

**Friday
9 September 2022**

**Volume 719
No. 45**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Friday 9 September 2022

House of Commons

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The House met at Midday

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr Speaker: I invite the House to rise and observe a minute's silence in memory of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The House, led by the Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, observed a minute's silence in memory of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Speaker's Statement

Mr Speaker: Before I call the Prime Minister, it is with the greatest sadness that I rise to say a few words in tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

Almost all of us in the House have experienced no other monarch on this country's throne but Her late Majesty. Indeed, only a score or so Members in this House will have already been born, let alone be able to recall a time, when she was not the Queen. She is wedded in our minds with the Crown and all it stands for.

After her accession in February 1952, she first came to the Palace of Westminster to open a Session of Parliament in November 1952, when Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister and Speaker William Morrison was in the Chair—almost 70 years ago. Fifty-seven complete Sessions of Parliament have passed since then and, as she was here to open all but three of them, as parliamentarians we have celebrated with her the silver, golden and diamond jubilees and, of course, marked her platinum jubilee this year in which the lampstandards were unveiled in New Palace Yard.

In this place, her reign saw 10 different Speakers occupy the Chair. During her reign, there were 18 general elections, and I am sure that the Prime Minister will remind us of how many of her predecessors she welcomed

too, and always, I am sure, with quiet wisdom. As the longest serving monarch this country has known, she will have been assured of a notable entry in our history books even were it not for the magnificence with which she undertook the role as Queen. And what a magnificent service that entailed: not just as Head of the Nation, but Head of the Commonwealth, Head of the Armed forces and Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

Over her reign, she saw unprecedented social, cultural and technological change. Through it all, she was the most conscientious, the most dutiful of monarchs. While she understood the inescapable nature of duty, which sometimes must have weighed upon her heavily, she also delighted in carrying it out, for she was the most devoted monarch. As well as Queen, she was a wife, a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother—roles she carried out with the same sense of vocation as well as human kindness as that of Queen. Her life was not without unhappiness and troubles, but our memories of her will be filled with that image of gently smiling dedication that showed throughout her life. Indeed, while this is a time of very considerable sadness, those memories of a noble, gracious lady who devoted her life to her family, the United Kingdom and those nations around the world which she served as Queen, will bring us some consolation and joy.

My deepest sympathies are with His Majesty the King and other members of the royal family to whom I commend all our sincere condolences and support at this very, very sad time.

We are meeting today for tributes to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth. I would like to inform the House that we will sit today until approximately 10 pm for tributes. At approximately 6 pm the House will be suspended while His Majesty the King makes his broadcast to the nation. Members present will be able to watch that broadcast on screens in the Chamber. We will then resume our proceedings to continue tributes.

The House will then sit again tomorrow at 1 pm. The first business will be oath-taking by a small number of senior Members. Members to be invited to take the oath tomorrow are being contacted by my office. All other Members will have an opportunity to take the oath when the House returns. After oath-taking tomorrow, tributes will be continued. The House is expected to sit until approximately 10 pm. The House is not expected to sit on Sunday.

Tributes to Her Late Majesty The Queen

Mr Speaker: I now call the Prime Minister.

12.10 pm

The Prime Minister (Elizabeth Truss): In the hours since last night's shocking news, we have witnessed the most heartfelt outpouring of grief at the loss of Her late Majesty the Queen. Crowds have gathered. Flags have been lowered to half-mast. Tributes have been sent from every continent around the world. On the death of her father, King George VI, Winston Churchill said the news had,

"stilled the clatter and traffic of twentieth-century life in many lands".

Now, 70 years later, in the tumult of the 21st century, life has paused again.

Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known. She was the rock on which modern Britain was built. She came to the throne aged just 25, in a country that was emerging from the shadow of war; she bequeaths a modern, dynamic nation that has grown and flourished under her reign. The United Kingdom is the great country it is today because of her. The Commonwealth is the family of nations it is today because of her. She was devoted to the Union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. She served 15 countries as Head of State, and she loved them all.

Her words of wisdom gave us strength in the most testing times. During the darkest moments of the pandemic, she gave us hope that we would meet again. She knew this generation of Britons would be as strong as any. As we meet today, we remember the pledge she made on her 21st birthday to dedicate her life to service. The whole House will agree: never has such a promise been so completely fulfilled.

Her devotion to duty remains an example to us all. She carried out thousands of engagements, she took a red box every day, she gave her assent to countless pieces of legislation and she was at the heart of our national life for seven decades. As the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, she drew on her deep faith. She was the nation's greatest diplomat. Her visits to post-apartheid South Africa and to the Republic of Ireland showed a unique ability to transcend difference and heal division. In total, she visited well over 100 countries. She met more people than any other monarch in our history.

She gave counsel to Prime Ministers and Ministers across Government. I have personally greatly valued her wise advice. Only last October, I witnessed first hand how she charmed the world's leading investors at Windsor Castle. She was always so proud of Britain, and always embodied the spirit of our great country. She remained determined to carry out her duties even at the age of 96. It was just three days ago, at Balmoral, that she invited me to form a Government and become her 15th Prime Minister. Again, she generously shared with me her deep experience of government, even in those last days.

Everyone who met her will remember the moment. They will speak of it for the rest of their lives. Even for those who never met her, Her late Majesty's image is an icon for what Britain stands for as a nation, on our

coins, on our stamps, and in portraits around the world. Her legacy will endure through the countless people she met, the global history she witnessed, and the lives that she touched. She was loved and admired by people across the United Kingdom and across the world.

One of the reasons for that affection was her sheer humanity. She reinvented monarchy for the modern age. She was a champion of freedom and democracy around the world. She was dignified but not distant. She was willing to have fun, whether on a mission with 007, or having tea with Paddington Bear. She brought the monarchy into people's lives and into people's homes.

During her first televised Christmas message in 1957, she said:

"Today we need a special kind of courage...so that we can show the world that we are not afraid of the future."

We need that courage now. In an instant yesterday, our lives changed forever. Today, we show the world that we do not fear what lies ahead. We send our deepest sympathy to all members of the royal family. We pay tribute to our late Queen, and we offer loyal service to our new King.

His Majesty King Charles III bears an awesome responsibility that he now carries for all of us. I was grateful to speak to His Majesty last night and offer my condolences. Even as he mourns, his sense of duty and service is clear. He has already made a profound contribution through his work on conservation and education, and his tireless diplomacy. We owe him our loyalty and devotion.

The British people, the Commonwealth and all of us in this House will support him as he takes our country forward to a new era of hope and progress: our new Carolean age. The Crown endures, our nation endures, and in that spirit, I say God save the King. [HON. MEMBERS: "God save the King."]

Mr Speaker: I now call the Leader of the Opposition.

12.17 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): Today, our country, our people, this House, are united in mourning. Queen Elizabeth II was this great country's greatest monarch, and for the vast majority of us, it feels impossible to imagine a Britain without her. All our thoughts are with her beloved family—our royal family—at this moment of profound grief. This is a deep and private loss for them, yet it is one we all share, because Queen Elizabeth created a special personal relationship with us all. That relationship was built on the attributes that defined her reign: her total commitment to service and duty, and her deep devotion to the country, the Commonwealth and the people she loved. In return for that, we loved her, and it is because of that great shared love that we grieve today.

For the 70 glorious years of her reign, our Queen was at the heart of this nation's life. She did not simply reign over us; she lived alongside us, she shared in our hopes and our fears, our joy and our pain, our good times and our bad. Our Queen played a crucial role as the thread between the history we cherish and the present we own; a reminder that our generational battle against the evil of fascism, or the emergence of a new Britain out of the rubble of the second world war, do not belong only to the past, but are the inheritance of each and every one of us; a reminder that the creativity, the hard work, the

enterprise that has always defined this nation is as abundant now as it ever was; a reminder that the prospect of a better future still burns brightly.

Never was this link more important than when our country was plunged into lockdown at the start of the pandemic. The Queen's simple message—that we would see family again, that we would see friends again, that we would be together again—gave people strength and courage when they needed it most. But it was not simply the message that allowed a shaken nation to draw upon those reserves; it was the fact that she was the messenger. Covid closed the front doors of every home in the country. It made our lives smaller and more remote, but she was able to reach beyond that, to reassure us and to steel us. At the time we were most alone, at a time when we had been driven apart, she held the nation close in a way no one else could have done. For that, we say “Thank you”.

On the occasion of the Queen's silver jubilee in 1977, Philip Larkin wrote of her reign:

“In times when nothing stood
But worsened, or grew strange,
There was one constant good:
She did not change.”

It feels like we are once again in a moment in our history where, as Larkin put it, things are growing strange. Where everything is spinning, a nation requires a still point. When times are difficult, it requires comfort. And when direction is hard to find, it requires leadership. The loss of our Queen robs this country of its stillest point, its greatest comfort, at precisely the time we need those things most.

But our Queen's commitment to us—her life of public service—was underpinned by one crucial understanding: that the country she came to symbolise is bigger than any one individual or any one institution. It is the sum total of all our history and all our endeavours, and it will endure. The late Queen would have wanted us to redouble our efforts, to turn our collar up and face the storm, to carry on. Most of all, she would want us to remember that it is in these moments that we must pull together.

This House is a place where ideas and ideals are debated. Of course that leads to passionate disagreement. Of course temperatures can run high. But we all do it in pursuit of something greater. We do it because we believe we can make this great country and its people greater still. At this moment of uncertainty, where our country feels caught between a past it cannot relive and a future yet to be revealed, we must always remember one of the great lessons of our Queen's reign: that we are always better when we rise above the petty, the trivial and the day-to-day to focus on the things that really matter—the things that unite us—rather than those which divide us. Our Elizabethan age may now be over, but her legacy will live on forever. And as the children of that era, it falls upon us to take that legacy forward; to show the same love of country, the love of one another, as she did; to show empathy and compassion, as she did; and to get Britain through this dark night and bring it into the dawn, as she did.

We join together today not just to say goodbye to our Queen, to share in our mourning, but to say something else important: “God save the King.” Because as one era ends, so another begins. King Charles III has been a

devoted servant of this country his entire life. He has been a powerful voice for fairness and understood the importance of the environment long before many others. As he ascends to his new role, with the Queen Consort by his side, the whole House—indeed, the whole country—will join today to wish him a long, happy and successful reign.

The emotions that we see across the nation today are echoed across the Commonwealth, to which our Queen was so committed; in the Church, to which our Queen was so devoted; and in the armed forces, which she led and her family served. Around the world, people will be united in mourning for her passing, and united in celebrating her life. We have already seen beautiful tributes flow from across the world. It would be impossible to capture them all here, but each one is a reminder of the esteem in which she was held, of what she achieved on behalf of her country and of the shared values that we treasure. The reason our loss feels so profound is not just because she stood at the head of our country for 70 years, but because in spirit she stood among us. As we move forward, as we forge a new path, as we build towards a better future, she will always be with us. For all she gave us, and all that she will continue to give us, we say thank you. May our Queen rest in peace. God save the King.

Mr Speaker: I now call the Father of the House, Sir Peter Bottomley.

12.25 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): My constituents will wish me briefly to record their love and respect for, and gratitude to, Her late Majesty. We can give continuing life to her values and virtues, kindness, aspiration, perseverance and pride. We thank her; we miss her; and we should say what she would wish: God save the King.

Mr Speaker: I call the leader of the SNP, Ian Blackford.

12.26 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): It is of course with great sadness that we unite to offer our prayers, focus our sorrow and gather our collective thoughts on the passing of Her Majesty the Queen. On behalf of the Scottish National party, I offer my condolences as we hold the Queen and her family in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time. The grief and mourning that reverberates around the Chamber and across the world will be all the more acute for the King and members of the royal family. Only they can understand their deep, personal loss of a close family member. People across society who have similarly lost loved ones will understand the pain that they must feel, as we ensure our heartfelt condolences are with them today.

Over the coming days, people up and down these islands will seek to come to terms, in their own private way, with the loss of one of the true constants in all our lives. In that regard, my thoughts are also with the Prime Minister, who is just days into her term in office, and having to come to terms with the enormity of the loss of the Head of State, and show the leadership that is now required in her position. We cannot help but dwell on the late Queen, who, right to the end, fulfilled her duties by appointing the new Prime Minister.

[Ian Blackford]

Many will feel this as a deeply personal loss, for the Queen's continuous and abiding presence, and the leadership that she has shown over seven decades, will be the enduring marker of her remarkable tenure as our Head of State. Her Majesty the Queen was Head of State for longer than most of us have been alive, and the majority of us have never known public life without the Queen at the helm. For many, she has been a steady hand guiding the ship, and a perpetual symbol of stability. Fifteen Prime Ministers and five First Ministers of Scotland have benefited from her institutional knowledge and, of course, her wise counsel. As the figurehead of the Commonwealth, she was a unifying force, recognised the world over. She visited at least 117 countries, and was committed to celebrating diverse values and cultures around the globe. That was all born out of a duty to serve.

During the Queen's reign, the world changed immeasurably. Through the good times and the bad times, through war and peace, through boom and bust, through advances in technology and communication and the dawn of the internet age, to many she was a guiding light, ever present, and she bore witness to the evolution of these islands into the modern era. She was a thread of continuity running through the fabric of the Commonwealth, at once tying societies to our shared histories and making new histories.

Like many others in the Chamber, I was fortunate enough to meet the Queen on a number of occasions and was always struck by the strength, the intellect, the modesty, the humility and often the humour with which she approached her royal duties. While I always met her in a professional context as monarch, I am struck by just how many people across Scotland, and indeed across the United Kingdom, had a first-hand encounter with the Queen. Whether they had been invited to her Holyrood garden parties or had the pleasure to meet her in the many hundreds of events, walkabouts or official openings, including that at our Scottish Parliament, or whether she had taken them wholly by surprise with chance encounters in the countryside or villages near Balmoral, people the length and breadth of Scotland have their own tales of their individual meetings with the Queen. She was a monarch who reigned with compassion and integrity, and established a deep connection with the public.

The affection the Queen had for Scotland and that Scotland had for the Queen cannot be underestimated. On the Queen's first visit to Scotland following her coronation, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland said to her:

"Today you and I are Scotland, greeting with all that we have to offer of love and duty our gracious young Queen."

We can today look back on those words and say that for as long as Her Majesty reigned, both she and Scotland held true to those values of love and duty for one another. Speaking when she reconvened our Scottish Parliament in 1999, Her Majesty set out the obligation on Members to

"set lasting standards; of vision and purpose, of debate and discussion, not just for our own generation but for future generations".

It is clear that Members across the Scottish Parliament, and I trust in this place, from all walks of political life have moved forward with that sense of vision and purpose in mind.

There is a deeply held sense of responsibility across political parties to govern for the betterment of future generations, in our case to uphold the values of the Scottish Parliament which are inscribed on the ceremonial mace—wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity—the values that set the aspirations for a modern Scotland, the values that were so often embodied by Her Majesty herself. In what was, sadly, her final ever address to the Scottish Parliament, her love of Scotland and its people was clear when she said:

"It is the people that make a place and there are few places where this is truer than it is in Scotland".

The relationship between Scotland and the Queen was one of shared admiration. Indeed, while she was everyone's Queen, for many in Scotland she was Elizabeth Queen of Scots. Her Majesty's roots in Scotland run deep. She was descended from the royal house of Stewart on both sides of her family and, of course, her mother was from Glamis in Angus. It is clear that these family ties gave way to a great and enduring affection. Scotland was a place that was truly held dear to her not only in an official capacity but in a private capacity as well.

It is well known that Balmoral, with its beautiful and atmospheric scenery, was the Queen's favourite home. Balmoral was a place where she was able to enjoy freedom, peace and the ability to indulge her love of the great outdoors, whether that was walking with her dogs, riding with horses, hosting picnics and barbecues, or from behind the wheel of her Land Rover. It is clear that Balmoral has been a place of peace and sanctuary for her throughout her whole life, and perhaps particularly so following the death of her husband, life companion and love, His Royal Highness Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh. It is therefore perhaps fitting that she has met her final peace at Balmoral, a place where she found such enjoyment and comfort. As someone of demonstrably strong faith, she will now have enduring peace with herself and, of course, to be reunited with Prince Philip.

Her Majesty's was a life of grace and wisdom defined by its service to the public and by the lives that she touched. Her legacy and her enduring presence will live on. God bless the Queen; may she rest in peace. God bless the King.

12.33 pm

Boris Johnson (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con): I hope the House will not mind if I begin with a personal confession. A few months ago, the BBC came to see me to talk about Her Majesty the Queen. We sat down and the cameras started rolling, and they requested that I should talk about her in the past tense. I am afraid that I simply choked up and could not go on. I am really not easily moved to tears, but I was so overcome with sadness that I had to ask them to go away.

I know that, today, there are countless people in this country and around the world who have experienced the same sudden access of unexpected emotion, and I think millions of us are trying to understand why we are feeling this deep, personal and almost familial sense of loss. Perhaps it is partly that she has always been there:

a changeless human reference point in British life; the person who—all the surveys say—appears most often in our dreams; so unvarying in her pole-star radiance that we have perhaps been lulled into thinking that she might be in some way eternal.

But I think our shock is keener today because we are coming to understand, in her death, the full magnitude of what she did for us all. Think what we asked of that 25-year-old woman all those years ago: to be the person so globally trusted that her image should be on every unit of our currency, every postage stamp; the person in whose name all justice is dispensed in this country, every law passed, to whom every Minister of the Crown swears allegiance; and for whom every member of our armed services is pledged, if necessary, to lay down their lives.

Think what we asked of her in that moment: not just to be the living embodiment, in her DNA, of the history, continuity and unity of this country, but to be the figurehead of our entire system—the keystone in the vast arch of the British state, a role that only she could fulfil because, in the brilliant and durable bargain of the constitutional monarchy, only she could be trusted to be above any party political or commercial interest and to incarnate, impartially, the very concept and essence of the nation.

Think what we asked of her, and think what she gave. She showed the world not just how to reign over a people; she showed the world how to give, how to love and how to serve. As we look back at that vast arc of service, its sheer duration is almost impossible to take in. She was the last living person in British public life to have served in uniform in the second world war. She was the first female member of the royal family in a thousand years to serve full time in the armed forces.

That impulse to do her duty carried her right through into her 10th decade to the very moment in Balmoral—as my right hon. Friend said—only three days ago, when she saw off her 14th Prime Minister and welcomed her 15th. I can tell you, in that audience she was as radiant and as knowledgeable and as fascinated by politics as ever I can remember, and as wise in her advice as anyone I know, if not wiser. Over that extraordinary span of public service, with her naturally retentive and inquiring mind, I think—and doubtless many of the 15 would agree—that she became the greatest statesman and diplomat of all.

She knew instinctively how to cheer up the nation, how to lead a celebration. I remember her innocent joy more than 10 years ago, after the opening ceremony of the London Olympics, when I told her that the leader of a friendly middle eastern country seemed actually to believe that she had jumped out of a helicopter in a pink dress and parachuted into the stadium. *[Laughter.]* I remember her equal pleasure on being told, just a few weeks ago, that she had been a smash hit in her performance with Paddington Bear.

Perhaps more importantly, she knew how to keep us going when times were toughest. In 1940, when this country and this democracy faced the real possibility of extinction, she gave a broadcast, aged only 14, that was intended to reassure the children of Britain. She said then:

“We know, every one of us, that in the end all will be well”.

She was right. And she was right again in the darkest days of the covid pandemic when she came on our screens and told us that we would meet again—and we did.

I know I speak for other ex-Prime Ministers when I say that she helped to comfort and guide us as well as the nation. She had the patience and the sense of history to see that troubles come and go, and that disasters are seldom as bad as they seem. It was that indomitability, that humour, that work ethic and that sense of history that, together, made her Elizabeth the Great.

When I call her that, I should add one final quality, of course: her humility—her single-bar-electric-fire, Tupperware-using refusal to be grand. I can tell the House, as a direct eyewitness, that unlike us politicians, with our outriders and our armour-plated convoys, she drove herself in her own car, with no detectives and no bodyguard, bouncing at alarming speed over the Scottish landscape, to the total amazement of the ramblers and tourists we encountered.

It is that indomitable spirit with which she created the modern constitutional monarchy—an institution so strong, so happy and so well understood, not just in this country but in the Commonwealth and around the world, that the succession has already seamlessly taken place. I believe she would regard it as her own highest achievement that her son, Charles III, will clearly and amply follow her own extraordinary standards of duty and service. The fact that today we can say with such confidence, “God save the King” is a tribute to him but, above all, to Elizabeth the Great, who worked so hard for the good of her country not just now but for generations to come. That is why we mourn her so deeply, and it is in the depths of our grief that we understand why we loved her so much.

Mr Speaker: We now come to the Mother of the House, Harriet Harman.

12.42 pm

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker. What an excellent speech from the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), which I am sure will have resonated in every Member of this House and, indeed, everyone in this country. It was a brilliant speech.

I am grateful for the opportunity to pay my tribute to the Queen, on my own behalf but also on behalf of my constituents, particularly those who, coming from Commonwealth countries in Africa and the Caribbean, held the Queen in such high regard.

We are a constitutional monarchy, and for we MPs, the Queen was ever present in the interwoven relationship between the monarch and her Parliament. She underpinned our democratic system for over 70 years—underpinning it but never intervening in it. She was always salient but never meddled. She avoided controversy not by staying in the background—far from it; she performed her role to the utmost—but by respecting the boundaries. She carried out her duties and gave us her full commitment for us to carry out ours. When many denigrated, she always respected and supported Parliament. We should be very grateful for that.

