

...IN AN EXTRAORDINARY OUTBURST BY HER OWN GODDAUGHTER

FAMILY FUN: Young Kate, left, and Joanne, meet up for Christmas in 1991 with Carole, right, and her mother Dorothy



STAYING AWAY: The Duchess of Cambridge with Prince George. Joanne has still never met the newest member of the family

Mary's Church, Northolt, in 1976. Carole then became godmother to Joanne, Alison's first child.

Carole returned the favour by inviting Alison to be a bridesmaid at her 1980 wedding to Michael Middleton at Dorney Parish Church, in Windsor. Joanne's father Robert, now a 61-year-old solicitor, was made Kate's godfather at her christening.

'Our families were always extremely close,' Joanne says. 'I think Mum and Carole were even in a nightclub together when she first met Dad.'

'Carole was a bridesmaid at Mum's wedding. When Carole and Mike got married four years later, they chose my mum as a bridesmaid. She was four months pregnant with me.'

'Then Carole was my godmother when I was christened at St Mary's Church, in Ruislip. She gave me a silver bracelet.'

As their two families expanded, they spent some Christmases and summer holidays together.

'Kate was the nicest one,' says Joanne. 'She doesn't have a bad bone in her body. She was very sweet to my youngest sister Cat, who looked up to her, and would write letters to her.'

In the summer of 1987 – when Joanne was six and Kate was five – they went to the Lake District

● Carole's embarrassed by her relatives, says cousin... and we haven't met George

● She's 'snobbish and uncaring'... and 'won't go anywhere where brother Gary is'

'My parents are elderly. They can't wait that long. Can we just pop in on our way home instead? It would be lovely to see you – even if Kate and George are not there.'

'But Carole said, "I'm sorry but I'm at work." So they went home again – without having met George.'

'I suppose Carole may feel that the Palace doesn't want her to see her wider family regularly now she is grandmother to the future King.'

'Perhaps she is complying with what she thinks is their wish but it doesn't make it easier.'

It is not just Carole's behaviour towards her aunt and uncle, Ruth and Ivor, that has caused offence. When Joanne's sister Catherine celebrated her wedding at the 18th Century Hampton Court House in Surrey last month, none of the Middletons attended or sent presents.

Alison had texted Carole asking if she could make it back in April, but in Joanne's eyes at least, Carole's response was beyond impolite.

'Obviously Catherine wanted the Middletons there as

they are our only family on our grandmother's side so she sent an invitation to them at Bucklebury and to Kate at Kensington Palace. But I believe they didn't even send a card and certainly not a wedding present. The Palace responded on behalf of Kate, who was unable to attend.'

There had been signs of tension at the Royal Wedding, on April 29, 2011. Although the Callen family were treated well, Kate's Uncle Gary was not invited to stay with the rest of the family in the Goring Hotel and was not given a reserved seat in the church.

Joanne recalls: 'A car picked us up and drove us to the Goring Hotel, where the family was staying the night before.'

'As we drew nearer, the streets were lined with thousands of people, the roads were blocked and photographers were holding their cameras against the car to take pictures.'

'I felt really excited but my stomach was churning and I felt nervous for Kate.'

'We didn't see any of our side of the family – Kate was in a suite on the top floor with her mother and Pippa – but we saw Mike's family in the bar. I remember wondering why Gary wasn't there. Someone told me he wasn't invited.'

'When we walked into the Abbey, my mum and dad, grandma and grandad had seats at the front, just behind Carole. Jessica, my other sister, and Catherine and I were

near the front and Boris Johnson was right in front of me. I remember laughing at his wild hair.'

'Then Gary walked in with Luan and Tallulah [his ex-wife and daughter]. He walked straight down the aisle towards mum and dad – I could hear his shoes tapping – but he hadn't got a seat reserved with his name on.'

'He had to sit right at the back and watch it on a screen. He has never

talked to the family about it but I felt really embarrassed for him because he is Kate's uncle and her brother James's godfather and he should have been at the front.'

Little did Joanne realise that the Royal Wedding day would be the last time she would see her cousin Kate – a particular shame, she says, given their closeness as children.

Carole was a bridesmaid when Joanne's mother was married at St



WEDDING BELLES: Joanne, centre, with sisters Catherine, left, and Jessica, right, and their mother Alison at the Goring Hotel before Kate and William's marriage

'Kate talked to me about her boyfriend, Will'

together. 'Kate and I had a lovely time,' she recalls.

'There was a steep stream there and we would slide down to the bottom of it on the slippery rocks. She was very active and very good at everything. In fact she was the best. If we did swing ball, she would win at that, if we did running races, she would win them.'

Four years later, they spent Christmas at Bude, in Cornwall. 'We hired a complex of different cottages,' she recalls. 'We all had separate ones – Mum and Dad and us children, Carole, Mike and their children, Ivor and Ruth, Dorothy, her husband Ronald and Gary.'

'We used to go to the beach a lot – even in the rain – and come back drenched. Carole was really house proud and she would tell us off for not taking our shoes off and getting sand all over the floor.'

When she got older Joanne and her sisters went to the local Church of England secondary school, near their home in Eastcote, Middlesex, while Kate, Pippa and James went to top public school Marlborough.

But they remained close and met up at family events such as Ruth and Ivor's golden wedding anniversary party at the Barn Hotel, Ruislip, in 2003.

'We hadn't seen each other for a while and were sitting at a table chatting about school and sport,' says Joanne. 'Three years later I saw Kate at Dorothy's 70th birthday party and she was referring to her boyfriend Will as if it was the most normal thing in the world.'

'It was Dorothy's last birthday before she died and it was a really poignant occasion.'

'I remember Gary turning up and giving Dorothy a Cartier watch – he is such a generous man and was exceptionally good to his parents.'

'She would have been heartbroken to see how he is being treated.'