

His Majesty King Charles III., involvement in The Prince of Wales Hospice, as the former Prince of Wales

King Charles III, as the former Prince of Wales has been always committed to supporting The Prince of Wales Hospice. He became the Hospice's patron in 1987 and he then became its president in 2000. He gave his name and recognition to the essential work the Hospice does for the Five Towns plus community.

He visited the Hospice in Pontefract several times, held royal polo matches in aid of the Hospice and attended their fundraising events to encourage people to support them. Hospice staff and volunteers received numerous invitations to the Queens annual garden party, as a royal gesture of appreciation for their work.

About Charles' visits to The Prince of Wales Hospice

- 1986

Charles, the former Prince of Wales' first visit to The Prince of Wales Hospice goes back to 1986, before the Hospice was even built. The former Prince of Wales was notified about the great effort being done in the Five Towns area to establish a local Hospice, which was much needed, particularly in this mining community where people were more at risk of suffering life-limiting conditions later in life.

On 3 July 1986 he visited the Five Towns area to meet the people who were trying to raise money for the Five Towns Plus Hospice Fund to build a local hospice.



(Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales meets the Council of Management at Castleford rail station with the people gathered on the road outside)

After meeting the Council of Management at Castleford railway station, Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales went to the home of Greta Sharkey in Townville, where he met members of the Castleford Support Group.



(Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales is at Greta Sharkey's house meeting with the Castleford Support Group)

He was then driven to Knottingley to the home of Lesley Etherington, the Hospice Fund Sister (the first MacMillan nurse in the area), to meet the Knottingley Support Group. His next visit was to Carlton Court in South Elmsall, where he met members of the South Elmsall and Hemsworth Support Group. He was then driven to Featherstone Library where he met support groups from Pontefract, Featherstone and Normanton.

In his speech in Featherstone, he said:

"I am really thrilled to see the kind of community activity which has been going on here for the past five years. Hospices are remarkable places filled and staffed by remarkable people. I hope it will not be too many years before you have the bricks and mortar to build the Hospice."

Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales's visit helped the Hospice Appeal both from the publicity he gave us and by encouraging the fundraisers. Coming so soon after the Miners' Strike his visit was also a tremendous morale boost for the area.

Her Majesty the Queen graciously consented to the newly built Hospice being renamed from The Five Towns Plus Hospice to The Prince of Wales Hospice, in November 1989.

- **1991**

The official opening of the Hospice by Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales was planned for 5 July 1990 but unfortunately, he broke his arm whilst playing polo and his visit had to be postponed at the last minute. Therefore, it was 12 June 1991, when he officially opened the Hospice.



(Here, Dr George Ward, a member of the Trustees, meets HRH The Prince of Wales.)

- **1993**

Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales, our President, visited again on 17 November 1993. To mark the occasion Nellie Sykes, presented him with a painting she had completed while staying as an inpatient.



(Nellie Sykes, presented Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales with a painting on his visit at The Prince of Wales Hospice)

- 1996

On 29 October 1996, on his visit to The Prince of Wales Hospice in Pontefract, Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales pledged a lifelong commitment to our Hospice saying:

“This is a very special place, and I will continue to be involved. I am in it for life.”

An emotional day-care patient declared she would die happy after her meeting with him: *“I have never met anyone like him before. I just wanted to put my arms around him and hug him if he had only come a bit nearer to me.”*



Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales is welcomed by Ann Glead, long-time volunteer at The Prince of Wales Hospice and Mary Lang, General Manager)



(Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales meets patients and staff)

- **8 June 2000**

The Chairman at this date was Mr Colin Allen and one of the main purposes of the visit was for the Prince of Wales to see the development plans for the Hospice following the Hospice support of the Prince's Foundation for the built environment. On this visit he was also addressing the business people of the area and appealing for them to support the Hospice.



(Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales addresses the local business people)

- **2004**

On his next visit on 22 January 2004, Lofthouse Youth Brass Band greeted him and he spoke to pupils from the nearby Halfpenny Lane Junior and Infant School who were waiting in the cold to greet him.



(Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales meets pupils from the nearby Halfpenny Lane Junior and Infant School)

After a guided tour of the Hospice he made a short speech praising the marvellous Hospice staff and volunteers, stressing the enormous difference the Hospice made to the local community.

Day care patient Delia Smith, 82, said of Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales: *“He was just like a dream Prince Charming. He joked with me, and said I was the original Delia and he asked me about my baking. He laughed when I told him he would have to try my mince pies.”*

- **2009**

For those who were working at the Hospice in the morning of 19 February 2009, it started like no other. Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales was escorted through the building meeting staff and volunteers.

He also met a group of patients from the Hospice’s Self Help Group. Fellow patient Jessie Norton said: *“I’ve met him before because last time he visited I was staying at the hospice. I said to him - I’ve met you once before, but you haven’t come here to listen to my aches and pains. - So we had a chat about his sons instead. It was a real, real pleasure to meet him.”*

Before leaving he met a number of representatives from Business and Industry including Lord Geoffrey Lofthouse, who had supported the Hospice for many years and, more so, when he became a Member of Parliament for the constituency. Lord Lofthouse was also one of the few Patrons of the Hospice at that time and he was a stalwart supporter of the Hospice to which he also gave financial support.



(Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales meets Geoffrey Lofthouse, one of the Hospice's patrons)

- 2017

Excitement was in the air when Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales visited the Hospice again on 22 March 2017, 30 years after his first visit. The purpose of his visit was to see the refurbishments the building had undergone during the summer.

He said: “I remember all those years ago coming up the first time and meeting the most wonderful groups of ladies from the five mining towns when they were planning all this. So, for me coming back now it’s remarkable to see the work, the difference, the experience, the unbelievable quality of care that can be offered to so many people in this area.”



Inpatient Whyne Staniforth dressed in her brand new nighty, really enjoyed having the opportunity to chat with HRH.

She said: “I was thrilled to bits when I first met him; he wasn’t like what I expected him to be.

He talked to me about my dogs and my legs, having bad legs, and about being in here.”

Before leaving, the Prince of Wales was presented with his 30 year volunteer badge – to great amusement and cheers. He promptly stuck it on his lapel for the rest of his travels in the area.



(Gordon Tollefson, Chair of Trustees presents Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales with his 30 year volunteer badge.)

Royal polo matches in aid of The Prince of Wales Hospice

On 25 May 1987 was the first royal polo match in aid of The Prince of Wales Hospice, held at the Guards Polo Club in Windsor Great Park, between the Maple Leafs and the Saracens. People saw Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales playing polo, followed by tea where he spoke to many of our Hospice supporters. It raised £55,000.

Between 1987 and 2012 there were royal polo matches organised every year to raise funds for the Hospice.



(Royal polo match, held in 2004 and raised £30,000 in aid of The Prince of Wales Hospice)

One of them was especially unforgettable. It was 2001 when the Highgrove Three, the three princes had played together publicly in the same team. It was an amazing experience to see them side by side, in aid of the Prince of Wales Hospice.



In an event programme note, Charles, H.R.H. the former Prince of Wales wrote:

“I have the honour of being associated with the hospice since 1986 and each time I visit I am immensely impressed by the wonderful atmosphere that pervades it.”

The Prince of Wales Hospice is most grateful to King Charles III., as the former Prince of Wales, for his support and commitment over the last 36 years. Without him, the Hospice would have not been built and could have not provided the much needed care in this area.