

EXCLUSIVE SCOOP - THE MAN IN RED



It's all very hush, hush why I've been asked to come here today but as I drive down through Brook Meadow Campsite I hear a faint 'ho ho ho' echoing across the lake, could it be? Is my super secret interview really going to be THE celeb of the Festive Season?

As I approach the idyllic lakeside lodge adorned with fairy lights I can see the fire roaring away through the window and I can hear gentle

bells tinkling. I can barely contain myself; there he is, taller even than in my dreams. Father Christmas in his long johns! Well that's a little unexpected.

I gather myself, having interviewed everyone from Queen to The Queen, I can play this cool. 'Hey Santa!' comes barrelling out of me!

I immediately attempt to salvage this by querying why at, what is surely the busiest time of year, he appears to be having rather a lovely holiday, today the misty lake visible from the lodge sets

the scene for magic. I realise I have accused Father Christmas, THE Father Christmas, of at best laziness, at worst, abandonment of duty. Luckily he takes it all in his jolly stride. Explaining he needed a break as he has been suffering from a respiratory lung condition linked to ingredients used in magic reindeer dust particularly used back in the 70's that we now know to be hazardous. He looks svelter than I was expecting, maybe he has taken up some of the more adventurous activities on offer here.

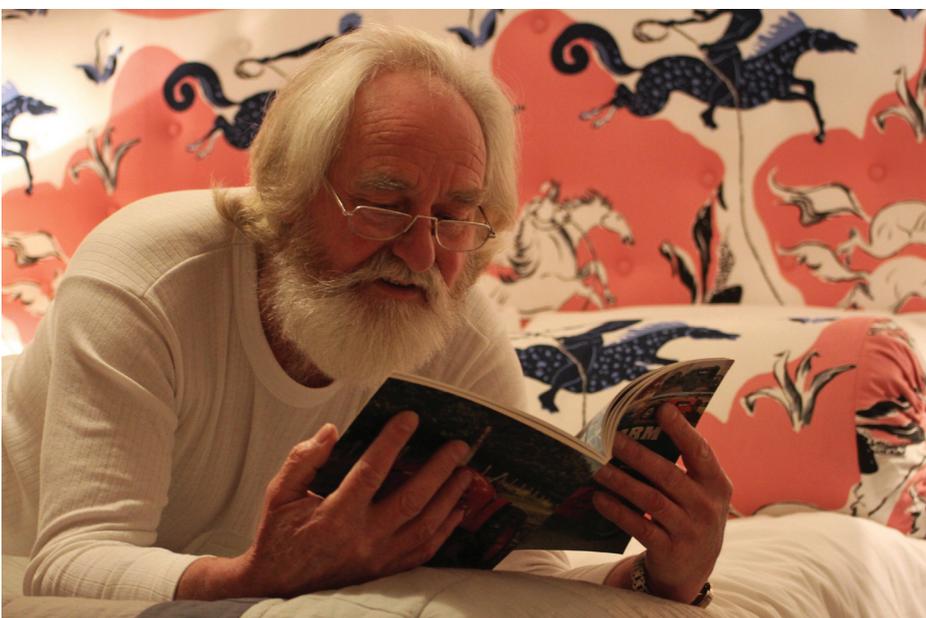


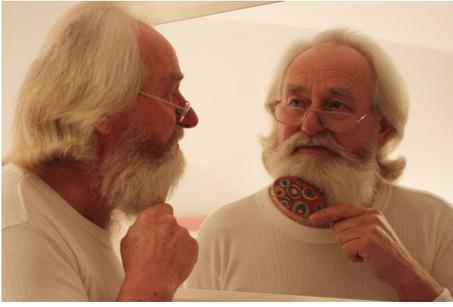


Mr. Claus launches into more about his 'incredible', 'fantastic' and 'amazing' team holding the reins (literally I assume??) at home. Although busy in Lapland at the moment, Mrs Christmas had a peaceful time here too during the summer. I startle, how long has he been sequestered away here then? And how on earth has he remained anonymous? There is nothing faint about his Ho Ho Ho's this time! He explains that really, unless he wears red, he manages to avoid detection, because who expects Santa Claus to be fishing in Northamptonshire in July or trundling about on a vintage tractor in a boiler suit! Well, when he puts it that way. Speaking of the suit, I assume that will be making its appearance soon for our photo shoot? 'Oh yes, of course' he confirms 'although I made rather a mistake in March and after collecting

it from the cleaners left it hanging on the wardrobe. Gave Beverley, the wonderful cleaner, quite a start when she came in to do her weekly shovel up after me. I'm a little bit too used to having the elves to work their magic you see. In Beverley came and there my suit was, it is rather unmistakable. Thankfully after liberally dosing her with spiked hot chocolate she has become quite the spy mistress which is particularly useful when I'm sneaking out in my red suit to get back for board meetings. I had been very tired but the stay at Brook Meadow has made me feel completed rejuvenated. Seeing all the green and water makes a change from all that snow and ice back home and I know when I put the red suit back on the Christmas spirit will run through my bones and tingle to my toes. I am feeling about ready to brush out my beard and polish my

boots, great timing really as Rudolph is bringing the Reindeers over soon for team building before The Big Night. We have to be on top form for Christmas Eve you know; we mustn't miss any chimneys'. I am almost hesitant to ask, does Rudolph take a lodge too? Again that laugh booms out, this time I join in as even in this magical setting I can't quite picture a team of reindeer in front of the fire. 'No, no' he chortles 'they stay on the farm next to the barn where I've been doing all the renovations on my sleigh and collection of tractors.' I immediately have to ask what renovations could possibly be needed on a magical sleigh. Here for the first time he is cagey, 'that's a surprise for The Big Night but, if you look hard enough when I fly overhead, you'll see something very special this year.' Even promising to go off record doesn't elicit a clue.





There is another question burning inside as I can't picture Santa in greasy overalls, 'do you need tools for your sleigh projects?' Again the laughter! He reassures me that all magical renovations need is fairy dust, Christmas spirit and imagination. I feel reassured that Santa isn't stepping outside my image of him until he starts to describe his pride and joy, a collection of tractors through the ages. I guess even Father Christmas needs a hobby!

It's time to wrap up our interview now, but I have one last question. What do you love so

much about here that made you stay for such a long time? With no pause for thought Kris Cringle launches into an array of the walks and views he has had, the activities and adventures he has got up to and the warm welcome he has received from everyone. Quite the Good Area Guide he has become. He also plans to visit Clipston School before heading back to Lapland to deliver some special information. He will be speaking to each and every child, giving out enchantment reindeer food, instructions on magic landing strip dust and briefing the

children on what to do so as not to miss anyone on The Big Night, apparently the Elf of Safety has been really on at him to do more and he knows he needs to tackle the issue at grass roots with the children as some grown ups as we know don't believe.

Is he going to be back next year for some more R&R, 'yes I am' he replies 'but this time I'm renting Skylark Lodge so I can bring my huskies Hairy and Very with me. I think they will love playing with the resident dogs here, Bear and Huck. That sounds like a very good plan to me!

