

MEETING PRINCE CHARLES

I was intrigued! The phone call from MDNSW asked if I was free to come to Sydney on the afternoon of 12th November. I checked my diary (I'm retired, so I'm busier than I've ever been in my life!) and I said "Yes, I could." "Wonderful!" was the reply, "but I can't tell you any more about it at the moment."

Of course, things become more mysterious a few days later when another phone call said that "it was definitely happening, and you'll be really excited! "More details would be revealed in a week or so." Hmmmmmm!

Well, all was made clear when, a week or so later, a mysteriously official envelope arrived in the mail. Inside was an invitation; "His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley, Governor of New South Wales and Mrs Linda Hurley request the company of Mr and Mrs P Bates at a garden reception in the presence of their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall on Thursday 12th November 2015 at Government House, Sydney."

Wow! So Lucy and I had been nominated by MDNSW to meet Prince Charles and Lady Camilla!

Now, normally we are shorts-and-t-shirt people but I recalled that I had a suit somewhere in the back of the wardrobe. I went in search of it, found it, and sent it off to the dry-cleaners. Being aware that thongs, no matter how new, wouldn't cut it, I polished up my best shoes. The information that came with the invitation suggested that a hat to protect one from the sun would be a good idea so, fondly laying aside

my old gardening hat, I went out and bought something more suitable.

On the day in question we got up early, put on our good clothes and drove the 160 kilometres from Newcastle to Sydney

in a state of excitement. We arrived at the gates of Government House in time to chat with Philip Hojgaard-Olsen from MDNSW and a few of the other guests, but before long we noticed that there were a lot of helicopters hovering overhead. Then the official motorcade whisked down the drive and in through the gates.

Those of us in wheelchairs and the other guests followed, and we found our allocated tables in the beautiful gardens of Government House. It was a sparkling Sydney spring day, and the view over the harbour was delightful. Each table was allocated a host to help with the issues of security and protocol and to put us at our ease.

After a local Elder gave the Welcome to Country, the Governor made a short speech of welcome to the royal couple and we all returned to our tables where drinks and nibbles were served, and waited to see what would happen next. Our host, Daisy, had warned us that Their Highnesses would only have to time to visit every second table, and then only for less than a minute.

I was surprised and excited, then, when one of the attendants asked me if I would like to "come this way to meet the Prince." You know that feeling that you get when someone you've seen on TV or in the papers is suddenly they're in front of you? That's how I felt. We only chatted for a minute or so, but my impression of the Prince is that he is a person who is genuinely interested in the world around him, and in the people he meets.

It was one of those days that stay with you forever, and Lucy and I would like to thank the wonderful people at Muscular Dystrophy NSW for making it possible.

Philip Bates MDNSW Member



The Gardens of Government House



Phil & Lucy meet Prince Charles