

A minor royal wedding - but no showboating romance; Princess Eugenie, youngest daughter of Sarah Ferguson and Prince Andrew, has coped with her share of scandal and strife. Her wedding to long-term boyfriend Jack will bring her a 'pillar of support,' writes

Julia Molony Sunday Independent August 26, 2018

She grovelled unreservedly in the press. She had been drunk, she said, and was in a state of "financial desperation", telling Oprah Winfrey in an interview later that year that she had been "so out of control with desperation where I'd reached the point of no return".

"I think I've been living trying to be the Duchess of York," she said. "It's so difficult to explain. Living beyond my means? Yes. Trying to keep it up, keep me up, keep Sarah going."

In 2011, when Prince William married Kate Middleton in an event that marked a new era for the royal family, Sarah Ferguson was not invited.

'I always used to make Beatrice go into parties first.

I'd hide behind her' But if Andrew was ashamed of the behaviour of his ex-wife, his own record was not to remain unblemished for long. In 2011, he ran into trouble when his friend and associate **Jeffrey Epstein** was exposed as a convicted paedophile.

[REDACTED] a mother of three living in Australia came forward with claims that she had been solicited into prostitution at the age of 15 by **Epstein**, also claiming she was forced into life as a "sex-slave" and had been coerced into **sexual** relations with the prince himself on three separate occasions when she was just 17. Soon after, a photo dating from 2001, emerged. In it Prince Andrew had his arm wrapped around Roberts's teenaged waist. The case was settled out of court, but Andrew's reputation was damaged, and he was forced to release a statement denying any involvement in the affair, saying "any suggestion of impropriety with under-age minors is categorically untrue".

Fergie launched a fierce defence of her ex. "I won't stand by, because I know what it feels like to have salacious lies made up about you... It's defamation of character and as a great father and a humongously good man and all the work he does for Britain I won't stand by and let him have his character defamed to this level," she said.

Throughout all the turmoil, Eugenie and her sister Beatrice have done their best to walk the tightrope between family loyalties with dignity, while making their own way in the world.

Eugenie got a good degree at Newcastle University and has a respectable job, working as the associate director of an art gallery. She's surrounded by a constellation of influential friends, who are likely to be present at the wedding, including singer/songwriter Ellie Goulding and Holly Branson (daughter of Richard Branson). It was Eugenie who introduced actress and model Cressida Bonas to her cousin Prince Harry. Though their romance didn't last, Cressida and Eugenie are still regularly seen hanging out together, partying at Glastonbury and at various exclusive London hotspots.

The wedding also offers an opportunity to the Duchess of York, who, after years in the cold, seems poised for a return to the fold.

"Sarah is being very hands-on," a source recently told Vanity Fair, describing how the Duchess is handling the role of mother-of-the-bride. "And Eugenie wants her mum to be a big part of it all and will make sure Sarah is included in every aspect. Her feeling is the other royals will have to get on with it."

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