

KING CHARLES III– THE MAN AND HIS ACHIEVEMENTS

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Simon Weston joined the Welsh Guard while a young man. Leaving his home and family in Wales, he underwent his training and almost immediately was despatched to Berlin, West Germany. He was a well adjusted man, who loved and played rugby and was to marry when only 19 years of age. "Berlin was a wonderful and rich city," he said, "But it could be very claustrophobic in those days, encircled entirely by Russians". While in Berlin he did Spandau guard duty and actually saw Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy who was incarcerated in the prison after the war. Weston left Berlin in 1979 and was posted to the war torn country of Northern Ireland. There he did dangerous patrol work and it where he met Sue whom he married. He then was sent to Kenya for further training, and back to Northern Ireland. In early April 1982 Argentinian troops successfully invaded the Falklands Islands.

He was sent to the war zone and after arriving was placed aboard the vessel *Sir Galahad* to await disembarkation. Aboard was the Prince of Wales Company. While on the vessel, Weston stated later they were never briefed in air-raid drill. The *Sir Galahad* was attacked by Argentinian planes and someone shouted "Get down! Get Down!" One of the bombs a 2,000 pounder landed where Weston was taking shelter. A fireball erupted, forcing shrapnel and ricochets whizzing past his head. It was a horrific scene, one from hell. In the short of it all, the twenty three year old Simon Weston, who wanted to enjoy life to the full, was horrifically burnt. Eventually he was sent back to Great Britain where the long hard painful road of constant treatment began. I need not tell you the ordeal that this young man had to go through, which coincided with great bouts of depression, he not wanting to leave him home, but with help from his mates, family and the army he became active with the Guards Association and eventually came to Australia. From Australia in 1986 he flew back to Britain, where he received an invitation to go to New Zealand to join *Operation Raleigh*, a young people's international adventure and aid organisation.

He was to write, "Later on in the venture I discovered that I was on the same plane as Colonel John Blashford-Snell, the creator of Operation Raleigh.

"I never did find out who nominated me," he said to the Colonel.

"You didn't?" replied the Colonel. "Well, I shouldn't really tell you this, but I'll give you a clue. It is someone very closely associated with your part of the world, who has followed your progress with a lot of interest and concern."

"My mam?" He asked. "My gran?"

"No. As a matter of fact it was the Prince of Wales."

I highlight this true story to convey all the work behind the scenes that Charles, the then Prince of Wales, did. He had met Simon Weston at the London Victory Parade after the Falklands War and as the Colonel said, "followed your progress with a lot of interest and concern," so much so he personally nominated this badly injured man and by nominating it means, he paid for his involvement. There was no publicity about this nor did the Prince seek it nor should he. There is a verse in the Holy Bible which states, "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. "(Matt 6:3) In other words, "don't make a big show of it". One always sees a number of celebrities being photographed, say in Africa with children. Most of it is for publicity purposes. They fly in, have a photo shoot and fly out again. They do it, arranged by their publicity agents, for the entire world to see. Truly they have received their reward. Prince Charles did not do that; all the good work he does, he does silently, behind the scenes, secretly, most of which, if not all, has not received public attention or acknowledgement. This, however, is the way he wants it; that is how he operates.

Of the King, very little of the true work he does and the true character of the man gets through. Rather, the concerted attacks against him portray him as a man out of touch, strange and immoral. After all, he talks to trees doesn't he? Well, I use to talk to my dog all the time, so perhaps that makes me strange too. If so, I am in good company. True there were those terrible days during the 90s for the Queen as well, where there were those scandals, the burning of the Queen's residence in 1992, the death of Diana and one thought would all this not end? The republicans and sensationalists had a field day and the Monarchy took a beating; there is no doubt. The Queen was criticised for lacking compassion after the death of Diana, but the Monarchy survived and Constitutional Monarchy remains strong. Charles married Camilla and of course she came under huge personal attacks. Even recently ex-Prime Minister Paul Keating at the release of his book with sarcasms and rudeness attacked the Royal Family and our system of government, as did ex Liberal Senator Amanda Vanderstone.

Let's move on to something much more positive. His late father, the Duke of Edinburgh, as a serving officer in the Navy, had seen something of Australia and been attracted by its people. It was arranged in 1965 that there would be exchange of students. Prince Charles would attend Mount Timbertop School at Geelong, while an Australian boy would attend Charles's school, Gordonstoun, which turned out to be a son of a farmer. This came under criticism; if Charles was coming to Australia why not have him attend an ordinary State high school. The school was chosen by the then Prime Minister, Robert Menzies. Menzies did not want the young prince to be at school in the middle of a crowded city in Australia, where people would be gazing constantly at him. He wanted the young prince to mix happily with ordinary Australian boys. By this time he was a senior boy and thus his position was to maintain liaison between masters and junior boys. It was a Spartan school, where students came in direct confrontation with nature; they had to provide with their own

welfare, in other words be self-reliant. The Prince surmounted the same hurdles as the other boys without claiming privilege. From Timbertop he visited missionary stations in Papua and New Guinea. That was his first visit to Australia.

