



# EARLY *years*

BORN TO A PRINCESS WHO  
BECAME QUEEN A FEW SHORT  
YEARS LATER, CHARLES'  
FORMATIVE YEARS WERE FULL  
OF UPS AND DOWNS



**J**ust under a year after his parents, Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip wed, their first child, a son they named Charles Philip Arthur George, was born. The happy couple welcomed their child, weighing seven pounds and six ounces, in the Buhl Room at Buckingham Palace on the evening of November 14th, 1948.

Princess Elizabeth, then aged 22, went through 30 hours of labour before surgeons stepped in and performed a C-section, right there in the palace.

The birth of the young Prince broke a centuries long tradition of Royal births being witnessed by a senior politician. It's believed that the tradition was introduced to ensure the new Royal baby could not be swapped at birth. However, Princess Elizabeth's father, King George VI stepped in during his daughter's labour and decreed that she did not need to follow previous protocol and could give birth privately as was her wish.



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His father was not present when he was born, instead he played squash to distract himself and make the time pass quicker. However, on hearing the news of his son's arrival, Prince Philip bounded up the stairs to the Buhl Room to see his beloved wife and first born, whom he described as looking rather like a “Plum Pudding.” He then presented his wife with a bouquet of red roses and carnations.

The arrival of the new heir was announced by the King's Troop Royal Artillery firing a 41-gun salute and the bells of Westminster rang, which lead to crowds flocking to the palace to celebrate the happy news. A month later, Charles was christened at Buckingham Palace, by the Archbishop of Canterbury. ►





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As a baby and toddler, Charles spent much of his time with his grandparents, the King and Queen, whilst his mother and father were in Malta, where Prince Philip was stationed in the Royal Navy. However, his beloved grandfather died when he was only three, changing the family's lives forever.

Overnight Princess Elizabeth became Queen and Charles became the official heir apparent. By then he had a little sister, Princess Anne, with whom he spent much of his time when his parents were away on official duty, completing long overseas tours.

Indeed he also grew very close to his grandmother, the Queen Mother, during those years and credits her with introducing him to the world of music and art. “My grandmother was the person who taught me to look at things,” Charles said, many years later, going on to describe her as, “The most magical grandmother you could possibly have.”



When the time came to begin his education, Charles was first home-schooled by Catherine Peebles, his Glaswegian governess. However, by the age of eight, his parents felt he would benefit from being surrounded by other children in a classroom. And so came the time for Prince Charles to break another Royal tradition, he became the first ever heir to the throne to attend school when he was sent to Cheam, a boarding school in Hampshire.

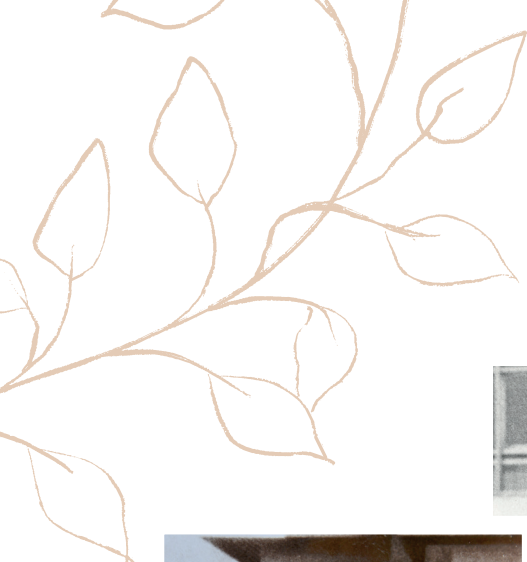


His secondary education saw him sent to Gordonstoun in Scotland, the same boarding school his father had attended. Unfortunately, Prince Charles describes the day his father flew him to an old RAF base, before driving him the rest of the way to the school, to be the start of his “prison sentence”. Each day at school would begin with a run, often in extreme weather, followed by a freezing cold shower.

There has also been talk of a culture of bullying, from which the young prince was not exempt. Since a Prince was attending the school, many of the rules became even stricter than before, and his fellow students often took it out on Charles. One of his schoolmates describes Charles’ time there as, “crushingly lonely” since most of the other children avoided the young Prince and anyone who did try to make friends with him found themselves taunted with constant ‘slurping’ sounds to indicate that they were sucking up to him. ►







*“Acting was something the young Prince thoroughly enjoyed.”*

Upon graduating Gordonstoun, Charles broke tradition for the third time, choosing to go straight to university rather than enrol in the British Armed Forces and was the first heir to receive a university degree. Charles attended Trinity College at Cambridge where he studied anthropology, history and archaeology.

During his time at university, Charles joined the Dryden Society, a popular drama club that saw him take part in plays and sketches – acting was something the young Prince thoroughly enjoyed.



