaters, cardigans, socks, mitts or hats," she says. "But I can do a very nice turn in scarves." That was good news for the women who work with SING, the campaign Annie set up to fight Aids in South Africa. On her last visit there she gave them some multi-coloured mufflers she had lovingly created.



Endearing to hear that Jane Seymour, the actress who left England to make her name in Hollywood (who could possibly forget the Golden Globe she won for the series Dr Quinn Medicine Woman) appreciates her life in California, where she lives in a Malibu beachfront house with her fourth hubby, actor James Keach. She sighs contentedly: "Every morning I wake up, look past the palms and swimming pool in my garden, and watch the dolphins in the sea. I pinch myself and think, 'I'm a little girl from Merton Park (South London) and now I'm not even on my summer holiday and there are dolphins!'"

Both Prince William (below) and Harry have been up to their eyes in military training, which will probably help keep them from dwelling too much on this coming Tuesday's anniversary. It will be 13 years since their mother Diana was killed in a Paris underpass. "They will both be on duty but will mark the anniversary privately," says an aide at Clarence House. As far as his military career is concerned, William has passed all his tests so far and is shortly to go "live" as a fully fledged search and rescue pilot. At the end of September he'll be posted to RAF Valley in Wales for the next three years. Valley carries out rescue missions in politically sensitive Ulster and William will be expected to join in. "He can't wait to do the job," says his aide. Harry is on an eight-month course flying Apache helicopters at RAF Watlington in Suffolk. But he was allowed a night off in a Chelsea club to celebrate passing a particularly tricky navigation test.

Twice-divorced Sir Stirling Moss, who boasts his racy lifestyle as a Formula One winner involved "literally hundreds" of pretty girls, has revealed how he manoeuvred himself out of marital discord if he was planning a canoe holiday with some young popsy at his Mayfair home. "When I was driving back to the house I'd say to them 'Get down in the footwell!', then I'd pull up, push a button to open the garage door and drive straight in. Only when the door had closed behind us would the girl get out. That way we would avoid any long lenses."

When Amanda Redman marries her long-term boyfriend next week at a manor house in Somerset, the actress just knows she's going to cry. The New Tricks star gushes of mobile phone designer Damian Schnabel, right (who at 38 is 14 years her junior): "I'm welling up just thinking about him. I love his kindness, his dignity and his brains - he's very clever." The two have been together for 10 years and she calls Damian the love of her life. "He brings out the best in me. He's the nicest, most caring man in the world. I'm so nervous because I don't want to embarrass myself on my wedding day. We are having a mix of traditional vows and writing our own vows too - and whenever I even think about what we're going to say to each other, I get very emotional."





Not all of Geri Halliwell's chums are ecstatic over her relationship with Henry Beckwith, pictured left together, especially as it now looks as if their two-year romance might be heading towards the altar.

Although Henry would appear to have everything a Spice Girl could need (he's an Old Etonian, good looking and his father is the frightfully rich property developer Sir John Beckwith) a handful of Geri's girlfriends feel that Henry is not exactly the steady influence she needs to look after her and her four-year-old daughter Bluebell.

Indeed it's certainly true that fun-loving Beckwith, who at 31 is seven years younger than Geri, has a bit of a roving eye and has been rather naughty in the past (last year he was arrested outside Raffles nightclub in Chelsea for alleged possession of cocaine). But while some may feel ambivalent about "Hoory" Henry, one long-standing supporter of Miss Halliwell informs me: "They're just jealous. It's a great relationship - he's rich and she's famous." What a perfect pair.

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Kate sis Pip and Palace party pal

DESPITE a warning to the rest of her family by Kate Middleton's mother that none of them should be seen to be exerting undue influence over the royal wedding (she's paranoid about any hint of "cashing in") I hear that younger daughter Pippa is relying heavily on one particular company for advice about organising the reception at Buckingham Palace.

Prince William has said he wants the Middletons to feel fully involved in the wedding (unlike previous royal in-laws who have usually been frozen out) so Pippa Middleton has been entrusted with a major role in ensuring the show is not entirely taken over by the "suits" at the Palace.

Helpfully Pippa (or Pip, as she's known among her family) has been able to turn to an old friend for advice: she is JoJo Browner, the boss of Table Talk, the Clapham-based event catering company for which Miss Middleton has been working part-time for the past three years. Table Talk, which was set up 18 years ago by JoJo and Therese Mayhew, would appear to be ideally suited to organising a grand wedding. It promises potential customers: "We will help your dream come true and look after every detail... we have a wealth of knowledge in organising beautiful weddings and work to create a day that surpasses all expectations."

A friend of the Middletons tells me: "No official deal can be done between the palace and Table Talk because of Pippa's employment and things have to be seen to be whiter than white."

But JoJo is quietly advising Pippa, right, and Kate about who to use for various aspects of the wedding.

"Although the reception is being held at Buckingham Palace, a lot of the decisions about detail will be guided by Pippa - Kate and William have absolute faith that she will do things the way they want them."

BILLY CONNOLLY would seem to be one of the few Scotsmen not dancing in the streets at the news of England's failure to capture the World Cup venue. "I'm genuinely sorry," he tells me. "I think they'd have done it rather well. Russia? Qatar? In Scotland most people think that Qatar is a chest complaint."

The BBC's red-headed royal correspondent Nicholas Witchell will never live down that fateful day on the Swiss ski slopes when Prince Charles looked at him witheringly and muttered to Prince William: "I can't bear that man, he's so awful." Witchell plans to capitalise on the incident when he finishes writing his autobiography, after the royal wedding next year (which coincides with his 35th anniversary with the BBC). He tells me: "I haven't made any decisions when to publish yet. But I do think a good title would be By Royal Disappointment."



That tricky actress Gillian Anderson, left, who plays the manipulative Duchess of Windsor in the TV adaptation of William Boyd's novel Any Human Heart, has revealed she still sees a therapist, after making her first appointment when she was just 14.

"I can get very self-indulgent, not really minding how I behave or treat my partner or kids," explains the twice-married mother of three. "So therapy helps me to be a better person. When people are under stress they can take things out on those closest to them. Sometimes you just need a third party to hash that stuff out with."

Best known as agent Scully in The X-Files, Miss Anderson was, like Wallis Simpson, born in America but moved to London, and says she shares other similarities with the wife of the Duke of Windsor: "I do look a bit like her. But she's also a very serious and sort character, and I've certainly exhibited my ability to play those in the past."



The question of George Osborne's voice (which popped up again last week when a leaked American diplomatic cable revealed that Tory aides were worried about the impact of his "high pitched delivery") is a matter that even he acknowledges when he was Shadow Chancellor.

When told that research showed his voice lacked the necessary gravitas to convince voters he could deal effectively with the financial crisis, Osborne agreed to see Valerie Savage, a Harley Street specialist who describes herself as "an expert in language and communication disorders."

So why does George's voice still not sound any stronger? My mole in Whitehall answers: "After two sessions of coaching he decided he'd had enough. His view is that politicians should concentrate on policy rather than personality."



As a defender of the realm, one would have hoped that Peter Firth, who plays that Spooks' stalwart Sir Harry Pearce, would be a committed anglophile. But, quelle horreur! His heart lies in France.

Bradford-born Firth, 57, says he is looking for a roost across the Channel because: "I enjoy the hedonistic pleasures of life, such as sitting drinking chilled rosé, and I love the terrific range of fine foods on offer along the Mediterranean."

"I dream of a house where I can live surrounded by nature. I would like to find that house and write my memoirs."

Until then, he has high hopes of persuading the producers of Spooks to base an episode in France. He adds: "A storyline set around Paris would be great fun, and we could shoot one aboard the Eurostar. All great spy stories have gripping scenes on trains. We're missing a terrific opportunity here."



Now that the broadcasting career of Angus Deayton has fizzled out like a spent Catherine wheel, Alexander Armstrong feels it's time for a permanent anchor on Have I Got New For You. And he knows the perfect candidate.

"I'd love that job," says Alexander, pictured, who with 16 appearances on the series holds the record as guest host. "I think you need the same guy in the saddle every week, so you can carry on running jokes with Ian Hislop and Paul Merton."

