

Her Majesty Will Broadcast On Christmas Day

Theme Of This Year's Program Will Be "The Good Neighbour"

It is twenty-two years since the first BBC Christmas Day programme linked the peoples of the Commonwealth for the first royal Christmas Day message by the Queen's grandfather, King George V. Each year since then this Christmas reunion has become more and more a broadcasting institution, part of the Christmas scene which although accepted, expected, continually adapting itself to the changing spirit of each passing year is an essential part of the Christmas ritual in the radio age.

Last year, when for the first time the British Monarch spent Christmas away from Britain, the programme made its first radical break with its tradition. The production was moved from London to Sydney and was shared with the Australian and New Zealand broadcasting authorities. The important principle was established that in broadcasting, as in other spheres of British life, the centre of the Commonwealth changes and moves with the reigning Monarch, the Head of the Commonwealth.

This year the Queen is again in Britain and will broadcast her Christmas message from her home at Sandringham. But again the programme leading up to the royal broadcast, while retaining in essentials its traditional character, is the subject of experiment and change.

The theme of the programme, this year is "the good neighbour." This idea is no longer a piece of wishful thinking, an ideal belonging to the better and higher side of man's nature, but a positive and practical guide to living between man and man in any one society and between nation and nation in world society. Ten years after the end of the second world war the world is poised, uneasily, dangerously, on a point of decision: to find a way for individuals, for nations, for groups of nations, to co-exist as good neighbours, or to face the consequences of the alternative. The idea of "the good neighbour," as both the theme and a Christmas programme, is deeply rooted in the Christmas tradition, but it is not exclusively a Christian ideal: it is an ideal common to all the great religions of the world, and it is the principle that can be seen at work in the lives of men and women of all countries and all races.

LIVING DEMONSTRATION

The community of the Commonwealth, in itself a family of nations, is a living demonstration of the "good-neighbour" idea as between independent states. Inside the different countries making up this community there exist many individuals, working alone or in association with others, the motive force of whose life and work is to increase the sum of human happiness and well-being.

It is from their ranks that will come the speakers and subjects for this year's Christmas programme, some of them famous personalities, some known only to their fellow-workers and fellow-citizens. They make up the vast, anonymous army of the men and women of goodwill. So an invitation has gone out this Christmas throughout the Commonwealth for true stories of "good neighbours" in action, in many spheres, for example, to be found in the world of sport. The bond forged by cricket between the Commonwealth countries grows stronger every year, and it is hoped to hear the Christmas from the English and Australian Test teams and from the Captain of the young Pakistan team who covered themselves with glory on their first visit to England this summer. International football, another growing force for understanding between nations, will be represented.

But perhaps the sport that captured the imagination of the world most vividly in 1954 was athletics. The spirit of the Commonwealth Games and the great international contests on the track will be summed up in a Christmas message from Roger Bannister, the young English doctor who was the first man to run the mile in under four minutes. He symbolises the ideal of the athlete that has been handed down like a torch from the ancient Greeks, as the apotheosis of the individual pitting himself against his fellows in friendly combat.

BANNER OF PROGRESS

It is hoped to illustrate, by at least one example, the revolution that is being worked in the jungles, swamps, and river-banks of Africa by the work of European and African scientists and doctors, to hear something of the work at reconstruction going forward under the banner of the United Nations in Korea, and report from one of the villages of India where the battle against malnutrition and disease is being fought with the help of good neighbours from many countries.

From Wales comes the heart-warming story of international friendship fostered by the Welsh love of music and song. Every year for the past seven years the little North-Wales town of Llangollen has played host to the singers and dancers of the world. Stemming from the enthusiasm of the townspeople of Llangollen, the International Eisteddfod, is now an annual event bringing together the people of twenty-six countries for three weeks every year. For these three weeks Llangollen and the villages round it are loud with the music of Spain and Germany, Yugoslavia and Canada, Portugal and Italy, France and Greece. Last year the Eisteddfod was honoured by a visit from the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. A massed choir of over a thousand voices of all nations gathered to welcome her, with the strains of Bach's anthem All Hail to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. A massed choir of over a thousand voices of all nations gathered to welcome her, with the strains of Bach's anthem All Hail to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. A massed choir of over a thousand voices of all nations gathered to welcome her, with the strains of Bach's anthem All Hail to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.



