



2016: A Year in Review

Their Royal Highnesses
The Earl and Countess of Wessex



2016: A YEAR IN REVIEW

2016 has been a year of anniversaries, with many of Their Royal Highnesses' associations celebrating milestones. Her Majesty's 90th Birthday was the key focus, but other birthdays included STOLL at 100 years, MENCAP 70, the National Youth Theatre 60, The University of Bath, which celebrated its' first half-century, The Royal Exchange Theatre 40 and ChildLine and Meningitis Now, which both marked 30 years. The Earl and The Countess of Wessex attended and hosted a number of events throughout the year to commemorate these milestones.

After Her Majesty's birthday, the dominant anniversary for Their Royal Highnesses was the diamond anniversary of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which saw Their Royal Highnesses travel extensively across the UK to promote the Award; meet Award participants; support fundraising endeavours and thank all those who support the charity.

It was also a busy year for overseas visits. In early Spring, Their Royal Highnesses toured the Bahamas and Cayman Islands. In the Bahamas, The Earl and Countess joined celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the Governor General's Youth Award (the title used on the island by The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award). On Little Cayman, The Earl and Countess visited the research centre of the Central Caribbean Marine Institute (CCMI) of which The Earl is Patron. There they were shown a number of projects concerning the intricacies of the coral reef. The visit led The Earl to host a two-day symposium at St James's Palace in June. This was attended by the world's leading marine scientists who discussed the global decline of coral reefs and what needs to be done to aid their recovery.



Meeting Canadian RCMP Officers, Winnipeg Manitoba, June

Their Royal Highnesses were also welcomed to Canada in June for a five-day tour and undertook engagements in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The Countess visited the wildfire-damaged community of Fort McMurray before Their Royal Highnesses attended another anniversary event, a 50th anniversary gala & performance for the Globe Theatre in Regina of which The Earl is Patron.

In September, as Patron of the British Paralympic Association, The Earl attended several days of competition at the Rio de Janeiro Paralympics and witnessed some of the extraordinary successes of our British athletes. As part of the same visit, His Royal Highness toured Uruguay and Chile on behalf of both the International Award and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. One of the highlights was a visit to the British & Commonwealth Fire Company Foundation in Santiago, of which The Earl is an Honorary Member. His Royal Highness saw for the first time - and was most impressed by the Company's 'new' fire station, the foundation stone of which The Earl had laid on his last visit, nine years previously.



CCMI Research Centre staff, Little Cayman, March



The Earl of Wessex continued to focus on charities working in the areas of the development of young people, sport and the arts. As a Trustee of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, His Royal Highness hosted or attended over 60 events on behalf of the charity and conducted ten DofE Gold Award ceremonies in St James's Palace, presenting 2,715 young people with their Award. 2016 also witnessed, in the gardens of Buckingham Palace, the largest Gold Award Ceremony ever held, during which The Duke of Edinburgh, The Earl and The Countess awarded 1,053 young people their Gold Awards. In addition to this, His Royal Highness attended 64 events in eleven countries across the world on behalf of the International Award.

The Countess of Wessex continued to support her military affiliations and diverse portfolio of charitable patronages that work across a wide range of areas including: the protection and welfare of children, avoidable blindness, speech and communication, disability and agriculture. Some highlights included Her Royal Highness hosting a reception at Buckingham Palace to mark the 30th Anniversary of Childline, now part of the NSPCC and delivering a key note speech at the NSPCC Annual General Meeting in October about it's work in the area of the proliferation of indecent images of children online. In 2016 Her Royal Highness also became Patron of The Defence Medical Welfare Service, which provides medical and welfare support to the Armed Forces and their families in the UK and across the world. The Countess became an Ambassador for the Women of the Future Programme that aims to inspire, promote and celebrate the success of young women in the UK. Her Royal Highness continued to Chair the Women's Network Forum, which brings together senior women in industry to share ideas and best practice. The Forum covers topics of mutual interest and relevance, with members taking these learnings back to their own organisations and networks. The Forum, established by The Countess three years ago, will hold a key event in the City of London during 2017.



Opening Girl Guiding new Headquarters

ENGAGEMENTS & ACTIVITIES

During 2016 The Earl and Countess of Wessex attended a total of 538 separate engagements across the UK.