[Ms Harriet Harman]

Between her Ministers—not just Prime Ministers—there was regular contact. After Labour won the election in 1997, I went up to the Palace, where she appointed me, like the other new Secretaries of State, to the Privy Council and bestowed on me the seals of office. They are actual seals, which are given to you and you take back to your Department to be locked in a safe. When, just a year later, I was sacked and the seals were taken out of the safe and back to Buckingham Palace, my diary was empty and my phone stopped ringing, my office was astonished to get a call from the Palace. No one else wanted to have anything to do with me, but the Queen wanted to see me. I was invited to take tea with the Queen, for her to thank me for my service as Secretary of State.

My point is that the relationship between our Queen and Parliament, and our Queen and Government, was never just on paper, but was always active and always encouraging. She radiated British values of duty, patriotism, internationalism, charity and service. But while she embodied British values, she never intervened in politics, and that is constitutional alchemy—nothing less.

It is evident that everyone, even those who do not agree with the hereditary principle of the monarchy, cannot but marvel at her personal qualities; and I want to marvel at how she could do all this flawlessly, not just over so many decades, but as a woman starting her reign in what was emphatically then a man's world. We have to remember what attitudes were at the time. The order of the day was that men were in charge and women were subservient. The man was head of the household, and the role of a woman was to get married, have his children and support him. In the 1950s, when she was crowned, I was a child, and I remember my mother warning me that people thought men knew more than women; that men's views were valuable, while women's were to be disregarded.

It was in that atmosphere that she stepped up, as a 25-year-old married woman with two children, to take her place at the head of this nation and play a huge role on the world stage. What determination and courage that must have taken. The Prime Ministers she dealt with were mostly men, and mostly twice her age. Things were very different then; huge change has taken place during her reign. Things were very different when, six years ago, she threw open Buckingham Palace for us to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the BBC's "Woman's Hour", and to celebrate how much women had achieved.

As Sir Tony Blair said, she was the matriarch of this nation: a matriarch for us on the world stage, and a matriarch too at home, in her own family. As well as being our monarch, she was the mother of four children and had many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and it is to her family that I extend my deepest sympathies for their loss and condolences for their grief, which we all share.

12.47 pm

Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con): It is with great sadness that I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, on my own behalf and on behalf of my Maidenhead constituents.

Yesterday was a day that we all knew would come some time, but that in our heart of hearts we hoped never would. But as we mourn a beloved monarch, we must always remember that she was a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother, and my thoughts and prayers are with King Charles III and the whole of the royal family. I also remember the close members of her royal household.

Queen Elizabeth II was quite simply the most remarkable person I have ever met. I am sometimes asked who, among all the world leaders I met, was the most impressive. I have no hesitation in saying that of all the Heads of State and Government, the most impressive person I met was Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She gave a lifetime of service, as she promised to do when she was 21. Her selfless devotion to duty was an inspiration and example to us all. She was respected and loved, not just here in the United Kingdom and in her other realms in the Commonwealth, but across the world. That love, respect and admiration was born not out of her position, but because of the person she was: a woman of dignity and grace, of compassion and warmth, of mischief and joy, of wisdom and experience, and of a deep understanding of her people.

Like so many, until last evening I had never known another monarch. She was a constant throughout our lives, always there for us, uniting us at times of difficulty—and, as others have said, most recently during covid, when she gave us hope that we would once more come together. Her passing marks a generational change, not just because of the length of her service, but because of what she lived through. When we marked the 75th anniversary of the D-day landings in 2019, she was with the world leaders not just as Queen, but as someone who had worn uniform during the second world war—an experience that, quite apart from anything else, had taught her how to strip an engine.

The Queen was always interested in people. When she walked into a room, the faces of those present were lit up, and her magnificent smile would calm nerves and put people at ease. As I said on her platinum jubilee, I saw that at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2018, when there was a reception at Windsor before a lunch. The leaders were gathered and talking among themselves, and I knew that Her Majesty was going to join the reception, but they did not. The minute she walked into the room, the sense of love and respect was palpable, and they all turned and wanted to speak to her. They loved her and she loved the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth today is a significant part of her legacy.

I also saw that quality on other occasions, including on what was one of the last—if not the last—appearances she made in public, when she came to open Thames Hospice in my Maidenhead constituency in July. The moment she walked through the door, the atmosphere in the room changed; you felt the love and respect of the people there for her. As she spoke to staff and patients, she exuded a warmth and humanity that put people at ease. She was Queen, but she embodied us. Across the nations of the world and for so many people, meeting Queen Elizabeth simply made their day, and for many will be the memory of their life.

Of course, for those of us who had the honour to serve as one of her Prime Ministers, those meetings were more frequent, with the weekly audiences. These

were not meetings with a high and mighty monarch, but a conversation with a woman of experience, knowledge and immense wisdom. They were also the one meeting I went to that I knew would not be briefed out to the media. [*Laughter.*] What made those audiences so special was the understanding the Queen had of issues, which came from the work she put into her red boxes, combined with her years of experience. She knew many of the world leaders—in some cases, she had known their fathers—and she was a wise and adroit judge of people.

The conversations at the audiences were special, but so were weekends at Balmoral, where the Queen wanted all her guests to enjoy themselves. She was a thoughtful hostess. She would take an interest in which books were put in your room and she did not always expect to be the centre of attention; she was quite happy sometimes to sit, playing her form of patience, while others were mingling around her, chatting to each other. My husband tells of the time he had a dream: he dreamt that he was sitting in the back of a Range Rover, being driven around the Balmoral estate; and the driver was Her Majesty the Queen and the passenger seat was occupied by his wife, the Prime Minister. And then he woke up and realised it was reality!

Her Majesty loved the countryside. She was down to earth and a woman of common sense. I remember one picnic at Balmoral that was taking place in one of the bothies on the estate. The hampers came from the castle, and we all mucked in to put the food and drink out on the table. I picked up some cheese, put it on a plate and was transferring it to the table. The cheese fell on the floor. I had a split-second decision to make: I picked up the cheese, put it on a plate and put the plate on the table. I turned round to see that my every move had been watched very carefully by Her Majesty the Queen. I looked at her, she looked at me and she just smiled. And the cheese remained on the table. [*Laughter.*]

This is indeed a sad day, but it is also a day of celebration for a life well spent in the service of others. There have been many words of tribute and superlatives used to describe Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, but these are not hype; they are entirely justified. She was our longest-serving monarch. She was respected around the world. She united our nation in times of trouble. She joined in our celebrations with joy and a mischievous smile. She gave an example to us all of faith, of service, of duty, of dignity and of decency. She was remarkable, and I doubt we will ever see her like again. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

12.55 pm

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): It is a real pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), and I congratulate her on her lovely, heartwarming speech.

The Liberal Democrats join Members on both sides of the House in expressing our deepest condolences on the passing of Her Majesty the Queen. We are mourning a profound loss. The Queen was a formidable monarch who faithfully served our country all her life, and she was loved the world over. She represented not only duty and courage but warmth and compassion, and she was a living reminder of our collective past, of the greatest generation and their sacrifices for our freedom.

For many people, myself included, Her Majesty was an ever-fixed mark in our lives. As the world changed around us and politicians came and went, she was our nation's constant. In challenging times, she was always a source of calm and comfort. She tied our nations together, embodying an unwavering pride in our country. She showed us that patriotism is not defined by political allegiance and reminded us of the many things that bind us all together, even when it does not always feel that way.

We saw this so vividly during the platinum jubilee celebrations in June. I am proud to represent the oldest royal borough in England, Kingston upon Thames, and our jubilee street parties certainly lived up to that status. It was truly wonderful to see such an outpouring of affection by people across Kingston from all walks of life. Schoolchildren baked jubilee cakes, neighbours shared bunting and choirs sang hymns of praise. It was incredibly fitting that, after so long kept apart by covid, it was a celebration of Her Majesty's reign that brought our communities back together so joyfully, just as the whole country is united today, so sadly, in grief.

The deep mourning across the country now, just like the celebration of her jubilee a few months ago, comes not from a sense of duty but from genuine and heartfelt affection, love and admiration for Her Majesty. It is not because we were her subjects but because she was truly our Queen. What she meant to us is perhaps best summed up by a phrase on so many people's lips over the past 24 hours: "I cannot imagine our country without her."

For almost everyone in our country, she had been there our whole life, at times of national grief and national jubilation. She had never not been there for us, so it is hard to accept that she is gone and hard to see how we go on without her, but we will. Our great United Kingdom has a great future because the Queen's spirit of strength, grace and resolve lives on in her people.

One of the greatest privileges of being a Member of this House was having the chance to meet Her Majesty, such as when she visited Kingston on the occasion of her golden jubilee or when I was deeply privileged to sit next to her at lunch at Windsor Castle. I was initially confused by a silver cylinder beside her place setting. I wondered to myself what treasures it might hold. I had my suspicions when, as dessert was served, her beloved corgis were let in and nestled themselves around her feet. The Queen lifted up the lid of the cylinder, plucked out some digestive biscuits, and began sneaking them to her grateful dogs. Whenever I met her, I was struck by her warmth, her wisdom and her humour, and I am looking forward to hearing similar stories from hon. and right hon. Members from across the House as they give glimpses of the wonderful person beneath the crown.

Her Majesty will be remembered with honour as a monarch who guided our country out of the shadow of a terrible war, who helmed us calmly through troubled waters and brought us safely into a new millennium. She will be remembered so fondly as the monarch who leapt from a helicopter with James Bond and who showed Paddington where she kept her marmalade sandwiches. For the royal family, she will be remembered simply as a beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Our thoughts, prayers and condolences are with them all as they bear this terrible loss.

[Ed Davey]

After a lifetime of dedicated and tireless service to our country and our Commonwealth, Her Majesty has gone to her eternal rest. May God rest her soul and may God save the King.

1.1 pm

Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): So much has already been said and I do not intend to repeat it much, but I do want to say that it is a sad day for all of us. It is tragic news, bringing to an end a remarkable career spanning 70 years, endless Prime Ministers and endless Leaders of the Opposition, too.

For those 70 years, Her Majesty carried out her duties with charm, humility—not often mentioned, but real humility—and also endless humour. She was quite remarkable in a way. She learned that from someone whom we have not mentioned today, her father, who in his own way was someone who never expected to be the monarch and who suffered a very significant problem, a speech impediment, yet showed her that it was possible to rise above the challenge and to deliver one's service to one's country at an incredible time. There is no question but that she learned that service and duty at the knees of her father as he overcame his own difficulties and put his country and their service first. That is something that is quite often forgotten.

A couple of things come to mind. So often, we have taken Her Majesty for granted. We expect her to be there. In the same way, whenever anything good or bad happens in our country, the crowds gather at Buckingham Palace. Whether she was there or not, they gathered; it was almost as though they could touch the railings and draw from them some sort of succour, support or mystical help. There they were again, last night, in pouring rain outside Buckingham Palace.

In all of that, we often forgot that she was also a human being with her own family issues and problems. I remember particularly that period when two of her sons faced marriage break-ups that were widely reported in the newspapers and the media, with everybody speculating in public about all that was going on. I wonder how many in this House could ever have borne something like that—such a tragedy for their mother—in such a public domain. Then, to top it all, Windsor Castle burned down, a place she loved deeply and felt responsible for. In a way, nobody seemed to take her into consideration until, approaching a speech—with a cold, interestingly—she said that that year had been her *annus horribilis*. I think that the public stopped. We all paused and realised that we had forgotten that we actually owed her as much duty and service as she had shown us without complaint. I thought that that was a remarkable moment, when the country came back from where it was to recognise that duty and service.

The other moment was when Diana, Princess of Wales, tragically died in that terrible car accident. Again, everybody gathered outside Buckingham Palace and demanded that the Queen should come. It got more and more shrill, with the newspapers banging on about how she had to come back. But there she was in Balmoral, trying to do what almost any grandmother would want to do—to put her arms around her grandchildren, comfort them and protect them from what she knew

was going to descend upon them. Finally, when she came down, I came to the realisation that, actually, it was not that the British public were angry that she was not there; it was that they needed her there to be able to show their own emotion, because she was the focus for all of that. When she came, everybody cheered and applauded—she was there, and they could now grieve properly, because she was the focus for that grief.

Of course, we all have anecdotes. When I ceased being leader of the Conservative party—it happens quite a lot, so I think the Queen was pretty used to it—she kindly asked me to take leave of her officially. I thought that was pretty kind—nobody else wanted me to, so it was decent of her to do that. When I came to the palace, and I was ushered into her small personal sitting room, I was struck by two or three things. One was the two-bar electric fire, which had around it a very strange piece of cardboard in the shape of flames and coloured with yellow and red crayons—I suspect by some somebody in the palace. It surrounded the fire, and I thought that was peculiarly dangerous; notwithstanding that, I am sure it had a purpose. The other thing was the Tupperware radio sitting next to her. I had not seen one since my parents smashed their last one. She very sweetly asked me how I was, being clearly sympathetic about what had happened. I just shrugged and said, “Well, Ma’am, nobody died and I’m still here,” whereupon she roared with laughter. The funny thing was that she then paused and looked at me, not sure whether I had actually made a joke. I laughed too, and then she laughed again—whether at me or with me, I could not figure out. That was something to relish.

The other anecdote I want to share with the House is slightly different. I was in a Privy Council meeting, and for some reason we were offered drinks at the end. It did not happen very often, so I took full advantage and ordered a whisky. The Queen came round to talk to us, and when she came to me, I, like everybody else, was as nervous as anything, but I stumbled through. Then I said, “I’ve just been reading some stuff about one of Churchill’s speeches”—I had suddenly recalled something he had said in 1941. President Roosevelt had sent a note over with the person he had just defeated in his third election, and Churchill said that, in it, he had written in his own hand a verse from Longfellow. Now, remember that in 1941 we did not know whether we would survive. Churchill had read the verse out, and I started to speak it. As I did, she started speaking it as well. I just want to share it with the House:

“sail on, O Ship of State!

Sail on, O Union, strong and great!

Humanity with all its fears,

With all the hopes of future years,

Is hanging breathless on thy fate!”

She said it perfectly. She then smiled slightly, and I detected a little dampness in her eye. Then she moved on. It suddenly struck me that that was exactly her. She was the ship of state. We looked to her for everything good, and in difficult times. She loved the Union with a passion, and she loved Scotland, I think, probably most of all. That is who she was—she was that ship of state, and somehow too often we took her for granted, but she never complained, and she always gave us service.

Now, for that union of hearts, if the House will indulge me, I want to quote WH Auden with a few changes:

“Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drums
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.”

She was our North, our South, our East and West,
Our working week and our Sunday rest,
Our noon, our midnight, our talk, our song.

We thought that love would last forever: we were wrong.

May God bless her and keep her, and hold her in our hands, and may we bless the royal family. God save the King.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I now call Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, but I warn other Members that I hope to get many speakers in today. Please can Members take up to three minutes after Sir Jeffrey?

1.11 pm

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): On behalf of my colleagues in the Democratic Unionist party and on behalf of many across Northern Ireland, I wish to offer our sincere sympathy to His Majesty the King and to other members of the royal family on the passing of our dear sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II. In Counties Antrim and Armagh, Down and Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone, individuals and families will gather in their communities to remember a great monarch, who stood with us in our time of trouble.

Her Majesty the Queen has been a steadfast and unshakeable Head of State for the United Kingdom and for the Commonwealth, and her gracious approach, as others have said, has been a constant throughout our lives. In 1952, during her first Christmas broadcast, Queen Elizabeth asked the nation to pray

“that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life.”

She certainly fulfilled her promises, and today we mourn her passing. We do so with tremendous honour for one who served God and her people faithfully.

Her Majesty led by example in Northern Ireland, and reached out the hand of friendship to help with the reconciliation process. We are duty bound to build on that foundation. The royal visit to the Republic of Ireland in 2011 was groundbreaking, and the warmth with which Her Majesty was received demonstrated that she was revered and respected far beyond the United Kingdom. I remember with fondness her speech during that visit, in which she again referred to her Christian convictions and reminded us that forgiveness lay at the heart of her faith, and that

“it can reconcile divided communities.”

Her visits to my constituency in Lagan Valley, to the city of Lisburn, to Dromore and, of course, to Royal Hillsborough invoke precious memories for the residents and for all of us, and I know her death will be felt acutely in Hillsborough and in the surrounding communities.

During the most traumatic days of our troubled past in Northern Ireland, Her Majesty visited us many times to show solidarity with her people in their darkest of hours. Her presence conveyed a deep sense of stability and offered hope to so many.

One such visit was in 1976, in one of the most violent years of the troubles. In her Christmas address later that year, Her Majesty spoke of the need for an end to the conflict, and pointed the way to peace and reconciliation. She reminded us that the following year was her silver jubilee, and expressed in hope that,

“The gift I would most value next year is that reconciliation should be found wherever it is needed. A reconciliation which would bring peace and security to families and neighbours at present suffering and torn apart.”

Yet just a few short years later, Her Majesty, too, was touched by the violence of the troubles, and her family endured the hurt and deep pain of losing a loved one, following the assassination by the IRA of the Earl Mountbatten at Mullaghmore in County Sligo in August 1979. She shared the sense of loss felt by countless victims, and her empathy and understanding offered comfort to so many from all backgrounds. She rose above that sense of loss to reach out across divided communities in Northern Ireland and to offer hope. This is real leadership.

Yet it took us almost 20 long years to complete our journey to a peace agreement, an agreement that offered the prospect of bringing about that reconciliation that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth yearned to see. Some 25 years on from that agreement, in truth we still struggle to deal with the legacy of our troubled past.

Your Majesty, on an island riven by conflict and division, you were a bridge builder, reaching out to those from opposite sides of the divide, and your work of reconciliation helped to heal wounds and to encourage change. Your historic visit to the Republic of Ireland was a cathartic moment in British-Irish relations. The way you conducted yourself, the language you used and the message that you brought helped to lay to rest many of the ghosts of our shared history that have cast their shadows over relationships on these islands for centuries. It is my hope that your passing and the example you set will inspire us to even greater heights and to complete the journey that will bring true healing and reconciliation to our troubled land.

Your Majesty, this United Kingdom has been truly blessed to have you as our Head of State, a sovereign whose dignified and faithful service has inspired a nation. I can do no better than to quote the words of a book that contains the values you sought to uphold throughout your reign:

“Well done, good and faithful servant”.

Our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is stronger for your reign.

To His Majesty King Charles III, I say this. We must all work to build this kingdom so that it is even stronger and more united, and we on this side will use all our endeavours to achieve these objectives. God save the King.

1.18 pm

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): I associate myself with many of the passionate comments that we have heard already this afternoon. There have been many thousands of moving and heartfelt tributes from across the world.

[Priti Patel]

Our Queen was loved, cherished, respected and admired for her deep devotion to public service and to the people.

We are meeting in circumstances that we all knew would happen one day, but it is of course a day that none of us wanted to see. It was so poignant yesterday when the heavens opened and cried with the country as the devastating news broke and this period of national mourning began. Most, if not all, of us in this Chamber, and people across the country, the Commonwealth and the world, have known only one Queen, one Head of State, one sovereign lady and one monarch.

The late Queen Elizabeth II's life was, of course, dedicated to public service and deeply inspiring. She had the dignified presence, ability and charisma, which this House has heard so much about already, to lead our nation through dark periods, but also through the most joyous moments we have celebrated as a country. From the horrors of the world wars to the fears of the pandemic, she was one who never ever faltered in her duty. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said, she was the rock: she was there as that model of assurance and that pillar to give us the strength and support we would need through the darkest times.

For each and every one of us and for all of our constituents, a royal visit was one of the most joyous moments and occasions we would celebrate. They were wonderful, they were memorable and they were great events, particularly when the visitor was Her Majesty the Queen. A few months after my election to Parliament in 2010, I witnessed that excitement when Her Majesty the Queen visited the famous village of Tiptree in the Witham constituency to mark the 125th anniversary of the royal warrant-holding jam makers Wilkin & Sons. The affection and warmth shown towards Her Majesty was not astonishing to see, and Queen Elizabeth reciprocated, touching everyone's hearts and taking the time to see and speak to everyone, including when inspecting the world-famous jams and the production lines of Christmas puddings, which so many people in this House in particular have enjoyed. Despite those huge undertakings year after year, each and every person she met felt special, and that was a tremendous mark of her own humility. That day nearly 12 years ago remains fresh in the minds of my constituents who, sadly, are mourning with the entire nation today.

It was not just such royal visits that marked out Her Majesty and gave us all the moment of excitement of seeing the Queen. For those of us who enjoy horses, and racing in particular, she was well known across not just the country, but around the world for her love and passion for horses. On the famous visits to Ascot or Epsom, including for the Derby itself, all of those who attended wanted to just snip that moment with her, looking to catch a glimpse and hoping to get the royal wave—or even a racing tip. No one did more to champion horse racing in this country than the late Queen. She loved the sport, she loved her horses and, in return, the whole racing industry loved her and will miss her enormously.

Her late Majesty led a remarkable life, and she delivered an era and a reign that will stand out as being the most magnificent in the long and great history of our nation. As we mourn the end of her 70-year reign, we

commemorate the great life she lived and the long and distinguished service she gave to our country, and we reflect on the importance of the monarch in our public life. At this particular moment in time, our thoughts and prayers are naturally with her family, and we offer our wholehearted support and commitment to the King—King Charles III. In the years ahead, while the face on our notes, coins and stamps will of course change, Her late Majesty will always occupy a special and affectionate place in the heart of this nation. God rest her soul, and God save the King.

1.23 pm

Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab): I have heard it said that on occasions such as this most of us talk about ourselves, and that is inevitable because we are talking about the links that we have with and the memories we have of the person who is gone, but I think I am one of the few in this House who remembers when the Queen's father died. I must admit that my memories are twofold: first, how surprised I was that people thought 25 was young; and, secondly, how when she came to the throne we all got a bar of chocolate.

