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Old Master Specialist

REFLECTIONS ON HER MAJESTY

At this time of national mourning, I think it is important to reflect on the many happy moments in the life of Her Majesty. My younger sister, Amanda, has a sweet photograph of her late and much-lamented husband, taking The Queen to inspect the Guard at Balmoral. They are laughing as they chat.

The year is 1982 and Major (as he was then) Ian Chant-Sempill, my brother-in-law, was on his second stint at Balmoral, one of the cushiest three month postings in the army! The Guard is always drawn from Highland Regiments, in Ian's case, The Gordon Highlanders. He became their last Colonel before they amalgamated with the Queen's own Highlanders to form The Highlanders. The officers of the Guard were invited stalking, shooting on the estate and to fish the River Dee. Ian was a very good fisherman and caught 27 salmon during his tour of duty, which I believe is a record.

One night at dinner at Balmoral, poached salmon was on the menu. The Queen leant across the table and said: "I think this is one of yours, Ian". Amanda sat next to Prince Andrew, who had just returned from the Falklands, and Koo Stark was there, too. Charles and Diana were newly-weds and the days seemed carefree.

Note: My dear brother-in-law, Ian, had very good Artworld credentials. He was the Great Grandson of Sir John Lavery, R.S.A., R.A., R.H.A. Christie's currently holds the world record for a Lavery at auction, with "The Croquet Party", sold on March 22nd this year, for £2.922m (inc. premium).

Footnote: Amanda and Ian also dined on several occasions with HM The Queen Mother at Birkhall, her residence on the Balmoral estate.



On one famous occasion they were asked to arrive early for drinks and sat down promptly at 8pm for dinner in the dining room, which contained no fewer than nine grandmother clocks! At 8.19pm, having consumed three courses, the Queen Mother said "shall we have coffee in the sitting room?" She didn't want to miss the start of "Dad's Army"! She turned to Amanda and said "I do so love Arthur Lowe".

When the programme was over, they all played racing demon on the floor.

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