"THE QUEEN HAS LEFT LONDON"—

Will Spend Christmas With Family At Sandringham

By Lady Pratt

Every year on the appropriate day in December the Court Circular announces that "The Queen left London this afternoon for Sandringham . . ." The Queen — as her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents did before her — has gone to her home in the country to spend Christmas with her family and enjoy for a short space the rare privilege of living as a private individual.

As the pomp and splendour of Buckingham Palace typify the official life of the Sovereign, with its never-ending round of public cares and duties, so Sandringham represents her family life, and especially from long association, the family festival of Christmas. Since 1861, when it was purchased, there have been few Christmases when Sandringham and its little church have not been the setting for a royal Christmas.

The Sandringham estate of Norfolk was bought by the Prince Consort for Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, with a portion of the accumulated revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall. The house was small, but the heaths and woodlands of the then neglected estate abounded in game, and there were great possibilities for agricultural and garden development. The Prince of Wales threw himself with zest into planning the construction of roads and duties, and the preservation of an enormous head of game, the building of kennels, stables, cottages and farmhouses and the layout of the beautiful gardens which now give so much pleasure to the public. Two years later, on his marriage with Princess Alexandra of Denmark, he began his long and famous career as country-house host

at Sandringham, and the Edwardian period, whose full flowering was destined to be as short as it was glorious, came there into premature bloom.

Entertained Friends
Early in the Prince's ownership Sandringham House was rebuilt and enlarged and, with its estate, it became a witness to the spacious era which he personified. Even the architectural confusion of the house itself — a generous, hospitable, Victorian-Tudor muddle of brick and stone, with sweet-scented shrubs and climbing plants covering the walls — speaks of warmth and spacious living.

It was the Prince's custom to invite large parties of relatives and friends to Sandringham whenever he was in residence, especially for the Christmas celebration. The company was always varied and included, besides London friends and Sandringham neighbours, members of all ranks and professions — even artists and musicians, who in Victorian days were often regarded as being not quite respectable. The Prince's guests found that, on the whole, life was simple, though liable to be strenuous. One of his friends thus describes Christmas week at Sandringham: "Wednesday we went out hunting; it poured in torrents from ten to four in the afternoon, yet we remained out the whole day. My agonies that day would be difficult to describe . . . not having ridden for so long. Thursday there was a servants' ball when we danced reels and jigs till five in the morning. . . . Friday was the Christmas tree, the Prince and Princess gave me the most lovely presents, afterwards we had the Loving Cup and the mistletoe which occasioned many jokes and laughter." When shooting was the order of the day, everyone had to join the shooting-party for luncheon and, no matter what they might have been doing during the morning, "carriages were ordered and we all had to have luncheon in a damp tent."

SIMPLER LIFE

These rigours are nowadays softened, for during a recent Christmas The Queen, with Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother, Princess Margaret and Princess Alexandra of Kent, had lunch in the Royal waiting-room at Wolferton Station, where they joined the shooting-party from Sandringham House. After a shooting-party, in King Edward's day, tea would be a full-dress meal with all the women in tea-gowns and the men in short black jackets and black ties. Gottlieb's band played like a bee in a bottle for an hour. Then everyone was mobilized for games, but those who knew the routine tipped off to the library and read or talked — a wise precaution, for the ensuing evening was likely to be a long one. No lady could go to bed before the Princess retired, at about midnight, and no man before the Prince, who went to bed about 1.30 a.m. unless he was playing bacarat, when he might sit up until 4 or 5 a.m.

Dinner was the only formal meal of the day, with tiaras and decorations worn, and guests sitting in order of precedence. A Sandringham dinner menu of those days bears witness to the Prince's excellent appetite in an age notable for heavy eating. The card began with turtle soup and goes on to turbot, quail, venison, saddle of mutton and roast pheasant before rounding off with petits sauvains a l'orange, fruit salad and tutti frutti ices — a gastronomic endurance-test to match the rigours of hunting, shooting and being entertained as described.

