

The Department of External Affairs

Ottawa - Canada

H.R.H. THE PRINCESS ROYAL was born at York Cottage, Sandringham, on April 25, 1897, and christened Victoria Alexandra Alice Mary. The only daughter of the late King George V and Queen Mary, the Princess Royal was educated at home. From girlhood, she showed a particular flair for languages and is fluent in French and German.

In 1921 the engagement was announced of Princess Mary to Viscount Lascelles, later 6th Earl of Harewood. The marriage took place in Westminster Abbey on February 28, 1922. The present Lord Harewood, who succeeded to the earldom on his father's death in 1947, was born in 1923 and his brother in 1924. Both are now married and the Princess Royal has four grand-children.

The Princess Royal has all her life kept up her interest in nursing and in hospital work. During the First World War she took up nursing and formed a Voluntary Aid Detachment at Buckingham Palace with a group of friends. The Princess Royal is particularly interested in child welfare and is personally associated with various hospitals as Patron. She has been Commandant-in-Chief of the British Red Cross Detachment since 1926. In 1927 the Princess Royal was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and in 1952 an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians.

As President of the Girl Guides Association the Princess Royal has always taken a deep interest in the Association. She was enrolled during the First World War by the Chief Guide, Lady Baden-Powell. At the time of her marriage in 1922, the Princess Royal made a donation of £6,000 from the sum subscribed as a wedding gift by the Marys of the Commonwealth to acquire a property in the New Forest for the Girl Guides. In 1950 she opened the thirteenth World Conference of the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts World Association at Oxford.

In 1932 King George V conferred on his daughter the title of Princess Royal. She acted as a Counsellor of State during absences abroad of King George VI and during Queen Elizabeth II's Commonwealth Tour. Her Royal Highness has herself carried out various overseas tours. After the First World War, she was the first member of the Royal Family to cross over to France on an inspection trip. During the early months of 1953 she visited the West Indies and in September 1954 Gibraltar. This last April she spent six days in Germany, visiting British regiments and services in which she holds honorary appointments.

The Princess Royal accepted the position of Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals in 1940 and is also Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment which bears her name, the Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's). She is also Colonel-in-Chief of the West Yorkshire Regiment which is allied to the Royal Montreal Regiment, of the Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) and of the Signal Corps of the United Kingdom and a number of other Commonwealth countries. In February 1955 she became Honorary Colonel of the Barbados Regiment. With the rank of Major-General, the Princess Royal is Controller Commandant of the Women's Royal Army Corps and is Air Chief Commandant of Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service.

The Princess Royal shared her husband's interest in the turf and both breeds and owns race horses. Also among her interests are gardening, forestry and agriculture. After her marriage, the Princess Royal spent much of her life in Yorkshire. She has accepted the freedom of many cities, including York, Harrogate, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds, Inverness and Ripon.

In 1951 the University of Leeds made history by appointing her the first woman Chancellor of any British University. The Princess Royal holds honorary degrees from many Universities, including Leeds, Sheffield, Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews, Manchester and Hull.

The Princess Royal received the Imperial Order of the Crown of India in 1919, the G.C.V.O. in 1937, the C.B.E. in 1927 and is a Dame Grand Cross of the Order of St. John.

The title of Princess Royal bestowed on the eldest daughter of the sovereign was first used during the reign of George II. It is held by only one person at a time.