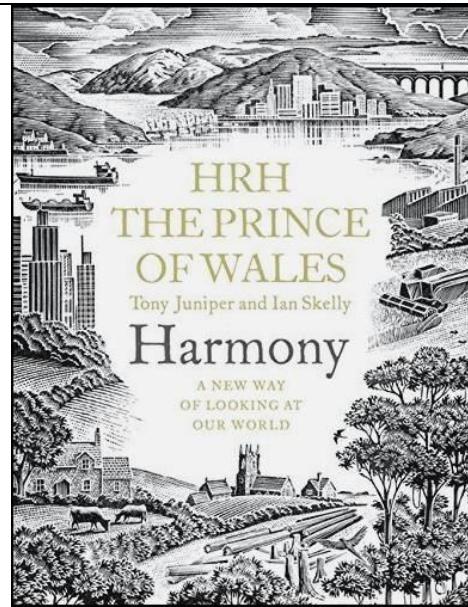


Harmony

The Book that predicted the Environmental Emergency

Reviewed by
Bonnie Folkins



More than a decade before today's environmental crisis, in his passionately written book, *Harmony* (2010), Prince Charles issued a warning about the future. It was a call to arms to save the planet from ecological devastation. As far back as 30 years ago, he started discussions about a climate emergency by predicting events that are common place now, yet he was not taken seriously at that time.

Perhaps his enlightenment took hold at the remarkable Gordonstoun School in the United Kingdom – a place of learning where his father, Prince Philip, was also an alumnus. The philosophy of the originator, Kurt Hahn, encouraged teamwork, promoted intense interactions with the natural world, and took inspiration from a set of moral principles called the Seven Laws of Salem. Hahn established a system wherein students were graded, not with marks, but on individual achievements involving ethics and their sense of right and wrong. Above all, Hahn's primary goal was to encourage kindness. He believed that compassion was the most significant sentiment to which a person could aspire. Every evening, students were encouraged to take fifteen minutes of silence for the purpose of reviewing their daily achievements.

HRH Prince Charles and his father, Prince Philip.

In *Harmony* the Prince warned about the great juggernaut of industrialization that articulates a world view that ignores Nature. He expressed concern that when industrialised techniques replace traditional practices, something very precious is lost.

"We carry on doing this as if we are immune to the consequences of this disturbing age of disconnection."

The result, he wrote, was that humanity was systematically severing ourselves from Nature.

"Nothing is sacred any more."



This is precisely the kind of education through enlightenment and preparation that is needed to create a human being worthy of the modern world. In his essays, Prince Charles convinces us that with fervent cooperation, we may, with a generosity of spirit, find a way to save the planet.

As we navigate today's heartless world of social networking trying to grasp the lies and deceptions of devious politicians or trying to make sense of the alarming events of climate change, attention to the subject is often offloaded to young prophets like Greta Thunberg of Sweden. In 2021, during Italy's Youth4Climate summit, she accused politicians of failing to act. The last thirty years of promises, she stated, were nothing but a lot of "blah, blah, blah".

By coincidence, around the time that *Harmony* appeared, I witnessed firsthand the desertification of Mongolia. As a result, when I began to learn about other environmental catastrophes, I took them very seriously. Following the failure of Gorbachev's Perestroika in the 1980s, in 1991, the Soviet Union abandoned this historic, nomadic culture. To survive, the people had no choice other than to increase the output of one of their most important money-makers – Cashmere goats. By taking advantage of this luxury commodity, globalization of the industry followed.

Overnight, garments that might have retailed for \$300 were sold for one-fifth of that price. An unsuspecting cost to human and animal welfare was the startling fact that Cashmere goats eat, not only the grass but the roots and all. This simple fact has created vast swaths of desert which are dangerous to traverse. These wastelands were, in turn, invaded by a type of steppe mouse that burrows deep underground chambers. When a horse and rider arrive unbeknownst, they are taken down instantly in a fall that can break the animal's leg. How could anyone imagine that such a simple chain of events could have such a disastrous outcome?



During one of her equestrian journeys in Mongolia Bonnie witnessed how cashmere goats were destroying the fragile environment.