Adds the Cambridge-educated actor, who was chatting at the Diarists' Lunch at Searcy's restaurant in the City's Gherkin building: "At one point the BBC was about to give me the job, but there was a change of heart and nothing happened. Damn it."



The things they do before they become famous. David Suchet, left, reveals that when he was young and waiting for acting jobs, he used to earn his crust by working in the Covent Garden branch of the gentlemen's outfitters Moss Bros.

He tells me: "An awful lot of the men who came in looking to hire evening clothing simply couldn't tie a formal black tie - and I could. So I'd carefully show them how to do it, and I nearly always got a ten shilling (50p) tip, which was no end of a supplement to my wage packet back then."

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Simon Cowell will be relieved to learn that work will shortly restart on the Four Seasons site in Barbados where he had placed £10million on deposit for a fabulous villa.

Other investors, such as Andrew Lloyd Webber, were alarmed to be told building of the 36 retreats had stopped last year because of a fall-out from the project's corporate backers but now the Barbados government has stepped in to guarantee their completion.

So Simon will soon have his own place to stay rather than always opting for the Sandy Lane, although locals feel he should try some of the more quietly chic havens, such as the Mango Bay hotel, should the bathrooms at his villa not be up to his exacting standards in time for his next holiday.

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When Martine McCutcheon decided to write her first novel she declined the offer of a ghost writer. Sure enough her opus, *The Mistress*, received a drubbing from the critics and caused drama doyenne Lynda La Plante to explode about "the celebrity **** on which publishers were wasting good money."

But just like sweet Tiffany in *EastEnders*, Martine is an optimistic, if misguided soul, and despite her novel failing to excite the literati, she is convinced it's worthy of being turned into a television drama.

"At the moment I have two production companies that are really interested," trills the pert actress before adding, with just an eyelash-flutter of disappointment: "But one said it might be too expensive."

No matter, Martine is doing her best to talk the TV suits round to her vision and hang the cost.

"More than ever what we need at this time is something with a bit of glamour on TV which is English."

"The Americans do glamour so well but it will be nice if we can do it."

Naturally Miss M, 32, will suggest she plays the novel's hottie, Mandy, should a screen version materialise.

Mandy is dynamic, turned 30, obsessed by designer clothes and looking for love.

It's a role just made for Martine really, isn't it?

Picture: STEVE ROSS/Capital

Leslie's ding dong with star Caine

PLAYING alongside Sir Michael Caine must be every actor's dream, surely? Not for Leslie Phillips, the urbane veteran of 130 films, who is still upset by his "ghastly" experience on Caine's last movie. Leslie, treasured for his appearances as a fruity-voiced seducer in the Carry On and Doctor films, tells me he feels so traumatised by the way he was treated while making *Is There Anyone There?* that he can barely bring himself to mention Caine's name.

He suspects Sir Michael's influence was behind the decision to "cut to shreds" most of his role as a resident of an old people's home who has relationships with two ladies. Caine plays a retired magician who makes friends with the son of the retirement home's owner.

"I feel I have been made a total fool which is not something I want at any time of life. I was humiliated and feel it has been very damaging to me," laments Leslie, 86, who only realised his eight weeks of filming had been in vain when he watched the film at its London premiere.

"I suspected something when at the start of the premiere myself and all the other actors were invited on stage to join Caine but he did all the talking and never asked us to speak. Then when we watched it we realised



HURT: Leslie believes Michael, right, influenced the final cut

everyone's part had been ruthlessly cut back but no one had bothered to tell us."

After watching how the film had turned out, others in the cast left the premiere and decided not to go to the party afterwards. But Phillips insisted on confronting the director John Crowley. "I said to him, 'How could you do that to us?' He went completely white with fear. That was the last time I saw him."

"I feel dreadfully sorry for all the other actors too. One, Elizabeth Spriggs, died before the film was shown – some might say she was saved the humiliation."

As for Michael Caine, he proclaimed it was one of the best roles of his career. However Phillips ripostes: "That's hardly surprising. If anyone asks about *Is There Anyone There?* the answer is 'no' because we were all cut out. It looked like a conspiracy to ensure the film ended up being all about Caine."

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Full of happy memories of their childhood holidays in Cumbria, opera star **Lesley Garrett** and actor **Brian Blessed** pulled out the stops last week to raise funds for flood-damaged Cockermouth at a concert in Keswick.

"I wanted to help because I love the Lake District, I was holidaying in a static caravan with my family just two weeks before the terrible floods," Lesley tells me.

Blessed gave a talk on his mountaineering exploits; he has made three attempts on Mount Everest and told the audience that, at the age of 72, he is planning another go at the summit. Says Lesley: "He did invite me to go up Everest with him but I don't think my diamond wellingtons would be up to the job."

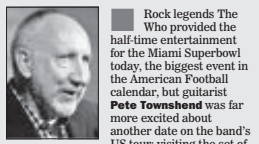


There was a time when mentioning her role as the Oxo mum brought a withering look from **Lynda Bellingham**, who was fed up with being typecast as the warm-hearted matriarch in the long-running gravy ad.

But now Lynda, 61, who is touring the country in the stage version of the hugely successful *Calendar Girls*, says she'd like to promote the product all over again.

"I really do think it's high time that we saw older women in advertising, the only ones of any age that you see these days are generally going on about denture cream, bles them. But what's wrong with a granny praising gravy?"

Adds thrice-married Lynda: "There are a lot of very active ladies over the age of 60 who are completely hands-on when it comes to running the home. So why not an Oxo gran instead of an Oxo mum? I'd certainly be up for it, if they ever wanted to ask me."



Rock legends The Who provided the half-time entertainment for the Miami Superbowl today, the biggest event in the American Football calendar, but guitarist **Pete Townshend** was far more excited about another date on the band's US tour: visiting the set of the TV series *CSI Miami*.

All three versions of the gory whodunnit (*CSI Miami*, *CSI New York* and the mothership, *CSI Las Vegas*) use Who songs as their themes, meaning the rickety rockers are enjoying new fame Stateside.

There was a bit of a worry that Pete, whose hearing has been damaged by years of playing in front of huge speakers, might not be able to make out what star David Caruso (who rarely raises his voice above a whisper) was saying, but a roadie reports: "Pete's using a state-of-the-art set of hearing aids which he's had fitted in the States and now he can hear a pin drop, or a guitar twang, from a thousand paces."



Former *Downing Street* spin doctor **Lance Price**, in his new book *Where Power Lies*, describes David Lloyd George as "the Tony Blair of his day". This will not please Blair one bit.

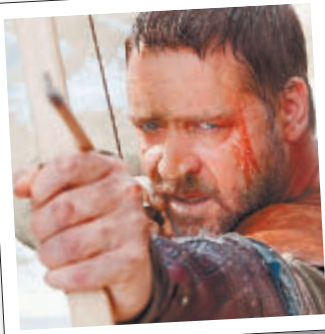
Naughty Lance tells me: "Lloyd George was heavily involved in trying to sort out Ireland and Mesopotamia (now known, of course, as Iraq). But he lined his own pockets, and, oops, was a notorious philanderer."

The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire has long been a devotee of Elvis Presley, making a pilgrimage to his Memphis home Graceland and installing an Elvis telephone in her home at Chatsworth. Now to celebrate her 90th birthday next month Debo is staging an exhibition of her life at her Derbyshire stately home and among the artefacts is a section of the picket fence that used to surround Graceland.

Explains Her Grace: "It had to be replaced with a bigger fence when he became really famous."

A sigh of relief from such ministers as **Harriet Harman** and **Ed Balls** as they are informed they haven't been risking their lives being chauffeured around in Toyota Priuses which now make up most of the Government's car fleet (they were judged to be the best carbon-friendly replacement for all those thirsty Jaguars and Rovers).

"The problems are affecting the new Toyotas; ours are older models," says a spokesman at the Department of Transport. Such a relief.