I first encountered Her Majesty at one remove soon after I was first elected to this House in October 1974, and I do recognise that many hon. Members here were not born then. By 1975 I was a junior Government Whip, when we had a small majority and a large legislative programme. There was a duty that usually fell to a very senior Whip, one of writing every day by hand directly to Her Majesty the Queen to tell her what was happening in her Parliament—I was told this had probably originated with the first Prime Minister, who wrote to the King to tell him what was happening in the House—and I was asked to undertake this duty to help my colleague. By the way—this is very important—I was told that this was a personal message from a member of the Government to Her Majesty for her eyes only. There seemed little point in telling her the things that she would know from her red box or that she had probably read in the chat column in *The Daily Telegraph*, so I wrote to her about the stuff I thought she would not get from either of those sources. I wrote to her about the gossip in the Tea Room—occasionally slightly edited—and about the rows that people were having behind the scenes in the Committee Rooms and corridors. There was no feedback, but there was no rebuke either.

A day then came when the Queen went on an overseas visit. I knew, of course, that official correspondence always goes through official channels when the Queen is out of the country, but I was a very new MP, and thought that no one would have the impertinence to read something that was marked from me personally to the Queen personally. Some busybody in No. 10, however, did.

Perhaps a little unfortunately—this is not unknown to Members in this House—there was something of a dispute going on at the time about the issue of our relationship with the European Community. [Laughter.] I told the Queen what we thought about it, what we were saying about it, and where I thought the Ministers of the day were sometimes getting it wrong. The House may not be surprised to learn—I will not sully your ears—that there is a short, pithy phrase in common usage that encapsulates exactly what happened next. Suffice it to say I was summoned to the Chief Whip,

and after a brief and spirited discussion, the job returned to the person to whom it had originally been assigned. *[Laughter.]* Many years later—this is rather typical—I heard very indirectly and subtly that perhaps Her Majesty had slightly regretted the return to normal service, and that was comforting, and I was pleased.

Many more years later, after a short involuntary break in my service in this House, I was returned for my present constituency. We have had the great honour of entertaining Her Majesty on many occasions, not least—it is in everybody's memory—when she opened our new football stadium and, indeed, our brand-new hospital. She was gracious enough to agree that we could give it the title of the Royal Derby Hospital, in which it rejoices to this day.

Over the years, including three as Lord President of the Council, I was fortunate enough to have many encounters with Her Majesty, and I can absolutely endorse everything that has been and will be said about her intelligence, awareness and attitude. I was also fortunate enough to be present, after the death of our colleague John Smith, at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of D-day, and to be in the Queen's company and to observe her utter respect for the veterans and the sacrifices of those days. I had many encounters with her as Lord President of the Council and, indeed, as Foreign Secretary I accompanied her on state visits, like the former Prime Minister the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), where I heard the Queen's observations about the comments made to her by the mother of a former President about the then incumbent, and very interesting they were. *[Laughter.]*

I testify to the qualities of which everyone else has spoken and to which I am sure everyone else will give testimony: her intelligence, her knowledge and her sense of humour. One of my abiding and favourite memories of recent years is a clip that hon. Members will probably recall and that has often been on the news. The Duke of Edinburgh was being chased by a persistent bee, and there is a picture of the Queen coming through an archway, giggling uncontrollably and clearly quite unable to suppress how hysterically funny she found it. That very much sums up the person we could see and admire. She was a remarkable person and a remarkable monarch. We are the poorer for her going.

1.30 pm

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): Often this place can be criticised for the debates we have, but I think it has risen to the occasion today in memory of Her late Majesty the Queen. The contributions from both sides of the House show the heartfelt thoughts of hon. Members who had close experience and of those of us who met the Queen very infrequently.

I met Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth at the opening of the Scottish Parliament last year. As the leader of the main Opposition party, I had a short conversation with her, and she moved on to the other party leaders. I have a picture of the Queen shaking my hand with the beaming smile that we saw in her last picture, which was taken at Balmoral on Tuesday. Her Majesty the Queen loved Scotland, and Scotland loved Her Majesty the Queen. I think it is right that that picture was taken by an excellent Scottish photographer, Jane Barlow, who captured Her Majesty looking very calm, very happy and very at home in Balmoral, which she loved.

I want to speak briefly on behalf of my constituents in Moray who enjoyed meeting the Queen on many occasions. Her last visit to Moray was in November 2014, when she arrived on the royal train at Elgin station and met our armed forces at RAF Lossiemouth and at Kinloss barracks; as has been mentioned today, the armed forces were important to Her Majesty, are important to King Charles III and will play an extremely important role in the coming days and weeks. On that visit in November 2014, the Queen was accompanied by the late Duke of Edinburgh. It was their 67th wedding anniversary. The public commitment to service and dedication of Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh meant that they went about their duties when others would have been celebrating a milestone anniversary.

That was what the Queen provided: commitment and dedication at every opportunity to deliver for people across the country. Over the next few days and weeks, we will remember that commitment from Her Majesty the Queen. In our thoughts and prayers, we will keep King Charles III and the royal family, who are grieving the loss of a loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. But as we join together to grieve and mourn, we also unite to give thanks and to celebrate a life well lived: a life committed and dedicated to public service, a life that has shone a light through the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth and around the world. The tributes that we have heard in this place today and those from leaders across the globe show the respect that is rightly held for Her late Majesty the Queen, may she rest in peace. God save the King.

1.33 pm

John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Unlike probably every previous speaker, I met the Queen only once. Appropriately enough, it was when she visited the Queen's theatre in Hornchurch, my then constituency. When she left, she went on to go from strength to strength, as she always did; I went on to be ejected from Parliament by the voters at the following election, so we had slightly different experiences after her visit.

As the leader of the Liberal Democrats says, it is difficult to imagine a world without the Queen. That is absolutely true, but it is worth remembering something that is very rarely remembered: in 1936, after the abdication crisis, the monarchy teetered on the brink. According to most polls at the time, most British voters thought that the monarchy might not survive for very long, but since 1945 the monarchy has been the most popular institution in Britain and has polled at something like 80%. There is no institution that has polled at anything like that level of popularity over such a sustained period. That is not an accident. It happened for two reasons: because the Queen and her father, George VI, had an iron dedication to public service—which possibly started in the most spectacular way when he decided to remain in London during the war instead of following the advice to leave London and go elsewhere, perhaps even to Canada, as one adviser suggested—and because both George VI and Elizabeth II had an absolutely clear understanding of the constitutional parameters of the role of the monarchy, and neither ever strayed outside that role.

Despite repeated attempts to pull the Queen into political controversies—the first one that I remember was when we had a hung Parliament in 1974, and article

[John Cryer]

after article in the press said that the Queen should intervene and pull together the two big parties, or perhaps the three big parties, to form some sort of coalition Government—she refused to do it, and she was absolutely right. She was persistent in that all the way through. That is her great legacy: the monarchy has survived as a popular institution because she observed those absolutely correct constitutional parameters.

I think we all hope that if the new King observes those parameters, as I am sure he will, and has that dedication to public service, which he has already demonstrated, he can reunite and draw together a nation that is as bitterly divided as I can remember.

1.36 pm

Dame Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): It was strange to wake up on this first day without our much loved and hugely respected Queen Elizabeth II. There is a sense of personal loss as well as shock. Somehow, her long years of service, commitment and duty felt as if they would never come to an end. As one of the older members of my family told me just this morning, things have changed so much in her and our lifetime, and sometimes we feel hopelessly out of date and rather uncomfortable. She was our figurehead, and for that we are truly grateful.

The Queen's reign was somehow timeless. I listened back this morning to her first televised Christmas broadcast in 1957, and then to her broadcast to the nation during covid. Queen Elizabeth II provided continuity right from the post-war years, through 15 different Prime Ministers—from Sir Winston Churchill to my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Norfolk (Elizabeth Truss)—to the extraordinary heart-warming royal digital performances with James Bond and Paddington Bear. For me, her handbag will now always contain a marmalade sandwich.

I always remember being sworn in as a Privy Counsellor. It was on the same day as my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson). We were given the usual briefing on how to kneel on a footstool with our right hand by our side and our left hand holding a bible. My right hon. Friend and I looked at one another and asked, "What! What if you fall off your footstool?" We were told, very straight-faced, "Don't worry, the Queen will find it very amusing," which we did not find reassuring, but luckily, it did not happen.

As Lord President of the Council during the hung Parliament of 2017 to 2019, I had the honour of regular audiences with the Queen ahead of Privy Council meetings. On those occasions, I was always struck by the warmth of the welcome and the frankness of the conversation. The Queen was always interested to hear updates on the progress of legislation and on the mood of the House. She was very well informed and quite challenging at a time of extraordinary events, from Brexit and Donald Trump's visit to behaviour scandals here in Westminster.

Once a year, the Leaders of the Commons and the Lords would be invited to Windsor castle for lunch with the Queen and Prince Philip. Those occasions felt quite overwhelming, but at the same time, after a pre-lunch drink in the sitting room, we got into a conversation

about how well the restoration of Windsor castle was going—presided over by Prince Philip—compared with our own efforts to restore the Palace of Westminster, and Baroness Evans of Bowes Park and I were soon distracted as we sought to defend the indefensible.

A happy memory for me is going to Sandringham one January for Privy Council, with log fires burning and the Queen's corgis pottering around. I recall the Queen saying what a very busy Christmas she had had, and I suggested that at least her family did not need to pause Christmas lunch for the Queen's speech, at which she told me that they most certainly did. Like all of us, her family had paused lunch to watch the Queen's speech, and Princess Charlotte had run over to the TV screen and said, "Look, there's Gan-Gan!"—very heart-warming.

At each audience it would strike me anew that Privy Council meetings were just one of the Queen's many daily duties, and that her cheerfulness and her twinkling eyes were a constant. Truly, she was a monarch who put the comfort of others above herself, and she never faltered in her promise to spend her life devoted to service. As we have prayed every day in this place that Queen Elizabeth II,

"may always incline to thy will, and walk in thy way",

so I believe we can now pray with confidence that,

"after this life she may attain everlasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Queen Elizabeth II spent her life building relationships in our nation, our Commonwealth and across the world. In her achievements we can all take comfort, and know that as the Crown passes to our new King, we will have the example of her legacy to unite us in loyal allegiance to her successor, King Charles III. God save the King.

1.40 pm

Dame Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): It is an honour to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituents in Wallasey, who are in shock and mourning today.

One thing that strikes everyone contemplating this sad news is the sheer span of time of Her late Majesty's reign—the longest ever reign in UK history. She was someone who lived through an era of profound upheaval and change, but who represented continuity and certainty amid the tumult. It is hard to remember that when she was born in 1926, only 10 women had ever been elected to this House of Commons, and at the time women did not exercise the vote on the same terms as men.

Thankfully, that has now changed, although I always say that work to achieve equality is never done—but, as the Mother of the House said earlier, Her late Majesty led by example and by being. As our Head of State who was clearly a woman, a wife and a mother, she demonstrated how possible it was, even if that had been granted to her by destiny, to combine her role and the pressure that she had on her with a family life.

Her late Majesty's coronation was the first to be televised; now the monarchy has a presence on social media platforms seen by billions. Her reign has seen the transition from Empire to Commonwealth and from conflict to peace in Northern Ireland, but also from complacency to climate emergency, which demonstrates to us all that we have much to do and many problems to confront.

The values the Queen personified are clear from the comments in this House: utter commitment to public service and duty. She was a woman who dedicated her life to the service of our nation and, when she said at age 21 in a broadcast:

“I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service”,

it was a vow that she delivered, as we now know, faithfully to the very end. She personified wisdom and experience but, as the right hon. Member for South Northamptonshire (Dame Andrea Leadsom) said, she had that twinkle in her eye. Whenever people were waiting in line to meet Her late Majesty, they could see the twinkle and it put them at ease.

The Queen first visited Wirral in 1957, but during my time in this House she first came to Birkenhead when she opened the Europa pool in 1996. Finally, she came to Wallasey for the second time in 2011, to open the newly rebuilt Floral Pavilion Theatre in New Brighton. Thousands upon thousands of official duties—many thousands of my constituents looked forward to her visits and have fond memories of them. She was always interested, always engaging and always smiling and reassuring when she interacted with people who lined the routes to see her on those fantastic occasions.

The loss of Her late Majesty will be mourned; it is a terrible, but inevitable loss. She left us in a place where we know we can survive the transition because of the strength she gave to the institution. May she rest in peace. I send the greatest condolences to the royal family, who are going through such a terrible loss. We look forward to supporting the new King as much as we supported our now sadly lost Queen Elizabeth II.

1.45 pm

Sajid Javid (Bromsgrove) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Wallasey (Dame Angela Eagle). I am filled with great sadness as I rise to pay tribute to the life and memory of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Our thoughts are with the royal family, who have lost a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother.

Her late Majesty lived an extraordinary life of service, and the touching tributes that we have heard from right hon. and hon. Members, along with the outpouring of emotion from across the world, including from my constituents in Bromsgrove district, reflect the deep affection and love for her. For more than seven decades, she was a source of strength and comfort, a representative of our closest-held values and beliefs, a defender of faith and an embodiment of the very best of public service and duty. She was our north star; a symbol of strength in difficult times. To put it simply, she was our Queen.

Many right hon. and hon. Members have shared stories of times when they were privileged to meet Her late Majesty. I did so on many occasions, and I always welcomed the huge wisdom that she would share, the advice and of course the good humour. I will never forget how, as the formalities of the final Privy Council meeting of 2017 ended, Her Majesty suddenly said, “Gin and tonic anybody?” She proceeded to press a buzzer and, with that, her staff promptly burst through the doors of the 1844 room in Buckingham Palace armed with trays of G and T and nibbles. Now, I am not much of a G and T drinker, but I was certainly not

going to turn down the opportunity of enjoying one with Her late Majesty. I later learned that she liked to make the last Privy Council meeting of the year extra special so that she could wish everyone a merry Christmas.

Our country faces immense challenges at home and abroad, and the person who has always been there is there no longer. However, in the wake of this terrible loss, there is an opportunity for parliamentarians from across this House to renew their commitment to the values that were embodied by Her late Majesty: public service, duty and the national interest. If we can leave this place having achieved but the smallest fraction of what Her late Majesty achieved, our country will be the better for it. After a lifetime of service, Her late Majesty is now at rest. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

1.48 pm

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): On behalf of Plaid Cymru, I offer my sincerest sympathies and condolences to Her late Majesty the Queen’s children and her extended family as they come to terms with their grief. Queen Elizabeth II was a constant presence throughout all of our lives. She stood as a figure of stability in a world changing at a rapid and sometimes frightening pace. The loss of the continuity that Her late Majesty embodied is a source of sorrow and anxiety for people across the world.

Up to her final days she conducted her duties with an extraordinary dedication that has been an inspiration for so many of us. Her values of duty, service, reconciliation and forgiveness are held dear by the people of Wales. In Wales, we respect people who embody that sense of dedication to society and to public service; those who put their public duty first. Her late Majesty the Queen personified that duty for so many people for so many years.

Her late Majesty had a canny ability to put people at ease in the midst of Palace formality. Three years ago, I was fortunate to be appointed to the Privy Council. I remember being nervous and intimidated by the protocols and rules that govern interactions with the royal family. Your mind, as it would, tots up an infinite checklist of everything that could possibly go wrong. What struck me was something she said: “You may well be worrying that you’ll do something wrong, or in the wrong order. Don’t worry. Whatever could possibly go wrong, I’ve seen it all before. There’s nothing that you could do that would shock me now.” Even among all the pomp and ceremony, there was that characteristic warmth and courtesy to the Queen.

Her Majesty was a magnificent role model for older women across the world. Historically, of course, older women have disappeared from public life. The Queen was a constant visible figure throughout the 70 years of her reign. From historic buildings and charities to football, she always showed an interest in Wales. People of all walks of Welsh life have been touched by her keen interest in and constant support for Welsh organisations. She attended every official opening of the Senedd and showed due respect for Wales’s nationhood and our growing democracy.

The Queen was patron to organisations as diverse as the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, the Football Association of Wales, the Cardiff Royal Infirmary and the Welsh Pony and Cob Society. Her love of horses,

[Liz Saville Roberts]

from thoroughbreds to native ponies, shone through. We can see it in those sparkling smiles. Everyone in public life knows that they have a public smile, but the photos with the horses show her real smile.

We now see one era drawing to a close and a new one at its very beginning. For now we will say, “Diolch yn fawr iawn.” “Thank you very much, your Majesty.” Cwsg mewn hedd. May she rest in peace. Bendith Duw ar y Brenin. God’s blessing on the King.

1.51 pm

Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con): I rise to share gratitude for the life of Her late Majesty the Queen; share sadness for her family; and share sadness for the country and the world at the loss of the greatest statesman of our time. I also want to mark my personal gratitude for the advice that Her Majesty gave me, and in particular, as was mentioned by the most recent former Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), for her role in bringing the country together and giving hope in dark times during the pandemic. I also add my gratitude for her taking the rare step of going public with her health status when she declared that she had taken a vaccination, showing further leadership.

The Queen was much loved, of course, across my West Suffolk constituency, but perhaps nowhere more than in Newmarket, which she visited so often. Newmarket, of course, is the jewel in the crown of horse-racing, certainly domestically and probably across the world. On her many, many visits there she showed that she could walk with sovereigns and the general public alike. Newmarket was where I first met her, when I was lucky to be with my small daughter, who handed her a posy. It is my daughter’s first memory, and will no doubt be an abiding one for the rest of her life.

That reminds me of the many times that I have seen Her Majesty meeting the public and been impressed and inspired by her sheer ability to ensure that each person she met understood that she was focused entirely on them. She listened so well to them, knowing no doubt that, for each person she met, it was a moment that that person would remember for the rest of their life. Her fortitude in continuing to do that well into her 90s was incredible to behold.

We in Newmarket are not always known for our humility, but we do know that the reason Her Majesty loved to come to Newmarket was not we two-legged beings, but the four-legged ones. Her love of horse-racing was perhaps her greatest love outside of her duty to her family and her country. The twinkle that we have heard so much about was probably brightest, and the genuine smile that came on her face at its broadest, when she was at a racecourse, as she demonstrated on what was probably her last social public occasion at Ascot. I remember that love particularly when she visited to open the National Horseracing Museum in Newmarket. She went down the line of dignitaries and she went down and met the public. She gave them her customary focus, but she was clearly doing her duty, because the museum is full of retired racehorses and it was only when she got to them that she really lit up. That was Her Majesty at her best.

We have lost a great servant. She is replaced by another great servant of our nation. God save the King.

1.54 pm

Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab): What has been so remarkable about the words that have been spoken about Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth since her death is just how many people’s lives she touched. It was not simply the length of her reign or her complete commitment to duty, but her character and the way in which she did her work that meant that she was loved by so many and will be missed by us all. Many of us here today had the privilege of meeting her and talking to her. Like the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith), I, too, had the drinks at Christmas. I remember wishing that I had known a bit more about cocktails, because I went for the safe gin and tonic instead.

I wish to remember Queen Elizabeth at the start of her reign and then recall two of the times that I was with her. I was eight when she was crowned. To my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett), I say that we were still rationed in those days if she remembers. The reason that the chocolate was so welcome was that it was rationed chocolate—we did not care about the eggs and the meat being rationed, but the chocolate was important. We did not have a television in our home, so we huddled and crowded around a small black and white television in one of our neighbour’s houses. I really remember seeing the coach, the glittering jewels on the Queen’s crown and her stunning white dress. It was simply like a fairy tale—a Cinderella or a Snow White—coming true. That magical moment of beauty, hope and goodness has stayed with me throughout her long reign.

There were two occasions when I met the Queen that also remain strong in my memory. First, in the early 1980s, when I was leader in Islington, the Queen visited Sadler’s Wells. We laid on a session for her with a group of old-age pensioners—women living in Finsbury. We were running a keep fit dancing class under the tutorship of Sadler’s Wells teachers. The warmth of the Queen’s smile when she walked into the room, the utter joy of the women at being watched by Her Majesty and the calm way that she put them at ease when she talked to them was simply brilliant. For the Queen, it was probably just another day, but for the women, it was probably one of the most eventful days in their lives.

The second occasion was when the Queen visited Barking and Dagenham in July 2015—she was nearly 90—to mark the 50th anniversary of the creation of the borough. She spent almost the whole day there: opening a community centre; lunching at a local theatre; visiting schools and watching a swimming display. Thousands of my constituents came out to see her and many met her. She enjoyed a rapturous reception. The fact that she had chosen to spend so much of her time with us on what must have been a tiring day—she was getting on for 90—demonstrates, I think, her total commitment to duty and to us, her people. Among the sea of Union Jacks that met her, I just remember the placards that said, “Welcome our Queen. We love you.”

At a time of a constant change, Queen Elizabeth II gave us stability. At a time of uncertainty, tension and conflict, she always provided a path to reconciliation. As a nation and community, she provided leadership

that brought recognition, respect and status, and love to all of Great Britain and all of our people. We will miss her.

1.59 pm

Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): It is with great sadness that I rise to speak in the tributes to Her late Majesty the Queen, not only on my behalf, but on behalf of my constituents in Selby and Ainsty. The news that the whole nation had been dreading brings the reign of the longest-serving monarch in British history to an end. As we have heard, as a child, she was not expected to be Queen, but her destiny, and that of our nation, changed when her father acceded to the throne as King George VI. As a 21-year-old woman, she pledged to live a life of service. No one anywhere can say that she did not deliver on that pledge.

