

# Fergie finally rejoins the royal fold

After decades of frostiness, the Duchess has returned to the frontline of *The Firm*

She's had a rocky relationship with the royal family since arriving on the scene in the '80s – but now Sarah Ferguson is firmly back in the fold.

It's been almost 40 years since Fergie, 64, married into the Windsors, and it's been no easy ride for the Duchess of York.

Following several public scandals, and claims that the late Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip, was not a fan, she found herself

uninvited to most royal gatherings. Yet December saw Fergie finally reunite with the royals, joining her ex-husband and his family for the annual Christmas walk to church at Sandringham. The move was the first time Sarah had appeared at the famous festive gathering in 30 years – suggesting that her ex-

brother-in-law King Charles is fine with her being involved with the family.

**'The King is fond of his nieces'**

A royal insider revealed it was down to Charles and Camilla that she had returned. The source said, "Sarah has always been close to King Charles and is fond of him. She's grown increasingly close to the Queen Consort, too." It's said that

the reconciliation was prompted by Camilla, 76, with the Queen's forgiving presence encouraging others to give fun-loving Fergie a second chance.

Royal author Robert Hardman confirmed it was also for the sake of Princesses Beatrice, and Eugenie. He said over Christmas, "Life moves on. I think it's a sort of readjustment. Fergie was out in the cold, if you like, really ever since the breakdown of her marriage back

in the mid-'90s. And there she was yesterday. She's always been really close to her ex-husband, but particularly, I think, the King is very fond of his nieces, Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie. This is a way of showing that."

Her return to the fold is not the only positive thing to happen to Fergie last year. She released her second romance novel, *A Most Intriguing Lady*, and beat breast cancer after undergoing a single mastectomy. She went on to

welcome a new grandchild when Princess Eugenie gave birth to son Ernest in May, before November saw her appear as co-host and guest editor on ITV's *This Morning*.

Reflecting on her mammoth year, Fergie wrote, "2023 hasn't been without its ups and downs, trials, lessons, laughter, miracles and joy." She continued, "I have had the pleasure of meeting some very inspiring people from around the world with beautiful stories to tell. I have discovered within myself that I, too, have more

stories to tell. I am 64 and just getting started."

## Marriage

Rumours have also swirled that Fergie's private life could also see changes. According to royal author Angela Levin, there's talks that Fergie and Prince Andrew – who divorced in 1996 but have remained close – could remarry. Angela shared, "You can keep separate and want to go your own way, but if you are a loving couple and you live together while not married, you start rethinking."

Fergie's love story with Andrew, 63, began when the pair allegedly met aged just three years old.

Later striking up a romance in 1983, the pair tied the knot at Westminster Abbey – going on to welcome daughters Beatrice, 35, and Eugenie, 33, together.

However, their marriage was far from smooth. The pair separated in 1992, finalising their divorce four years later. Reflecting on her marriage breakdown, Fergie revealed that it was the Prince's Navy career that caused issues – insisting she only saw him for "40 days a year". Although no longer married to Andrew – who was stripped of his military titles and patronages in 2022 after his out-of-court settlement in a civil sex assault case in the US – the pair still live together and she has

She joined the family for the annual Christmas walk to church at Sandringham



Fergie looked thrilled to be back



Marrying Prince Andrew in 1986



Appearing on *This Morning* last November





Prince Andrew and Fergie with the Queen on board the HMS Campbelltown



With Diana in the '80s before they fell out

previously described them as “the happiest divorced couple ever”. Pictured rubbing shoulders with the royals over Christmas, it’s hard to believe that Fergie spent decades frozen out of the royal fold. Although described as having a close bond with the late Queen, it was Prince Philip who clashed with the fiery redhead.

Fergie’s first run-in with Philip came soon after her split from Prince Andrew. Months after announcing their separation, pictures emerged of Fergie lounging on a sunbed in St Tropez with Texan-born John Bryan, appearing to have her toes sucked by the millionaire. She later claimed it was done as part of a game she was playing with him and her daughters, but according to royal insider Emily Andrews, papers detailing Fergie’s antics were “laid out on a table in the breakfast room in Balmoral”,

with Prince Philip “throwing” one of the newspapers at his former daughter-in-law. She was consequently banned from family events.

## Shattered friendships

Marrying into the monarchy just years apart, Sarah initially found a confidante in Princess Diana – however, this friendship would mark another tumultuous chapter of Fergie’s life.

Both separating from their husbands in 1992, Fergie and Diana initially remained close as they navigated life outside the royal family. Yet trouble came in 1996, following the publication of Fergie’s autobiography, *My Story*. Initially championing her friend, Diana’s support came on the one condition she was not mentioned.

On a trip to Canada just a year after their wedding



Fergie sparked a scandal after being pictured with John Bryan soon after her split from Andrew



Princesses Eugenie and Beatrice as children



They still live together at the Royal Lodge in Windsor

Instead, Fergie alleged that Diana once gave her a verruca, writing, “Diana helped me by giving me all her shoes (and less happily, her plantar warts).”

Unsurprisingly, the intimate revelation caused waves. “I think Sarah made many attempts to make it up,” shared royal author Katie Nicholl, “but Diana could really bear a grudge.” At the time of Princess Diana’s death, the former friends were not on speaking terms.

## New beginnings

Although sharing a more strained relationship with some members of the family, Fergie always maintained a level of closeness to

the late Monarch. A royal insider once revealed that the Queen – who passed away in 2022, aged 96 – had a “personal affection [to Fergie], despite her previous bad behaviour.” As the Yorks settled their divorce, it was reported that the Queen asked what Fergie wished for, to which she replied, “Your friendship.” The pair remained close in her final years, with Fergie taking on the Queen’s two Corgis after her death. A palace insider previously shared, “Fergie’s always been loyal to the royals and hasn’t put a foot wrong in recent years. She’s never said a critical word and is always extremely loyal to the institution.”

And it’s said this loyalty has helped win over King Charles. Royal expert Jennie Bond revealed, “Things have changed quite a lot for Fergie since the Duke of Edinburgh’s death. He found it difficult to even be in the same room as her after the shame she had brought on the family. Now, Charles is showing that he accepts her as part of the family.”

**‘She has always been loyal’**

Words: Charlotte Roberts. Photos: Shutterstock