I hear **Russell Crowe** was so anxious to protect his privacy during the filming of his forthcoming epic *Robin Hood* that he ordered a nest of trailers, constructed into the shape of a quadrangle, to keep prying eyes from watching him slide into his Robin of Sherwood tights. It's customary for the star of a movie to occupy the biggest trailer on set but in Nottingham the sensitive star had four. The burly New Zealand-born actor has softened up since getting married and becoming a father of two boys but he still loves his tucker. So one wagon housed a gym and a personal trainer to keep him looking lithe and toned for the close-up shots. The most opulent mobile home was reserved for Crowe, while the two others accommodated his personal assistants. "His encampment was virtually impenetrable," reports my merry man in the forest. "We called it Russell Square."

Adam Helliker

The man who knows the people you'd like to know...

adam.helliker@express.co.uk



Picture: REX FEATURES

Charles to make spiritual return

AS HE approaches his fifth wedding anniversary next month, Prince Charles is feeling the need for a male-only spiritual recharge: he is contemplating a solo sojourn to a monastery in northern Greece. The religious enclave of Mount Athos, where no woman has set foot since the 11th century (and even female animals are banned), was a favourite retreat for Charles during his testing times with his first wife Diana. But since his marriage to Camilla Parker Bowles he has not felt the need to return, until now. On previous visits to the remote religious community, the Prince has joined in prayer and meditation with monks during the mornings, spending his afternoons painting watercolours of the imposing monasteries dotted among the lush scenery. Normally visitors to the self-governing republic have to share a dormitory, as well as the frugal lifestyle embraced by the monks, but in the only concession to his royal status, Charles is allocated a small whitewashed "cell". He sleeps on a steel-framed bed with a foam mattress (possibly not the best choice for a man with an ever-aching back who is in his 62nd year). There are nearly 2,000 monks housed in the republic's monasteries, all of whom have devoted their lives to shunning sexual desire



PILLAR OF STRENGTH: Charles at Athos

through prayer and following the Greek Orthodox faith. Every meal is taken in silence. Charles was first introduced to Mount Athos by his father, who was born in Corfu and had to switch to Anglicanism from Greek Orthodoxy to marry the Queen. Philip's mother, Alice, was deeply religious and became a nun in her later life. When she died in 1969 she left no possessions, having given everything away, and was buried, as she had requested, on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Speaking about Charles's last visit, one of the monks said: "Your Prince is always welcome here. It is a place where he seems to have found a lot of serenity in his life. He is treated just like a fellow monk and lives just as we do, from the food we eat to the hours we keep." A senior royal source adds that, increasingly as he gets older, Charles "is seeking answers to spiritual and philosophical questions". "Nourishing the spirit is very important to him these days. He is a man beset by many pressures, so he relishes the prospect of spending time alone, with the time to concentrate on spiritual matters." Clarence House has always adhered to the line that the Prince's visits are considered "private" and gives no details of whether, and when, he would go but if he does travel to Mount Athos this year, it's likely to be in May.



Writer **Jane Fallon** might not get much in the way of helpful criticism of her forthcoming novel, *Foursome*, from her partner, a certain **Ricky Gervais**. "He doesn't read fiction at all and I am completely bemused by people who don't read fiction. I can't imagine my life without it," says Jane, who has lived with the comic for 26 years (the couple, above, met while studying at University College, London). "Reading was a big deal in my house. We lived in a flat above my parents' shop, which was a newsagents and had a little paperback stall. I used to write 'novels' that were eight pages long and clearly brilliant but my dad refused to sell them."



As he prepares to embark on a national tour of the musical *Hairspray*, **Michael Ball** is hoping that there is no repeat of an incident that disrupted his one-man show. "People use mobile phone cameras during performances now and suddenly you get a flash in your face in mid-song. But the worst thing that happened to me was during my show at the Haymarket. It was opening with the first song and there was a voice from the audience: 'Michael, Michael!'" "This woman ran to the front of the stage and said to me: 'I can't find my seat and my son is in the one next to me and he won't answer me.' So I had to stop and the lights were put up and the son had a look of, 'Oh God, let me die!' It was awful."



Now that **Channel 4** is giving up the rights to broadcast *Friends* (after 236 episodes) there is hope for fans of **Matt LeBlanc**, who played **Joey Tribbiani** in the American series. The production company **Hat Trick** has been touring country houses in the south of England seeking locations for what they tell owners will be "a hilarious British/American sitcom starring **Matt LeBlanc**". They add: "It's a top-secret project, so don't tell anyone about it."

Last month art dealers were stunned when a life-size sculpture of a male figure by **Alberto Giacometti** sold for £55 million at *Sotheby's* in London, setting a world record as the most expensive piece of art ever to sell at auction. The identity of the buyer was kept secret but now it can be revealed as society hostess **Lily Safra**, who inherited billions after her husband, banker **Edmond Safra**, died in a fire at her penthouse in Monte Carlo. Four-times-married **Lily** also owns the world's most expensive house, *Villa Leopolda* on the *Côte d'Azur*, but the sculpture will stay in the UK; it has been delivered to her home in Belgravia.



Now that **Penny Smith** is leaving the comfort of the GMTV sofa, she will have more time to write novels and recite the poetry she loves so much. Passionate **Penny**, 51, whose previous boyfriends include **Kory Bremner** and **Paul McKenna**, can call on her considerable experience of love to ensure that her books will be a raunchy read. Indeed while writing her first novel, she felt moved to describe the significant effects on her heroine of using an accessory called a Rampant Rabbit (a battery-operated female pleasuring device, m'lud). The honeypot will also have more leisure time to view her considerable collection of naughty DVDs, as she snuggles up with her boyfriend, actor **Vincent Leigh**. Incidentally, one of the many qualities that keep her attracted to **Vince** is his hirsute back. "I love the way the hair goes up my nose when I rub against it," she purrs.



As this column has been so successful at matchmaking, it's time to turn to **Rick Parfitt Jr's** quest for a girlfriend. Singer-songwriter **Rick**, whose daddy, as you might have guessed, is the Status Quo rocker, is single after breaking up from his last popsy, **Keri**. He tells me: "I'm auditioning for the future Mrs Parfitt. Ideally she will be a combination of **Heather Locklear**, as she was in the Eighties, **Heather Graham** and **Fearne Cotton**."

Would-be candidates will be able to see **Rick** in action, with his band, at the ball he has organised at the Hurlingham Club in Fulham, west London, on March 17, in aid of research into Crohn's Disease, the bowel illness he has suffered from since childhood. Softly spoken **Rick** claims he has a unique talent for "pleasuring the ladies" (he is unfortunately in the habit of slipping into Stringfellow-type thong-speak as he has been on a massage course. "I just need someone to practise on," he laments).

While that unlikely lothario **LEMBIT OPIK** has, amazingly, managed to reignite his romance with pert lingerie model **KATIE GREEN**, above, I hear the upstanding Member for Montgomeryshire still has not returned some dresses belonging to another former squeeze, **Gabriela Irimia** (one half of the Transylvanian singing duo the Cheeky Girls). The wacky Lib Dem MP, 45, has annoyed **Gabriela's** forceful mother, who says she has been trying to recover her daughter's clothes ever since **Gabriela's** 19-month relationship with the priapic politician ended two years ago. "I would like to hear from Lembit," declares Mrs **Margit Semal** from the house she shares with her daughters in East Sussex. "Gabriela left in his apartment some of her things that were presents from me. One is a £200 **Ted Baker** dress." "I always buy two of everything so that the girls have identical dresses but now **Gabriela** is missing several. She's returned his engagement ring to him but he did not return her dresses." Perhaps **Lembit Opik** (or the well-known anagram, as I like to think of him) is deliberately delaying the return of **Gabriela's** knick-knacks. After all this Estonian physicist's son does have a fondness for dressing up, as he demonstrated last week at a Macmillan Cancer Support fundraiser where he appeared wearing a weird sandwich board with **Wonderbra** model **Katie**, 22.

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Believe it or not, putting up with **Kate Moss** is not the easiest of roles for boyfriend **Jamie Hince**. Even he tires of gazing at that famous visage when she's being demanding and wants to stay up partying all night.