I vividly recall the celebrations for the Queen's silver jubilee in my village and across the nation. It is incredible that she also celebrated golden, diamond and platinum jubilees. Her life spanned some of the most amazing milestones of the last century—the discovery of penicillin, the moon landings, and the invention of the world wide web. She also circumnavigated the world, visiting hundreds of countries, including those Commonwealth countries that she held in such affection. The Queen also visited Selby in my constituency, alongside her beloved husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, in 1969, when they came to present Maundy money to 43 men and 43 women at Selby abbey; 10,000 people lined the town's streets that day to welcome and catch a glimpse of their monarch.

Like many hon. and right hon. Members, I had the privilege of meeting the Queen, both times at the palace. I cannot tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, how nervous I was as we lined up to meet her. All my nerves were calmed, however, once I had been greeted by that beautifully warm smile and her welcoming words. That warmth, and that smile, has comforted our nation over the decades, through good and challenging times. The word “constant” has been widely used; that is exactly what Her late Majesty was. It is difficult to imagine life without her, and it feels as though we have all lost a grandmother.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), in his touching speech, referred to Her late Majesty as Elizabeth the Great. He was absolutely right to do so. She was a truly great monarch—in some ways, the greatest monarch. Her late Majesty was also a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. My thoughts and prayers are with her family, and especially with King Charles III, who succeeds her to the throne. As my right hon. Friend also said, it is a tribute to her that we can say with great confidence: God save the King.

We owe Her late Majesty a great debt of gratitude. May God bless her and keep her. May she rest in peace, and if I may paraphrase a small bear from darkest Peru, “Ma'am, thank you for everything.”

2.2 pm

Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP): The warm tributes that have already been paid to Queen Elizabeth II by hon. and right hon. Members tell their own story about the great respect and deep affection that so many from such diverse and different backgrounds had for her—an

affection and respect that transcend mere political difference and speak to her position as a leader and an example of public service.

As others have said, the Queen was one of the most consequential civic figures of the last century. As political leaders came and went, and as public opinion ebbed and flowed, she remained a constant—an unyielding and limitless source of strength and comfort for her people in times of national pride and sorrow. Her reign, which lasted more than 70 years, spanned the embers of conflict that followed the second world war and the peace process between our islands and peoples. During that time, she forged a legacy that will outlast all of us here. I hope it lays the foundation for enduring relations between these islands, in spite of the challenges that we now face.

As leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party, I had cause to meet Queen Elizabeth on a number of occasions. Believe me when I say that it is difficult to think of two people more divorced from each other, in background and aspiration, but I can only recount that in any dealings that I had with her, I found her a person of great warmth, character and enduring passion for the interests and needs of people. That, I think, is the reason for the longevity of her support from the British people.

As a leader of Irish nationalism, I want to place on the record my deep appreciation and respect for the Queen's role in forging new bonds of friendship between our islands and our people. It is all so easy to forget now, but she was also a victim of the conflict that the people of these islands were subjected to for 40 long years. I know that the murder of her cousin, Lord Mountbatten, in Mullaghmore in August 1979 had a profound effect on her and her extended family. She experienced the sharp pain of loss, but in common with the people of Ireland, she took risks for peace and played an enormous role in reconciling the traditions that share our islands.

At no time was that more visible than during Queen Elizabeth's 2011 visit to Ireland. I believe that her visit to the garden of remembrance in Dublin, and the way she stretched herself to be an example of a good neighbour to Ireland in those moments, contributed in a very significant way to healing the wounds of our past. Those cúpla focal, those few words of Irish—“A Uachtaráin agus a chairde”; “President and friends”—were a symbolic embrace of the Irish people, and they were deeply appreciated.

The blessing of a long life does not make the burden of saying goodbye any lighter. My sincerest condolences are with the Queen's immediate family, with right hon. and hon. Members here today, and most particularly with those in Northern Ireland for whom she held a cherished place in their lives and their hearts. I know how difficult it is to lose your hero, but there is comfort in the lasting legacy that she will leave, having helped shape our common history.

The story of our peoples is fundamentally and inseparably intertwined. We all live in each other's shadow. I hope that we continue to build on the legacy that Queen Elizabeth II helped forge. May she rest in peace.

2.6 pm

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): As other right hon. and hon. Members have mentioned, it is impossible for virtually all of us and our constituents to remember

[Mr David Jones]

a time when Her Majesty the Queen was not there. I was born a matter of weeks after she acceded to the throne, and throughout my life—indeed, all our lives—hers has been a continuous, reassuring presence, providing wise guidance for the country through good times and bad. She was both an anchor and a lodestone for our nation, and it is indeed hard to contemplate life without her.

For seven decades, she was there for us, and I think that many of us thought that she always would be. She had a rare, innate ability to generate affection, respect and loyalty not only from the people of this country, but from countless millions throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. Hers was arguably the most recognised face on the planet, and she will be missed not only here but in other lands across the world—even in the few countries that she never visited during her long reign.

At the time of her platinum jubilee, the BBC broadcast a remarkable documentary called “Elizabeth: The Unseen Queen”, which was part-narrated by the Queen herself. In the documentary, she spoke the following words of an Australian aboriginal proverb:

“We are all visitors to this time, this place.

We are just passing through.

Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love.

And then we return home.”

While we and our constituents feel the most profound grief at her passing, and our mourning will undoubtedly continue long beyond her funeral, we must find comfort in the knowledge that our Queen, strong in the Christian faith that sustained her throughout her life, has returned home and is at peace. God bless the lovely memory of Her Majesty. God save the King.

2.9 pm

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): I rise at a time of great sadness for our country. I do so on behalf of my constituents in Doncaster North, although I know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I also speak for you and your constituents in Doncaster Central, and those right across Doncaster. The House has been at its best today, with some wonderful speeches and memories of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

I was Leader of the Opposition, as the House will know. It is noted that the Queen experienced 15 Prime Ministers. I think we have lost count of how many Leaders of the Opposition she went through, which perhaps says something about Leaders of the Opposition, but it is in that spirit of my experience that I want to talk briefly to the House. One thing that has come through so much since Her Majesty's passing last night is the phrase “public service.” I want to reflect on some extraordinary qualities that she showed in terms of public service, including, first of all, her ability to bring people together and unify our country. I was at the state banquet in 2014 for the President of Ireland—a state banquet attended by the late Martin McGuinness. It showed extraordinary selflessness, courage and an ability to heal that Her Majesty invited Martin McGuinness, given the history of what happened to Lord Mountbatten, but that was the person that she was; her duty to our country and to bring people together came first.

Secondly, she taught us about kindness in leadership. The right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith), who is not in his place,

talked about his experience when he was deposed as Leader of the Opposition. I was deposed by the British people rather than my party, but as my career nosedived my wife's took off; in 2019, she became a High Court judge and a dame. We were therefore both invited to the palace to meet Her Majesty. As we saw each other, Her Majesty fixed me with her gaze and said, “Oh, it's you. What are you doing here?”, knowing full well why I was there, and we had a wonderful conversation. There she was at 93, still full of vim, vigour and humour. There is a lesson for us all in the kindness she showed to me and to other Members of the House.

Thirdly, I want to say something about her sense of humour. I go back to a time in 2008, when I had recently been appointed as Secretary of State for Climate Change and I went to my first ever Privy Council meeting. Her Majesty was reading out laws that were being passed. As she did so, she paused for a moment, because she was having trouble reading, and she said, “Yes, it's these new long-life lightbulbs that we have introduced.” She fixed me with a beady gaze and a twinkle in her eye, and I smiled. That was the sense of humour that she showed.

Her Majesty was an extraordinary monarch, but I also want to say a word about King Charles III. Again, I speak on behalf of my constituents. He has been an extraordinary warrior on the issue of the environment, long before it was fashionable. When I was Climate Change Secretary, I always thought of him as an extraordinary national asset on the issue, and he remains so. But he is not just a fighter for big causes; he is also someone—he has inherited this from his mother—of extraordinary kindness, generosity and compassion. We see it in his work to heal social divisions in our country, but I have also seen it in my constituency, which was hit by floods in 2007 and 2019. On both occasions, including on the first, when part of my constituency was still under water, he came to see my constituents, to talk to them and to be with them—including, on the second occasion, just before Christmas—because he knew that his presence, at that time of anguish, grief and anxiety, would make an enormous difference to my constituents, and indeed it did.

I say to the House that we have lost an extraordinary monarch who had an extraordinary and distinguished reign over seven decades. She is followed by someone who I know will live up to all the hopes of our country, and who will bring that same sense of unity, compassion and public service. Long live the King.

2.15 pm

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): I am very grateful to be able to participate in this solemn occasion, one that we all knew would happen but that, in our heart of hearts, we all hoped would not. It is a day of mourning for all of us individually, for the House collectively and for the whole nation, and not just for this nation. I was struck last night by the picture of an American baseball diamond with the teams lined up for a minute's silence in recognition of the loss of the Queen.

Of course, the Queen was a global figure. I remember hosting the Global Law Summit in 2015, when the Queen very kindly hosted a reception at the palace. The US Justice Secretary, a powerful man in that country, came up to me after he had been introduced to the

Queen and said, “I feel like a nine-year-old. It is amazing that I’m here. It is extraordinary.” That is what the world thought of her, and it is why they will all be mourning with us now.

I have two particular reasons for mourning. As a committed racing watcher, the Queen came to my constituency every year to attend the Derby, and she will be much missed there. I received an email from a constituent this morning that said, “We will miss that moment every year when she drove up the road at the end of our street and we could all see her and wave as she went past.” She will be missed by everybody in Epsom.

I will particularly miss her because I had the privilege of serving for five years, first as her Lord Chancellor and then as Lord President of her Council. In those two roles one gets to spend a considerable amount of time with her, although not as much time as the Prime Minister, and she was an extraordinary, welcoming, kind, smart person. I remember the moment when the current Archbishop of Canterbury was sworn in. We went through the formula that we go through on such occasions and, when we had finished, the Queen and the archbishop, who used to work for Shell in Nigeria, embarked on the most extraordinary conversation about the politics of Nigeria. She knew it inside out. She was incredibly knowledgeable about what was going on in this country and elsewhere.

She was incredibly welcoming to all of us who had the privilege of spending time with her in our various working capacities. We knew she was a kind, warm and always welcoming person. There was always the twinkle in her eye, to which the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) referred, and there was always a light-hearted conversation, sometimes about great issues and sometimes about simple matters such as how she managed all the dogs at Sandringham at Christmas time. I remember, on so many occasions, going in to see this incredible global figure and being made to feel welcome; being made to feel that she was interested in what I and we were doing. I feel incredibly proud that she was our monarch.

I join the right hon. Gentleman in wishing all the very best to King Charles III. He has had a long apprenticeship, and I believe he will be a great monarch. I know everyone in this House will wish him all the very best at what is a very difficult time for him. We extend our condolences to all members of the royal family, who have lost their grandmother and great-grandmother. This is a very sad occasion for them.

Today I particularly think back to one conversation I had with the Queen before a Privy Council meeting. We were talking about the way technology is changing the world, and I said, “It is extraordinary. The world is changing so fast. Who knows where we will be in 30 years’ time?” She said, “The only thing I know is that I will not be there.” Sadly she is not, and we will miss her.

2.19 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I rise on behalf of my constituents in Leeds Central as we, together, mourn the Queen’s passing, offer our heartfelt condolences to His Majesty the King and to the royal family on their private grief borne so publicly, and mark an extraordinary life.

It was at my first meeting of the Privy Council that I came to understand that the Queen was determined that things should be done correctly. We were waiting outside the door, and one of the footmen opened it to see what was going on. As he closed it, he turned to his colleague and said, “She’s moving the footstools again!”, to which he received the reply, “She’s the Queen. If she wants to move the footstools, she can move the footstools.”

Hers was a life that, above all else, embodied constancy. We have known no other, and we feel the Queen’s passing so keenly precisely because she was always here. Her devotion to duty, to service and to representing our country ran like an unbroken thread through the decades, and through each of our lives. Like the passing of time and the changing of the seasons, she was always here, and although, as we have heard, so many things changed during her reign, she did not change. Above the noisy clamour of politics and public debate, she carried on and showed us what service means—carried out with grace and with humour.

And now the day has come, as we long feared but knew it would, when she is no longer here; and, as the people of Leeds and of Yorkshire and of the country come to terms with their deep sense of loss at this moment in the history of our nation, our United Kingdom, let us give thanks for her uniquely long and well-lived life. Just as faith, hope and love abide, so will our memories of the Queen: her constancy, her service, and her profound sense of duty. Thank you for everything that you did, ma’am, and may you rest in peace eternal.

2.21 pm

Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con): Between July 2018 and April 2019, I had the very great privilege of serving as Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty’s Household, a role and a title given to the fourth most senior Government Whip. It is a role about which the right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett) spoke earlier in her fantastic contribution, and it is a role that most right hon. and hon. Members do not even know exists—except when they see one of the Whips standing at the Bar of the House wearing a tailcoat and carrying what appears to be a snooker cue. It is also a role that people would hear about only when they realised that someone had to be held hostage at the Palace before Her Majesty came to Parliament for the State Opening.

However, the role involves much more than that. Alongside the day-to-day activities in the Whips Office, the Vice-Chamberlain would write a daily note to Her Majesty, keeping her up to date on parliamentary business and giving her all the gossip, and would then go to Parliament to discuss those matters. I am glad to say that, unlike the right hon. Member for Derby South, I can say that neither the Chief Whip nor the Prime Minister ever read my notes.

Given that my period in office coincided with some of the most acrimonious Brexit debates, a confidence vote in our Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), and the 2019 vote of confidence, there are very few issues Her Majesty and I have not discussed. Indeed, my final week in office as Vice-Chamberlain included nude protesters gluing themselves to the glass in the Public Gallery, and the

[Andrew Stephenson]

Chamber being suspended after water started pouring through the ceiling into the Press Gallery. Perhaps it was quite symbolic of how broken our Parliament was at that time.

However, although that was an immensely stressful and politically charged period, on every occasion on which I met Her Majesty I found her calm, warm and reassuring. Like all who have spoken today, I was struck by her interest in current events and her lifelong service to our nation. As our longest-reigning monarch and the world's longest-serving Head of State, she had an incredible insight into current affairs, and was a great symbol of continuity in a rapidly changing world.

I remember vividly a discussion that we had about the online abuse that many Members throughout the House face on social media. Her Majesty recalled a conversation she had had with Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the world wide web, and talked knowledgeably about the subject, although social media was something most people in their nineties would not know or care anything about. We also discussed interviews that she had watched on "BBC News at Ten" the night before, which demonstrated that Her Majesty's desire to stay on top of current affairs stretched well beyond the papers that she received in her daily red box. All these meetings took place with Her Majesty standing throughout and were often sandwiched between multiple other official engagements that she was undertaking.

I last met Her Majesty the Queen on 19 July at her last ever Privy Council meeting. I was sworn into the Privy Council and presented with a bible, which I carry with me today. I believe that made me the 1,336th person, and final person, to be sworn into Her late Majesty's Privy Council.

It was an incredible honour, as a Minister for the past five years, to get to meet a remarkable, caring, informed and witty monarch who oversaw huge change during her reign, but never stopped working day in, day out for our country. And it is an incredible honour for me as a Lancastrian MP to see the love felt towards Her Majesty Duke of Lancaster by so many of my constituents in Pendle, with whom I will be joining in remembering and celebrating her life over this period of national mourning. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

2.25 pm

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): I never had the pleasure of meeting the late Queen personally, but I have met her son, the new King, on several occasions and I can testify personally to his deep love for the highlands. I know that my constituents in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey will want to join me in holding him in our thoughts as he deals with this most personal of losses, that of his mother.

But of course, as we know, the late Queen was also a grandmother and a great-grandmother. She acceded to the throne as a young woman at the age of 25, and was an inspiration and icon for many young women. As we have heard today, she became an inspiration and an icon for many older women, too. She was someone who, as we can see from the tributes internationally, was respected and admired far and wide. The vast majority

of my constituents, whether they be monarchist, republican or anything in between, have never known a time when she was not our head of state. Our sympathy goes to her family and all those who are so deeply affected by her passing.

2.27 pm

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): On behalf of the constituents of Harwich and North Essex, I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty, whose whole life was the greatest example of public service we shall ever witness, whose kind heart, sharp intellect and huge wisdom were such a gift to the nation, and who had love in her soul for everyone and a serenity which even now calms the nation in these troubled times.

She inspired so many good causes, but I single out one: the Commonwealth—in 1952, a mere eight nations—which she led from being an emerging relic of a lost empire to a network of nations representing 2.5 billion people in the networked world in which we now live. Just one of her achievements, but what an achievement. What a legacy for future generations, including, may I say, the Commonwealth Youth Orchestra, whose foundation she supported and about which she spoke to me with such passion, knowing that we both had such interest in music.

Her devotion brought her to every corner of the kingdom, where she would show her humour and humanity. In 2004, when Ivan Henderson was still the Member of Parliament, she came to Harwich to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the town charter. Her programme included seeing the historic carvings in the town jail, but when the late Andy Morrison, the mayor, announced, "You will now be taken to the jail, your Majesty" a pall fell over the royal party. He attempted to rephrase the invitation, but Prince Philip just retorted, "That wasn't much better!" and she threw back her head and roared with laughter.

Later that day, as she stepped into the crowd on Harwich quay, she said to the mayoress, Pam Morrison, "My dear, don't let me miss any children." A three-year-old boy was duly lifted over the barrier. He gave his flowers to the mayoress at first, but Her Majesty, unfazed, chatted to the boy and charmed him. He saw her take the little bunch of flowers into her own hands, and she carried them for the rest of the tour.

She combined global leadership, such principle and dedication with such humanity and care. She has gone to the light, who some call God, who inspires us all. God rest her soul. May he comfort all those who were closest to her. God save the King.

2.29 pm

Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab): It is an honour to be able to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and to offer my condolences and those of all of my constituents to King Charles and the whole royal family as they face their personal loss.

Right hon. and hon. Members have rightly praised Her Majesty's admirable work ethic, her sense of duty, which has never wavered, and her unparalleled dedication to public service. Her Majesty served us right until the very end, forever committed to her people and her country. She lived and symbolised the very best of our

constitutional system, the value of a royal family, what it gives to our country and the part that they play in our national life.

One of the proudest days of my life was when my dad was awarded an OBE at Buckingham Palace. My whole family just could not get over the fact that we would get the chance to hang out in the Queen's house. On that day, it fell to the Queen's daughter, the Princess Royal, to hand out the honours, but the whole occasion was made magical because it followed precisely the exact example of the Queen herself.

I will also never forget arriving in this place for the very first time in 2010, standing in front of the Speaker's Chair and taking hold of this House's copy of the holy Koran, on which I swore my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen as one of this House's first ever female Muslim Members of Parliament.

The Queen's relationship with Birmingham was strong and, in return, we Brummies had a deep affection for her and gratitude for the time that she devoted to us in the 70 years of her reign. Over the years, she visited Villa Park, the Bullring, many of our railway stations, the NEC, the International Convention Centre, Pebble Mill and the Hippodrome. Of course, we have just hosted the Commonwealth games, an important moment for our city, which has such a deep connection with the Commonwealth and which is inextricably linked with the Queen.

Like so many thousands of Brummies, as much as I am a child of Birmingham, England and Britain, I am also a child and grandchild of the Commonwealth. Millions of British citizens have a similar family history, making them a part of the Commonwealth family, and we recognise Her Majesty as the loving matriarch of the Commonwealth, its guardian and its guiding light. Her commitment to the Commonwealth and her championing of it recognised and respected our heritage. She gave institutional and spiritual meaning and the heart and soul of belonging to those of us who are citizens of our great nation, equal before the laws of our land, but who do not have centuries of birthright claim upon these our islands, and we thank her for it.

For me, the Queen's Christian faith always stood out. She was a committed Christian and, as we know, Supreme Governor of the Church of England. It might surprise some that her commitment to her Christian faith could mean so much to those of us who practise and observe other faiths and belong to other faith communities, but in a speech at Lambeth Palace to mark her diamond jubilee, the Queen said:

"The concept of our established Church is occasionally misunderstood and, I believe, commonly under-appreciated. Its role is not to defend Anglicanism to the exclusion of other religions. Instead, the Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country."

She was Defender of the Faith, but she was a Queen for those of us with other faiths and, indeed, for those of none.

May God make it easy for her. May he give her loved ones strength. And if I may, I offer this House an Islamic verse, which Muslims recite when someone dies and which I hope will resonate with the Queen's Christian faith, too:

"Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon"—
to God we Belong, and to God we all return.

2.34 pm

Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): I rise to make my own tribute as well as one on behalf of my constituents of North East Hertfordshire, in Royston, Baldock, Buntingford and Letchworth. The Queen was very much loved and admired in our area—a remarkable woman and wonderful head of state. She knew our area well from visiting her mother's family, who live in St Paul's Walden, a village near Hitchin.

We were lucky that the Queen was able to be with us for some of our area's most important events. She opened the new North Herts Leisure Centre at Letchworth Garden City and later, in 1993, my first year as an MP, she came to open a new housing development at Beech Hill and a sheltered housing scheme at Tabor Court in Letchworth. Letchworth was also proud that she chose the Marmet pram, made in Letchworth, as the baby carriage for the new King. On such occasions, what struck me was the Queen's ability to put people at their ease and get them to talk to her. She was kindly and had that dry sense of humour.

I remember one Privy Council meeting at a time when the country was having difficulties with the European Union—similar to those mentioned by the right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett), although in a different period. At this particular meeting, Her Majesty approved the high hedges order for Guernsey. Afterwards, she said with a twinkle in her eye: "I am so pleased that we have sorted out those high hedges in Guernsey—is anything else going on?"

People in North East Hertfordshire loved the Queen and we will miss her. Our thoughts are with the royal family. Long live the King!