STOLL Christmas concert, December



Dine Catering, North West Tour, February



Rainbows in Scotland, July



Academy players at a DJ session with Manchester City Football club, February



Vanessa Nursery School with the Columbian First Lady, November



Mile End Urban Adventure Base, November



Waverley school, Berkshire, November



DofE Participant at the Wokingham Youth Centre, March



The London College of Fashion, April



THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

The Earl of Wessex is passionate about helping prepare young people for life's challenges. His Royal Highness's programme continued to concentrate on prioritising the work of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in the UK (and the International Award that is available in more than 140 countries around the world). A gold award holder himself, The Earl has been a Trustee of the UK Award since 1988 and dedicates much of his time to promoting and developing the charity in the UK and around the world, with a vision that every young person, from every background, should have access to and be able to take part in the Award and succeed.

During its 60th anniversary, there was an exciting year-long programme of activities and events that celebrated the Award's achievements, to thank the volunteers, supporters and funders, to raise money for the Diamond Appeal and to set out its vision for the future.



THE DIAMOND CHALLENGE

The launch of 'The Diamond Challenge' in January saw both The Earl and The Countess take up their own anniversary projects. His Royal Highness embarked on a Regional Tour of the UK and attended a range of events and celebrations involving young people whose lives have benefitted from the DofE and those who support and run the Award. The Earl enjoyed joining in with a number of supporters' Diamond Challenges, including a 10k hike in the Peak District, rowing with Sea Cadets in Salisbury, first aid training and archery lessons.

Her Royal Highness led two major fundraising projects, which were the focus for much of her work throughout the year. The first involved The Countess of Wessex's Women in Business Committee, of which Her Royal Highness is Chair, who organised a "Diamonds are Forever" Anniversary Gala Dinner in Stoke Park, Buckinghamshire. This was a spectacular evening attended by The Duke of Edinburgh, Their Royal Highnesses and a number of well-known names from the James Bond franchise. The event raised £1million for the DofE which will be used to help fund the delivery of the Award to many more young people, particularly those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Edinburgh



Her Royal Highness' second challenge was slightly more physical, as she committed to cycle the 445 miles from The Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh to Buckingham Palace. The Countess tackled this challenge with extreme determination and took on an extensive training schedule to get her 'bike-ready' for the event. On 19th September, Her Royal Highness set off, and over six and a half days, with a small team of riders and supporters from her military affiliations rode south, arriving at Buckingham Palace to an amazing welcome from the team's supporters, family and friends - and the band of the Scots Guards playing 'Congratulations'! This challenge raised over £308,000 for the Award.

The DofE Diamond Anniversary year also saw a number of other landmark events, which culminated in a Service of Thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey, attended by Her Majesty The Queen, The Duke of Edinburgh and The Earl and Countess of Wessex. This gathering brought together current participants, Award alumni, young leaders and key supporters of the Award in the UK and from around the world, to embrace and celebrate the Award and to reflect on its diversity and its future.

London

THE EARL'S CHARITIES AND PATRONAGES

Whilst The Duke of Edinburgh's Award both nationally and internationally is a focus for much of His Royal Highness's work, The Earl cares strongly about his other affiliations which support the development of young people, sport, the arts and the natural world and regularly attends forums where he can be briefed on current issues, and offer his support and guidance.



THE ARTS

In November, His Royal Highness hosted a reception at Buckingham Palace for the National Youth Theatre, to celebrate its' diamond anniversary. In October, The Earl attended the rehearsals for the National Youth Music Theatre's 40th anniversary performance. His Royal Highness also attended the annual International Youth Arts Festival in July, run by his patronage Creative Youth, which showcases young talent nationally and internationally and provides a platform where young artists can reveal and share their skills and art. His Royal Highness also became Patron of the internationally renowned Birmingham Conservatoire, which develops musical talent and creativity.



YOUNG PEOPLE

The Earl became Chancellor of Bath University in 2013 and presides over several graduation ceremonies each year. In this capacity, His Royal Highness attended a Service of Thanksgiving in Bath Abbey and a celebration at the Guildhall in October, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Royal Charter being presented to the University.