Now, though, the weary guitarist has somewhere to slink away to when it all gets too much on weekends at Kate's raucous roost in the Cotswolds. Their chums, fashionable artist Jake Chapman and Rose Ferguson, have bought a £3million spread, Furzy Hall Farm, which is just a 10-minute lollipop from Miss Moss's place near Farringdon in Oxfordshire.

"Jake hasn't been well; he ended up in hospital in Ibiza last year when he was struck down with a virus and then developed pneumonia," chatters one of Miss Moss's circle. "So he bought this place to get away from the madness of his life in London."

"It's great. Jake's house is so close. It means every time Kate gets too much, Jamie trots to Jake's place in the middle of the night and cools off."

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Adam Hellicker

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Picture: ALAN DAVIDSON/Ret Features



■ Patient princess-in-waiting **KATE MIDDLETON** is painted as something of a goody-goody by her contemporaries at Marlborough College but in between studying for her A-levels (in Maths, Art and English) she did at least display the odd flash of naughty teenage behaviour. One classmate recalls a time when Catherine, as she was then known, got "very merry" on cider at a midnight feast (steady), while another pupil at the *Wiltshire* public school wrote in the leavers' handbook for the year 2000: "Catherine's perfect looks are renowned but her obsession with her boobs is not. She's often found squinting down her top screaming, 'They're growing!'"

Wills set for Falklands



SEA KING: William will perform a tour of duty

WHILE Prince Harry may get his wish to see active service again in Afghanistan after he receives his wings as a helicopter pilot this Friday, I can reveal his brother William is to be sent to the Falklands, where the RAF is beefing up its defences amid renewed aggressive noises from the Argentinians. Britain went to war in 1982 against Argentina after it had invaded the Falklands claiming ownership of the remote islands, which are once again the subject of diplomatic tension as British exploration groups began drilling for oil there. The Argentinian president, Cristina Kirchner, claims the exploration violates its national sovereignty and there is fear among the islanders over the possibility of new moves to take the territory by force. David

Cameron has said ownership of the islands is "completely non-negotiable" and if he was PM, Britain would go to war again to secure their future. Despite this renewed tension, the RAF is making provisional plans to post Prince William for a tour of duty in the Falklands, where his uncle Prince Andrew served as a helicopter pilot in the fierce fighting of the last conflict, which cost the lives of 255 British combatants. "Crews do relief stints out in the Falklands, where we operate Sea King helicopters for search and rescue, and it's being pencilled in for William sometime down the line," says a senior RAF source. "He'll do a couple of months there." William's main base during his next three years' training will continue to be RAF Valley in Wales, and besides the Falklands he is expected to take part in operations in

Northern Ireland, making him the first member of the Royal Family to serve there since the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969. Flight Lieutenant Wales's deployments will mean more time apart from Kate Middleton, although she has been able to stay with him in Anglesey, where the Prince has access to a farmhouse where he's not on call at the RAF base. Last week Kate and William surprised shoppers when they popped into McColl's convenience store in the quarry town of Blaenau Ffestiniog. "Their visit was the talk of the town," said deputy manager Ceurywn Williams-Michelmore. "The assistant who served them said she was very nervous. The Prince and Kate were very polite." As if that wasn't enough excitement, William was also spotted eating a bacon and egg bag from a roadside burger van in Valley.



WAR VETERAN: Prince Andrew fought in 1982

■ If David Cameron becomes prime minister on Friday, one of the first rewards he will dispense is to create a suitably grand role at No 10 for **Steve Hilton**, whose advice he rates above all others but whose closeness to the leader has caused resentment among a number of Tory MPs, who have labelled him "Rasputin". Shaven-headed Hilton, 40, and his willowy wife Rachel Whetstone (a former aide to Michael Howard and now head of communications at Google) will be the power couple behind the throne because of their combined influence on Cameron. Besides Tory PR chief Andy Coulson, Hilton is one of the highest paid on Cameron's staff and easily able to afford the £1.2million farmhouse he has just bought near his master's constituency home in Oxfordshire. Both he and Rachel were godparents to the Camerons' late son Ivan. Although he went to Oxford, Hilton comes from a modest background. His parents, Hungarian refugees called Hircsac, met at Heathrow airport,



POWER COUPLE: Steve and Rachel

where they worked in catering (they took the name Hilton because it was easier to pronounce). Before wooing Miss Whetstone, Hilton went out briefly with Catherine Osler, now editor of *Tatler*, who says: "Dave absolutely adores him. They tease each other and trust each other." As for Miss Whetstone, she has only once blotted her copybook. During a break from Steve she wisely took up with an old lover, Viscount Astor, who just happens to be David Cameron's stepfather. Happily, though, she was soon reunited with Hilton.



■ The potential elevation of David Cameron won't be the only promotion to be toasted by his family; his barrister brother **Alexander** has been elected head of chambers in his criminal practice. Quite apart from being in demand for his expertise on cases involving insider dealing and money laundering, Alexander Cameron, who has been a QC since 2003, is noted by his colleagues for his charm and urbane manner. "Unlike many one could mention in this profession he's unpretentious and has time for everyone," reports one of his learned friends. "He's High Court judge material, even if he didn't manage to keep Lord Archer and Jonathan Aitken out of jail when he defended them." As if that weren't enough praise, Alexander is also happily married (his wife Sarah is a cousin of foodie High Fernley Whittingstall) and has a teenage daughter called Imogen and, like his younger brother, prefers bicycling to driving. The secret of his success? "He kept his head down at Eton." It's the only way.



NOT QUITE SPLICED: "Wanderer" Rupert and Keira

■ Just when **Keira Knightley** was getting fed up with her boyfriend's lack of commitment, he has come up with a ring. Actor **Rupert Friend** has been Keira's lover for four years since they met on the set of *Pride & Prejudice*, and likes to think of himself as a "wanderer, a bit of a gypsy" (or commitment-phobe, as her friends see it). So, to celebrate her 25th birthday, Rupert took her out for breakfast and presented her with a gold and diamond ring. Sadly there was no mention of an engagement, let alone a future wedding. Instead he told her it was a "token of his love". Those who know Teddington-born Keira say that the star of such films as *The Duchess* and *Pirates Of The Caribbean* is "deeply frustrated" that Rupert refuses to talk about marriage. "Keira is beginning to feel broody and wants to feel Rupert is committed to being her partner for life," discloses one actress who is a friend of the couple. "Still, she was thrilled to get the ring. Rupert says he wants to 'establish himself firmly' before even considering the idea of a family. He's a normal bloke who doesn't own a proper home." That's all very well for Mr Friend, who has enjoyed nowhere near as much success as Ms Knightley, who has four films coming out this year and has two lined up for next year. "Still," concludes the couple's chum, "the ring is a start."

■ Being confined to a wheelchair with her fractured tibia is driving the **Duchess of Cornwall** to distraction, and not a healthy one. Ever since royal health guru Dr Mosaraf Ali persuaded her to take up yoga instead of smoking (and she got fed up with Prince Charles bleating about the smell of nicotine) Camilla has concentrated on her morning exercises rather than cough and reach for the packet of Marlboro Lights. "Now she can't get anywhere near the lotus position she's getting twitchy and longing for a puff," whispers a flustered footman trying to hide the



crested ashtray at Clarence House. At least Camilla can still look forward to the daily distraction of a few tumbler of gin. As the wife of former President George W Bush recalls in her forthcoming memoirs, she saw Prince Charles pouring himself and Camilla a stiff drink from a hip flask he had taken from his jacket before greeting guests at a reception when the couple visited the White House in 2005. Surprised at this "royal stash of apparently neat gin", Laura Bush notes dryly: "The Royal Family is not without its quirks."



With commentators falling over themselves to rush out books on the royal romance, there has been an unseemly amount of scurrying for details of Kate Middleton's love life before she fell for her prince. Yet still no author has succeeded in wringing any salacious admissions from the lucky chap who was Kate's first love: **Willem Marx**, 28.

Willem, (whose father is Dutch and mother English) met Kate while both were at Marlborough College and, according to a contemporary at the Wiltshire public school, is the boy who "first broke her heart". As my picture shows, he bears a strong resemblance to Prince William. Although their affair fizzled out and both went their separate ways – Kate to St Andrews University and Willem to Oxford to study Arabic – the two have remained good friends.