2.36 pm

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): There have been some wonderful tributes to Her late Majesty the Queen; in particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood) talked about the importance of the Commonwealth and of faith to the late Queen.

This is my opportunity to say a few words on behalf of my constituents in Kingston upon Hull North. I was pleased when my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition referred to some words of the adopted son of Kingston upon Hull, the poet Philip Larkin, who penned them 45 years ago for the silver jubilee celebrations. As with all great poems, the words resonate as much on this day as they did in 1977. I repeat them:

"In times when nothing stood
But worsened, or grew strange,
There was one constant good:
She did not change."

My city of Kingston upon Hull has a rebellious history when it comes to the monarchy, having slammed the city gates against the King in the civil war. But the city took Queen Elizabeth to our hearts, and we were very firmly in the royalist camp during this second Elizabethan age. Her Majesty visited the city many times and met its people. During her reign, she was in Hull on some of the most important days in the life of the city and the region. They include the opening of the iconic Humber bridge in 1981, celebrating the city's

[Dame Diana Johnson]

700th birthday in 1999, and visiting Hull in 2017 when we were the UK city of culture. The late Queen's first visit was actually to Hull Royal Infirmary in 1957; she came again 50 years later to open the Queen's Centre for Oncology and Haematology at Castle Hill Hospital in 2009. The city will miss her.

Although the sovereign's passing is a historic moment for the United Kingdom, our Commonwealth and many others around the world, at this time we must remember above all else that a family has lost a beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. This loss to the nation resonates personally with the loss of one's own parents or grandparents. In particular, I remember my auntie Betty—a staunch royalist who loved the Queen and was also born in 1926.

On behalf of the people of Hull, my thoughts and prayers are with the royal family at this saddest of times. I also express condolences on behalf of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, on which I sit. Although there is great sadness at this time, let us also remember a long life of service, so well lived and devoted to this nation—a life that should be celebrated. The Queen was a member of that greatest generation who herself, as we have heard, served in uniform in world war two, helping to secure our democracy's survival against tyranny. This was also a Queen who embraced change throughout her life and saw us into the digital age.

It was a special honour to be sworn in as a Privy Councillor over Zoom during the covid pandemic; I did not have any of the worries about falling over the footstool. The Queen was on a very large screen in front of me. She looked entirely at ease and was taking this new technology completely in her stride—perhaps rather more so than the Lord President of the Council at that time, the right hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg).

To conclude, like the vast majority of Britons alive today, I have known no other monarch; but sadly we now have reached the point where change has come. Alongside the condolences to the royal family, we look to the new King Charles III. One era is ending, and a new one is beginning. Queen Elizabeth II would want us to go forward as a great nation, in all our faiths and beliefs, proving that she was never mistaken in hers. God save the King.

2.40 pm

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): In paying tribute to Her late Majesty, may I, on behalf of my constituents in North Thanet, simply say that our condolences are with His Majesty King Charles, the Queen Consort and all the members of the royal family? The then Prince Charles, speaking at the jubilee, opened his remarks by saying: "Your Majesty, mummy". I think we all need to remember that this family has lost a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother. We all feel their pain, and our thoughts and prayers really are with them.

I was nine years old when King George VI died. I can remember it fairly vividly. Rather like the right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett), I think the next most memorable event in my connection with

the royal family was the bar of chocolate that we were all given at the coronation—and I seem to remember we got a coronation mug as well.

For 70 years, so far as I am concerned, this great lady has been my lodestar, my monarch. I was listening on the wireless—I think some people called it a radio—this morning, on my way up from Kent, to a caller who said that if we really want to honour Her Majesty's memory, then it would behove us well to emulate the way that she lived and served in her life. I think that is something that in this House we might all bear in mind.

Those of us who had the privilege of meeting Her Majesty face to face all remember—without exception, I think—what has been referred to over and over again today: the twinkle in those beautiful eyes and the smile that is now lighting up heaven. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

2.42 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): It is a privilege to speak on behalf of the Green party of England and Wales and pay tribute to Queen Elizabeth II. Above all else, she was a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother. I know I speak for the people of Brighton, Pavilion when I offer my sincerest condolences, in particular to her immediate family and to her loved ones. They have lost someone very dear to them on a deeply personal level, and our thoughts are with them all.

But we have lost her too. Perhaps the most recognisable public figure in the world today, the Queen has been a uniquely enduring part of the fabric of our lives for nine remarkable decades. In moments of national crisis and in moments of national pride, she was always there. Through turbulence, through uncertainty, she was always there as a fixed point—as a steadying, guiding figure that we all felt we knew. And of course, for most of us, she is indeed the only monarch that we have ever known.

I, too, was drawn to the lines of Philip Larkin. Indeed, I find it symbolic that so many in the House have been drawn to the words that he wrote and which are engraved on a memorial in Queen Square in Bloomsbury, erected to mark Her Majesty's silver jubilee. I hope the House will indulge me, as they bear repetition:

"In times when nothing stood
But worsened, or grew strange,
There was one constant good:
She did not change."

Listening to the radio and watching the news over the past 24 hours or so, I have been struck by just how much that dependability and stability meant to people, by how many people's lives the Queen touched in a very direct way, and by memories from those who met her of her deep humanity.

I know that there are millions of people in Britain who are not necessarily monarchists, but who are none the less deeply mourning the Queen; who feel a profound sense of loss; and who also had huge respect and admiration for her. They—we—saw in her an extraordinary work ethic, a deep stoicism and an extraordinary wisdom gained over so many years. We saw the values of selflessness and sense of duty, and also the personal side of her character: that humility, the kindness and the famous sense of humour that has been spoken about so much today. From the marmalade sandwiches allegedly secreted

away in her iconic black handbag to joining James Bond on the zipwire, she was a Queen unafraid to be playful. So many people speak of the twinkle in her eye and of her genuine interest in the world, across which she travelled so extensively.

That determination to be seen to connect with people saw the Queen become the most travelled monarch in history, making more than 285 state visits. She broke many other records, too: she was not only our longest-serving monarch, but the one woman from the British royal family ever to have served in the armed forces and the only modern Head of State to have served during world war two. That all speaks to her driving purpose, that deep sense of duty.

Today, young and old, people of all faiths and none, royalists and republicans across our four nations, the Commonwealth and the world are united in recognition that she worked so tirelessly until the very last days of her remarkable life. From all walks of life and all corners of the globe, people want to pay their respects—and Her Majesty did inspire genuine respect, as well as admiration, love and affection. She is part of the world's collective understanding of Britishness—the epitome of faith and steadfastness. I thank her for her devotion and for her dignity. Her enduring legacy will be as multifaceted as she herself was in life, but I believe that she would want the most abiding aspect of that legacy to be hope and solidarity, as symbolised by the double rainbow that stretched across the skies above Buckingham Palace yesterday, shortly after the announcement of her death. Rest in peace, Your Majesty, and thank you.

2.47 pm

Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con): I rise to pay tribute to a very remarkable and wonderful lady, not just on my own behalf but on behalf of the constituents of Central Devon.

Queen Elizabeth II, our longest-reigning monarch, a passionate Head of the Commonwealth for which she did so much, was loved, admired and recognised throughout the world in a life that spanned so much. When she came to the throne, world war two was a very fresh memory, there was still rationing and man had yet to walk on the moon. She reigned through Suez and the Cuban missile crisis; she saw the Beatles, she saw a solitary football World cup victory and she saw Concorde fly; she witnessed industrial unrest on an industrial scale; and in her own family she suffered great personal tragedy. She was there alongside us for the dawn of a new millennium. She joined James Bond for the opening of the London Olympics and Paddington for the jubilee. She said of the Lionesses and their recent triumph:

“You have all set an example that will be an inspiration for girls and women today, and for future generations.”

That could equally be said of her.

Elizabeth, as we have heard, has always been here. She has always been a part of our lives and a part of our world. Perhaps, in essence, that is why she will be so sorely missed. She was certainly with us in Devon and the west country; she would have known my constituency well, as I have no doubt she did all our constituencies. She was a frequent visitor to the south-west and was there as recently as the G7 summit, where for the first time she met President Biden, one of the 13 Presidents

of the United States whose acquaintance she made—all of them since Harry S. Truman, with the exception of Lyndon Johnson.

When Her Majesty was 13, she accompanied her family, including her father King George VI, to the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. She would remember that as the first time she met a young cadet—her future husband, Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark. That is something of which Devon can be particularly proud. As Queen, she returned to Dartmouth with Prince Philip before the coronation.

Many of us have shared today our personal reflections of our contact with Her Majesty. Mine came as Comptroller of the Royal Household in our Whips Office and briefly as Lord President of the Council. My impression of her in my small number of private meetings with her was that she was sharp; that she was kindly; and that she was humorous—she had a twinkle in her eye. Indeed, when I went to see her for the first time, the equerry turned to me and, to put me at ease, told me a little anecdote about an ambassador who had gone to see her for the first time. On approaching her, to his horror, his phone sprang to life and started ringing, and he looked panicked. After he had turned it off, she turned to him and said, “Perhaps you should have answered it—it might have been something important.”

I thought that perhaps Her Majesty could be a little mischievous on occasion. I did not know her well enough to be sure of that, but I was certain of the fact that she could be great fun—that was something that shone through when meeting her—and wise, of course, based on her huge experience of life and the world. Just as everyone told me, she was someone who put you at your ease—someone it was good to be with. She made you feel special.

It was the honour of my life to spend a little time with her. Queen Elizabeth, thank you—you gave us all so much. Rest in peace. God save the King.

2.51 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab):

“Ring out the old, ring in the new,”

wrote Tennyson on the death of his much-loved friend. We proclaim, “The Queen is dead, long live the King”, but it feels too sudden, too soon, too sharp a turn in our lives. The death of a queen is painful—it hurts. We do not have to ask,

“O death, where is thy sting?”

because we know—the nation feels the sting of death. It is as if a member of our own family has departed. Weirdly, we feel as if we ought to tell members of our family who have long departed the news. Even Google, with its brightly coloured logo, is grey today, which is sort of ironic for Her Majesty, who wore every colour under the sun at some point in her life.

The poet, priest and Member of Parliament, John Donne, said when preaching at Whitehall in 1627 that the protection against a fearful death was a life devoted to a calling. That is exactly what it was—a life devoted to a calling. How often must the Queen have thought, “Not another opening. Not another royal variety performance. Not another unfunny comedian. Not another Prime Minister.” Yet she did her duty. In the words of the promise of the boy scouts and the guides,

[Chris Bryant]

“to do my best to do my duty to God and to the Queen”.

She did her duty to herself.

I pledged my allegiance to the Queen 10 times as a clergyman and as Member of Parliament—we all have—and to her heirs and successors. In a sense, that is not personal at all. Our allegiance was to her as Head of State—the embodiment of our shared life as the United Kingdom—but I suspect that we felt that we all owed allegiance to her personally, because she had earned her moral authority. She donned a uniform to do her bit to fight fascism. She could not lead us into battle, or give us laws, or administer justice, but she gave us her heart and her devotion to these old islands and to all the peoples of our brotherhood of nations, as she faithfully promised in 1957.

There are other queens. I have met a few—but then again, too few to mention. However, we—and, I note, the President of France—call only one the Queen

The Queen’s face was on the coins my constituents started producing at the Royal Mint in Llantrisant in 1953. However, to mix my poets, she knew that

“Our little systems have their day”—

we are

“Dress’d in a little brief authority”.

I know that some people deify the monarchy, but that is to miss the point: the point is the humanity of the monarchy. Richard II, under whose great hammerbeam ceiling Her Majesty will lie in state in a few days’ time, is given a great speech by Shakespeare, which ends:

“You have mistook me all this while.

I live with bread like you, feel want

Taste grief, need friends”—

not just bread, of course, but marmalade sandwiches as well.

Most movingly of all, the Queen was as human as any other widow in losing her husband, her consort, her life companion. None will forget her sitting alone at Philip’s funeral. It is a sign of their enduring love that her and Philip’s deaths came closer in time than those of any other reigning monarch and their consort in our history. I thank God that it was in her reign that men were able to declare their love to one another, and women were able to do the same.

I end with words that have never felt more appropriate than for our longest-reigning monarch, who lived through holocaust and war, and led us through years of unimaginable turbulence:

“The weight of this sad time we must obey;

Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.

The oldest hath borne most: we that are young

Shall never see so much, nor live so long.”

God save the King.

2.56 pm

David Mundell (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con): Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had a lifelong and deep-felt love for Scotland, which we have already heard about. That was reciprocated by the people of Scotland, who held her, and indeed still hold her, in deep affection. I had the opportunity myself to see that close up, both as a Member of the Scottish

Parliament when it reconvened in 1999, and subsequently as Secretary of State for Scotland. At the opening of the Scottish Parliament, the Queen declared:

“I have trust in the good judgement of the Scottish people, I have faith in your commitment to their service and I am confident in the future of Scotland.”

She reaffirmed that belief in, and commitment to, Scotland on each subsequent opening of the Scottish Parliament, although she told me she always found it amusing that, as soon as the Scottish Parliament was formally opened, it went on recess, or on holiday, as she referred to it.

As we have heard, the Queen was also extremely well informed about everything that was going on in politics. At the time of my first substantive conversation with her as Secretary of State, there had been a major incident in Parliament. In 2015, rather more members of the Scottish National party had been elected than might have been anticipated, and there was a little conflict about who should sit on one of the Opposition Benches—the then Member for Bolsover and some other Labour Members were not so keen on SNP members occupying it. The Queen was very familiar with the situation and sought to interrogate me on the rights and wrongs of the issue, but I found myself blurting out, “Oh, your Majesty, that’s buttockgate.” I thought, “In my first meeting with the Queen, I’ve said the word ‘buttock’. What is to happen?” But rather than me being taken off to the Tower or some other place, the Queen just laughed. She found it all very amusing. She was interested in what was happening in Parliament and in the day-to-day events.

The Queen had many connections with my constituency, from opening the Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary, to visiting the town of Lockerbie after the devastating air disaster. Most tellingly, I found a clipping from a 1956 edition of *The Glasgow Herald*. It stated:

“Previous royal visits to Scotland having neglected to include Biggar, in South Lanarkshire, the Queen decided to make amends in October of 1956. As this paper observed: ‘A thoughtful gesture by Her Majesty added 90 minutes in time and 35 miles in distance to her programme.’”

But she felt that Biggar was the only county town omitted from recent royal tours. That was the Queen. She wanted to include every community across the United Kingdom and of course the people of Biggar turned out in their masses to thank her for that very generous gesture.

Scotland and the whole of the United Kingdom have lost not just the Queen but a dear and true friend whose like we shall not see again. God bless her and God save the King.

3 pm

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow the “buttocks” of the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell)—it will be the first time he has heard that, as well.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to pass on my condolences to the royal family and also to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen on behalf of my own family, constituents in Edinburgh South and people all over her beloved Scotland. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth was a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother to her own family, but she was also a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to the nation. We will all remember where we were when we learned of her death yesterday.

We will always remember that it was in Scotland that she spent her last weeks and days and, as we have heard already, she loved being in Scotland and particularly on the Balmoral estate—the tranquillity, the great outdoors and the complete absence of any speed limits.

The Queen loved Scotland and Scotland loved the Queen. The ties between Scotland and our longest-reigning monarch are plentiful, from her very first public speech as a young princess in Aberdeen at the opening of the British Sailors Society, to the yarn of her wedding dress being woven in Scotland, Royal Yacht Britannia being built on the Clyde and retired to the Forth, as well as the opening of the first Forth bridge and the second one 53 years later. She always looked forward to the royal week in Edinburgh each year. Scotland was, as she described it, her “special place”. She said at the opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 that,

“if I may make a personal point”

Scotland occupies

“such a special place in my own and my family’s affections.”

I remember my own childhood and the traditions that revolved around Her late Majesty. Every Christmas, she was as much a part of our family as the rituals of the tree and the turkey as every generation of our family crowded around the television for her 3 o’clock Christmas address. She transcended every generation all the way to my two-year-old daughter, who now knows who that was drinking tea with Paddington. I have yet to explain to Zola that Paddington’s friend has passed away.

Over the past 24 hours, I have tried and struggled to find the language to describe her, but the one word that a constituent said to me late last night was “iconic”. She was the very definition of iconic. She was on every pound I ever spent—admittedly fewer than many others because I am a Scot—and on every letter that I ever sent. Her name is on dozens of plaques and buildings all over my constituency and tens of thousands all over the country. She embodied what it means to be British and epitomised public duty, decency and dignity. She picked us up when we were down and when our children and grandchildren look back at this time, it will be Elizabeth II above all else who they will remember as the thread through every part of our post-war history. She was truly our greatest monarch.

I would love to tell a humorous anecdote—I hope that somebody else will tell it—about the visit to Balmoral that she had with Dick Griffin, one of her former protection officers, but there is no time to do that. Somebody else might do so shortly. I never met Her Majesty but we all think we did because she was such an integral part of and influence on our lives. Everyone thinks they did meet her, because anyone who did never stops telling the story. That is the impact she had on each of their lives.

I can only imagine the pain and grief the royal family feel today and that pain and grief is compounded by the duty that King Charles III now has to lead this nation. I, the people of Edinburgh South and the people of Scotland simply say thank you for everything, Ma’am, rest in peace, and God save the King.

3.4 pm

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): I feel I cannot match the eloquence of the many wonderful speeches we have heard today, but I want to share for a

few moments my personal sadness at this terrible loss. I am sure that sense of sadness is shared also by my constituents in Chipping Barnet.

Her late Majesty was a woman of remarkable charm, warmth and kindness, typified by the lovely smile that adorned so many hundreds of millions of images of her published during her 70-year reign. She could come out with rather unnervingly direct comments sometimes on matters in the news, often with a twinkle in her eye, deploying that mischievous sense of humour about which so many have spoken today.

When I met Her late Majesty, I was so star-struck in her presence that I scarcely felt able to string a sentence together. If she noticed, she was far too kind and polite to mention it. Her enthusiasm for Northern Ireland featured in many of our conversations during my time as Secretary of State. At an audience she kindly granted me at Hillsborough Castle, she remarked gleefully that she always felt a sense of such excitement flying into Belfast and catching sight of the Harland & Wolff cranes. She said, “You know there is only one place in the world you can be when you see those landmark cranes.”

As Northern Ireland Secretary, my team and I had provided some suggestions on the itinerary for the 2014 royal visit. I felt they might be a little more daring than previous plans for the visit, so it was with some nervousness that I arrived at the first stage of the programme at St George’s Market, which saw Her late Majesty mingle among the crowds in a way that would have been inconceivable in Belfast just a few years previously. Later, a walk by Her late Majesty around the set of “Game of Thrones” in the Paint Hall Studios was a social media phenomenon, but politely—and probably wisely—she declined the invitation to sit on the Iron Throne.

History, I am confident, will record her role in promoting peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland as one of the greatest achievements of Queen Elizabeth II. As we have heard and as we all know, she suffered personal tragedy at the hands of the Provisional IRA, yet she was willing to shake hands with the late Martin McGuinness and even welcome him to her home in Windsor. Her visit to the Republic of Ireland in 2011 was truly a landmark moment. Britain and Ireland share hundreds of years of contested and often violent history, and for centuries to come I am sure people will recall that 2011 state visit as a turning point that played a significant role in moving us on from a conflicted past towards a better future.

Her late Majesty was the last Head of State anywhere in the world to have donned a uniform in world war two. As our new Prime Minister said, Queen Elizabeth was the rock upon which we built the modern nation we are today. She has been an unchanging constant in all our lives, there for us in good times and bad. As we move on from the Elizabethan to a new Carolingian age, this loss truly marks the end of an era. Without her presence, life in this country will never be the same again. God save the King.

3.8 pm

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): My thoughts, prayers and condolences, and those of communities across Newcastle North, are with His

[Catherine McKinnell]

Majesty the King, the royal family and the country as we mourn, remember and celebrate the incredible life of Her late Majesty.

On learning the news of her passing yesterday, as I am sure was the case for many, I shed a tear. I was asked by one of my children what the Queen meant to me, and it was only when I thought about how I would answer that question that I realised the profound impact her ever-presence had had: a strong, steadfast matriarch, unwavering in her calm, measured, dignified approach, no matter the challenges thrown at her or at our nation—and there have been many.

So often she captured the mood of her country, shared our joys and provided comfort. Her intervention during the pandemic, a time of such anxiety and unease, was pitch-perfect and soothed the nation. The tributes have been global—as was her reach—and, at the same time, so deeply personal; a unique, unrivalled and personal connection to millions of people across the globe. As I am sure is the case for many Members across the House, on every school visit I make, I am asked whether I know the Queen. Although Newcastle can seem a long way from Buckingham Palace, Her late Majesty is felt very closely.

We in Newcastle have been privileged to have had many visits from Her late Majesty over the years. Images of her visits show the sheer joy that she brought every time she came, whether to open Newcastle's Eldon Square, to visit the Millennium bridge, or to visit the city library. Indeed, I was only recently in Eldon Square buying new school shoes for my children, and we stopped and remarked upon the prominent plaque marking her visit to open it in 1977. Her legacy will live on for many years to come.

Her late Majesty had a particular connection with our Metro service. She opened the Tyne and Wear Metro in 1981, naming the Queen Elizabeth II metro bridge over the Tyne and travelling on the 4020 metrocar. The original 1981 metrocar received a makeover for this year's platinum jubilee and for the golden jubilee, when she got to travel in a golden metrocar.

Her late Majesty's love and knowledge of horses is, of course, legendary. We were honoured to have her visit Newcastle Gosforth Park racecourse in my constituency for the famous Northumberland Plate race day. The photos from that day show her beaming from ear to ear in the way that only racing can bring about.