The Earl is also Patron of the Bristol, Clifton and West of England Zoological Society and has a great interest in the conservation work that has long been championed at the zoo. In April, Their Royal Highnesses were accompanied by Lady Louise and Viscount Severn when they visited the zoo to officially open The Mahali Pori Exhibit, part of the zoo's 'Wild Place' Project.





THE COUNTESS' CHARITIES AND PATRONAGES

The Countess of Wessex continued to support her many diverse patronages and charities, through both public engagements and regular briefings and meetings with the senior teams of her organisations. These include charities that support disabled people and those with communication difficulties, avoidable blindness programmes, children's charities, agricultural shows and groups, sporting organisations including England Hockey and British Wheelchair Basketball, and initiatives that support women in the workplace, both now and in the future.

AGRICULTURE

Her Royal Highness is very aware of the many challenges faced by those involved in agriculture and has continued her keen interest in farming and the agricultural world. After hanging up her hat as President of the Cheshire Agricultural Show in 2015, The Countess was appointed President of the New Forest and Hampshire Show 2016. As Patron of the Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations (ASAO), Her Royal Highness attended their 60th Anniversary National Conference in the Autumn. In 2016, Her Royal Highness became Honorary President of LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), a leading organisation promoting and delivering sustainable farming, exchanging knowledge, developing sustainable market opportunities and engaging the public.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Countess has continued to support charities that work with children and young people and the many issues that they face in today's society. As President of the NSPCC, The Countess attended the inaugural NSPCC Childhood Champions Award in the Summer, an event that recognised some of the NSPCC's amazing volunteers and supporters. Her Royal Highness believes that every child has the right to a childhood and to be supported to be all that they can be.



A particular area that Her Royal Highness retains a keen interest in is the NSPCC's work around preventing the online exploitation of young people, particularly in relation to the proliferation of child abuse images.

To support this work, Her Royal Highness revealed her own 'Dream Jar' in conjunction with the release of the BFG film. This was situated outside Buckingham Palace and emotively illustrated The Countess of Wessex's hope that every child is protected from the dangers of the internet and social media.



SPORT

The Countess is proud to be associated with a number of sporting organisations. In February, Her Royal Highness travelled to Meribel in France, to attend the Combined Services Winter Sports Association (CSWSA) Championships as Patron, which was celebrating its 10th Anniversary. In this Olympic year, The Countess also visited the England Hockey headquarters at Bisham Abbey, where she took the opportunity to take part in a training session. After the extraordinary success of the Women's GB Team, The Countess invited the Men's and Women's teams and support staff to her home for a celebratory reception, and subsequently attended a Gala Ball at the Tower of London.



THE ARMED FORCES

Both The Earl and Countess of Wessex are committed to supporting the men and women of Her Majesty's Armed Forces, their families and those that work with them.

In his capacity as Honorary Air Commodore, The Earl visited RAF Waddington in September to present a new Standard to 8 Squadron and to attend a consecration ceremony. The Earl was also the Reviewing Officer at the Passing Out Parade for RAF officers held at RAF Cranwell. As Royal Honorary Colonel of the Royal Wessex Yeomanry, in the Spring, His Royal Highness attended a study day followed by a Regimental dinner in Bovington.

As Royal Colonel, Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, The Countess attended a ceremony to present the Firmin Sword of Peace to 5 Armoured Medical Regiment and in her capacity as Honorary Air Commodore attended an event to mark the 100th Anniversary of her station, RAF Wittering, in Lincolnshire.

In July, Her Royal Highness visited the 5th Battalion The Rifles in Paderborn for an emotional farewell as they prepared to leave Germany and relocate to Bulford in Wiltshire. The Countess spent time with the soldiers and their families as well as with officials from the town of Paderborn.

Her Royal Highness also attended the annual Countess of Wessex Cup, a competition between Her Royal Highness's military affiliations. This year it was hosted by RAF Wittering and saw the teams tested both in their technical and physical skills across a number of challenges.



