

# Camilla: THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

## How she rose from royal mistress to the King's closest advisor

Queen Consort Camilla has been embroiled in royal family business for decades. Once called a "Rottweiler" by Princess Diana, the 75-year-old has now found herself holding a title that many would have once thought impossible. But her journey from being the "other woman" to the Queen Consort has been far from easy.

### Early days

Born Camilla Shand in 1947, she first met Charles at a polo match in the early 1970s. It was

rumoured that she flirtatiously reminded Charles that her great-grandmother, Alice Keppel, was the long-standing mistress of King Edward VII – before asking, "How about it?"

Biographers have revealed that Charles contemplated marrying Camilla, before ultimately focusing on his Navy career. Camilla went on to marry cavalry officer, Andrew Parker Bowles, and Charles married a 20-year-old Diana in a 1981 wedding that enchanted the world.

But behind the scenes, things were souring – with Diana blaming Camilla for her marriage breakdown. During an infamous 1995 TV interview three years after she and Charles had separated, a heartbroken Diana said, "There were three of us in this marriage, so it

**'It's been far from easy'**

was a bit crowded."

And within the royal household, there were others who had reservations about Charles' lover.

### Harry's claims

During a 2005 interview marking his 21st birthday, Prince Harry opened up about his relationship with Camilla, saying, "She's always been very close to me and William. She's not the wicked stepmother."

But over 15 years later, his bombshell memoir *Spare* told a far different story. In the book, 38-year-old Harry revealed that he and William, 40, pleaded with their father not to marry Camilla. "Despite Willy and me urging him not to, Pa was going ahead. We pumped his hand, wished him well. No hard feelings. We recognised that he was finally going to be with the woman he loved, the woman

Camilla and Queen Elizabeth II at Royal Ascot in 2013

With Charles at her son Tom's wedding

With Charles and her now-ex husband Andrew in 1975





In easier times with Harry



Camilla and Charles on the palace balcony after William's wedding in 2011



At the Queen's funeral with Kate, George and Charlotte

he's always loved," he wrote.

Harry also recalled wondering whether his father's long-term mistress would be cruel to him "like all the wicked stepmothers in storybooks", while his older brother "long harboured suspicions about the Other Woman".

Painting a picture that is far from the close bond he spoke of in 2005, Harry wrote, "In a funny way, I even wanted Camilla to be happy. Maybe she'd be less dangerous if she was happy?"

And the Prince – who stepped down from his royal duties alongside wife Meghan Markle in 2020 – has taken his criticisms of Camilla much further than the pages of his book.

Speaking to CBS earlier this year, Harry accused Camilla of leaking stories about him to the British press as part of her campaign to "rehabilitate her image" – alleging that she left

"bodies in the street" to become Queen Consort.

## Rebuilding her image

Prince Harry isn't the first person to accuse Camilla of taking drastic measures to improve her image. When Princess Diana died in a car crash in 1997, royal aides were swiftly tasked with rebuilding Camilla's tarnished reputation.

Slowly integrating Camilla into her public role, she and Charles' first appearance together came at Camilla's sister's birthday party

in 1999. By 2005, the once controversial pair were married – and she's now regarded as a key member of the royal family.

Despite Harry's claims, palace insiders have said Camilla's rise to power stems from a much more genuine place. A former senior royal aide previously told Reuters, "People simply have got to know her better, and they've liked what they've seen and heard. It is not an overt PR campaign to make her look good. It is her doing her job really well."

## 'She's perfect for Charles'

## True Love

In a secretly recorded telephone conversation published in 1993, Camilla told Charles, "I'd suffer anything for you. That's the love. That's the strength of love."

And, indeed, their love has spanned decades – with many sources insisting the Queen Consort is a positive influence on the King. Speaking on *Piers Morgan Uncensored*, royal photographer Arthur Edwards shared, "Charles is much calmer about approaching things. He had a little bit of a sparky temper, but I've not seen that in a long while."

He added, "Camilla has never hogged the limelight. In fact, she is perfect for him."