There is such a rich life of duty, service and deep faith to reflect on; there is so much to learn from her life and her example; and there is so much to do to ensure that her legacy endures. May perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

3.11 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I am sure that I speak for other colleagues when I say that when a debate has been going on for four hours, one feels more and more inadequate about what one is going to say and how one can do true justice to this magnificent tapestry.

When Mr Speaker opened the debate, he said that only a score of Members were alive during the previous reign; I must confess that I am one of them, but my

memories of it are very dim indeed, as I was so young when the Queen came to the throne. She has been, as so many people have said, an extraordinary guiding star to us. Some of the best parts of these tributes have been wonderful literary allusions, as well as personal memories.

I remember talking to her once during my time on the Public Accounts Committee. I was very nervous because we were trying to abolish the royal train—a train so expensive and slow that it could travel only during the night—but when I raised it with her, she immediately defused the whole issue. She was charm itself, and despite our efforts, I think the royal train carried on running for many years after that—[*Interruption.*] And still does!

I remember that, at a Privy Council meeting, I was quite nervous—although quite proud—to mention to the Queen that my father had been Clerk of the Privy Council decades earlier. I was particularly nervous, because when I had proudly mentioned it as a younger man, the Duke of Edinburgh said that the whole Privy Council was a “bloody waste of time”—indeed, it is quite formulaic. When Nick Clegg was Lord President of the Privy Council, he actually turned over two pages of orders and nobody noticed apart from the Queen, who immediately stopped proceedings. When I mentioned my father, she was so kind. Of course, the then Clerk had no memory of one of his predecessors from four decades before, but she immediately remembered my father and thanked me for his service. What a wonderful, kind and superbly astute person she was.

Before I sit down, may I just mention one thing? I was struck by the wonderful speech by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood), who spoke on behalf of Muslims. I am not an Anglican—we Catholics had a bit of a torrid time under the first Elizabeth, when one of my ancestors was hanged, drawn and quartered merely for being a Catholic priest, and we did not do so well under the second Charles, either—but I think the Queen played an absolute blinder in the way that she carried out her role as Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

We all know that so many top politicians just don't do God. They are embarrassed to talk about religion and feel that by doing so they put themselves on a pedestal that they will be dragged down from. So many people talk about service, and I think that what epitomised her service was that it came from her deep faith. Unlike all of us, who spent so many years trying to get into this place to serve the public, she never asked for this job, but she was sustained all her life by her deep and abiding faith. When people were sad, in mourning or experiencing difficulties, her Christmas broadcast appealed to and comforted people of all faiths and none. We really should thank her for that, because it is so difficult to do.

In one of those Christmas broadcasts, over 50 years ago, she said:

“Wise men since the beginning of time have studied the skies. Whatever our faith, we can all follow a star—indeed we must follow one if the immensity of the future opening before us is not to dazzle our eyes”.

Dear colleagues, she has been our guiding star for all that time. Remember that her first broadcast was 80 years ago, to children displaced by war. She has been our guiding star. Eternal rest grant unto her; may perpetual light shine upon her.

3.16 pm

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): I am grateful for this opportunity to give a tribute to the late Queen on behalf of my constituents in East Renfrewshire. East Renfrewshire Council has opened a book of condolence this morning, and I know that many local residents will want to take that opportunity to pay their respects and share memories of meeting the late Queen and what she meant to them.

To so many people in my community and far beyond, she was simply a constant. She was, after all, the Queen for longer than most of us here have been alive and the only monarch that we have ever known. Her reign stretched across a society that has changed so much in the many intervening years, but the thing that never changed throughout all that time was her focus, which always remained on her duty. That sense of service and duty and her resolve to persist was a hallmark throughout her reign. I do not think that anyone could fail to be moved by the fact that that continued even this week, as she dealt with the installation of a new Prime Minister. In fact, during her reign, the late Queen saw 15 Prime Ministers, five First Ministers and 13 US Presidents. That puts this in perspective; in every way, this is the end of an era.

Her sense of public duty, which spanned that whole era, was very close to everyone who came into contact with the late Queen. I will always remember the great regard that my gran had for her. She always followed the Queen's movements with great interest. They shared a birthday and she saw that as being very significant. She was very pleased to be able to attend a number of royal visits. I grew up in Angus, which means that my home was not very far from Glamis, so I think that my gran's interest stemmed very much from knowing that there was that local connection, because the Queen was known to have spent many happy times in the area.

Of course, the late Queen was involved in so many different local areas, places, organisations and charities. That means that she will be missed in all of those spheres, too, and I think that people will feel that loss very personally because they had that personal connection to her. They will feel that this loss is also their loss. I know that many will take comfort from the words that they have heard today.

For all her public presence and influence, it is obvious that most of all she will be missed by her family. I hope that in time they will also be able to take some comfort, perhaps by looking back on a life of duty that was well lived and by reflecting on the memories that people across the world will have shared. I am sure that we all know from our own lives that very deep sense of grief and loss that the King and the royal family will be experiencing just now. It is difficult to lose a loved family member, and my thoughts and the thoughts of people in East Renfrewshire are with them today.

3.19 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I returned to Westminster, after the dreaded news, from our home at Upton Cressett in Shropshire, having this morning tolled our Hanover bell, struck in 1701 to respect the Act of Succession. I struck it 96 times in respectful memory of Her Majesty. Farewell our longest, and most loved and devoted sovereign in the history of our country and of

the Crown in Parliament. She loved her people, and they loved her, as did my constituents in Stone, for whom I speak. They showed that in those heady days of her 70th jubilee, which they joyfully celebrated with her, never forgetting the profound loss of her dearly loved husband, Prince Philip, only a few months before.

As the Queen requested, God helped her to keep her vow of service, which she made on her accession to the throne in February 1952. Born as I was on 10 May 1940—the very day that Churchill became Prime Minister—I vividly recall that moment in February 1952, at the age of 11, when the headmaster declaimed to us: “The King is dead. God save the Queen.” I watched her coronation with wonder on a small television screen in black and white on 2 June 1953, just as Hillary climbed Everest and we won the Ashes—it was a triple whammy because of the coronation itself.

The Queen was graceful in her majesty and, in equal parts, she was selfless; she had Christian faith and integrity; she was constant; she was wise; she had an extraordinary, spontaneous beauty; and she had the kindest and most expressive eyes, and a gentle and humorous smile. I was honoured and privileged to meet her and to speak with her several times. What she said to this lowly Back Bencher was more poignant than I deserved. “We read you in *Hansard*”, she said once. “Your Majesty”, I replied, “I am very surprised: very few do—particularly on the issue of Europe.” She thought that was very amusing.

I was proud to be knighted by the Queen herself at Windsor, one of the greatest honours of my life. She was the mother of our nation and of the Commonwealth. She was a supreme diplomat for our country and, as many have said, in Ireland also. She lived in the hearts of her subjects, who will always remember her. For them, she will never die. All our prayers are with the whole royal family. Mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, may she rest in peace. God save the King.

3.22 pm

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): At this very sad time, we remember the life of Queen Elizabeth II, with gratitude for her love and service to our nation. Her Majesty lived her life guided by a deep sense of duty—a duty to her people, her country, her family—and an overwhelming sense of public service. She carried out her duties without stinting, without complaint and through the toughest of times and the darkest of hours. As a politician, I appreciated the stability and constancy that she brought through recent difficult and tumultuous years; how she was so attentive to adapting to periods of social change through her time; and her respect for our democracy.

That is why we mourn our Queen: her sense of duty, her humour and her warmth touched the hearts of the nation and indeed so many across the world in her beloved Commonwealth and beyond. She lived a truly remarkable life. She was purposeful in all she did. Young and old loved her. I am not the only MP to know that probably the first and most important question we will always be asked on a visit to a primary school is, “Have you met the Queen?”

Today, I laid flowers at Buckingham Palace on behalf of my constituents, with our thoughts and prayers for King Charles III and all his family. My constituents

[Seema Malhotra]

are sharing in the national grief, and I have been receiving moving and thoughtful messages from them. One said:

“News of the passing of Her Majesty deeply saddened me. Her reign spanning over 70 years was a celebration of leadership, courage and dedication. She led the nation with exemplary steadfastness even while battling with her personal grief.”

Another said:

“Rest in Peace to an amazing icon. She was the face of Britain and was loved by all.”

Locally, we recall the special memory of a visit by Her late Majesty in October 2004 to open a new wing of the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha on Alice Way in Hounslow. The Gurdwara has a wonderful library, classes and community wellbeing and support services, all of which she saw. Her visit was just one example of her deep and genuine interest in communities across our nation and in all faiths that saw people from all backgrounds feel at ease, respected and connected to her. Her visit left a mark and a deep sense of the local community and its story being recognised and valued.

Her late Majesty’s passing also caused me to reflect on how, just in June, we came together to celebrate her platinum jubilee. I attended more than 10 street parties and events in those few days. Even at 96, she had the power to bring people together. She was the inspiration for parties in Feltham, Heston, Bedfont, Hanworth and more widely that were organised by residents, local businesses and our Royal British Legions. People shared their lives after two years of covid. The events reunited friends and neighbours still building their confidence to connect after so much isolation.

The loss of a mother is truly the most painful of moments and, as King Charles III takes on the role of monarch, we know that he will be leading and supporting his whole family in their grief just over a year after the sad passing of Prince Philip. They do not grieve alone. We stand with them at this time. Her late Majesty was admired, loved, respected and revered. She was the best of us and brought out the best in us. Today, we thank her, we mourn her and we celebrate her. God save the King.

3.26 pm

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): Most people who possess power first seek it. Indeed, in this place, we know that many people crave it. Her late Majesty the Queen never sought power—it was truly thrust upon her—but, when she wielded authority, she did more fundamental good and brought more benefit than almost anyone here, and of course for much, much longer.

Most people with influence expect plaudits, but, for Her late Majesty the Queen, acclamation, when it became obvious and clear to her just how much she was loved, was greeted on her part with humility and grace.

Most of those who lead expect to bring change. For her, constancy was the most fundamental thing that she could bring to the nation—a permanent part of who we are as a people; each of us and all of us. It is not that she was behind the times; she was beyond the times.

I remember meeting her a number of times. In particular, 20 years ago in Buckingham Palace she said to me, “Do you use computers in your office?” I said, “Yes, we do,

your Majesty.” She said, “I have such trouble printing things out. Sometimes pages get missed altogether. I have been caught out making speeches like that twice.” She went on to say that, when her husband Prince Philip could not print things, in her words, “The air turns blue.” Her sense of humour was a part of her charm—so obvious and palpable that she could charm even those who were not intuitively or instinctively in favour of the monarchy.

I met her, but I did not know her. Few people knew her well, but we knew that she was there. She was in our consciousness. Not many people think of the sun and the moon—I suppose that astronomers and astrologers do; I have in mind a fusion of William Herschel and Russell Grant—but we know that they are there, for we expect the sun to come up in the morning and we expect to bathe in the light of the moon, and so it was with Her late Majesty. Now, our days are a little dimmer and our nights are a little colder for her passing, for she was in all of our lives for so, so long.

The Queen wore the crown, but of course she was not the Crown. The Crown has a permanent life—it goes on—and the institution she graced is secure in the hands of her heir, her son, our King. This woman, whose life lasted so long, personified dignity, was gracious and, in that way, brought a beauty to her job. For there was, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) said, a beauty about her grace—a quiet, enduring and palpable beauty.

Now that the Crown passes to her dear son, our wonderful King, we must hope that he in his grief will know that he shares that grief with everyone in this House and with all her people, for whom she will remain not merely as a memory but a presence in the Crown itself. May God, as he welcomes Her Majesty to heaven, keep and bless her successor, our King Charles. God save the King.

3.30 pm

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): It is a solemn honour to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and I want to begin by offering my condolences on behalf of my Barnsley constituents and myself to His Majesty the King and all of the royal family in their time of grief.

It is hard to believe that Her late Majesty the Queen is no longer with us. For nearly all of us in this place and beyond, her presence is all we have ever known. There is a sense of loss in the country so profound that it will take time to mourn and to come to terms with. She was not only our Queen; she was someone embedded in our hearts. This special place was earned by her devotion to each and every one of us. She embodied dignity, dedication, duty and a service that was unwavering throughout. Her long life and remarkable reign saw our country through the best of times, but our late Queen was also a source of strength in the worst of times, not least in recent years during the pandemic. Her address to the nation in April 2020 was the tonic to a fear and hopelessness that seemed almost insurmountable. She said, “we will meet again”, and we did. We will miss her deeply.

All of those who have had the privilege to serve in our armed forces know there will be a distinct sadness among the armed forces community. This is because, as our head, the late Queen cared about us deeply. Indeed,

during the second world war, as a Princess, she chose to serve in the Auxiliary Territorial Service. That closeness to and affection for the armed forces was reciprocated by all who have served. It was not just because we knew she was formidable; it was also because we knew she had a great sense of humour.

Many of us, and my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) nodded to it, have enjoyed the story told during the platinum jubilee celebrations by a former royal protection officer, Richard Griffin. While accompanying Her late Majesty on a walk near Balmoral, a group approached asking, "Have you ever met the Queen?" Her response was, "No", before pointing to the protection officer and saying, "but he has!" People did not have to be close to the late Queen to appreciate her sense of humour. The world remembers and will always remember the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics, when she famously was seen to parachute out of a helicopter with Commander James Bond, and who could forget her double act with Paddington?

I am certain that history will judge Her late Majesty as an extraordinary monarch adored by her people, but it will also note that, while the world changed at a rapid rate, the Queen struck the balance perfectly between stability and tradition versus change and modernisation.

A new era now begins, and at this testing moment we must now support the King who is grieving for his mother while leading our nation through a time of mourning. He has already lived a life of service to others in so many ways, serving in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, establishing the Prince's Trust, and being the patron of many, many charities. Just one example is his role as the Colonel-in-Chief of my old regiment, the Parachute Regiment. Recounting the time he took the parachute training course at RAF Brize Norton, he said:

"I felt I should lead from the front, or at least be able to do some of the things that one expects others to do for our country."

It is clear that the King will follow the example set before him: to serve, to lead. The torch has been handed to a new monarch, and that sense of duty will continue to burn brightly. Rest in peace, Queen Elizabeth, and God save King Charles.

3.35 pm

Dame Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): It is with great sadness that I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen on behalf of my constituents. The late Queen was held in the highest esteem in my constituency and throughout the borough of Basingstoke and Deane. Our mayor, Councillor Paul Miller, said only today:

"The commitment that she made to her role and the public service she has given is matchless."

My constituency has a proud loyalist history. At the siege of Basing House, our ancestors, as committed royalists, supported an earlier King Charles, and we proudly, but with sadness, welcome our new King Charles III as our sovereign. As we come together to grieve the loss of Her late Majesty the Queen, we remember the remarkable woman that she was: an inspiration for a nation and a person who made us proud to be part of a United Kingdom. Her loss will be felt not only at home but abroad, particularly by the people who make up our Commonwealth. Just two weeks ago, the Commonwealth

Parliamentary Association held its annual meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and we toasted Her late Majesty as our patron. We will remember her fondly.

It helps at times such as this to share some of our personal memories by way of grieving. I will always remember the first time I had the privilege of meeting Her late Majesty, which was at Balmoral in September 2012 when I was appointed as a Privy Counsellor. As many have already said, such encounters involve a number of briefings. Perhaps knowing that I shared Her late Majesty's love of dogs, I was warned not to encounter the Corgis too closely, because they can be quite selective in who they like and will overtly demonstrate their feelings towards strangers. I kept my distance, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) did not. She was far more daring than me, but left with all her fingers intact.

I also remember the great honour of twice hosting Her late Majesty on Remembrance Sunday as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Walking with Her late Majesty through the Foreign Office can be a nerve-wracking task in its own right—the layout of the Foreign Office is quite complicated—and we reached the top of the final set of stairs only to encounter the most enormous countdown clock showing that we had a matter of seconds to get out to the Cenotaph. Trying to lighten the mood, Her late Majesty simply said, "I hope you've adjusted the timings. I'm getting a bit older and I take more time on the stairs." That was her usual sense of humour at play, trying to put everybody at ease.

I was humbled to receive a damehood in Her late Majesty's final birthday honours list to mark her platinum jubilee, and I will treasure that. Each of us here today took an oath of allegiance to Her late Majesty, to her heirs and successors, so may she rest in peace. God save the King.

3.39 pm

Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab): It is a huge honour to take part in these tributes on behalf of my constituents. As has been said, we must remember that Her Majesty's family are grieving the loss of their mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. The loss of someone in that position in a family is immense for those who go through it; it changes people's lives forever. My sincere condolences go to the family.

We all chose to take on the role of public service, but the Queen did not. She was born to serve—and how she served for her 96 years. When we saw that photograph the other day of her receiving the new Prime Minister, she looked very frail and was clearly not in the best of health, but did any of us really think that, a day or two later, she would not be with us? She was serving to the very end. That was her life, and we are all grateful for that. Her wisdom, and the way she did that, has been immense.

I will mention a couple of things in my life and my memories of the Queen. The first time I saw the Queen was at the silver jubilee when she was travelling from Gypsies Green stadium in South Shields to Sunderland. The village I am from is right in the middle of those two places. We all went to the coast road and saw her for only seconds, probably, but it felt like a lifetime—we were stood there for an hour. It was so exciting and uplifting. Over the years, every time

[Julie Elliott]

Her Majesty came to Sunderland, hundreds of thousands of people would be standing by just to see her car pass.

In those days I never dreamt that I would get to meet the Queen, but I had the privilege of meeting her twice in her diamond jubilee year. When she came to Sunderland that year, she came off a yacht because the port was the most secure place for her to have slept. As she came off, a Vulcan bomber went past and, as everyone has said, she showed that smile and engagement with everybody, as if they were the most important person in the world. I will never forget that.

I will mention the occasion when I visited London with my twin daughters to see a concert. The traffic stopped when we were in Trafalgar Square and we thought, “Oh, who’s coming past?”, and it was the Queen. There is a nursery rhyme about going to London to visit the Queen, and in our family, my daughters say, “When we went to London, we saw the Queen!”

The Queen visited Sunderland many times, the first time as Princess Elizabeth when she launched a ship. It was just after the second world war and Sunderland produced the most ships of anywhere in the world.

I do not want to repeat everything that has been said, but her comforting and calm presence when she addressed the nation is the thing I will miss most—that calming feeling that I got when she addressed the nation lastly in the pandemic, as has been said, and made me think, “Well, we’re all going to be all right.” We all got that calming, nurturing feeling, as if we were one of her own. Losing her at that age, we have to celebrate a life well lived and thank her for a life of service. We remember her, and we hope that she rests in peace eternally.

3.43 pm

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): On behalf of my constituents, I rise to pay tribute to and give thanks for the life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Among all the recollections of right hon. and hon. Members, I will remember her for her service, duty, humility and faith. We witnessed many years of her service, as our longest-reigning monarch, through unrecognisable change. The length of her reign means that only 12% of the population have lived longer than the time that she has been on the throne.

The Queen’s duty to communities in all nations of the United Kingdom, to the Union of the United Kingdom and to the Commonwealth was recognised across the globe. In spite of the admiration in which she was held, and her standing here and around the world, her humility was obvious in the way that she acted, spoke and related to us all. That demonstrated her understanding of the challenges we all face.

At a time of increasing secularisation of society, she turned to her faith for inspiration in challenging times and to give thanks during the better times. Faith was something that she celebrated, rather than hid away, as was reflected on by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh).

I had the privilege of meeting Her Majesty on many occasions. At one time, the issue of pronunciation of Welsh place names came up in conversation. To my

amazement, she said that the one that she recalled best was Coedarhydyglyn, a property within my constituency that even locals wrongly pronounce. It turned out that she spent many summers during her childhood playing on the estate of the late Sir Cennydd Traherne, Coedarhydyglyn, and she had said that she was determined during her childhood to learn to pronounce the place properly.

At these sad times, we now owe the service and commitment that she showed to us to her son, King Charles III. God save the King.

3.45 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Cumbria mourns the loss of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I personally, and all of us in our county, want to express our genuine and deep condolences to the royal family. We have lost our Queen, and it touches every one of us. We can tell from the contributions so far today that this is a personal loss for us, but how much more is it a personal loss for those who have lost a mother, a grandmother and a great grandmother? We grieve with them and we thank her for her service.

The news reached us yesterday as we were winding down the Westmorland county show. The news was devastating, yet it caught us while we were together and it feels like an honour that that was the case. There had been a tremendous couple of days, with thousands of us being in the same place, in the same muddy fields, enjoying time together, and then that moment of dismal unity came about, but I am glad that it happened when we were all together.

The landmarks of the Queen’s reign have been the landmarks of each of our lives. Many who are even older than me will remember her acceding to the throne. I remember the silver jubilee, dancing around a maypole at the age of seven in 1977, and the golden jubilee as a father of a new young child. We think of the diamond jubilee and the joy earlier this year of the platinum jubilee. Her life was our life and her history has become our history; they are inseparable and indivisible and we will ever be touched by it.

Her Majesty’s reign united us; her passing must, too. I believe that it will, and it has already, as we transfer our allegiance to her beloved son, King Charles III. Cumbria, the Lakes and the Dales were loved by Her Majesty the Queen and we loved her in return. Her visits to Cumbria were always massively special to us. Relatively recently, on her visits to Kendal and Windermere, she was presented with Westmorland wild flowers to honour her, Lakeland wool to warm her and Kendal Mint Cake to sustain her.

