

= Prince John of the United Kingdom =

Prince John of the United Kingdom (John Charles Francis ; 12 July 1905 ? 18 January 1919) was the fifth son and youngest of the six children born to King George V and his wife , Queen Mary . At the time of John 's birth , his father was the Prince of Wales and heir apparent to the reigning monarch of the United Kingdom , Edward VII . In 1910 , George succeeded to the throne upon Edward 's death and John became the fifth in line of succession .

In 1909 , John was discovered to have epilepsy and was also believed to have some form of intellectual disability and possibly autism . As his condition deteriorated , he was sent to live at Sandringham House and was kept away from the public eye . There , he was cared for by his governess , " Lala " Bill , and befriended local children whom his mother had gathered to be his playmates . Prince John died at Sandringham in 1919 , following a severe seizure , and was buried at nearby St Mary Magdalene Church . His illness was released to the wider public only after his death .

Prince John 's alleged seclusion has subsequently been brought forward as evidence for the inhumanity of the royal family . However , records show that the Prince was in some ways given favourable treatment by his parents , in comparison to his siblings , and contrary to the belief that he was hidden from the public from an early age , John for most of his life was a " fully @-@ fledged member of the family " , appearing frequently in public until after his eleventh birthday .

= = Biography = =

= = = Birth = = =

Prince John was born at York Cottage on the Sandringham Estate on 12 July 1905 , at 3 : 05 a.m. He was the youngest child and fifth son of George Frederick , Prince of Wales and Mary , Princess of Wales (née Mary of Teck) . He was named John despite that name 's unlucky associations for the royal family , but was informally known as " Johnny " . At the time of his birth , he was sixth in the line of succession to the throne , behind his father and four older brothers . As a grandchild of the reigning British monarch in the male line , and a son of the Prince of Wales , he was formally styled His Royal Highness Prince John of Wales from birth .

John was christened on 3 August in the Church of St Mary Magdalene at Sandringham , the Reverend Canon John Neale Dalton officiating . His godparents were King Carlos I of Portugal (his third cousin once removed , for whom the Prince of Wales stood proxy) , the Duke of Sparta (his first cousin once removed) , Prince Carl of Denmark (his uncle by marriage and first cousin once removed , for whom the Prince of Wales stood proxy) , Prince John of Schleswig @-@ Holstein @-@ Sonderburg @-@ Glücksburg (his great @-@ great @-@ uncle , for whom the Prince of Wales stood proxy) , Alexander Duff , 1st Duke of Fife (his uncle by marriage , for whom the Prince of Wales stood proxy) , the Duchess of Sparta (his first cousin once removed , for whom Princess Victoria of the United Kingdom stood proxy) , and Princess Alexander of Teck (his first cousin once removed , for whom Princess Victoria stood proxy) .

= = = Early life and illness = = =

Much of John 's early life was spent at Sandringham with his siblings ? ? Prince Edward (known as David to the royal family) , Prince Albert , Princess Mary , Prince Henry and Prince George ? ? under the care of their nanny Charlotte " Lala " Bill . Though a strict disciplinarian , the Prince of Wales was nonetheless affectionate toward his children ; the Princess of Wales was close to her children and encouraged them to confide in her . In 1909 , John 's great @-@ aunt , the Dowager Empress of Russia wrote to her son , Emperor Nicholas II , that " George 's children are very nice ... The little ones , George and Johnny are both charming and very amusing ... " Princess Alexander of Teck described John as " very quaint and one evening when Uncle George returned from stalking

he bent over Aunt May and kissed her , and they heard Johnny soliloquize , ' She kissed Papa , ugly old man ! ' " George once said to U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt that " all [his] children [were] obedient , except John " ? ? apparently because John alone , among George 's children , escaped punishment from their father .

Though a " large and handsome " baby , by his fourth birthday John had become " winsome " and " painfully slow " . That same year he suffered his first epileptic seizure and showed signs of a disability , probably autism . When his father succeeded as George V upon Edward VII 's death in 1910 , John was awarded the title " His Royal Highness The Prince John " . John did not attend his parents ' coronation on 22 June 1911 , as this was considered too risky for his health ; nonetheless , cynics said that the family feared their reputation would be damaged by any incident involving him . Although John was deemed not " presentable to the outside world , " George nonetheless showed an interest in him , offering him " kindness and affection " .

