



The Centre celebrates the Coronation of King Charles III



His Majesty King Charles III

The Centre participated in the nation's weekend celebrations of the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla. To mark the occasion the Centre flew the Union Flag and opened The Prince of Wales Garden to the public from 5th to 8th May.

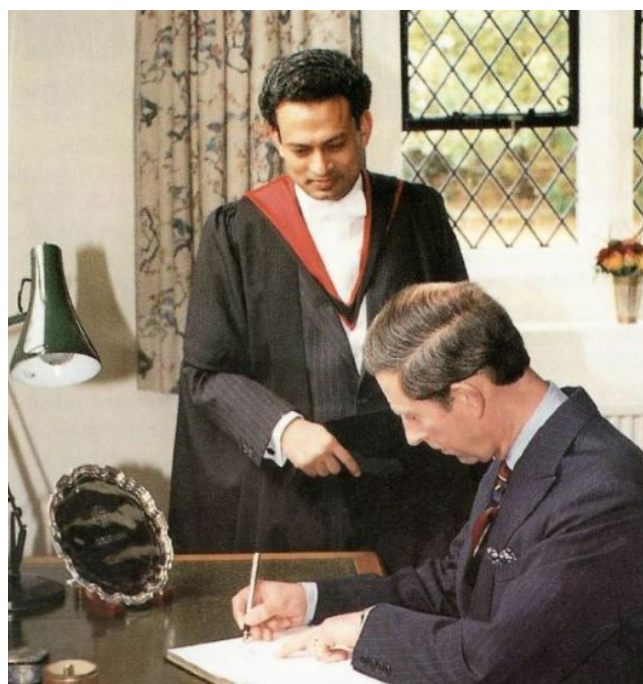
The Centre has benefited from a long and close association with His Majesty (as Prince of Wales) over the 30 years since he graciously agreed to be associated with the aims and activities of the Centre, and provide guidance and encouragement as Patron. The ongoing connection was acknowledged during the weekend's official celebrations as Centre members were honoured to attend the Coronation and the Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle.

In his inaugural lecture on 'Islam and the West' in 1993, His Majesty described the Centre as having, *'the potential to be an important and exciting vehicle for promoting and improving understanding of the Islamic world in Britain... an institution of which the University, and scholars more widely, will become justly proud'*. Thirty years on, the Centre has done much towards fulfilling this vision of its potential but much remains to be done.

"I am utterly convinced that our two worlds have much to offer each other. We have much to do together. I am delighted that the dialogue has begun, both in Britain and elsewhere. But we shall need to work harder to understand each other... The further down that road we can travel, the better the world that we shall create for our children and for future generations."

*HM King Charles in his 1993 lecture
'Islam and the West' on becoming Patron*

As Patron, His Majesty has always been active in encouraging the Centre's mission of providing a deeper



His Majesty, then HRH The Prince of Wales, signing the visitors' book at the Centre, with the Director, 1993

and more informed understanding of Islam, its culture and civilization, and of providing an active bridge for academic and other intellectual exchanges.

The King's landmark first Centre lecture, which highlighted the need for practical measures to further dialogue and mutual understanding between the Islamic and Western worlds, resonated world-wide. The 'Islam and the West' lecture, even thirty years later, continues to attract international interest and is still referenced extensively. The Centre followed up, holding a conference at Ditchley Park in October 1994 (which swiftly became an annual event) to encourage contact and cooperation between civilizations.

"I am delighted that the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies has taken the initiative to bring together at Ditchley a group of distinguished experts from so many countries and backgrounds. This... provides an important opportunity to consider seriously many aspects of the complex and crucial relationship between the Islamic and Western worlds."

*Patron's statement of welcome,
read to the first Centre conference at Ditchley, 1994*

The lecture also enabled the Centre to emerge as a global forum by launching the Centre's series of distinguished lectures by international leaders and figures of global academic standing. The next visiting lecturer was



The Patron welcoming President Nelson Mandela on his visit to the Centre, 1997



The Patron giving the lecture on 'Islam and the Environment' in 2010

President Nelson Mandela followed by other luminaries including Heads of State and Government, internationally renowned scholars, and the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, Commonwealth, Arab League, UNESCO and OIC.

The Prince of Wales Fellowship for the Study of the Islamic World was, with His Majesty's gracious consent, established in 1997 as further practical support for the Centre's aims. Later, collaboration with The Prince's Charities assisted the Centre to set up its Young Muslim Leadership programme.