Indeed they recently enjoyed a night out in Chelsea after Willem had been in touch to say he was over from New York, where he's based as a foreign correspondent. Says a source close to Kate: "Two authors of forthcoming books on the royal engagement have tried to persuade Willem to talk about Kate but he's absolutely loyal to her and she really appreciates that."



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Picture: DAVE HOGAN/Getty Images

The man who knows the people you'd like to know...



Sophie is Kate's steady hand

Picture: CLARE LINDSAY

MINDFUL of the pressure placed upon brides marrying into the Royal Family, the Countess of Wessex has volunteered herself as a mentor to Kate Middleton to help her through the months before her wedding. The move was suggested by William, who gets on well with Sophie Wessex, and asked her shortly before his engagement announcement whether Kate could visit Bagshot Park, the Wessexes' home in Surrey, for an informal chat about how she might best cope both as a royal fiancée and later in her role as a princess's wife.

Sophie's role as mentor will have been approved by the Queen, with whom she is a firm favourite. The Countess often accompanies HM to church at Windsor and is the only one granted the privilege of travelling with her by car to the Christmas Day service at Sandringham. The two ride together at weekends and watch television at Windsor Castle. They also have a shared



KIND: Sophie Wessex has volunteered to be Kate's mentor

passion for military history. Indeed the Queen has always liked Sophie, who is a vivacious companion and has a more easy-going manner than her own daughter Princess Anne. It helps that the sovereign's favourite son is Edward, who is being groomed to take over his father's mantle as the next Duke of Edinburgh. So she will know that Sophie is perfectly placed to help with the daunting prospect of becoming

a princess, not least because they have so much in common. They both come from stable middle-class families (Sophie's father Christopher Rhys-Jones is a retired businessman) and like Kate Sophie was with her prince for eight years before they married. The Countess, who worked in public relations before her marriage, also knows the pitfalls. A few days before her wedding, a

newspaper published a picture of her posing topless with Capital Radio presenter Chris Tarrant, a photo taken when she still had a job doing the station's PR.

But by far her worst time was nine years ago when a reporter, posing as a sheikh, recorded her making disparaging comments about other members of the Royal Family and she stood accused of trading on her royal connections. The headlines following the revelations could not have been more damaging, with Sophie quoted on the front of one donkeymarket rag insisting: "My Edward's Not Gay."

A senior royal aide says of the Countess's role as mentor to Kate: "She will spend quite a bit of time with her and always be at the end of a phone when Kate gets the collywobbles, which is bound to happen. Kate's life is about to change so dramatically that she will appreciate the counsel of someone who has been through it. As Sophie herself has said, she's been on a steep learning curve ever since she first accepted Edward's proposal."

Her sister hardly had to kiss any frogs before she found her prince but it's taken a while longer for **Pippa Middleton** to snap up her ideal man, and her few relationships have always lasted a few months. But her romance with former Warwickshire county cricketer Alex Loudon, which I disclosed the other day, is going so well that he could be the one to accompany her to Westminster Abbey. Although Alex, 36, doesn't quite tick all her boxes (she once told a girlfriend her ideal man had to have a country estate and a title) he has some claim to sporting fame, having once been selected for the England test squad against Pakistan.

Social astronaut Pippa has had a number of dalliances since she left Edinburgh University. She likes her aristos – she has tickled tonsils with the Duke of Northumberland's son George Percy and with Alexander Spencer Churchill, nephew of the Duke of Marlborough. But could Alex Loudon, pictured below, who gave up his promising



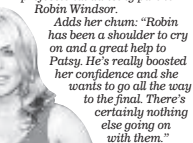
Viewers have been suitably impressed by **Patsy Kensit's** transformation on *Strictly Come Dancing* from nervy ingenue to sassy star. But this week she has suffered a knockback: her fourth husband, **Jeremy Healy**, who walked out on their marriage six months ago, has suddenly got back in touch.

"Out of the blue Jeremy sent her a text and congratulated her on how well she looked and how well she was doing on the show," confides a friend of Patsy's. "Patsy was a bit upset because they haven't talked since he left and then he gets in touch just because

he saw her looking good on TV. Of course she teased him back but it was a setback because she's trying to put what happened with Jeremy behind her."

Patsy, now 42, has declared she's no longer interested in romance.

Right now the most important man helping her is her professional dancing partner **Robin Windsor**. Adds her mum: "Robin has been a shoulder to cry on and a great help to Patsy. He's really boosted her confidence and she wants to go all the way to the final. There's certainly nothing else going on with them."



The night before his peerage was announced, I spotted **Julian Fellowes** celebrating at Julie's, the Holland Park restaurant which has been popping corks for discerning customers for 40 years. "It's one of my favourites," said the Downton Abbey writer. "Julie's has always been one of those places which seemed central to the lives we were all leading when I was at university and then drama school. We all thought we'd find cool people there, even though we weren't in the least cool ourselves."



Goodness knows when **Dame Maggie Smith** will find time to swish her parasol for the next series of *Downton Abbey*: much of next year will be taken up with her commitment to star alongside her old chums Albert Finney and Sir Tom Courtenay in *Quartet*, directed by Dustin Hoffman. "In this film Maggie will be able to reveal she has a very fine singing voice," discloses my source in the pre-production department. "The movie should be a hoot, it's set in a home for retired opera singers. The cast will be falling on their arses a lot." Right now the redoubtable dame (who will be 77 next month) is already having plenty of giggles in India, where she's working on *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, with yet more of her friends – **Judi Dench**, **Julie Christie** and **Peter O'Toole**. Not bad for Maggie, whose grandmother, on hearing that she wanted to act, told her at the age of 16: "Oh, you can't dear – not with that face!"



The Lord Chamberlain and the Master of the Household may be the top funkies ostensibly in charge of the royal wedding reception or, more correctly, wedding breakfast) but there's only one man who makes sure his party goes with a swing – **Michael Fawcett**. The spectre of Fawcett *The Fence*, who is still Prince Charles's most favoured factotum (and one-time royal toothpaste squeezer) will send shivers through the staff at Buck House, where there is ongoing below-stairs rivalry with Clarence House. Several have memories of bruising encounters with Fawcett. Indeed Fawcett's power engendered such resentment that William's late mother Diana, who disliked him intensely, wrote in her diary that "Charles confides more in Fawcett than he does in me."

However Bexley-born Michael, who started royal service as a footman, is highly valued by Charles and Camilla, and although he can still be found on most days at Clarence House or Highgrove, now runs (with his wife Debbie, a former royal housemaid) a party organisation firm called Premier Mote.

William knows Fawcett, who oversaw his 21st birthday celebrations at Windsor, works overtime to see the little details at a party are all covered. As Charles is paying the bill, Fawcett will be only too happy to oblige.

Those snobby friends of William who used to sneer that Kate wasn't good enough for him – and mine Dora to Manual or DTM – behind the back of former air stewardess **Carole Middleton**, have a new job now that Mrs Middleton is to become the Prince's mother-in-law. Whenever Carole's name comes up they refer to another airline acronym: I.G.E. Landing Gear Engaged.



The impending split between **Angelina Jolie** and her partner **Brad Pitt** hasn't dulled their "home-aholic" tendencies. Last week's news that Brad had bought himself a \$700,000 Californian cave so he can escape the chaotic life he shares with the twice-divorced actress and their six children has spurred Ms Jolie to go palazzo-hunting in Venice.

In the style of her alter ego Lara Croft, I can report that the like 34-year-old has been demanding particulars from agents for a six-bedroom, canal-fronted, anti-paparazzi gated palazzo with gondola; private islands will be considered.

She has just three weeks to source a Venetian roof before filming starts on her next movie *The Tourist* on February 20, a steamy romance with co-star Johnny Depp, written by Oscar-winning scriptwriter Julian Fellowes.