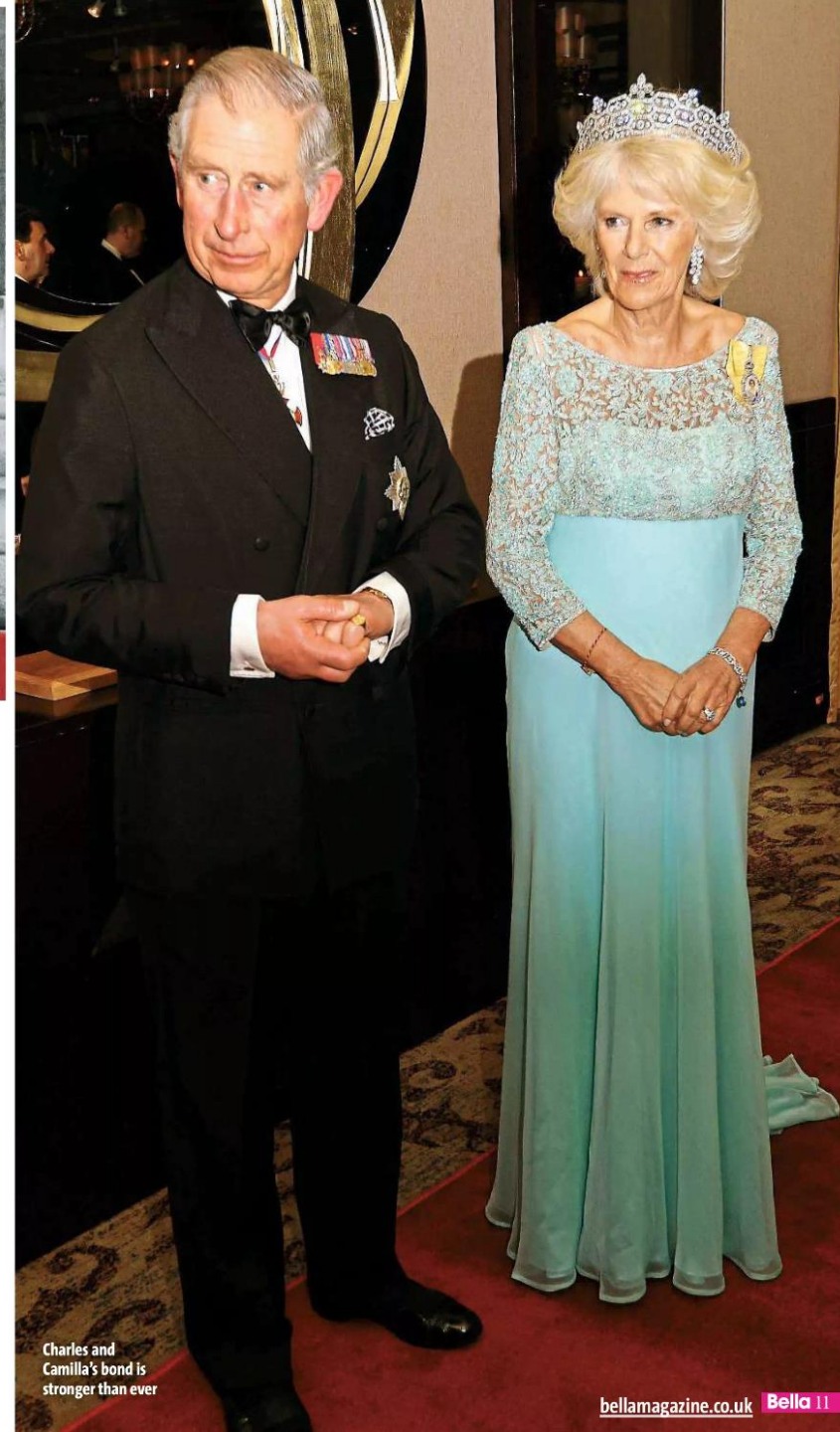
The royal couple's relationship is currently stronger than ever. Their happiness has been evident, with them joking their way through public appearances and putting on a united front as Charles tackles his new role as King – as well as handling the fallout with Harry and his

disgraced younger brother Prince Andrew, 63.

Talking about their private life to British *Vogue* last year, Camilla revealed, "We always sit down together and have a cup of tea and discuss the day." She continued, "The nicest thing is we actually sit and read our books in different corners of the room. It's very relaxing, because you know you don't have to make conversation. You just sit and be together."

And always his wife's biggest supporter, the King also gushed about Camilla in a rare 2015 interview with CNN. Reflecting on their marriage, he revealed, "It's marvellous to have somebody who you feel understands and wants to encourage – although she certainly pokes fun if I get too serious about things. All that helps."

So, while it hasn't been as easy a transformation from royal mistress to Queen Consort, Camilla has firmly cemented herself as a key figure in Britain's modern-day monarchy – with Charles saying, "She's been, I think, brilliant."



Charles and Camilla's bond is stronger than ever