

Introduction

Princess Diana was a very famous British woman. In August 1997 Diana was on holiday in the Mediterranean with her new man, Dodi Al Fayed. There were holiday photographs of them in the newspapers. Diana looked happy. Then, just a few days later, she was dead. She died suddenly on the 31st of August in a car accident in Paris.

There are many books about Diana's life. We often see her photograph and hear her name. She was beautiful and famous. She was a modern Princess and a loving mother. She wanted to help people. But her life was not always happy. This is Diana's story.

1

The Early Years

Diana's parents were Frances and Johnnie Spencer, the Viscount Althorp. Johnnie was from a very old and important English family, the Spencer family. George Washington, Humphrey Bogart and Rudolph Valentino were connected to this family. Frances was beautiful but she was also a very strong woman. She fell in love with Johnnie Althorp when she was only seventeen years old. Johnnie Althorp was tall and handsome, and Frances wanted to marry him. Johnnie went to Eton – one of the most famous private schools in England – and then he

was an officer in the army. Later he left the army and studied farming.

Frances and Johnnie married on the 1st of June 1954 at St Margaret's Church, Westminster, in London. A thousand people were at the wedding. The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Queen Mother and the Queen's sister, Princess Margaret, all came.

Frances and Johnnie lived at Park House in Norfolk. The Royal Family had a house nearby called Sandringham House. The royals often came to Sandringham on holiday. They knew the Spencer family well.



Johnnie Spencer and Frances Roche at their wedding, 1 June, 1954

When Frances's father died, he left her a lot of money. Frances used the money to buy a farm at Snettisham, near Park House. In 1955 the couple had a daughter, Sarah, and in 1957, another daughter, Jane.

In 1960, they had another child. This time it was a boy, called John. But he died after only ten hours.

Then, on the 1st of July 1961, Diana was born. And three years later, in May 1964, Frances and Johnnie had a boy, Charles. But there were problems in the marriage. In 1966 Frances met a new man, Peter Shand Kydd, at a party in London. Frances and Peter fell in love.

At Christmas 1967, Frances left Johnnie and moved to London. She wanted to take the children with her. Johnnie wanted them to stay at Park House with him.

Diana missed her mother very much. She was only six years old when Frances left. Her sisters were at boarding school – a type of school where they lived most of the time. It was a sad and very difficult time for Diana and Charles.

After Frances left, Johnnie paid money to different women – called nannies – to look after the children at Park House. The Spencer children loved Park House. It was a large and friendly house. Diana loved animals like dogs, cats and rabbits. She enjoyed swimming, playing tennis, and going for picnics on the beach. She visited her mother in London at the weekends.

Sometimes the Royal Family invited the Spencer children to the big house at Sandringham. Diana was

good friends with Prince Charles's younger brother, Prince Andrew.

Diana's mother and father divorced in April 1969. Frances married Peter Shand Kydd soon after. Diana and her brother had holidays with Peter and his three children. Later, Frances and Peter bought a big house on the Isle of Seil. Seil was an island near the west coast of Scotland.



The Spencer family at Althorp House, 1969. Diana (left) and Charles are at the front of the picture

Diana went to a small day school near her home called Silfield. But when she was nine, her father sent her to boarding school. The school was called Riddlesworth Hall.

In September 1973, when Diana was twelve, she moved to another school called West Heath. West Heath

was near the town of Sevenoaks in Kent. Diana liked her new school. She had some good friends there. She learned to dance and play the piano. She was not very interested in school exams, but she was good at dancing and swimming.

At this time, Johnnie Althorp met a new woman. Her name was Raine Legge, the Countess of Dartmouth. Raine was also the writer Barbara Cartland's daughter.

Raine was married with four children. Johnnie's children loved their father very much and they did not want him to be with another woman.

Then, on the 9th of June 1975, Johnnie's father, Jack, died. Jack was the seventh Earl Spencer. Now Johnnie became the eighth Earl Spencer and Diana became 'Lady Diana Spencer'. Johnnie and his family went to live in his father's great house at Althorp in Northampton.

The Spencer children did not like Althorp very much. It was a very big house in a large park. It had 121 rooms. It was a beautiful house but it was also very cold. It was not a 'home' like Park House.

Raine started to come to Althorp a lot. In May 1976, Raine and her husband divorced. Two months later, in July, Johnnie and Raine married quietly in London. Johnnie did not tell his children about the wedding. They read about it in the newspapers.

The Spencer children were very angry with their father. Now Raine lived at Althorp all the time. Diana loved her father, but he was now married to Raine. This was very difficult for Diana.



Johnnie Spencer and his second wife Raine in front of Althorp House, 1 January, 1981

Many of Raine and Johnnie's friends visited Althorp. They had a lot of parties there. But the Spencer girls were always cold to Raine. In 1978, Johnnie was very ill and was close to death. Raine looked after him and helped save his life. Johnnie was lucky and he got better. But still the children did not like Raine.

2

The Prince

Prince Charles was born on the 14th of November 1948 at Buckingham Palace. He is the oldest of the Queen's four children. He is also the Prince of Wales. After the