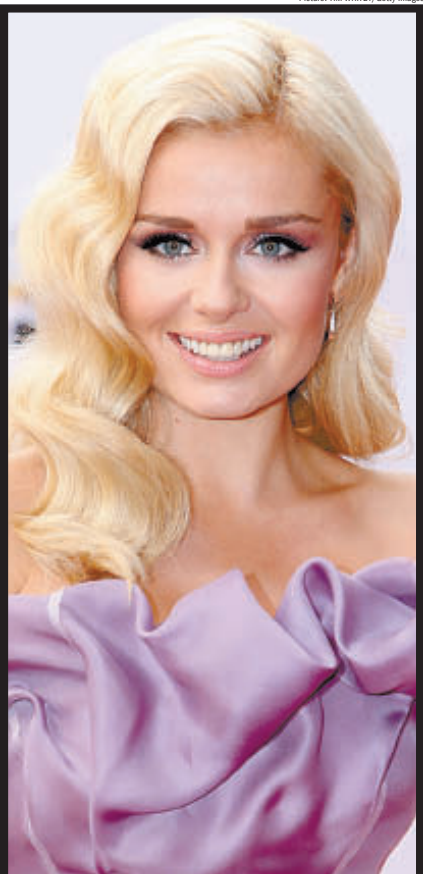
"Johnny is happy to rent a room in a hotel for the 13-week duration of the shoot but Angelina wants a property of her own so her children can stay with her and they can visit afterwards," a Brangelina insider confides.

Adam Helliker

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Picture: TIM WHITBY/Getty Images

The man who knows the people you'd like to know...



It's over and out as Jo moves on

WHILE RONNIE Wood makes a fool of himself with a different bimette each week, his ex-wife of 33 years is moving on with her life, quite literally. Jo has decided to put the marital home she shared with her crumbling crooner up for sale.

Holmwood House, the massive Surrey spread where riddled rocker Ronnie twanged a guitar, wielded a paintbrush and emptied his drinks cupboard each evening until he ran off with a Russian waitress 18 months ago, is up for grabs at £13.5 million.

"Jo has not only moved on, she now wants to move out," confides a friend.

The 50-room former Victorian Hunting Lodge is just too big for the former model who charmed us all in TV's *Strictly Come Dancing*. She now wants to move to Chelsea and become a girl about town again. Her daughter Leah, who lives in the adjoining four-bedroom annexe with her husband and daughter, is leaving for Australia and her sons Tyrone and Jamie have left home, so Jo, 54, no longer needs the space.

She is no longer willing to live in the wizen shadow of her alcoholic husband, who gave her the house and a further £6 million in a divorce settlement two months ago.

"Ronnie has begged her at least three times to have him back but she refuses," the friend adds. "Jo is still hurting terribly but there is no going back for her. She just wants to sell, make a clean break and get on with enjoying the rest of her life."

The glamorous granny is looking for a house



STONE FREE: Despite Ronnie's pleas, Jo is selling up as Ron camps in a rented house

big enough for three dogs, her organic beauty business and enough space to entertain her friends. She loves cooking and get-togethers with the Rolling Stones' WAGs. But she has confided she is dreading clearing Holmwood as it is still full of Ronnie's belongings.

"It's as if he never left," I am told. "The place is littered with his stuff. There are loads of guitars. His studio is full of dried-up paint pots and half-finished canvases as well as hundreds

of paintings and photos that must be worth a fortune. There's even the Romany caravan that Jo bought him for his 60th birthday two years ago."

Meanwhile, the wrinkle rocker, who is back in rehab for the eighth time, rents a three-bedroom house down the road in leafy Claygate. A turquoise scarf belonging to his former Russian squeeze adorns the neck of a stone great dane outside the front door.

Get-well wishes to boy-band heart-throb **Jules Knight**, 28 (left), who is recovering from a heart scare just three months after his father died of a heart attack.

"It was really scary," the baritone, who forms one quarter of the group **Blake**, told me. "I was staying with my sister and suddenly had a tingling in my arms, tight chest and numb hands. I was rushed to hospital in an ambulance and had an ECG and angiogram. I had all the symptoms of a heart attack."

Sussex-born Jules, a university chum of Prince William and Kate Middleton, admits he has been going through a bad patch as he has also broken up with his girlfriend. "I was burning the candle at both ends," he adds.

"I have been very stressed and I still miss my dad." At least he has the launch of Blake's new classical album to look forward to in March and an Australian tour in April.

Rumours that actress **Kate Winslet** and her director husband **Sam Mendes** were planning to pack up their matching Oscar statues and abandon their 18th-century Cotswold manor house for somewhere further west appear to be unfounded. With the dust barely settled after five years and £1.5 million worth of renovation work on the listed building, bought as a semi ruin for £2.3 million in 2006, they have put in an application for more work on the 22-acre property. Given the titanic struggle they went through to get planning permission for the alterations, they are playing it safer this time. They just want to convert a "cart" shed into a garden room.

Ozzy Osborne once bit the head off a bat on stage but biting the head off a daffodil doesn't sound quite so rock and roll. Yet that's what rock drummer and general wild man **Ginger Baker** did for a buzz during the height of his fame in the Sixties. As revealed in fellow Cream member Jack Bruce's upcoming biography, *Composing Himself*, Ginger muses: "I didn't enjoy it. I got a sore throat but it didn't get high." So much for fower power.

Edited by JANE SLADE

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It is no secret that **John Cleese** has been travelling the world on a global fundraiser to finance his \$20-million (£12.5 million) divorce settlement from his third wife Alysce Eichelberger. The Monty Python star, left, who begins his one-man shows with the

introduction: "I've fallen on hard times. I'm having to pay \$20 million to a woman who I believe is the special love child of Bernie Madoff and Heather Mills," is about to experience his first floating venue.

Cleese on the high seas, or to use the official title: *How To Finance Your Divorce Tour*, is certain to make waves on board P&O's cruise ship *Silver Spirit*, where the long-limbed funnyman will entertain passengers in two weeks' time sailing from Buenos Aires to Santiago. "It is his first cruise ever," a chum confides. "He has always avoided water in case one of his wives tries to drown him."



A thunder of hardbacks beckons as the race begins to produce biographies of the **Queen** in time for her Diamond Jubilee year in 2012, with no fewer than four authors jostling pens for shelf position.

Regal experts Sally Bedell Smith and Isabelle Rivère are both scribbling furiously as the irrepressible Gyles Brandreth, who tells me: "I have been asked to produce a revised version of my biography of the Queen but at the moment I am writing a murder mystery about her great-grandfather Edward VII and Oscar Wilde. When that's done I shall be turning my attention to Her Majesty. There is plenty of new material."

But the queen of royal biographers Sarah Bradford looks like stealing a march on the lot. I learn she is updating her 1996 biography of the monarch.

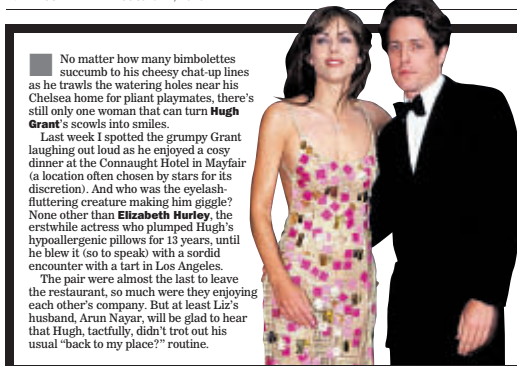
One hopes they find something new to tell since a Palace spokesman informs me that no one is being allowed access to the royal archives and Her Majesty isn't giving any interviews.



The woman with a star part in the biggest real-life royal soap is about to visit the set of the UK's longest running TV soap. As part of the 50th anniversary celebrations for ITV's *Coronation Street*, the **Duchess of Cornwall**, left, will be treading the

cobblestones of the most famous fictional street in the country when she visits the show's Manchester set on Thursday.

One cannot help but think that for this long-term Corrie fan, the prospect of a Malibu and pineapple at the *Rovers Return* is probably a little more enticing than the other event lined up for herself and her husband, the Prince of Wales on the same day: discussing debt counselling with local victims of the credit crunch.



No matter how many bimbolettes succumb to his cheesy chat-up lines as he trawls the watering holes near his Chelsea home for plant playmates, there's still only one woman that can turn Hugh Grant's scowls into smiles.