During his time at Sandring - ham , John exhibited repetitive behaviour , which can be a sign of autism ; this is possibly a reason for his constant misbehaviour : " he simply didn 't under - stand he needed to [behave] . " Nonetheless there was hope his seizures might lessen with time ? ? . Contrary to the belief that he was hidden from the public from an early age , John for most of his life was a " fully @-@ fledged member of the family " , appearing frequently in public until after his eleventh birthday .

In 1912 Prince George , who was nearest in age to John and his closest sibling , began St. Peter 's Court Preparatory School at Broadstairs . The following summer , The Times reported that John would not attend Broadstairs the following term , and that George and Mary had not decided whether to send John to school at all . After the outbreak of World War I , John rarely saw his parents , who were often away on official duties , and his siblings , who were either at boarding school or in the military . John slowly disappeared from the public eye and no official portraits of him were commissioned after 1913 .

= = = Wood Farm = = =

In 1916 , as his seizures became more frequent and severe , John was sent to live at Wood Farm , with Bill having charge of his care . Though John maintained an interest in the world around him and was capable of coherent thought and expression , with his lack of educational progress the last of his tutors was dismissed and his formal education ended . Physicians warned that he would likely not reach adulthood .

At Wood Farm , John became " a satellite with his own little household on an outlying farm on the Sandring - ham estate ... Guests at Balmoral remember him during the Great War as tall and muscular , but always a distant figure glimpsed from afar in the woods , escorted by his own retainers . " His grandmother Queen Alexandra maintained a garden at Sandring - ham House especially for him , and this became " one of the great pleasures of [John] 's life . "

After the summer of 1916 , John was rarely seen outside the Sandring - ham Estate and passed solely into Bill 's care . After Queen Alexandra wrote that " [John] is very proud of his house but is longing for a companion , " Queen Mary broke from royal practice by having local children brought in to be playmates for John . One of these was Winifred Thomas , a young girl from Halifax who had been sent to live with her aunt and uncle (who had charge of the royal stables at Sandring - ham) in hopes her asthma would improve . John had known Winifred years earlier , prior to the outbreak of World War I. Now they became close , taking nature walks together and working in Queen Alexandra 's garden . John also played with his elder siblings when they visited : once , when his two eldest brothers came to visit John , the Prince of Wales (formerly Prince Edward) " took him for a run in a kind of a push @-@ cart , and they both disappeared from view . "

= = = Death = = =

As John 's seizures intensified (Bill later wrote) " we [dared] not let him be with his brothers and sister , because it upsets them so much , with the attacks getting so bad and coming so often . "

Biographer Denis Judd believes that " [John] ' s seclusion and ' abnormality ' must have been disturbing to his brothers and sister " , as he had been " a friendly , outgoing little boy , much loved by his brothers and sister , a sort of mascot for the family " . He spent Christmas Day 1918 with his family at Sandring - ham House but was driven back to Wood Farm at night .

On 18 January 1919 , after a severe seizure , John died in his sleep at Wood Farm at 5 : 30 p.m. It is now known , due to modern autopsy techniques , that people with epilepsy may die of it , with no other illness or injury contributing to death nor to the etiology of the condition .

Queen Mary wrote in her diary that the news was " a great shock , tho ' for the poor little boy ' s restless soul , death came as a great relief . [She] broke the news to George and [they] motored down to Wood Farm . Found poor Lala very resigned but heartbroken . Little Johnnie looked very peaceful lying there . "

Mary later wrote to Emily Alcock , an old friend , that " for [John] it is a great relief , as his malady was becoming worse as he grew older , & he has thus been spared much suffering . I cannot say how grateful we feel to God for having taken him in such a peaceful way , he just slept quietly into his heavenly home , no pain no struggle , just peace for the poor little troubled spirit which had been a great anxiety to us for many years , ever since he was four years old . " She went on to add that " the first break in the family circle is hard to bear , but people have been so kind & sympathetic & this has helped us much . " George described his son ' s death simply as " the greatest mercy possible " .