Charles stayed at Gordonstoun until the age of 17, when his father decided it would be good for him to experience a couple of semesters abroad, in the Outback of Australia. The school in question was named Timbertop, and although his time there was often just as gruelling as it was in Gordonstoun, His Majesty seemed happier than he had been anywhere else. He has since said “It was a more physically testing experience than Gordonstoun. But it was jolly good for the character and, in many ways, I loved it and learnt a lot from it. I was able to communicate and talk to people so much more.”

Indeed, Charles found the other students in his new school to be far more accepting of him and his status as heir to the British throne, which he had previously found himself isolated for at his former schools.

When he returned from Australia, Charles was far more confident and relaxed than he had been just six months prior and so he found his final year of education back in Gordonstoun a lot more bearable than previous years.

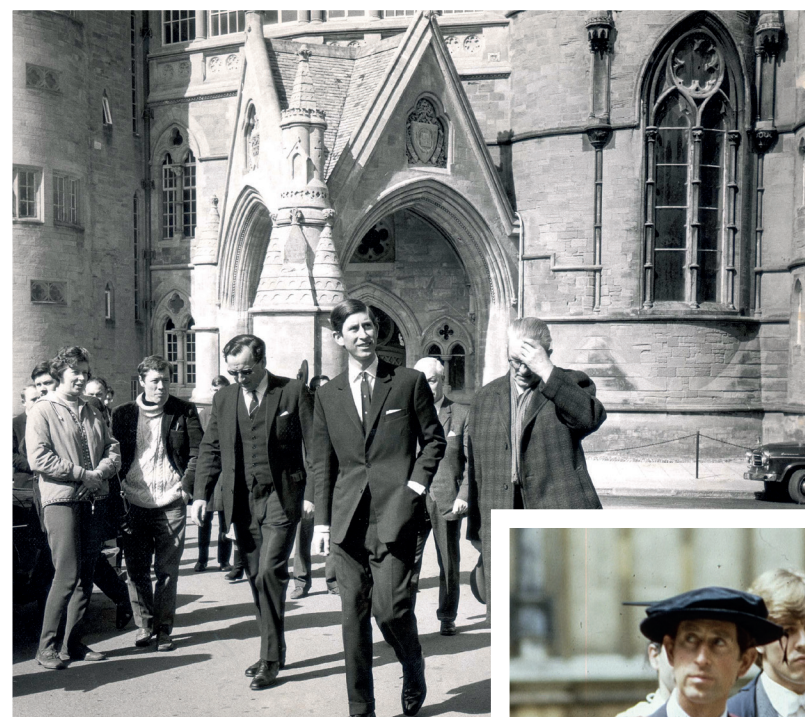
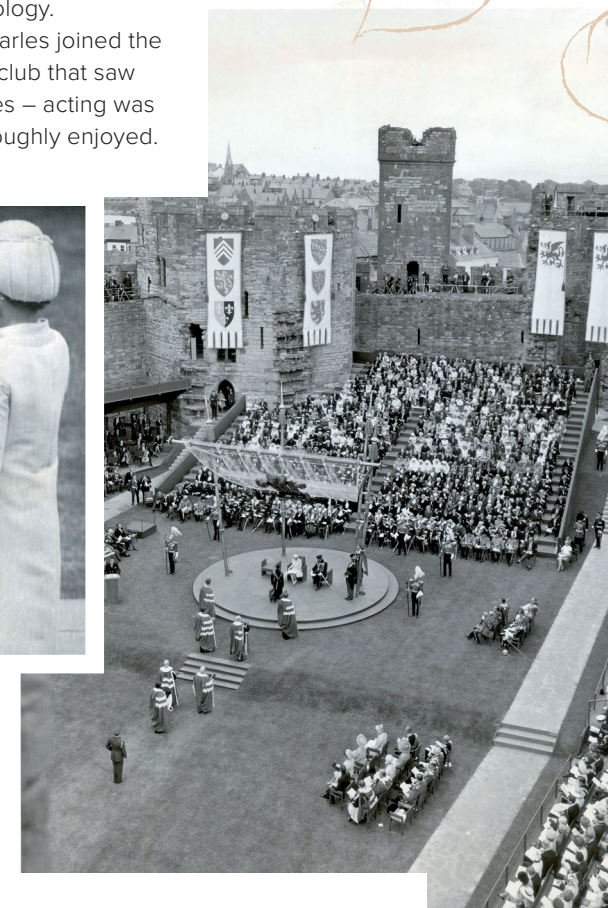


IMAGE CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK



When he was 20, Charles formerly became Prince of Wales. The investiture, which saw his mother officially crown him as the Prince of Wales, was watched by 500 million people around the world.

A year later, Charles went on to obtain a 2:2 degree from Cambridge, and it was on his graduation that his real life as the heir apparent truly began. •