Last week I spotted the grumpy Grant laughing out loud as he enjoyed a cosy dinner at the Connaught Hotel in Mayfair (a location often chosen by stars for its discretion). And who was the eyelash-fluttering creature making him giggle? None other than Elizabeth Hurley, the erstwhile actress who plumped Hugh's hypoallergenic pillows for 13 years, until he blew it (so to speak) with a sordid encounter with a tart in Los Angeles.

The pair were almost the last to leave the restaurant, so much were they enjoying each other's company. But at least Liz's husband, Arun Nayar, will be glad to hear that Hugh, tactfully, didn't trot out his usual "back to my place?" routine.

Adam

By jingo that Jensen Button is speedy... and not just on the racetrack. The Formula One champion is proud of the nippy time it takes him to leave his Monaco apartment. "From getting out of bed to locking up my front door, I'm looking at 25 minutes. I'll shower, brush my teeth, trim the facial hair, tidy my hair and leave." But there's one sartorial matter that sometimes impedes his timing - his shirts. "I like them nicely pressed with no creases," insists bachelor Button. "I don't trust anyone with my shirts, so I do my own ironing."



Helliker



The man who knows the people you'd like to know...

Neighbours say Huhne's no gent

THE Minister for Energy, Chris Huhne is likely to be hit financially in the inevitable divorce from his wife of 26 years, Vicky, who friends report is in "vengeful mode" after last week's revelations that her pious partner has been canoodling with pro-haired bisexual Carina Tringham. When the LibDem MP's spouse, who as an economist knows more than most about the value of money, consults her divorce lawyers she is likely to be told she will be entitled to half of the property portfolio she has helped her adulterous husband acquire. He owns five houses in London and Oxford which he rents out, while living in one home in Clapham and another in his Hampshire constituency. I can report that he will not be missed by his neighbours in Clapham, who include several high-ranking civil servants, political pundits, Polly Tonnesee and restaurateur Christopher Corbin, now that he has moved out to live with Miss Tringham. As one resident tells me: "He isn't particularly friendly, you won't find him giving anybody a smile. But then we haven't rushed to be his friends, knowing the



SPLIT: Chris Huhne has left his wife Vicky

dreadful way he treated the house's former owners when he was buying it in 1990." Indeed during a six-month wrangle, he beat the owners of the five-bedroom Regency property down from the original asking price of around £600,000 to £515,000. "The owners were a lovely couple but they were amazed over Huhne's behaviour," confided a neighbour. "He first argued that the roof needed to be replaced with expensive

Welsh Slate tiles because the house was a grade two listed building and nothing else would do and sliced a chunk off the asking price for that. Then they were really insulted when he went round with a clipboard noting every lightbulb and doorknob, as though they might take them with them. "Apparently at the 11th hour on a Friday he threatened to pull out of the sale completely unless a pair of £400 velvet curtains was included; they were due to exchange on the Monday. The owners wanted to withdraw the house from sale, but remarkably the agents agreed to take £400 out of their commission so it could go through. "Everyone wants to get the best possible deal when they buy a house but it was the way Huhne behaved that was so shocking and made us all feel that he was no gentleman and was never going to fit in." Sounds like Carina, (who I remember when she did some work experience for me on another diary column) is welcome to the Minister for Hypocrisy who, lest we forget, claimed on his parliamentary expenses £119 for a trouser press and 79p for a packet of HobNobs.

Fascinated to hear that photographers covering the opening of the Harrods summer sale by Eva Herzigova were requested by a store official not to snap the model's legs. "We were told that she's very sensitive about her varicose veins," whispers my man with the long lens.



Amid the usual parade of showbiz break-ups, here's a heartening tale of Pierce Brosnan, who says his wife is still the only woman he looks at after nine years of marriage.

"She's beautiful, she still breaks my heart," the former James Bond waxes about his spouse, American journalist Beth Shaye Smith. "She's very good at what she does, as a mother, as a friend. And I know when to say 'Yes, dear.' We've come through a lot together, which is bonding, and, God willing, we still have a long way to go." The Irish-born smoothie likes to keep the romance alive with all fresco feasts at the site of the house in Hawaii the couple are building but he doesn't like to splash out so they can pour all their finances into their dream home. He says pragmatically: "I buy only cheap champagne, to keep the costs down."



Looking back on her early life, Rachel Ward is now glad that she was released from the trappings of her gilded upbringing by escaping to Australia to marry the rugged Australian actor Bryan Brown. "To tell the truth I'd always felt uncomfortable with my privileged class," says the actress, above, who was brought up in a Cotswolds manor house and was educated privately in Gloucestershire. "We used to go to school in a chauffeur-driven car and I would make the chauffeur drop us off a quarter of a mile from the gates, so no one would see how we turned up." Concludes Rachel, grand-daughter of the Earl of Dudley: "Poor kids are sometimes ashamed of their situation. But it works on the other side of the tracks too."

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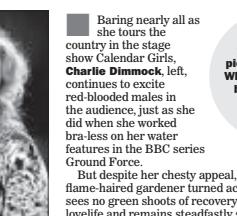
Great news for all those fans of John Nettles, who is retiring as Chief Inspector Barnaby after his 81st episode of Midsomer Murders: the popular actor is to star in a new TV series. From his home in Warwickshire he tells me: "It seems quite a lot of viewers think that because I'm leaving Midsomer Murders I'm retiring altogether, but I've no intention of giving up the acting until the phone stops ringing. "TV are about to give the green light to a new series called Country Matters, in which I will be playing a rural magistrate. "I've been giving a lot of thought as to who I'd like to have in the dock in front of me for my first sentence to be passed. I've decided that Daniel Craig would be the first one to be 'sent down' for a long stretch. He's far too good as 007 and I am deeply jealous of him. "Time to get the competition out of the way."

It's all very well for Ronnie Wood to strut around town proclaiming his love for his exotic new squeeze. So why does he keep calling his ex-wife Jo Wood, right, whom he discarded after 23 years of marriage? Jo, who is happily single (and feeling calm and serene after all those years of dealing with Ronnie's traumas), has been telling friends about the incessant calls she has been receiving from the Rolling Stone and his new lover Ana Araujo, a Brazilian polo coach. (Where does he find them?) I'm told by one of her chums: "The most irritating part of these calls is that Ronnie speaks to Jo, then hands the phone over to his girlfriend, who seems desperate to make friends. She

is angling for an invitation to dinner at Hollywood House [the Surreys' roost Jo retained in her £6.5million divorce settlement]. "Jo says that whatever Ronnie is up to, she doesn't want any part of it. She really has moved on. She wishes they would just leave her alone." Happily, from next month Jo will be out of contact for a while. She is off on a trek, led by an Indian mystic, to Tibet. The fashion-conscious blonde says it will be the first time she has ever swapped her Louboutins for climbing boots.



Picture: CAPITAL



Picture: GEMMA WATSON

Baring nearly all as she tours the country in the stage show Calendar Girls, Charlie Dimmock, left, continues to excite red-blooded males in the audience, just as she did when she worked bra-less on her water features in the BBC series Ground Force. But despite her chesty appeal, the flame-haired dancer turned actress sees no green shoots of recovery in her love-life and remains steadfastly single.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY "I'd like to pick a buttercup. Why people leave buttocks lying around, I've no idea." Stephen Fry

Her 13-year relationship with wine grower John Masket fell apart in 2001 when he discovered she was having an affair with a sound technician. "I have mates who I go out to dinner with but nothing more," sighs Charlie, 43. "I'm too old for hitching up with another bloke. Besides, I'd be in pain in the neck to live with, not least because I have a cat and a dog who sleep on my bed. "That would be enough to put most fellas off, wouldn't it?"



LOYAL SERVANT: Prince William with his dog

After a hard day's training at his RAF base in Wales, **Prince William** likes to relax by curling up in his rented cottage with the loyal, wet-nosed creature he knows will give him a comforting nuzzle and a few sloppy licks to perk up his spirits. No, not Kate Middleton but his treasured black Labrador Widgeon.