But with King Edward that way of life ended. Queen Alexandra continued to occupy Sandringham House while his successor, King George V, resided at York Cottage, a small house in the grounds built originally to accommodate the overflow of guests from Sandringham House. "This most undesirable residence" was the favourite home of George V. for 33 years and the centre of his devoted family circle. Here he spent his honeymoon; here five of his six children were born and here, in quarters far too small and incredibly inconvenient, his family spent a large part of their childhood, the Court resided. State business was carried on, and the King himself was boundlessly happy.

Life at York Cottage was in no sense spacious. For his Secretaries, the carrying on of State business, which the Sovereign cannot avoid, wherever he goes, was a matter of extreme difficulty, while, in contrast with the gargantuan meals of King Edward's day. Such strict rationing was observed at York Cottage during the Great War that "at breakfast, those who were late got nothing."

FIRST BROADCAST
King George V came to the throne in anxious times, and he and Queen Mary rose nobly to their great task and gave of themselves ungrudgingly in the service of their peoples through 26 of the most critical years in the nation's history. The King's labours during the First Great War took a toll of the King's health from which he never recovered. He took up residence at Sandringham House after the death of Queen Alexandra, and but for the relaxation afforded him by "dear old Sandringham" he might not have lived to see his life work crowned by the rejoicings of his Jubilee. Life at Sandringham under his rule was like that of any English country house, and it was there, following that way of life that he died a few months after his Jubilee on January 20th, 1936. On Christmas Day in 1932, speaking from his study at Sandringham House, King George inaugurated the Christmas broadcast to the Commonwealth that has now become a yearly custom. In that address which established him as a "natural" broadcaster, he recalled the long years during which he and his peoples had striven together in the cause of peace and prosperity. "My life's aim has been to serve as I might towards these ends," he said. "Your loyalty, your confidence in me, has been my abundant reward. . . . To all, to each, I wish a happy Christmas. God bless you." Little did he imagine that on the twentieth anniversary of this first Christmas broadcast the little grand-daughter, whose joyous company was one of the delights of his last years, would be sitting at this same desk addressing her peoples as their Queen.

And so the wrought-iron gates bearing the entwined emblems of the Rose, the Thistle and the Shamrock close behind the young chateau of Sandringham House as she returns once more to celebrate Christmas with her family in the home of her forebears, and to kneel as they did before the Altar of Peace (a dedication chosen by Queen Alexandra) in the little church full of memories. As Mother of her family and Sovereign of her far-flung peoples, the thoughts of us all go with her.

(Copyright: N. F. L.)
More history was written on Christmas Day 1941 — for Hong Kong surrendered, after 17 days of siege; one of the saddest Christmas days of the war.

Legend tells us that a young shepherd girl was weeping bitterly as she watched the Wise Men on their way to take gifts to the Christ Child.

An angel appeared, and after ascertaining why the young girl was crying, she waved her wand, and instantly the ground was carpeted with glittering white Christmas roses. The young girl quickly gathered these blooms. When she presented her gift, the Christ Child smiled, and as his fingers touched the white flowers the petals became tinged with pink.

Christmas Rose Has Real Significance

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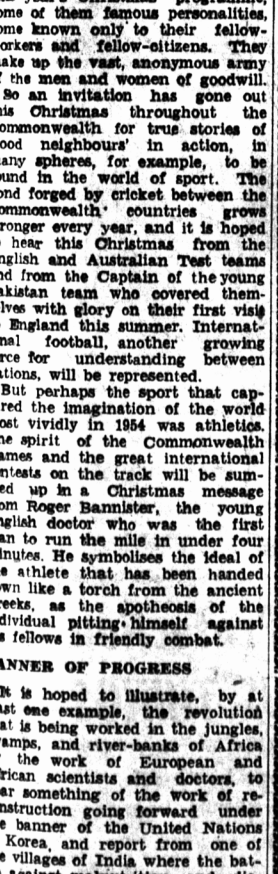
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