

# GRACIE FIELDS FINDS PEACE IN CAPRI— BUT SHE WILL GO ON SINGING

From Our Special Correspondent

Capri, Bay of Naples,  
Saturday.

**I**T'S the end of a sentimental journey. Seventeen years ago to-day I visited Capri to ask Gracie Fields to write her life story for the "News of the World" and spent a month at her villa here—a white stone building that was once a fort, which she christened Canzone del Mare (Song of the Sea).

Now I am back again talking with Gracie—not of what life has done to her over the years, but of what the future holds for Britain's best loved star. So often sentimental journeys of this kind are rather sad so that you regret their making.

But with Gracie it is not so, for the troubles she has met have given her a new beauty; an even deeper warmth of character. Her hair has become grey; new lines are etched in her face, but in some strange way the years have added to her charm.

For more than two hours to-day we talked in her lovely villa, and Gracie assured me that she has no intention of retiring. She will continue singing "just as long as they want me."

## IT WAS OUR JOB

"How can I retire?" she asked as she looked down at her swimming pool. "You see all those tiles surrounding the pool? Well all those are songs I have sung; everything in this place is part of me—and it costs money to maintain."

"But apart from that I have not yet completed my job—or rather our job, for Monty and I dreamed of this place."

"We planned it all together. We wanted to build a hotel—the loveliest place you could imagine—and I hope to finish the work we set out to do. Monty had set his heart on this hotel, and somehow it shall be as he wished. He was a man with such great enthusiasms."

Since the sudden death of her husband, Monty Banks, Gracie has thrown herself into a welter of work, but perhaps her greatest task to-day is to fulfil the plan they had made about Capri.

When I visited Gracie 17 years ago she had just bought this old fort from the Marquis Patrizi. It was the beginning of her holiday home; a haven to which she could retire from her busy public life.

To-day the fort is a beautiful villa, with her own tastefully decorated apartments, and flats for her friends and relations. She has built a swimming pool, surrounded

sister Edith (Mrs. Duggie Wakefield) and her daughter, Grace, and her sister Betty's married son, wife and little boy. Gracie runs the restaurant but I try not to act like the boss," she says.

At night it becomes a fashionable dancing resort, and, occasionally, when Gracie feels like dressing-up she comes down to her guests and gives them a song.

What of the future? Gracie has a big Canadian tour planned. She has been asked to televise, and she will continue radio and recording work.

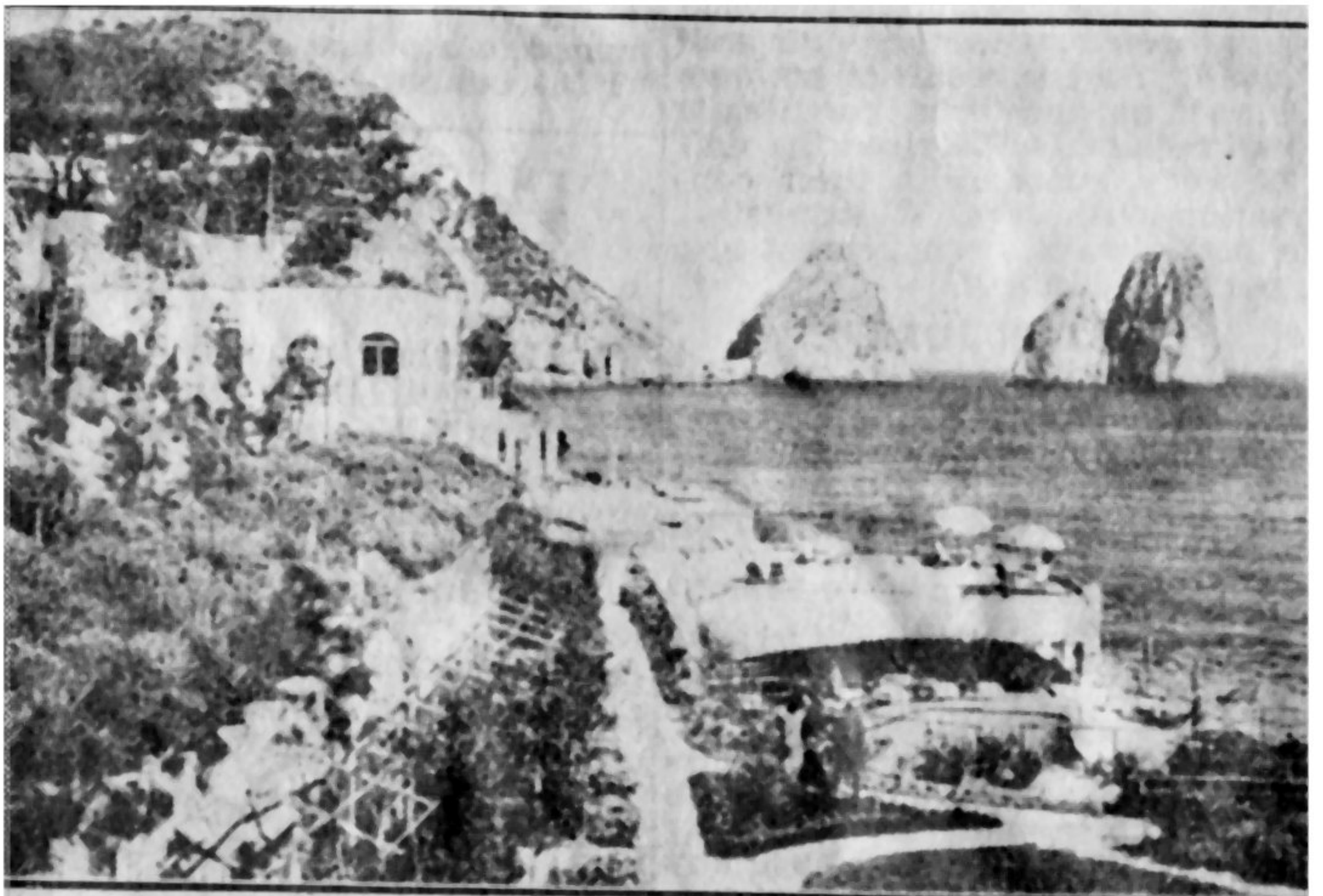
As we walked through this paradise home I realised more than ever how much her work means to this very great artist. For place of honour is given to a lovely grand piano where, in the cool of

the Capri evening, she sits and plays through the songs which she is now preparing for the winter season.

Gracie is not certain yet how long she will spend in London. "Stage work means so much dressing up; so much titivating, and I'm getting a little old for that sort of thing. With recording and radio it is different; you can do it more or less in your own time."

I shall always remember the end of this sentimental journey: Gracie standing at the wrought iron gates of the Canzone del Mare waving good-bye and saying: "Come back again when the job is done just as Monty and I planned it together."

I shall go back. And I know that "the job," as she calls it, will be done. Gracie is just one of those people.



SONG OF THE SEA  
Gracie's "paradise" in



*My love - Good  
Wishes to you  
Gracie Fields*

GRACIE—"I'm 53 . . . I'm a very sentimental woman."