

**KING CHARLES III CORONATION TREE PLANTING CEREMONY
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
ARBORETUM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WEDNESDAY 28 JUNE 2023**

Good afternoon and welcome to this historic tree planting ceremony to mark the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea and waters.

As we know, the then Prince Charles became King upon the death of Her Majesty, which was announced by Buckingham Palace on 8 September 2022. I attended his Coronation at Westminster Abbey on 6 May, representing our State and people of Tasmania. Don accompanied me at other events in the days before and after the Coronation. We were also honoured to have a private Audience with King Charles on 16 May at Buckingham Palace. At this Audience, we discussed Tasmania and topics of mutual interest, including our Adaptive Re-use of Stables Project. I presented as gifts to The King, Government House Tasmania Estate honey and gin, and a hand-crafted Tasmanian devil-motif wooden box in various timber veneers. His Majesty gifted me a bottle of organic gin made at Highgrove and a portrait.

For those of you who may be interested, I have written a short account of the Coronation and the other events, posted on our Government House website.

May I now tell you a little about this tree being planted today.

The official Coronation Invitation of King Charles and Queen Camilla is beautifully decorated as a spring wildflower meadow, with the 'Green Man' prominent – a figure from ancient British folklore symbolising spring and rebirth and therefore equally symbolising the new reign.

The Green Man is crowned and garlanded with leaves of oak, ivy and hawthorn.

Bordering the invitation are lily of the valley, cornflowers, wild strawberries, dog roses, bluebells, and a sprig of rosemary for remembrance. The flowers appear in groupings of three, signifying the King becoming Charles III – the third monarch of this name.

This specific concentration on botanic growth led us to consider planting an oak – not a traditional oak, but a cork oak. This is unusual because it's evergreen.

The cork oak (*Quercus suber*) is a medium-sized tree growing to up 20m tall.

It is a graceful shade tree with beautifully textured covering in the form of a thick, corky bark. Harvesting of the cork does not harm the tree and a new layer of cork regrows, making it a renewable resource.

The cork can be harvested as cork for sealing that most precious of beverages, sparkling wine, aka champagne. In 25 years' time, this, the King's oak tree will be mature enough to enable us to harvest cork for our Government House Tasmania sparkling wines, to be planted in due course.

Cork oak trees can live as long as 250 years. This evergreen oak variety has also been chosen for its hardiness and drought resilience.

Cork oak also provides its ecosystem with several benefits. It helps prevent soil erosion from wind and water and increases the absorption rate of rainfall. A harvested cork oak stores up to five times more carbon than an unharvested tree, because the tree utilises additional carbon in the regeneration of its bark.

Grey bark is also fire-retardant.

Many of you may have seen the spectacular cork oak in the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. A pride of the Gardens. It is one of oldest of its kind in this region of the world, it is truly of international heritage value. That tree was planted more than 150 years ago.

The planting of this cork oak marks the start of more plantings to come here on the Eastern Arboretum. Government House Tasmania, like King Charles III, is committed to improving the environment by increasing canopy cover.

May I recognise our Estate Gardens Manager, Tara Edmondson, and thank her for her suggestion to plant a cork oak, and for securing this sapling. Tara and her colleagues do exceptional work maintaining and creatively enhancing these gardens and grounds.

This, then, is an historic occasion of significance in our magnificent gardens. This planting adds to the success of Royal plantings –

- 1954, for Her Majesty The Queen, an English oak
- 1963, for Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh, two blue gums
- 1974, for then Prince Charles, a Dutch medlar (near the Japanese Pond)
- 1977, for Her Majesty, a silver birch
- 1988, for Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh, a Huon pine and a myrtle
- 1989, for Princess Anne, a blackwood
- And in 1994, for then Prince Charles, a blue gum (in the Pinetum near the South Terrace).

We also have numerous plantings by other royals and dignitaries, each having its own plaque.

May I conclude, and mention that the Coronation Invitation is on display in the Main Hallway – when we go indoors for tea shortly.

May I now do the honours.

[HE shovels soil]

[Applause. Photographs]

[All move to the Drawing Room for tea]