Seventeen years after 'Islam and the West', on the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Centre, His Majesty lectured on 'Islam and the Environment'. Long a passionate advocate of environmental conservation, he evoked traditional Islamic precepts related to conscientious stewardship of God's creation and their application as a foundation for formulating environmental policy, again focusing on the need for practical approaches.

His Majesty's commitment to the Centre has been continually reaffirmed by his generously hosting celebrations to celebrate such milestones as the Centre's 10th, 15th, and 20th anniversaries. These events brought together a number of the Centre's Oxford and overseas friends and supporters, some at His Majesty's private Highgrove country estate, others at St James's Palace. In his statement on the Centre's 10th anniversary, then as Prince of Wales, he said: *'It was... with great pleasure that I accepted the Oxford Centre's invitation... to become Patron. I have since come to admire greatly its dedication to establishing a partnership of understanding between Islam*

and the West. I believe this is a task of special importance in today's world.

Speaking at the 15th anniversary dinner, His Majesty expressed his pleasure that the Centre was making a real contribution to understanding of the Islamic world and was creating opportunities for the international dialogue and cooperation so essential in our interdependent global community. He added that the Centre could and should make a contribution to dispassionate reflection, sound understanding, appreciation of shared common values, and mutual trust and toleration.

“The ability of the Oxford Centre to develop an ambitious programme of academic activities has depended greatly on the world-wide participation of well-wishers and scholars. I congratulate all those who have been involved with the establishment and success of this important institution.”

HM King Charles in his statement on the 10th Anniversary of the Centre



The Patron addressing the guests on the occasion of the grant of the Royal Charter to the Centre in 2012

In 2012, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II granted the Centre a Royal Charter, an instrument with a 700-year history, now bestowed by the sovereign (on the advice of the Privy Council) to exceptional bodies that work in the public interest. This prestigious honour, recognised the Centre's dedication to encouraging a more informed understanding of Islamic culture and civilization.



The Patron planting a tree to mark the inauguration of the Centre's new building, 2017

In the King's words, on receiving the award, the Centre joined (as the first Islamic member), “the august family of current Charter holders, which includes distinguished livery companies, centres of academic excellence including our ancient Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and charitable organizations.” The Patron hosted a celebration of this distinction for the Centre at St James's Palace, attended by senior personalities from the UK and around the world.

On his 1993 visit, His Majesty had his earliest view of the site acquired by the Centre for the construction of its permanent home in central Oxford. Subsequently he took a close interest in its plans, visiting again in 2005 to view progress on the new building, and contributed directly to the design of the gardens he consented to be named ‘The Prince of Wales Garden’ in his honour.

This tranquil space stands as an enduring tribute to His Majesty's concern and commitment to the Centre, and an expression of the Centre's indebtedness to him for the many ways in which he has, consistently over many years, encouraged its operation and guided its successful development.

His Majesty's most recent view of the Garden was at his inauguration of the new building in 2017, an occasion on which he expressed his pride in the Centre's accomplishments. He hosted a lunch at the Centre for the British and International guests, including Heads of State and Government.

“I pay tribute to the work of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies... its commitment to the creation of a worthy and lasting home for Islamic study among the greatest of the Oxford colleges, is something which brings me great satisfaction and pride...It seems to me absolutely right that, here in the United Kingdom, we should do all we can to nurture an institution which not only promotes a better informed understanding of Islamic culture and civilization, and the challenges facing Muslim communities, but which can also remind both the Islamic world and the West of those timeless, universal principles of harmony enshrined within Islam that the world needs so urgently to re-discover in the battle to preserve the future for our descendants.”

*His Majesty, then HRH The Prince of Wales,
on the award of the Royal Charter*



*The Union flag at the Centre to mark the coronation of
HM King Charles III on 6 May 2023*

King Charles and the Centre have long held to a shared understanding of the importance of increasing dialogue, respect and tolerance, which His Majesty described as underpinning essential British national values, both recognising and celebrating the UK's diverse historical heritage and the commonalities which enable communities to grow together. The Centre hopes its activities continue to generate a sense of pride in the past efforts and association and that, during the reign of this steadfast and generous friend of the Centre, their shared aims will continue to prosper. His Majesty's past speeches as Patron (listed on the Centre's website) are available in full in English and in Arabic, published by the Centre.