"A shepherd called Nassa joined us. He had never seen a foreigner, so he stared at me incessantly. Nassa told me that he watched over his family's six hundred sheep and goats. How they found enough grass was a mystery and it went without saying that such enormous herds were the reason for the catastrophic desertification I was witnessing," recalled Bonnie.

Photo copyrighted by Bonnie Folkins.

Another hazard of desertification is that countless ancestral pasturelands are no longer sustainable for animal fodder. I have witnessed massive herds of starving animals being pushed to still fertile places. The resulting chaos from emergency migrations brings on acute trauma, suffering, and even death.

Through the use of classical farming techniques, Prince Charles proposes how responsible farming through biodiversity can (and must) eventually create sustainable situations.

In less dramatic circumstances, everyday occurrences are happening right before our eyes – events that might otherwise be overlooked if they are not examined carefully. I live in rural New Brunswick, Canada, beside a vast potato field that is operated by an environmentally conscious farmer. The owner does not use chemical pesticides and he rotates his crops in three-year cycles. Not more than ten miles (as the crow flies) across the Northumberland Strait to Prince Edward Island, fish are dying in what were once pristine streams. Pesticides from potato farms there are seeping into the waters of one of the most beautiful places in North America.

It is precisely situations like these that Prince Charles has made it his mission to defend. In this deeply sensitive book, he uncovers the ancient history between man and the environment and how, through the millennium, they have lived harmoniously. He speaks directly to our “intuition” – that inner voice that commands everyone to answer to a sense of morality. Einstein called it: that “sacred gift” - that link between body and soul, that link between the particular and the universal.

The Prince wrote, “*It is a fact of history that humanity will never wake up to the dangers until the crisis actually hits us between the eyes. Until then, vested interests stave off the warnings by shooting the messenger or destroying the sanctuary that holds the wisdom of the heart, either by suffocating it with ugliness of all kinds, or reducing the argument to the level of a tabloid travesty – anything rather than face the darkness that overwhelms the soul. At such a crucial moment in our history it is vital that we reignite the lamp and illuminate what has lain in the shadows.*”

He reminded humanity that in all sacred traditions the circle is symbolic of the unbroken unity of Heaven. The word planet means wanderer, he said, and we have to face our primary duty, which is to safeguard the Earth.



Prince Charles's inspirational guidelines elegantly describe many formulas for embracing the all-encompassing issues that we are facing. The book is complete with relevant photographs and illustrations; even the paper it is printed on is beautiful to the touch. One could say it is a blend of a small encyclopaedia and a prayer book. Geometric symbols, ancient philosophies, mathematical sequences . . . every possible reference to protecting the natural world has been considered.

“Although we stand on the brink of considerable ecological upheaval that may spell catastrophe, there are still opportunities to forge a new way forward. This could be a hugely rich period of opportunity. This renaissance could take place during the twenty-first century – if we draw on the ancient knowledge of Nature and on the timeless wisdom that today survives in isolated pockets. The renaissance that is starting to unfold is a flower that needs nurturing and is still a delicate thing,” Prince Charles urged.



Long Rider Living Treasure Bonnie Folkins

In 2007 Bonnie was the first equestrian explorer to venture into the remote Altai Mountains of western Mongolia in search of an ancient tribe of mounted nomads. Folkins discovered the Kazakhs, descendants of nomads who had fled the cultural genocide unleashed in the 1930s by Soviet dictator, Josef Stalin. Not only were the Kazakhs still mounted, they had also retained their ancient tribal custom of hunting wolves in winter with the help of specially trained golden eagles. The renowned photographer created astonishing images which formed a pioneering ethnic collection known as *Riding with the Eagles*.

Subsequently Bonnie made nine equestrian journeys in Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Armenia.

	Bonnie made contributions to all three-volumes of <i>The Encyclopaedia of Equestrian Exploration</i> , most notably in reference to that spiritual awakening known among Long Riders as “the long quiet.”
--	---

To learn more visit:

HRH Prince Charles' Foundation – Respecting the Past, Building the Future
<https://princes-foundation.org/>

Bonnie Folkins Photography
<http://bonniefolkins-photography.com/>

Riding With the Eagle Hunters
<http://www.thelongridersguild.com/stories/eagles.htm>

The Encyclopaedia of Equestrian Exploration
<http://www.thelongridersguild.com/Books/eee.htm>