



Australian
Nationhood
Foundation

The King



The King, wearing the Order of Australia,
speaking in the Great Hall of Parliament House, Canberra

When Australia was discovered by Captain James Cook in 1770, George III was King. It was under his granddaughter Queen Victoria just 131 years later, that the Australian colonies federated into one sovereign and independent nation. Today Charles III, the great-great-great grandson of Victoria and direct descendant of George III, is our present King.

Due to the difficulties and time taken in travelling from one side of the world to the other, it was impossible for earlier monarchs to visit Australia, although Queen Victoria did send her son Prince Alfred, the (then) Duke of Edinburgh, to Australia in 1867. Unfortunately, Prince Alfred was shot by an Irish rebel at Collaroy in Sydney but despite this upset, the two sons of Alfred's brother, the then Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, visited in 1881. One of these sons, the Duke of Cornwall, together with his wife, represented his grandmother Queen Victoria at the opening of the first Parliament in 1901. The Duke and Duchess were later to become King George V and Queen Mary.

The next royal visit was in 1920 by their son, Edward, Prince of Wales, later to become the uncrowned king Edward VIII.

In 1927 Prince Edward's brother Prince Albert Duke of York visited Australia together with his wife to open the (now old) Parliament House in Canberra.

On Edward's abdication Albert became King as George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth (later known as the Queen Mother).

1934 saw a visit by their brother the Duke of Gloucester who returned after the war as Governor-General serving from 1946-7. The next royal visit was by Queen Elizabeth II with her husband the Duke of Edinburgh, in 1954.

This was the first ever visit by a reigning monarch and since that time there were numerous visits by Her late Majesty and other members of the royal family.

Queen Elizabeth's father became king on the abdication of his brother King Edward VIII in 1936. Attitudes were different at that time and people were against his proposed marriage to a divorced woman. The Prime Minister of Australia was amongst those consulted and he was the first to respond with a vehement objection to the marriage.

No one ever thought at the time of her birth that Princess Elizabeth would ever become Queen. She was born on the 21st of April 1926 and named Elizabeth, not after Queen Elizabeth I, but after her mother. But when her father became King, Princess Elizabeth, at only 10 years old, was trained for her future role as Queen.

In 1947, Princess Elizabeth, in a broadcast to celebrate her 21st birthday whilst on a tour of South Africa, established the principles upon which she would reign with this extraordinary and inspiring vow:

"I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long, or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great Imperial Commonwealth to which we all belong. But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do; I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God bless all of you who are willing to share it."

In July of that year, the Princess became engaged to her third cousin Prince Philip of Greece. They married on the 20th November 1947 and Elizabeth became Queen and was crowned on the 2nd June 1953.

Charles Philip Arthur George was born on 14 November 1948, during the reign of his maternal grandfather, King George VI, as the first child of Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of Edinburgh (later Queen Elizabeth II), and Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

He became heir apparent when his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, acceded to the throne in 1952 and was created Prince of Wales in 1958 (his investiture was held in 1969).

He was educated at Cheam School and Gordonstoun, and later spent six months at the Timbertop campus of Geelong Grammar School in Victoria, Australia. After completing a history degree from the University of Cambridge, Charles served in the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy from 1971 to 1976. In 1981, he married Lady Diana Spencer and had two sons, William and Harry but divorced in 1996. Diana, Princess of Wales, died as a result of injuries sustained in a car crash the following year and in 2005, Charles married his long-term partner, Camilla Parker Bowles.

As heir apparent, Charles undertook many official duties and engagements on behalf of his mother, the Queen. He founded the Prince's Trust in 1976 (now the King's Trust', sponsored the Prince's Charities, and became patron or president of more than 800 other charities and organisations. He advocated for the conservation of historic buildings and the importance of architecture in society.

He has always been an avid environmentalist and introduced organic farming into the Duchy of Cornwall estates. He has authored or co-authored seventeen books.

Charles became king upon his mother's death on 8 September 2022. At the age of 73, he was the oldest person to accede to the British throne, after having been the longest-serving heir apparent and Prince of Wales in British history. He was crowned at Westminster Abbey on 6 May 2023.

His first overseas, non European, visit, since becoming king, was to Australia from 18 October 2024 to 23 October 2024. He then flew to Samoa to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Although he had earlier visited Australia as Prince of Wales on 16 occasions, including his time at Geelong Grammar, this was his first visit as King. In fact, the first ever visit of a King to Australia. It was also his first time at CHOGM as King although he had earlier deputised for his mother.

QUESTIONS

What is the date of the King's birth?

Who was Queen Elizabeth II named after?

Where did Prince Charles go to school?

What date did Charles become Prince of Wales?

When did he become King? Why?

How many times has he been to Australia?

When was his last visit?