But sadly dear old Widgeon, given to William as a Gundog on his 14th birthday by his late mother Diana, is getting a little wobbly on his legs and is no longer up to the long tramps through the Welsh countryside that his master likes to make. So the Prince has been advised to leave the old dog at Highgrove, where he can be fussed over by Prince Charles's staff.

Named after a breed of wild marshland duck, Widgeon is the grandson of one of the Queen's favourite dogs, Brea, and has been William's canine companion on walks and shoots for nearly half of the Prince's life, so being without him is a wrench.

"Widgeon is old and unsteady on his pins, so it's retirement time," says an aide. "It's likely William may be given another dog for gun training, but he won't want to upset Widgeon by getting a younger, fitter companion just yet."

Let's hope the same principle of loyalty applies to Miss Middleton.

Adam Helliker



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The man who knows the people you'd like to know...

Thought for the day, from **DAWN FRENCH**: "If I'd been around when Rubens was painting, I would have been revered as a fabulous model. Kate Moss? She would have been the painbrush."

Does **Sir Tom Jones** ever stoop to the level of using the phrase "Do you know who I am?" when lesser beings fail to bow to his every whim? Not quite, but the Welsh warbler relies on others to do it for him. "There's always someone with me who can say for me, 'Don't you know who this is?' It gets things done."



Suitably idiosyncratic views from **Stephen Fry**, while addressing students at Cardiff University. Advising them to "stay young" for as long as they could, he said: "You love anything and everything, especially alcohol and sex, which come high on the list but so they should."

Emphasising the importance of keeping an open mind, he said: "There are actually out there at the moment from all quarters of the world, people questioning the benefits of evidence-based knowledge. In social terms, it means never to buy a lawnmower. I have nothing particularly against lawnmowers as objects but they are, to me, a symbol of something that is terribly fixed."



Although **Bryan Ferry** mentions Facebook in the lyrics of his forthcoming album Olympia, the old smoothie admits he's not up to speed on technology. "I wouldn't have a clue where to start with something like Facebook. I can just about send an e-mail. I just thought it would be nice to mention something vaguely current on the album. Girls love those things, don't they? They live on those iPhones and BlackBerries, or whatever they're called."



Picture: GETTY IMAGES

The pupils of the premier London girls' school Godolphin and **Latimer** were thrilled when former student **KATE BECKINSALE** now a celebrated Hollywood actress, arrived to address them wearing stiletto heels and skin tight leather trousers. They were even more delighted when Kate, daughter of the late Porridge star **Richard Beckinsale**, admitted to being a member of "the really stupid group" and summed up her talent in maths in an unprintable four letter word. The star of *Pearl Harbor* and *The Aviator*, who dropped out of her French and Russian Literature degree at Oxford University after **Kenneth Branagh** cast her as *Hero* in *Much Ado About Nothing*, then advised her rapt audience: "Don't accidentally have children like I did!" **Los Angeles-based Miss Beckinsale, 36**, was referring to her 11-year-old daughter **Lily Mo**, from her relationship with actor **Michael Sheen**. Even though she remains close with Sheen, she has been married for the past six years to **Len Wiseman**, the film director who wooed her on the set of the vampire picture *Underworld*.

Kate's former teachers admitted they recalled her as being rather a **defiant teenager**. But despite a battle against anorexia she still managed to win awards for story-writing and poetry. She told them she still remembered the pressure she felt while taking her exams: "Did you know I started to go grey at 17 when I was doing my A-levels?"

Fergie and PR guru split on good terms

CONTRARY to reports that the Duchess of York had been forced to sack her most valued employee, PR adviser **Kate Waddington**, because she has no money left to pay her, I hear that Miss Waddington had already resigned shortly after Fergie's last debacle, in which the Duchess was exposed for touting introductions to her former husband, **Prince Andrew**.

Having worked hard for 15 years to rehabilitate the image of the hapless Duchess, **Kate Waddington** had been shocked at the implications of her debt-ridden boss being secretly filmed in a hotel room and drunkenly asking for £500,000 to introduce a bogus Arab businessman to the Prince to set up trade deals.

Besides working for her, **Miss Waddington** is one of Sarah's closest friends - the Duchess is godmother to her six-year-old daughter **Flora** - but she felt she could no longer represent her to the media and public who had grown increasingly impatient with Sarah's antics.

"Kate has been through an extraordinary journey with Sarah and has looked after her through thick and thin, but this was the final straw," reports a well-placed source. "The incident just hastened what would have happened soon enough, because Sarah can be very demanding, and Kate needs time to devote to her own PR company."

Indeed, **Sputnik Communications**, the firm Kate set up 10 years ago with the Duchess as its first client, now employs 14 people and is just celebrating the signing of two major new clients, **Renault cars** and **Hennessy cognac**.

Although **Miss Waddington** declines to speak about her parting with the Duchess, a close friend says: "She was never sacked because she had already resigned, having come to the conclusion she could not help much further. It's incredibly amicable and Kate will always support her. She knows that although she is at rock bottom right now, she is incredibly resilient and will one day flourish again."

Another reason **Kate** wanted to be relieved of the stress of looking after

the demanding Duchess was her health: three years ago she suffered from cellulitis - a bacterial infection of tissue underlying the skin - and came close to having her leg amputated. She vowed to try to lead a less stressful life.

In the absence of her own PR, **Fergie** has gratefully accepted an offer from her old friend **Lord Bell**, **Margaret Thatcher's** former adviser, to use one of his executives, **James Henderson**, as her unpaid spokesman. He will now have the task of fielding media enquiries about her future and how she will deal with her parlous finances: her debts mean bankruptcy is a real possibility.

Mr Henderson is upbeat about his new client, saying: "She's done lots of wrong things, but she's achieved a lot."

Fergie is, of course, getting away from the pressure in the way she knows best, by taking a free holiday from **Sir Richard Branson**. Yesterday she left for a week on **Branson's Virgin Islands retreat**, **Necker**, along with daughters **Beatrice** and **Eugenie**.



JOURNEY'S END: Kate Waddington with Fergie



Actor Richard E Grant thinks he's had the last laugh on the drama school teacher who described him as "weird-looking" and with no dramatic future. He recalls: "When I was leaving, the guy who was head of the school told me, 'You have some talent but you have a very long face and you're never going to make it as an actor.' "But he died from alcoholic poisoning! Ha!"

Incidentally, the 53-year-old is a teetotaler, so when he was cast as a drink-sodden student in *Withnail And I*, the film's director made him down a bottle of champagne and half a bottle of vodka during the course of a night so he would know what it feels like to be drunk. He hasn't touched a drop since.

After receiving help from accountants **PricewaterhouseCoopers**, the **Duke of York** is about to publish his second annual report to show his value to the taxpayer and, at last, it's expected to reveal how he has cut back on his travel costs. An aide says the **Prince** (who is jolly sensitive about being called *Airmiles Andy*) is expected to go into "even more detail" about his costs than his inaugural report last year. Fortunately for **Andrew** he's still able to combine his official engagements with his love of golf. This week he just happens to be on a "fact-finding mission" in Scotland, which has enabled him to be at **St Andrews** this weekend, so he can watch the *Open*. Truly a man never knowingly under par.



When the lovely **Alice Eve** (left) hit cinema screens twice this summer in two American films, *Sex And The City 2*, and *She's Out of My League*, there was much talk of the Oxford-educated actress being "lost" to Hollywood.

But happily **Alice, 28**, daughter of **Trevor Eve** and **Sharon Maughan**, has now landed a role in an all-British production. Alongside former *Dr Who* actor **David Tennant**, she will star in *The Decoy Bride*, scripted by **Smack The Pony** actress **Sally Phillips**, which is being filmed in Scotland and the Isle of Man.

So far, **Miss Eve** is resisting pressure to cash in on her success by relocating to LA, which is good news for her relationship with poet **Adam O'Riordan**, whom she met while reading English at Oxford.

Fittingly her new film tells the story of a superstar actress who intends to marry her **British boyfriend** in Scotland. The news is leaked but the couple manage to shake off the paparazzi by using a decoy bride.

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