The times I spent with the Queen were relatively few, but I recall one occasion in particular. I had been an MP for a very short period of time, and she offered me some advice about what you do when a constituent who has had a letter from you thanks you for it and you do not remember the details. She said that happened to her all the time and that she always said, “It’s the least I could do.” That is a wonderful get-out phrase, and I confessed to a few of my constituents that I had occasionally deployed it.

As has been said, Her Majesty did not seek her office; she practised it with utter humility. The most famous human being on planet Earth and yet she acted with the grace and humility that none of us here—no offence,

please—has ever managed to match. She was a constant to us all, but, as has been said already, the constant in her life was her faith in Jesus Christ. Let us remember this: for many people it may be a perfunctory ceremonial faith, but for her it was not; it was a living, active faith in a living saviour. Let us remember this: we have sung for 70 years “God Save The Queen”. If her faith is accurate—I am certain it was—God has saved the Queen. We now transfer our allegiance to King Charles III, who I am proud and honoured to serve. God save the King.

3.49 pm

Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con): I am grateful as a Front Bencher for being permitted to speak from the Back Benches—though in my case it might be hard to keep up. I am aware that my appointment was, along with those of others, one of the last acts of Her late Majesty. That thought will lie with me every day that I go about my duties, because she really was the last of a generation that has now passed—a generation marked by stoicism, humility, modesty and service. Those qualities, too often neglected in our politics and our public life, are ones that I, like all others in this House, seek to emulate.

I am here to represent my constituents in the loyal borough of Newark-on-Trent—loyal because in May 1646, we were the last town to hold out in the English civil war. The town surrendered only when the King—a forebear of Her Majesty’s, and another Charles—said that we must. At the end of the war, the town was racked with disease and pestilence, but all contemporary accounts show that no one regretted their decision to stand by the monarch. That shows that even in a hereditary monarchy, and certainly in our modern democracy, the loyalty of the people to the Crown is not something that any monarch can take for granted; it has to be earned.

From the speeches made from all parts of the Chamber today, we can see that Her late Majesty the Queen, over the course of her long and remarkable reign, earned the respect and admiration—indeed, the love—of her people. She really has been the golden thread that has run through the warp and weft of our national story. My grandmother stood in the crowd on the Mall and watched the Queen and her family celebrate on VE Day. My dad watched the coronation—as did others who have spoken—on a small, rented television set, and marvelled at her beauty. Afterwards, he created a bonfire on the street, and it took the council years to fill in the pothole, so some things clearly never change.

I met Her late Majesty only a few times. Once, I did so on Zoom, as other Members have said they did. It was a Privy Council meeting. As has happened to us all many times during the pandemic, the Zoom failed. Out of the darkness, a voice suddenly emerged. It was Her late Majesty the Queen, and she said, “Well, thank goodness someone kept a landline.”

Just the other day, I went with my family, including my children, who are the great-grandchildren of holocaust survivors, to see Anne Frank’s house. My children, who had gone ahead of us on the tour, came back to me and said that in the secret annexe ahead, among the images on the walls were photos of Her late Majesty the Queen, then Princess Elizabeth, and her sister Princess Margaret. I later researched with my daughters why

that was. Otto Frank, Anne’s father, is recorded as saying later in life that Anne Frank loved the royals—but that was not the only reason. He wanted to put some photos on the wall that would give the children strength, and Anne Frank also said that the beautiful smile kept her going. May the Queen rest in peace, and God save the King.

3.53 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for the loyal constituency of Newark (Robert Jenrick). It falls to our generation to tell of the passing of our gracious sovereign, and the passing of a platinum Elizabethan age. As a young woman, she had responsibility thrust on her, without a manual. She wrote her own story, and in doing so, wrote the story of our nation—a story through which we have all lived. We have known her as a young woman who actively supported the war effort and danced in the street when the war was over, and we saw her jump out of a helicopter in the Olympic ceremony in 2012; that showed us her sense of humour, and showed us that we were more than just medals.

I was in Walsall yesterday when I heard the sad news of Queen Elizabeth’s passing. I know that my constituents in Walsall South are grieving; the owner of Fortune Cookie, our local Chinese takeaway, was in tears. In every school that I and every other Member has visited, the question has always been asked: “Have you met the Queen?” Launer, based in Walsall South, makes her handbags. I hope that the royal link will continue, especially now that we know, thanks to a refugee from Peru, that she used to keep marmalade sandwiches in her handbag to keep her going.

As a lawyer, all I ever knew was “the Queen’s Bench Division” and “Queen’s Counsel”. That, like our stamps and notes, will change to herald a new era.

Having been born in Aden to Goan parents, I had never imagined that I would meet Queen Elizabeth; but I did—in the Gallery in the other place, in the British Museum, and in the Privy Council. Those who have had an audience with her can testify to her wisdom and generosity of spirit. She had the ability to speak with people as though she had known them forever, whether she was talking to a winning jockey or a little girl with a posy, or working to the end to welcome her 15th Prime Minister. Like all of us, she knew that life is a rollercoaster, but she never complained, and only ever mentioned one year as an “annus horribilis”.

Our Queen carried out her duties with dignity, grace and love for us and her country, yet also embraced different countries and cultures through the Commonwealth, always respecting differences, dealing with changes, and acknowledging past mistakes, knowing that life and history move on. Queen Elizabeth reminded us that we are human beings first and members of a race second, and that our duty is to help each other make this world a better place and live in peace—just as she said in her first broadcast. How we will miss those quiet, reassuring messages to the nation, at Christmas and at difficult times.

Duty, service, Defender of the Faith and love for her United Kingdom: a constant that brought us all together. The bright full moon shone down last night, and there was a rainbow over Windsor castle, which reminded us of God’s promise to His faithful. We pray for her

[Valerie Vaz]

grieving family to get through this difficult time, and especially for King Charles III. Eternal rest grant unto Queen Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor: may she rest in peace.

3.56 pm

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Ind): These are indeed the saddest of times for us to gather here today to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen. I suspect that we will all remember where we were yesterday when the news came that doctors were gravely concerned about Her Majesty's health. Our world was suddenly put on hold, and then came the announcement that we had dreaded hearing. Our rock, our stability, the one person who came to symbolise the very best of Britain, was no longer with us.

Her Majesty's sense of duty to serve was especially appreciated by our armed forces. That phrase "for Queen and country" is not just a catchphrase; it is the allegiance that you pledge when you join Her Majesty's armed forces. The Queen was our commander-in-chief, and, having served herself, she was only too aware of the sacrifices that personnel were willing to make, all done in her name.

This emptiness that we now feel is a testament to the admiration, the respect and the affection that we all had for her. Indeed, we have not known a Britain without her. Perhaps we can consider ourselves fortunate that the nation was able to come together this year to mark the Queen's platinum jubilee, and celebrate with her a most incredible life of service, from the street parties that took place across the country—including those in my constituency—to that wonderful celebration outside Buckingham Palace, when the Queen and Paddington Bear stole the show.

On only one occasion did I have cause to write formally to Her Majesty, and that was to ask her if she would agree to Parliament's Clock Tower being renamed the Elizabeth Tower, to mark her diamond jubilee 10 years ago. I was truly honoured when she accepted. The name was formally changed, and we now have a constant parliamentary landmark honouring Her Majesty.

As we now mourn the person we knew, we should reflect on the fact that the constant is also the monarchy itself: the British monarchy that has matured over centuries and allowed our great country to advance, to mature, to thrive as a democracy. Her loss does of course leave a mark—it marks the end of an era—but in our new King, who is well prepared to serve, the monarchy will continue to play its role in how our state functions. So yes, we do mourn the loss of our Queen, but we also transfer our faith and allegiance to our new King, His Majesty Charles III. Long live the King.

3.59 pm

Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): I thank colleagues across the House for their moving words today. Like other Members, I have found the outpouring of affection for our Queen, both from our shores and across the world, deeply heartwarming. I hope the royal family find solace in that over the coming days and weeks.

I have always taken great inspiration from our Queen. She was a woman who found herself in a position of leadership at such a young age; a woman who threw herself into service as not just the most recognisable, but the most admired of global leaders; a woman who steered us through loved times of joy and times of darkness, and who always drew on her own experience and inner strength to help those who most needed it. I am in awe of the way she took on that unimaginable responsibility. She got on with the job, she never stopped, and she has set an example for us all.

One of the proudest moments of my life and for my family was when I was sworn into the Privy Council; these kinds of things do not happen to a girl like me. It was surreal to meet Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II herself via Zoom. She could put anyone at ease, adapting to the challenges, the circumstances and the change. Most of all, though, she was a loving grandmother. As a grandmother myself, I know and understand the complete love that she had for her family. Her children and her grandchildren were the centre of her life, and I know the whole House shares in both their pain and their pride. To us, she was our Queen, our national figurehead, and the greatest and longest serving monarch in British history. To them, she was also Granny. The loss of such a loving presence will be heartbreaking and my heart goes out to them.

Her Majesty the late Queen was a constant figure of strength, integrity and service throughout our lives. She was an inspiration to women across the world, with complete devotion to her duty, her family and her country. She set an example of leadership for women everywhere; the outpouring of condolences from leaders across the world is testament to that. More recently, we will never forget how she guided us through the despair and loneliness of the pandemic. Her values of public service and dignity never wavered.

It is appropriate today that I speak from the Back Benches, because our Queen was greatly loved and admired by the people of my constituency. She visited Greater Manchester many times and was always welcomed with love by the local community. She was last in Manchester a year ago to visit "Coronation Street", where the cast greeted her at the Rovers Return pub to celebrate the show's 60th anniversary. It is just three months since the streets of Ashton, Droylsden and Failsworth were decked with Union Jack flags as we came together to celebrate the platinum jubilee. Our local papers were proud and our local community was proud. She is now gone, but she will be forever missed and always in our hearts. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

4.3 pm

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): I pay tribute to the extraordinarily warm and moving tribute paid by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner).

Queen Elizabeth II famously referred to her late husband as her "strength and stay", but although she would never have claimed it for herself, it was she who was the strength and stay of an entire nation and, indeed, the Commonwealth. The constancy and humble commitment to duty were the hallmarks of her life. She embodied the values that are the best of

our country. In a world of increasing noise and self-promotion, she provided that counterpoint of quiet poise and dignity.

We in Cheltenham are proud of a lifetime's connection with Queen Elizabeth II. It was as a young princess that she came to our town. She gave her name to Princess Elizabeth Way, which remains a major Cheltenham thoroughfare, and planted an oak tree in 1951 to mark its completion. Later that same year, she was at the races—the Cheltenham gold cup—with her mother. History does not relate which Cheltenham event she enjoyed more, opening the road or going to the races. We may have our suspicions, but she was far too professional ever to let on.

Prince Philip was back in 1957 to open an extension to what is now the University of Gloucestershire, and in 2004 the Queen was in Cheltenham to open GCHQ, or “the doughnut” as we refer to it. Indeed, she was a strong supporter of the intelligence agencies and unveiled the plaque at GCHQ's first London home in 2019.

She had a quick mind, as many have observed, and was very much up to speed on current events. In Cheltenham in 2004, when she observed the magnificent hanging baskets that then decorated the front of the municipal offices, she recalled a recent media story about a hanging basket landing on someone's head. She noted that Cheltenham's display was so magnificent that it could wipe out the entire council.

Like many people, I sat down with my children, aged 10 and eight, yesterday and tried to convey the scale of what had happened. Children cannot and probably should not bear, as we do, the aching pain of this loss but, as we mourn, let us explain to them what Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II meant to this nation. Just as Her Majesty the Queen dedicated herself to the service of our country in 1952, let us dedicate ourselves to immortalising her values, her duty, her integrity, her selflessness, her country and her kindness.

The Queen was a woman of faith, and I hope she approached the end with peace. Yesterday, as her death was announced, I thought of her family and those close by as, in the words of a young RAF pilot in 1941, she “slipped the surly bonds of Earth....and touched the face of God.” God save the King.

4.6 pm

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): On behalf of my constituents, I rise to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen.

We mourn the passing of an icon. She was admired across the world and touched our lives in so many positive ways. The Queen was a constant example of service, of duty, of wisdom and of dedication to her people, her country and the Commonwealth. These civic virtues are needed now more than ever. She began her life of service as a child and worked until the final days of her life.

The tone was set during world war two when the then King and Queen chose to stay in London during the blitz and the young Princess Elizabeth joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service. When their home, Buckingham Palace, was bombed, the Queen Mother famously said that she could now look the east end in the face. Ever since then, east-enders have embraced the Queen and her family with a particular bond of love and loyalty.

Of course, today's east end is a very different place. It is more diverse and more connected to the rest of the world and, in particular, the Commonwealth countries. Her Majesty reimagined Britain's post-colonial place in the world, and the Commonwealth has grown to 54 nations and nearly 2.5 billion people.

I can personally relate to the story of the Commonwealth, as I was born in a Commonwealth country, Bangladesh, that joined in 1972. I remember watching with pride as the Queen visited that very new country with Prince Philip in 1983. Her state visit was a big moment for a new nation. It was a time and a moment that made us feel proud to be British, and it made us feel that we belonged not only to this country but to the Commonwealth family. Across the Commonwealth, people remember when the Queen came to town with a great sense of warmth and affection.

Here at home, I had the honour of receiving the Queen at the Royal London Hospital in my constituency when its new facilities were opened. Hospitals are the heart of our national life and were the epicentre of coping with the pandemic. The Queen's words during the pandemic were necessary to give hope and comfort when constituencies like mine were hit so hard.

Other Members have mentioned the Olympic ceremony, one of the highlights of which was when it seemed as though Her Majesty and her most loyal servant, James Bond, were parachuting into the Olympic stadium in London's east end. We pride ourselves on being the coolest part of the country, and Her Majesty made us the coolest place on earth with that stunt. On behalf of my constituents, my thoughts are with her children, her grandchildren, her wider family, and her heir and successor, His Majesty King Charles III.

Her Majesty was unique. She radiated warmth and she embodied decency. We will never see her like again. We will never know such a paragon of civic virtue and a shining beacon of public service. May she rest in peace. Long live the King.

4.10 pm

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the excellent speech from the hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali).

I rise on behalf of all my constituents in Preseli Pembrokeshire to convey our condolences to His Majesty King Charles III and all members of the royal family at this sad time, and to say thank you for a wonderful, long and full life, and an extraordinary reign, which has been a blessing to our nation for seven decades.

Queen Elizabeth II was loved and respected all across the historic county of Pembrokeshire, where her family of course had ancestral roots through the Tudor line. We enjoyed her visits to Pembrokeshire—to St Davids cathedral, and to so many of the excellent charities and community groups that we have in the constituency.

For millions of adults, and certainly for children, whom we meet on constituency school visits, Queen Elizabeth absolutely had something of the mystique and magic that we perhaps associate with an earlier Queen Elizabeth or with a Disney fairy-tale queen. But as we have heard so often today, her reign was also extraordinarily human and personal, shaped as it was by her amazing capacity to touch people at a very

[Stephen Crabb]

individual level—to raise their self-esteem and to touch their hearts in a very special way, which left lasting, lifelong memories.

For now, the joy that Queen Elizabeth gave to the nation—to people she met in all our constituencies—gives way to grief and sadness. In time we will remember her reign with joy once again, but in the meantime, we ask God to bless her and to save the King.

4.11 pm

Dame Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak in tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I begin by expressing my most sincere condolences to her family on my behalf and on behalf of people across the constituency of Llanelli. Our thoughts are particularly with King Charles III, Her late Majesty's other children, her grandchildren and their families. For them, this is a deeply personal loss. While they have always had to share the Queen—their mother and grandmother—with the public, that is particularly hard at this time of immense grief. For them, too, this follows so closely from the loss of their father and grandfather, the late Prince Philip.

I would like to set on the record my huge appreciation for the way that the Queen carried out her duties, shouldering an enormous workload and responsibility from a young age for a full 70 years, including working right into this week appointing the new Prime Minister. The Queen was exemplary in her dedication and commitment—an example to all of us in public life—but she went above and beyond that, taking a personal interest in matters and showing real empathy with people.

In Wales we were privileged to receive the Queen's visits on many occasions. She has been with us for important moments in our nation's history, including to open the National Assembly for Wales in 1999 and, last year, to open the sixth Session of the Senedd.

At the opening of the Senedd, a young woman from my constituency, Ffion Gwyther, was tasked with presenting Her Majesty with a bouquet of flowers. As Members can imagine, as that moment approached, Ffion was very nervous—but she need not have worried. The Queen looked at her and immediately understood the situation, putting her at ease by saying gently, "Are those flowers for me? How beautiful. They match my outfit." That is a moment that Ffion will never forget, and it is just one of countless examples of how the Queen was always so kind and thoughtful in her approach and knew exactly how to handle the occasion and put a young woman at ease. During her reign, she will have touched millions in the same way.

It was not only on happy occasions that the Queen visited Wales. She will always be remembered for her visit to Aberfan in the aftermath of the terrible tragedy of 1966, when a slag heap buried the school. Speaking about her visit, Jeff Edwards, the last child to be rescued from the school, stressed the community's appreciation, saying that people

"felt comfort from the fact that the Queen, who was the head of state, had come to a small mining village and had shown direct interest and concern for her subjects who had gone through this enormous event."

The Queen's role goes far beyond Wales and the UK to the Commonwealth. There we have seen huge changes and a complex transition from the empire to today's Commonwealth. With such a range of nations, each with its own particular circumstances, it is no wonder that tensions have sometimes arisen, but we must recognise the crucial role that the Queen has played in maintaining a unique family of nations. There is no doubt that her wisdom and professionalism, her personal rapport with individuals and the very high esteem in which she is held have been pivotal in helping to smooth that transition and keep the Commonwealth together.

Going forward, the best tribute we can give is to follow her excellent example and to try to serve our communities with the same dedication and fortitude that she showed throughout her life. As we turn to the future, long live the King.

4.15 pm

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): As someone with the honour of representing the faithful city of Worcester, I want to pass on the love, prayers and good wishes of constituents and faith and civic leaders to all the royal family, especially His Majesty the King, at this sad historic moment. I can associate myself with the remarks containing so many superlatives that we have heard from across the House today, but I want to focus on two things: Her Majesty's faith and her profound connection with children, which the hon. Member for Llanelli (Dame Nia Griffith) spoke about.

Her late Majesty swore at her coronation to be a defender of the faith. In so many messages over the decades, she not only defended but enhanced and gently protected the role of faith in our society, not only for her own Church of England but, as we have heard from people of all faiths and denominations, for people across the whole United Kingdom of all faiths and none.

When Princess Elizabeth first visited Worcester in 1951, she was already the mother of two small children, and the beautiful princess was greeted by flower girls and a parade of Scouts and Guides outside the cathedral. As a lifelong patron of the Guides and a former Girl Guide herself, as well as the fount of so many Queen's Scout awards, she has inspired millions of young people.

She returned as Queen in 1957 and visited New Road, the most beautiful cricket ground in England, with her consort Prince Philip, touring the boundary in an open top Land Rover to the cheers of 5,000 local schoolchildren. After more visits in the 1980s when she distributed Maundy money and celebrated the anniversary of the city's charter, her final visit to Worcester and the proudest moment of my life was at her diamond jubilee. Her Majesty opened the Hive library, a joint city and university library that is the first of its kind in Europe and a fabulous repository of children's books. I was fortunate enough to be in the welcoming party for that visit, and to join some wonderful volunteers from local charities and children from local schools at the event and in being presented to Her Majesty the Queen. What struck me, as so many have already reported, was her smile, her bright humorous eyes, her genuine interest in the people to whom she was introduced and the instant connection she formed with children.

Most recently, children in schools up and down our country were able to celebrate and learn about our Her Majesty at her remarkable platinum jubilee. They joined children from successive generations in singing, dancing and making wonderful art to celebrate a jubilee of this longest serving sovereign. She was described by one of our former Prime Ministers as a matriarch, and of course that is right, but I think we have also lost the world's favourite granny.

I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Andrew Stephenson) and Paddington Bear in simply saying on behalf of us all, "Thank you, Ma'am, for everything".

4.18 pm

Owen Thompson (Midlothian) (SNP): I am here to offer the condolences of the people of Midlothian on this very sad occasion. Among the ebb and flow of people, politics and power, Queen Elizabeth has always been there, a steadfast figure in our shared history. With quiet dignity, she made her mark on momentous global events but, perhaps more importantly, she touched people in a very personal way. Across these isles, the Queen is part of the backdrop of the stories of all our lives.

The Queen brought grace, warmth, dignity and humour to her role, which in turn brought her respect from people across political divides. Her passing brings an unsettling time, a time of grief and reflection, and for many a reminder of loved ones lost. People across the nations may understandably feel like they have lost a loved one of their own, yet preparations are already under way and the duty occupies the new King Charles III, showing that, in the immortal words of Terry Pratchett, it is true that the only thing known to travel faster than ordinary light is monarchy.

Regardless of our views on monarchy, the Queen is respected for her remarkable dignity, with which she held herself throughout trying times. We appreciate the twinkle in her eye, her humour, her love of animals and the humility with which she held a far-from-humble office.

She was the first Queen Elizabeth in Scotland, of course, with a lineage stretching back to the Stuart dynasty and Mary, Queen of Scots. It is said that in Scotland, hosting barbecues in the hills of Balmoral, was where she was happiest. Older generations will fondly remember the happy tour of Midlothian back in 1961, where she was out and about across the county, viewing aspects of everyday life and visiting Rosslyn chapel, the rural housing schemes at Temple, the carpet factory in Bonnyrigg and the Loanhead memorial park. There was no standing room left in the streets of Dalkeith at that time, with crowds climbing on the roof of the bus station to seek a glimpse of the young queen.

