

Recycling the remains of Prince Charles' breakfast! Chris Hudson 2/ 4/2008



ONE IS pleased with your green machine – it turns one's fry-up into compost! A Macclesfield business has won royal approval for a new generation of composting machines it has invented, and the owner got to see the contents of Prince Charles' bin – which included the remains of a full English breakfast. Boffin Simon Webb, of Accelerated Compost, in Gawsworth, met the heir to the throne – surrounded by high security – at Sandringham, in Norfolk.

At the regal rendezvous, Simon explained how his invention works and peeked inside the royal composter Prince Charles rents from them. He said: "There was lots of toast, tomatoes and beans, quite possibly the remains of a fry-up, but nothing that anyone of us wouldn't have. There were no Champagne corks or anything like that." Dad-of-one Simon, 36, of Tabley Close, Macclesfield, was surprised to meet the Prince as he had been asked simply to explain his machine to a 'group' of people – one of whom turned out to be the future King of England!

They chatted for 45 minutes about environmental issues, after which, Simon said he would love to offer Prince Charles a job. He said: "He was so knowledgeable about composting and all the legislation surrounding it – if I could have employed him, I would have done."

Charles then asked to take Simon's card, which had the whole royal party falling about with laughter as the Prince hardly ever makes such a request. A Clarence House spokeswoman could not confirm or deny what the Prince of Wales has for his breakfast as "it is not something we consider to be part of his public life", but added the Prince takes a close interest in environmentally-friendly measures.

It's not the first time Simon – who says he is often mistaken for the former Blue singer Simon Webbe – has met the green-fingered heir as the pair shook hands when he was eight years old on a trip to Scotland. Former automotive engineering student Simon and his dad John, 79, came up with the idea for the compost machine, which uses natural bacteria and woodchip to break down waste, in 1998, patented it in 2003, and have had a machine rented out to Sandringham since March last year.

After meeting Simon last June, the Prince said he wanted four other royal residences fitted out with composters: Highgrove, Balmoral, Birkhall and his mum's house – that's Buckingham Palace to you and me.

Henbury-born Simon's company has met with red-tape from the Soil Association over the royal estates being able to keep their organic status in using the composters, but is now on the cusp of getting the Royal Seal of Approval. Simon said: "It was a very great privilege to install one of our composters at Sandringham and I was delighted. "We have Prince Charles' approval, but we don't have the Royal Seal of Approval just yet."