On 20 January the Daily Mirror said that " when the Prince passed away his face bore an angelic smile " ; its report also made the first public mention of John ' s epilepsy . His funeral was the following day at St Mary Magdalene Church , John Neale Dalton officiating . Queen Mary wrote that " Canon Dalton & Dr Brownhill [John ' s physician] conducted the service which was awfully sad and touching . Many of our own people and the villagers were present . We thanked all Johnnie ' s servants who have been so good and faithful to him . " Though nominally private , the funeral was attended by Sandring - ham House staff ; " every single person on the estate went and stood around the gates and his grave was absolutely covered in flowers . " Queen Alexandra wrote to Queen Mary that " now [their] two darling Johnnies lie side by side " She was referring to her youngest son and John ' s uncle , Prince Alexander John of Wales , who had died in 1871 one day after birth , and who was also buried at St Mary Magdalene .

= = Legacy = =

Prince Edward had hardly known John and consequently , saw his death as " little more than a regrettable nuisance . " He wrote to his mistress of the time that " [he had] told [her] all about that little brother , and how he was an epileptic . [John] ' s been practically shut up for the last two years anyhow , so no one has ever seen him except the family , and then only once or twice a year . This poor boy had become more of an animal than anything else . " He also wrote an insensitive letter to Queen Mary , which has since been lost . She did not reply , but he felt compelled to write her an apology , in which he stated that " [he felt] like such a cold hearted and unsympathetic swine for writing all that [he] did ... No one can realize more than [she] how poor little Johnnie meant to [him] who hardly knew him ... " He went on to state " I feel so much for you , darling Mama , who was his mother . " In her final mention of John in her diary , Queen Mary wrote simply " miss the dear child very much indeed . " She gave Winifred Thomas a number of John ' s books , which she had inscribed , " In memory of our dear little Prince . " " Lala " Bill always kept a portrait of John above her mantelpiece , together with a letter from him which read " nanny , I love you . "

In recent years , Prince John ' s seclusion has been brought forward as evidence towards the " heartlessness " of the Windsor family , According to a 2008 Channel 4 documentary , much of the existing information about John is " based on hearsay and rumour , precisely because so few details of his life and his problems have ever been disclosed , " and the British Epileptic Association has stated , " There was nothing unusual in what [the King and Queen] did . At that time , people with epilepsy were put apart from the rest of the community . They were often put in epilepsy colonies or mental institutions . It was thought to be a form of mental illness , " adding that it was another twenty

years before the idea that epileptics should not be locked away began to take hold . The royal family believed that these afflictions flowed through their blood , which was believed to be purer than the blood of a commoner , and , as such , wished to hide as much as possible in regard to John 's illness . Others have suggested that John was sent to Wood Farm to give him the best environment possible under the " austere " conditions of World War I. Undoubtedly the royal family were " frightened and ashamed of John 's illness " , and his life is " usually portrayed either as tragedy or conspiracy " . At the time that Edward VIII (formerly Prince Edward) abdicated , an attempt was made to discredit Prince Albert , who had succeeded as George VI , by suggesting that he was subject to falling fits , like his brother . In 1998 , after the discovery of two volumes of family photographs , John was briefly brought to public attention .

= = Popular culture = =

In 2003 , The Lost Prince , a biographical film about John 's life , directed by Stephen Poliakoff , was released .

In the 2007 film My Boy Jack , the death of Prince John is referred to in the conversation between George V and Rudyard Kipling at the end of the story .

In 2008 , a documentary about John , titled Prince John : The Windsors ' Tragic Secret , was released by Channel 4 .

John is also briefly mentioned in the 2010 film The King 's Speech , which depicts Prince Albert and his struggle to overcome a childhood stammer . Lionel Logue , portrayed by Geoffrey Rush , asks the future George VI of the United Kingdom , played by Colin Firth , to describe his relationship with his youngest brother , called Johnny . George VI replies that Johnny was a " sweet boy " , leading the audience to believe that they had a good relationship , though when he died at thirteen , he was hidden from view , a common occurrence for diseased children in those days .

= = Titles , styles , honours and arms = =

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12 July 1905 ? 6 May 1910 : His Royal Highness Prince John of Wales

6 May 1910 ? 18 January 1919 : His Royal Highness The Prince John

= = Ancestry = =

= = = Endnotes = = =