

The Portrait of King Charles III



The portrait of the King when Prince of Wales is reproduced in this issue of *Graya* with the kind permission of the artist, June Mendoza AO, OBE, RP, ROI, one of the world's foremost portrait painters. Now located in the Small Pension Room at the Inn, the portrait was commissioned by the Benchers in 1978 and completed in 1979. Recently, Miss Mendoza disclosed that one of the sittings she had with the young Prince occurred on his 30th birthday, which would have been on 14th November 1978. Intriguingly, the painting sets the scene in the Small Pension Room, with the Prince seated in the Queen's Chair with his back to the mantelpiece with the wall above the mantel, where the painting hangs today, left blank as if waiting for the painting to be placed there. This piece of tour de l'oeil is nicely done.

The Queen's Chair, or Chair of State, now located on the staircase leading from the Benchers' hallway, was specially made for the late Queen's visit to the Inn in 1956. It is modelled on a 'monumental chair' that once belonged to Archbishop Juxon, a member of the Inn, which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Juxon became Archbishop of Canterbury on the accession of Charles II in 1660 and subsequently presided over the Coronation of the King. The monumental chair

was made by John Casbert, the Royal Upholsterer, for use by Juxon at the Coronation. At the same time a footstool was also produced emphasising the importance of the Chair. It would seem Juxon removed the chair and footstool to his home after the ceremony as both remained in the Juxon family until 1794 when they were sold.

To complete the well chosen iconography, there are two silver standing cups shown at either end of the mantelpiece in the painting. The maker's mark is 'WH', possibly for Wolfgang Howzer. These cups are often used as Loving Cups at the Inn from which the Hippocras on Grand Nights is drunk. One Cup bears the London hallmark for 1669 and was the gift of Justinian Pagitt on his Call to the Bar and immediate admittance as 'an associate of Ye Benche'. Later another member of the Inn, John Plomer, left £20 in his will so that the Society might purchase a piece of plate. The Benchers ordered that the same silversmith be instructed to make another standing cup so that it matched that given by Mr Pagitt. This was done and explains the hallmark of 'London 1672' for the matching cup. Incidentally, these magnificent cups are the oldest secular plate in the Inn's possession.



The Queen Consort talking to Master Mark Waller in front of the portrait in the Small Pension Room, when (as Duchess of Cornwall) she too became a Royal Bencher in 2012.

Clearly much thought has been given to this composition. It seeks to remind us of the Carolean Age (1660–1685) and the new age to come that we have so recently embarked on. Both the Queen's Chair and the silver shown in the portrait have close connections with the reign of Charles II and in the forefront of the picture is the new King, Charles III, in evening dress. His Majesty the King is the senior Royal Bencher at Gray's Inn, having been elected in February 1975.

***Timothy Shuttleworth,
Master of Pictures***