



**SMILES on a chilly afternoon — The Queen, the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret with Mrs Harriet Benstead vice-president (third left) and Mrs Doris Parsons, chairman of Sandringham WI after arriving for the January meeting. (RC 4392).**

### A VISIT TO SANDRINGHAM WI MEETING *as told by Madge Thompson*

Mrs. Madge Thompson, West End Branch member in Wellington South District, attended the annual Sandringham meeting when members of the Royal Family were present, The Queen, The Queen Mother and Princess Margaret.

The Queen Mother is President of the Sandringham Branch and presides at the January meeting; two vice Presidents carry out the duties the rest of the year.

It was in 1915 that Queen Mary invited Mrs. Alfred Watt (the Canadian who introduced the WI to Britain) to organize a branch at Sandringham. This was the second branch organized in Britain and Queen Mary was the first President.

When Mrs. Thompson knew she would be in the vicinity of Sandringham she contacted the branch about the possibility of attending the January meeting, enclosing credentials stating she was a bona-fide and active member of the West End Branch. Usually the meeting is closed to visitors, however an exception was made and Mrs. Thompson received a reply from Clarence House stating "The Queen Mother is sure it would be perfectly in order."

Arriving at the village hall, Mrs. Thompson was met by the vice presidents, ushered to the front row and introduced to the guest speaker, Joan Foreman, author of "Haunted Houses of East Anglia."

There was a flurry of excitement as last minute touches were made to the tea table and exhibits. Prior to their Majesties arrival, some business was discussed. The vice presidents went outside at the appointed time to welcome the guests, upon entering the hall God Save The Queen was sung. Behind the president's table were chairs draped with Royal Stewart Tartan rugs. The Queen, Queen Mother and Princess Margaret seated themselves and the vice president introduced Mrs. Thompson, a "member from Canada."

Mrs. Thompson rose to acknowledge the introduction, and said "I received a gracious smile from the Queen and a beaming smile from the Queen Mother."

Various little incidents occurred, one was, when the Queen Mother was asked to sign the minutes. As she reached for the book the Queen turned to her with a rather mischievous look and said, "They haven't been read yet." Putting her hands to her face in momentary embarrassment, the Queen Mother quickly laughed it off, and the secretary proceeded to read the minutes. Later, signing the book, the Queen Mother turned to her daughter with a quizzical look, saying, "Is it all right now?"

In her presidential report, the Queen Mother commended the members for having maintained their support of worthwhile projects even though everyone had to reckon with increased costs. She reminded members of the necessity of the anti-litter campaign against bottles, tin cans, plastic bags, sweet wrappers, which are carelessly thrown around. Urging their support, she quoted the slogan, "Keep Britain Tidy," and for Jubilee Year, and added "for the Queen" glancing toward her daughter, as she spoke. There was an immediate enthusiastic response from the members.

For the speaker's presentation, the chairs behind the table were moved to face the speaker, as the change was being made, the Queen Mother came over to Mrs. Thompson, and with outstretched hand extended a warm welcome to the meeting. She talked for some minutes, and was greatly interested to know Mrs. Thompson lived in Guelph, the Royal City, and that there was a Royal WI.

Later in the meeting, when circulating among the members, the Queen spoke to the Canadian guest as well. "Madge" offered congratulations on her Silver Jubilee both personally and for her Branch. Reference was made to Prince Andrew attending Lakefield and the Queen said he was happy and it was an experience.

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