



Celebrating a Lifetime of Service

The Society adds its voice to the celebratory cheer for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Her Majesty the Queen was proclaimed Queen, aged 25, on 6 February 1952, the day after the death of her father King George VI. Her coronation took place the following year on 2 June 1953. She is the longest serving British monarch of all time; her great great grandmother Queen Victoria, who reigned for 64 years, is runner-up.

Only one monarch in recorded history has reigned for more than 70 years – Louis XIV of France. But he succeeded to the throne aged five, which some would regard as cheating.

On her accession, Harry Truman was US president, Stalin still held the Soviet Union in an iron grip, General Franco was in power in Spain, Salazar in Portugal and Mao in China, and British troops were in the Korean War.

The United Nations comprised 57 members (today there are 193). Countries have come (Ukraine, Bangladesh, Eritrea and many other African states), others have gone

(the two Germanys, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Zanzibar). Saddam Hussein once boasted he had outlasted two other world leaders – Margaret Thatcher and George Bush senior – but he's gone too.

It has been a time of unprecedented change both within Britain and internationally. Throughout it all, the Queen has been an unwavering symbol of stability and continuity.

Just how heavy a burden she inherited is reflected in the coronation oath, administered by the Archbishop of Canterbury:

"Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the Peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon, and of your Possessions and the other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, according to their respective laws and customs?"

*"I solemnly promise so to do."
"Will you to your power cause Law and Justice, in Mercy, to be executed in all your judgements?"
"I will."*

For the naysayers these are mere words, but for the Queen, with her overriding sense of duty, this oath was taken in deadly earnest.

But how do you fulfil this remit as a constitutional monarch, when you don't own the levers of power?

The answer is in the example you set, which is something the Queen has been doing all her life, working relentlessly for the national good.

Our cover photo shows the Queen as an Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) driver in 1945, starting her long association with the Armed Forces. She was the first female member of the Royal Family to be an active full-time participant in the Services, getting stuck in with everyone else.

And the example continues. Last

year, notwithstanding the death of Prince Philip, she carried on working and this year, aged 95, she continued with 'light duties' after contracting Covid in February.

She brings a whole new meaning to the term 'working from home', for she never stops, wherever she is.

Take a look at her schedule – it is available online. Her week beginning 7 March included meeting the Prime Minister of Canada, receiving the First Sea Lord on his appointment as Chief of Defence Staff, and virtual audiences by video link with four separate Ambassadors.

She has been an anchor, the personification of moderation, discretion, and respect for others; a stoic and an optimist, well illustrated in her 2021 Christmas address not long after the death of Prince Philip: "And for me and my family, even with one familiar laugh missing this year, there will be joy in Christmas."

The Queen has been a visible bringer together of people. Nelson Mandela affectionately referred to her as "my friend Elizabeth".

As the most travelled monarch of all time, she has reached out to her people and has been, as Head of the Commonwealth, its strongest supporter, well understanding its potential as a force for good.

This was reflected in her Commonwealth Day message on 14 March 2022: "In these testing times, it is my hope that you can

draw strength and inspiration from what we share as we work together towards a healthy, sustainable and prosperous future for us all."

These days, people often need a bit of 'me-time'. But the Queen does not get 'me-time'; her task is relentless.

Many years ago, a friend of mine was, as a young subaltern, Captain of the Guard at Holyrood Palace. The Queen was in residence, but there was no official function, so he was invited to dinner. And because there was no official function, he was the only guest, so he sat next to her.

He acknowledged that it was a chance for her to talk to one of her subjects, but he was astonished that she was entertaining him, a complete stranger, when she did not have to and at the expense of a little respite. It was a demonstration of how seriously she took her duty and of her bond with her Armed Forces.

Of course, it is not just the Armed Forces. The Queen is patron of 600 charities and the arts, is interested in them and learns about them all.

At times of great change, it is also necessary to be able to adapt, for even a symbol of continuity must do that or become a fossil, but she has been alive to this from the very beginning.

"We are very lucky as a nation to be served by such a woman"

L-R: Queen Elizabeth through the ages: waving from the Palace balcony after the coronation, 1953; visiting Queensland, Australia, 1970; meeting the people of Washington, UK, 1977; Trooping the Colour, 1984; celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Marine Society and Sea Cadets, 2006; enjoying a visit to London, 2008

It was the Queen who insisted her coronation be televised, against the advice of others. This was new, but the right call, perfectly fusing the old with the new. The celebrations of her Platinum Jubilee this year will also very much reflect the times.

Lastly, she has shown herself to be very human; a countrywoman by disposition, at home amongst the heather in Scotland, thrilling at the excitement of the races, indulging her dogs, relishing the exhilaration of galloping a horse and soaking up the excitement of the Derby.

We are very lucky as a nation to be served by such a woman.

The Platinum Jubilee celebrations, which started on 6 February, culminate on a special four-day bank holiday weekend from Thursday 2 June to Sunday 5 June. Planned events include the Trooping of the Colour, lighting of beacons, a thanksgiving Service at St Paul's, the Epsom Derby, a Platinum Party of live music from Buckingham Palace, Jubilee street parties and a Jubilee pageant.

God Save the Queen. 🇬🇧