INTERNATIONAL

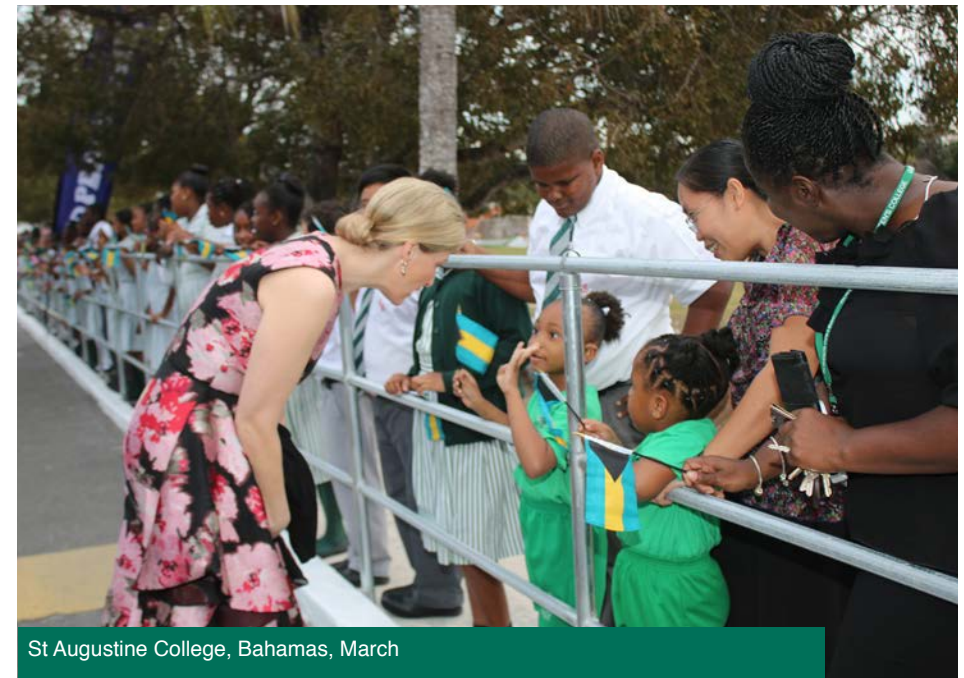
The Earl and Countess travel extensively each year as ambassadors for Her Majesty The Queen, the British Government and the charities they represent.



Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada, Winnipeg Manitoba, June



British and Commonwealth Fire Company Foundation, Santiago, September



St Augustine College, Bahamas, March



Centre of creative learning, Latvia, November



Tourism and Creative Industries School, November



Gold Award Ceremony, Sap Paolo, Brazil, September



A Youth Exhibition and Fair, Ghana, May



Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, South Africa, May



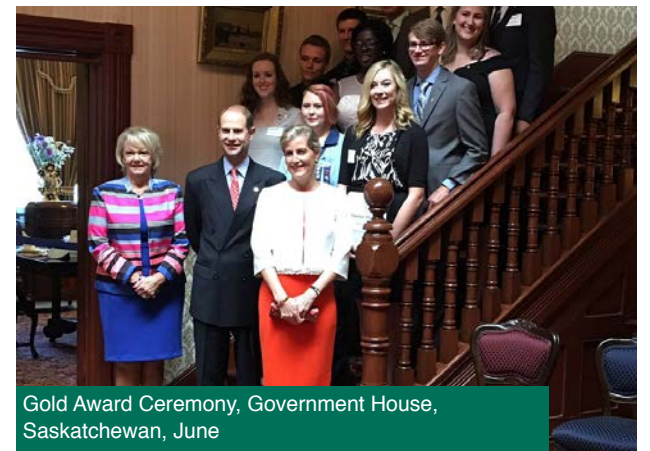
Sir John Ive KBE at Apple Headquarters, California, October



Inspecting Cadets of The Royal Bahamas Defence Force, Nassau, March



St Augustine College, Abbacco, Bahamas, March



Gold Award Ceremony, Government House, Saskatchewan, June

A man in a blue and black jacket is smiling and holding a large yellow tarp. He is surrounded by other people, including a woman in a blue jacket and a man in a dark suit with a gold chain. The background shows a wooded area with trees and a green banner with a white crest and the text 'Allen Pool'.

LOOKING FORWARD

Whilst 2016 was a special year on many levels, 2017 will be far from quiet. Their Royal Highnesses will continue to build on the momentum of 2016 with a range of activities and engagements across the UK and overseas.

Some of the visits planned include The Earl travelling to Bermuda for the 50th Anniversary of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award in the country and Her Royal Highness travelling to Malawi as Vice Patron of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust to promote work within The Commonwealth to eliminate avoidable blindness and empower a new generation of young leaders.

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