Much of course could be said of his early life. He is now a mature man, very well qualified, educated and experienced. He is intelligent and compassionate. He is a great believer, as I am, in natural therapy and the benefits of herbs. For more than 40 years, HRH has put his organic principles into practice in his ground-breaking garden at his property called Highgrove in the UK. He states that “the garden is an expression of what I hold dear – an essential harmony and connection with Nature, which is so important for the world today and for our descendants. We are planting to the future, so that those who come after us can reap the benefit of what has been planted before.” He goes on to say, “The single most important factor in the success of an organic garden is the health of the soil.” Again, seems quite correct to me...”my advice to anyone who is thinking of gardening organically,” he states, “would be to make a start, be patient and take the rough with the smooth. If you encourage wildlife into your garden, you will find pests and diseases become less of an issue. Surprisingly, you will discover that you tend to have more success than failure with benefits to the environment and to your own well being.” Prince Charles has become the Patron of Plant Heritage, which conserves the diversity of our plants. He is very interested in the health of children. He is quoted as saying, “There are many imaginative campaigns designed to teach children to eat well and be healthy, such as the Food for Life Partnership led by the Soil Association, as well as groups, such as Garden Organic, which encourage children to plant seed, nurture plants and have their own produce. Local gardening groups need to encourage the same sort of thing.” The public can actually visit Highgrove, to experience what he describes as “harmony with Nature; that it warms the heart and feed the soul of those who visit and maybe for those who have never gardened, provides inspiration to show what can be done in a mere few decades.” Here, the Prince is setting an example to us all.

He has behind the Dumfries Housing Estate project in Scotland restoring an 18th century home and grounds for the benefit of the local and wider community. The historic estate will be preserved for the future, providing work for many young people who have had their lives turned around because of the opportunities presented to them.

He is a military man having spent time in the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy, commanding a mine hunter and a Destroyer. He learnt to fly helicopters and twin engine jet fighters. He also completed the parachute’s regiment notoriously grueling jump training. He is also a general of the army.

He is a great musician and watercolour artist of some talent. Lithograph copies of water colours by the prince are sought after all over the world and the rarest currently fetch up to 15 thousand pounds apiece at the London Gallery. His works are also available at his country

estate Highgrove in Gloucestershire where the originals hang. Proceeds from sales of the copies, signed in pencil by the prince, have gone to his Charitable Foundation.

Of his paintings, Charles stated, "It transports me to another dimension which refreshes parts of the soul which other activities can't reach."

The King is known to attend services at several different Anglican churches near his home at Highgrove and in the year 2000 he was appointed as Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He travels each year to Mount Athos to spend time in the Orthodox monasteries, demonstrating his interest in Orthodox Christianity. We must not forget that his father, the Duke was raised Greek Orthodox, before being converted when he married the future Queen Elizabeth II.

He has demonstrated a great interest in alternative medicine and because of this he has been a subject of controversy and criticism. On one occasion he advocated that medical practitioners should offer herbal and other alternative treatments. One critic said, that many of the alternatives are "downright dangerous", not to state of course prescribed drugs can be "downright dangerous".

While his late wife Diana received great publicity regarding her charity work, little is known of Charles's. He founded the *Prince's Trust*, establishing fifteen charitable organisations and serves as president of all of those. An alliance of charities is called *The Prince's Charities* raises over 110 million pounds annually. He is patron of 350 other charities and organisations and carries out duties related to these throughout the Commonwealth. He draws attention to youth, the disabled, the environment, the arts, medicine the elderly, heritage conservation and education. A ex private secretary described the Prince as "a dissident who works against majority political opinions."

He has frequently criticised modern architecture. He cares (to quote), "deeply about issues such as the environment, architecture, inner-city renewal and the quality of life." And with courage, when only a young man in 1984 attacked the British architectural community in a speech given to the Royal Institute of British Architects. He wrote a book called "A Vision of Britain" in which he criticises modern architecture. The King, despite attacks has continued to put forward his views, together advocating the restoration of historic buildings.

There is so much we can say on King Charles, the Man and His Achievements. His involvement with modern architecture has been described as "an abuse of power" especially when he criticised the developers of the Chelsea Barracks, suggesting that the design was "unsuitable" with the development being done by a royal Arab family. Those in the architectural community has described his "behind the scenes lobbying" as counteracting the "open and democratic planning process" which is a lot of rubbish really. If they believed in what I just quoted they would welcome his comments. Lately the King has been accused of using his charities to lobby ministers over politically sensitive issues such as

VAT to promote his beliefs on topics including social development and the environment and has called directly on the Government to change policies. But as one correspondence to the Daily Mail (UK) pointed out, "As senior patron and head of these charities this is what is EXPECTED of him, by those charities".

It is well worth adding that during the year 2021 at the age of 72 he had in excess of over 500 engagements, which included many abroad abroad. He eclipsed his sister, Princess Anne who previously held the record. How many of us could be as dedicated as that?

Questions are asked what type of King he will be. He will be a good King. He is aware of his responsibilities and he is a humane man willing to speak his mind when he sees it is beneficial to his people and country. What more could we ask of our monarch? The true success of anyone I have observed is within their family. King Charles has reared two sons, William and Harry. It has been a dreadful time for them all with the loss of their mother in terrible circumstances, surrounded by controversy which still exists today. The pressure upon the family has been enormous, a weight which the majority of us I surmise would not be able to handle

Things have settled down a great deal over the years; the popularity of the late Queen was incredible and the appreciation of the system of government provided is high, including Australia with many republicans stating that it is a lost cause. They are hopeful when Charles became King, it will promote the republican cause, but I doubt it. As said, he will be a good King and will pass the mantle on in time to his son, William and his wife, Kate. I have entitled this article, **King Charles III the Man and His Achievements**. His greatest achievement will be to be a King in every sense of the word. That challenge for him has arrived. In this day and age it is probably more difficult than ever before to accept the burdens of being Monarch. Time will tell us what King he will be.

I just like to name some of the King's charities – some of them...The Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust; The Prince's Drawing School; The Prince's School of traditional Arts; the Prince's teaching Institute; The Prince's Regeneration Trust; The Prince's Countryside Fund; Business in the Community; Scottish Business in the Community; and The Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership.

Her late Majesty made Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, on the 7th anniversary of her marriage to Charles, a Dame of the Grand Cross of the Royal Victoria Order. The Queen approved her title of Queen's Consort not long before she passed away.