More recently, she was warmly welcomed back to Midlothian to the reopening of the Borders railway, unveiling a plaque at the station in Newtongrange, where she was welcomed with a wonderful performance by the Newtongrange Silver Band, who express their condolences at this time. People from all walks of life in Midlothian wish to convey their respect, to make it clear just how fondly the Queen is remembered. Condolences have been expressed online by community groups across Midlothian, in addition to Midlothian's lord lieutenant and provost, who have already held local

tributes and, in line with many other places, opened up books of condolence across council venues in Midlothian to allow people to pay their own tributes.

As a previous member and current chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the Boys' Brigade, I have always been keenly aware of Her Majesty's role as the organisation's patron. I know that all in the Boys' Brigade world, the entire Boys' Brigade family, wish to pass on their thoughts and prayers at this time.

We are all now getting our heads around the changes that this will make to the basic things that we all took for granted. The ground has shifted beneath our feet. The lads at my local post office in Loanhead said, "Every day we send hundreds of letters and parcels bearing the Queen's head." This will now be no more. May she rest in peace.

4.21 pm

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): I rise with the deep and profound condolences of my constituents in South West Wiltshire. A good and gracious lady has been taken from us, and we are all the poorer for that. A lady who has shaped the contours of our national life for 70 years has gone, but her legacy endures. If anyone doubts that, just look at the pictures of His Majesty, in the hour of his grief, greeting the crowds that have gathered outside Buckingham Palace today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, grown men don't cry, do they? Well, they do. I have cried twice in my adult life, once when my father died and once last night, for a woman that I had only met once—at the aforementioned gin and tonic opportunity that a number of hon. and right hon. Members have cited today, although unfortunately in my case there was no gin and tonic. The reason it is so profound is that, for most of us, for all of our lives she has been a constant—somebody who has always been there; a rock; a stable place; someone to look to and to admire. Like many colleagues around the House today, when I go to primary schools, I am asked two questions usually, one more difficult to answer than the other: "Have you met the Queen?", and, "How much are you paid?"

Last night I called my mother, because I knew she would be upset, and she was. In June 1953, she and many of her generation lined the streets of London to watch another young woman go to her coronation. That was a profound moment for her and an extraordinary moment in the life of our nation. Very soon we will do something similar again, under altogether more sombre circumstances. Her sense of profound loss is certainly replicated right across this land, by people of all generations and, if I may say so, as I remain a member of His Majesty's armed forces, particularly by members of the armed forces of this country, who have lost their commander in chief, many of whom live in the towns and villages around Salisbury plain that I have the honour and privilege to represent.

In 878, Alfred the Great secured the future of what became Wessex and ultimately the nation state we know today. "The Great" is a descriptor that should not be used lightly. Queen Elizabeth II is the benchmark for monarchs in this age and in ages past. She is Elizabeth the Great. As the Elizabethan age closes and the Carolean era dawns, we have to understand that it will look and

[Dr Andrew Murrison]

feel different. We will look and feel different. But difference will bring renewal and it will bring opportunity, as His Majesty has demonstrated today.

Rest well, your Majesty. God save the King.

4.25 pm

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): It is a privilege to offer the condolences of my constituents to His Majesty the King and to all members of the royal family.

My constituency is privileged to be able to thank Her late Majesty the Queen and, as he was at the time, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales—now, of course, the King—for securing Sony in my constituency. As the managing director of Sony UK told me today, thousands of my constituents have benefited from their direct intervention. The site was opened by the late Queen in 1993 and it was the King in 1974, on a visit to Japan, who said to the then chief executive of Sony, “If you consider putting something in the UK, please put something in my country, Wales.”

I think of Her late Majesty in the forms of fun and friendship. Just like the right hon. Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison), I am frequently asked, whenever I visit a school, be they teenagers or primary schoolchildren, “Have you ever met the Queen?” To which the answer is, “Sort of. I have seen her. I have been at the box in the House of Lords for the Queen’s Speech.” I once was asked, following that question, “Have you ever touched the Queen?” I am not sure who was more shocked, me or the headteacher, who genuinely looked like he was about to faint.

The Queen had a healthy obsession with trees. I recall fondly the talks she held with Sir David Attenborough about the Queen’s Green Canopy—clips have been shown over the past few days—and the work he was doing to talk about delivering that right across our United Kingdom. She joked that “We”—her and Sir David—would not see that tree come to its 50-year life, and they both laughed. It is her humility that so many of us will think of so fondly.

I have had the privilege, in my brief time in this House, to meet King Charles III twice. The first time was five days after I was elected in a byelection in 2016. I was lined up by the secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant and told, “Just stand there, Mr Elmore. He’ll be along shortly.” When he arrived and came out of the car, I was the second person to greet him. He said to me, “You’re the new one.” I was quite nervous and I said, “Yes, your Royal Highness.” He said, “I wouldn’t worry about it; I’m terribly nice.” I think that common touch is what he has picked up from the late Queen and I know he will go on to serve this country and the Commonwealth well. God bless and keep the Queen, and all who mourn her. God save the King.

4.28 pm

Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con): There have been so many wonderful and moving tributes today, it has been a real pleasure to be in the Chamber to listen to them all. With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will make my tribute through the eyes of the schoolchildren of Tatton.

So many MPs have mentioned the curiosity children have about the late Queen Elizabeth II. The question they ask, particularly in primary and junior schools, is, “Have you met the Queen?” When I say yes there are literally squeals of delight and gasps of disbelief. Uncontainable excitement ripples through the class. Such was the impact that this lady had on people of all ages and in all parts of the country. She loved children and children loved her. And the clatter of questions that followed! “Were you nervous when you met her?” “How was she?” “What’s she like?” “Where did you meet her?” So I try to describe the Queen to them as they sit and listen, eyes wide open.

“Well,” I say, “she was diminutive, yet she was imposing. She was gentle, yet steely. With that powderpuff grey hair, she was radiant and she shone, but it was her eyes that were remarkable and memorable. They were penetrating and bottomless, the knowledge behind them limitless. You could almost feel what she had seen and experienced. You were in the presence of wisdom—and they were kind, too. She was a curious blend, quite disarming and yet incredibly caring. And was I nervous? Without doubt. You’re in the presence of greatness, whose life has spanned war and peace, and that nervousness is amplified by the royal protocol that she lived through and by.

“When you are made a Privy Counsellor and you have steps to take and kneels to bow, there is meticulous choreography—the timing, quick steps, kneels, the precision of words and taking oaths—and the seal of office at Sandringham. It was magical; it was a whirl of rooms and doors opening. It was brevity, but intensity, and as we left we were all handed a packed lunch.” All I can say is that it was thoughtful but simple, no frills—I think it was nutritionally balanced, but there was no fuss whatsoever; there was no bother or nonsense. As deputy Chief Whip, I was also Treasurer of Her Majesty’s Household.

What the Queen loved, and where I met her and spent more time with her, was Windsor Castle, with her horses in her stables, which she absolutely loved. She confided that one of her best memories was the day that Estimate, trained by Sir Michael Stoute, won the Gold Cup at Royal Ascot. She spoke to her trainers, Nicky Henderson and John Gosden, every week without fail. That was what she loved. I am delighted that the St Leger is going ahead this weekend, not least because the Queen won it in her silver jubilee year with Dunfermline, ridden by Willie Carson, one of her favourite jockeys.

She was kind and, finally, thoughtful. In my final conversation with her, she questioned social media and its impact, and said, “Could anybody these days keep a secret?” She talked about Operation Mincemeat, the deception that fooled Hitler and helped us to win the war, and she said, “Can people keep things to themselves, or do they feel that they’d sooner tell everybody, and maybe spoil what should be done?”

When I leave children, I say, “Have you got discretion? Can you keep a secret? Are you selfless? Can you think of the greater good more than you can think of yourself? And if you can, then the Queen has done her job and her spirit and her qualities will live on in all of us.” God bless the Queen. God save the King.

4.32 pm

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Tatton (Esther McVey).

Queen Elizabeth was just 10 years old when her uncle abdicated and she became heir to the throne. She was just 13 when war broke out, and in the six years that followed we saw the pattern of her whole life to come: standing with her people at home and across the Commonwealth in those dark hours, sharing in their grief when her own uncle fell in service, leading our national celebrations when victory and freedom were finally secured and, throughout the war, setting the perfect example by rolling up her sleeves and doing her bit for the collective effort.

Yet, while the second world war inspired millions to incredible feats and brought out the very best in our country, what we saw in those years from the young Princess Elizabeth was what we would come to understand as her normal. For the next seven decades she continued to set the perfect example of dedicated, selfless, timeless service and to embody the values that unite our people. She continued to share our grief when tragedy struck the nation, whether it was Aberfan or Dunblane or 7/7, when so many people in Islington were killed. She did not buckle when it touched her own family; she continued to stand with us in our darkest and most fearful hours, all the more so when she gave those messages of hope and courage that inspired all of us at the start of the pandemic. She continued to lead our national celebrations right up to the point in recent years when the biggest, most united celebrations of all were to mark her own birthdays and jubilees.

The Queen did all that for us; she lived her life for us. While she may have visited 200 hospitals or 2,000 schools, cut 5,000 ribbons, awarded 20,000 medals and shaken the hands of hundreds of thousands, she never forgot for one moment that although those daily duties were nothing out of the ordinary for her, they were deeply special for everyone she met, and she ensured that each of those individuals would go away with a unique memory of what she had said to them, how she had smiled at them and the interest that she took in their service to the country. For so many people, those encounters with the Queen will be remembered as the greatest moments in their lives.

I know that in Islington at the moment, lists are being compiled of the visits that she made to our borough and stories are being shared of the many times that we had the opportunity to see her and experience a meeting with her. We join today to thank the Queen for nine decades of devoted service, every one of them filled with her setting the right example; filled with giving her people courage, sympathy and joy; filled with making others feel special and doing it all day after day, year after year, right up until the very end. That record of duty would be unfathomable, astonishing and worthy of celebration in this House even if she had been a humble librarian or a long-serving charity volunteer, but to do all that in the pressure of her roles as heir to the throne and Head of State places her public service on a pinnacle that is unmatched in the history of our country and the like of which we will never see again.

On behalf of the Honourable Artillery Company, the Charterhouse and Farringdon Crossrail, all with whom

she shared particularly strong links, and on behalf of the people of Islington South and Finsbury, who loved her so dearly, I thank you, ma'am. God save the King.

4.36 pm

Stuart Andrew (Pudsey) (Con): It is with sadness that I offer my tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen on my behalf and that of the people of Pudsey, Horsforth and Aireborough.

I suppose that the first time the Queen came into my consciousness was when, as a small boy, I was standing outside the house waiting for some lady in a big posh car to go past as she marked her silver jubilee in 1977. From then on, there were many royal occasions—the jubilees, the royal weddings—when we all enjoyed street parties on our estate. I thought about those street parties when the Queen's 90th birthday was coming up and thought that I had not seen one in our community for some time, so we decided—a group of our friends—to organise one. We were staggered when thousands of people in the community came out to celebrate Her Majesty's 90th birthday. We also saw that reflected on the Mall recently during the jubilee, when literally hundreds of thousands turned up. Why? Because they respected and loved her; because they recognised that this was a woman of great dedication who wanted to serve her country in the best way that she could, and that she would work to the very last day, as she committed to do all those many years ago.

Last night, a couple of us went up to the Palace, where, again, people were meeting and strangers were talking, all sharing conversations and memories about Her late Majesty the Queen. The British public were showing how much they loved her.

The Queen was there when we needed her most. Many have talked about the pandemic and when our country had those awful terrorist attacks. She has always given warm words and comfort to the victims and their families. We will remember the amazing speech that she made in the hospital in London, when she said that “they will not change our way of life.”

I do not know about anybody else, but whenever I visit a constituent who is celebrating their 100th birthday, the card from Her Majesty the Queen is front and centre in the living room—of course, and why would it not be? It is something they are so proud to have.

Many have also mentioned schoolchildren asking, “Have you met the Queen?” For many years in this place, I was unable to say that I had, until I was honoured to be appointed as the Vice-Chamberlain of the Household. I remember when I was about to be introduced to her, waiting for those doors to be opened. When they finally did, I realised that I had become a little boy again, standing there with my knees knocking and wondering how I would address Her Majesty. As others have said, she put me at ease and made me feel incredibly welcome.

As Vice-Chamberlain, I had to write the daily reports from Parliament. She liked the gossip, I understand, which is heart-warming. I was also taken hostage at the Palace, when Her Majesty came to open Parliament. I was offered a drink, and was asked whether I would like tea or coffee. One of the officials looked at me and thought, “You look more like a champagne man.” I thought, I am never going to do this again, so why not?

[Stuart Andrew]

It was a big bottle of champagne and I had a good time. A couple of months later there was a general election and I had to do it again. As Her Majesty was leaving Buckingham Palace, she turned to me and said, "You'll have a good time again, won't you?"

To conclude, after the awful attacks of 9/11, the Queen said to the people of America:

"Grief is the price we pay for love."

We all loved her, which is why we are grieving, and we send our thoughts and best wishes to His Majesty the King and his family, and we say, "God save the King."

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Please look again at your contributions so that they stick to the three minutes. I call Alistair Carmichael.

4.41 pm

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am grateful for the opportunity to try to articulate the keen and profound sense of loss across the northern isles.

Her Majesty made a number of visits to Orkney and Shetland during her reign, all of which built a real connection between Orcadians and Shetlanders and their monarch. One of the best remembered was in 1960, when she took the royal yacht *Britannia* to Stronsay and Westray in Orkney. Prince Philip was given the job of driving her round Westray in the most suitable available vehicle, the new 12-seater school bus. It was produced one of the best pictures of Her Majesty that any of us will ever see. She is sitting in the passenger seat, laughing uproariously, while Prince Philip is in the driver's seat with, shall we say, with a look of grim determination on his face. I do not know exactly what caused that look, but having been there myself with my wife on occasion I can only guess.

Her Majesty visited Shetland in 1981, as its oil came onstream at the Sullom Voe terminal. She opened the terminal—something which was remembered on Shetland, unfortunately, because it was the day the IRA detonated a bomb in the power station there. While we all speak of her quite remarkable record of service, we should not forget that that service often came at personal risk.

Like others, I treasure my moments meeting Her Majesty—very private and special moments. I served as Comptroller of the Household from 2010 to 2013, so I had a walk-on part in the state opening of Parliament. In 2013, we had the misfortune of a state opening which clashed with the first day of the Windsor horse show. When we returned to Buckingham Palace after state opening we were left in no doubt that should that unfortunate diary mismanagement happen in future it would not necessarily be the Windsor horse show that would lose out.

I think back to the very first time I saw Her Majesty in the flesh, when she visited Islay when I was growing up in 1977, as part of her silver jubilee tour. She often visited Islay privately as a guest of the Morrison family, and I pay tribute not just to Her Majesty but to the honourable Mary Morrison, who served for many years as one of her ladies-in-waiting. On that occasion, she

visited Bowmore distillery. It was the first time she had visited a distillery, and that visit came back to me in 2014, when I was present as Secretary of State for Scotland at the naming of the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth. As the carrier was named, a bottle of Bowmore whisky was smashed on its side. The smell of that malt whisky drifted across Rosyth and took me back to that day in 1977. I mention that because Her Majesty wove these threads throughout the lives of so many people, and enriched the fabric of our country. That is why we miss her and why we now pledge our new allegiance to His Majesty the King. God save the King.

4.45 pm

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): I rise to pay tribute to our late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on my behalf and on behalf of all my constituents throughout the Wrekin constituency. Queen Elizabeth visited Shropshire many times over her long reign, and her visits to the Wrekin, in particular, are still remembered with abiding fondness and deep affection: her visit to Wrekin College in 1967, her visit to the 13th-century Butter Cross in Newport in 1981, her visit to Donnington during the Falklands war in 1982, the occasion she passed through High Ercall and nearby villages, and her last visit to the Wrekin, in 2012, when she visited RAF Cosford as part of her diamond jubilee pageant and a huge crowd of over 35,000 people turned out to greet her.

The late Queen Elizabeth was the personification of duty, integrity, selflessness, steadfastness and resoluteness, and always with a superb sense of humour, observation and wit. Yes, that was born out of her own decency and exemplary character, but it was also born out of her deep and abiding Christian faith—something that she quietly attested to throughout her long reign, and that was so often heard in her comforting and unifying Christmas day messages, which we will all miss.

The Wrekin loved the Queen. Shropshire loved the Queen. She will abide in all our hearts and memories. May she rest in peace and rise in glory. Long live the King

4.47 pm

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): It is an honour to speak not only on my own behalf but on behalf of my constituents and to pass on their condolences. The passing of Her Majesty the Queen is a great loss for the royal family and for our country. As our longest-reigning sovereign, our remarkable Queen dedicated 70 years of her life to serving our country. She devoted her life to the betterment of this country, and today we celebrate her service and express our thanks for her steadfast leadership. The Queen was a role model and touched the lives of so many in her own unique and distinguished way.

Over the course of the Queen's reign, there was great transformation and progress in the world, yet she served as a constant and reassuring figure during periods of change and provided us all with a sense of security. She was incredibly resolute and principled, and she had a work ethic and a commitment to duty and service that she placed above all other considerations. Even in her 90s and in the days before her death, she was still working and serving our country.

The Queen's strong and abiding faith in God was the golden thread that guided her work and her commitment to respecting everybody, appreciating difference and serving people. Across Battersea, people will be reflecting on her selfless service and leadership of our country. She visited the constituency on many occasions, including the then children's home on the Winstanley estate and, of course, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home. We all know how passionate she was about animals and their welfare, and that was shown by her patronage of the home. As staff at the home have already said this week, they were so lucky to have had such a valuable relationship with her. But she was not just our Queen, as we can see from all the global contributions and tributes that have come her way.

As I close, my thoughts and prayers are with His Majesty King Charles and the royal family. May Her late Majesty rest in peace and rise in eternal glory. God save the King.

4.50 pm

Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con): I rise to add my tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my Chelsea and Fulham constituents at a time of great sadness for the whole country. She was much loved in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and among my Fulham constituents. She came at least once a year to my constituency, to the Chelsea flower show.

Indeed, it was at the Chelsea flower show that I personally met the Queen for the first time, in 2010, and the last time, just three months ago. The Chelsea flower show was one of her absolute favourite events. She rarely, if ever, missed it. She may have been to it more than 70 times. But in 2010 it was my first Chelsea flower show. I was third in the royal receiving line and exceptionally nervous. This was not helped by the receiving line taking around two hours, as almost the entire royal family came, at 10-minute intervals, starting with Princess Alexandra. Eventually the Queen arrived and all passed well. I had bowed in the right place and extended her my hand at the right time. We had a brief, charming and pleasant conversation. I could relax—except that I had forgotten one thing: she was not the last of the royal family to come. There was still, moments later, the Duke of Edinburgh. I realised my mistake and almost fell over, having messed up my bow and called him “Your Majesty”, to which the Duke smiled and said, “Are you new?” I pay tribute to him today as well: the late Duke of Edinburgh, the Queen's beloved husband.

The last time I saw Her Majesty was at this year's Chelsea flower show, which she toured with great enthusiasm in a golf cart. She was radiant and, as ever, fascinated by the displays. It was simply amazing to see her at the age of 96.

The Queen was much loved by my Fulham constituents as well. Indeed, one of the iconic pieces of video footage from the 1977 silver jubilee is a clip of a group of women on Kingwood Road in Fulham, arm in arm, wearing jubilee hats and singing, all together, “Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner”. She will be grieved and warmly remembered the length of King's Road and, appropriately, along New King's Road as well.

I also met Her Majesty in my role as the Government's Deputy Chief Whip. Many in this House will know that the Deputy Chief Whip is also the honorific Treasurer

of Her Majesty's Household. The role comes with a wand of office, which looks like a long billiard cue and unscrews in the middle. My right hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Andrew Stephenson) referred to it earlier. The day came in October 2013 for the transfer of the wand of office from my predecessor, Sir John Randall—now Lord Randall—to me in a ceremony at the palace. I was once again nervous, but once again it all started well. Sir John handed the Queen the wand of office, which she then handed to me. But I started fidgeting with it—I found it a fascinating article—as Sir John carried on speaking with Her Majesty. I started absentmindedly to unscrew the wand of office. I got an alarmed look from Her Majesty and an alarmed look from Sir John Randall, who told me, “Stop it!” I was told afterwards that if I had unscrewed entirely the wand of office, that would have meant rejecting the office and that Sir John would have had to come back here as the Government's Deputy Chief Whip.

But that was not the worst thing. A minute or two later, the Queen suddenly said to me and Sir John—bear in mind that this was in 2013, at around the time of growing European rebellion in the Conservative party—“I do think Mr Baron has a point”, referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron). By now I was a total wreck. The Queen was seemingly pronouncing on the greatest political issue of the time, and I had to give her an answer of behalf of the Government. Fortunately, she saw my difficulty and clarified that it was in reference to one of my hon. Friend's many other rebellions—regimental mergers—and was nothing to do with Brexit at all.

The Queen's historic significance, the length of her reign, everything that she had seen, the fact that she met every US president during her reign except one, the fact that her first Prime Minister was Sir Winston Churchill, who was born more than 100 years before my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Norfolk (Elizabeth Truss), and the fact that Josef Stalin was still in the Kremlin when she came to the throne, show her historical significance. On behalf of my Chelsea and Fulham constituents, I pay tribute to the Queen and wish King Charles III a happy reign of many years.

4.56 pm

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to express my personal condolences to His Majesty the King and the royal family, to associate myself with the remarks that we have heard so far, and to pay tribute to Her late Majesty on behalf of my Leicester South constituents and the city of Leicester. Leicester is proud of its radical tradition. Notwithstanding our history as a parliamentary stronghold, Her Majesty was held in deep affection and viewed with deep reverence and love across Leicester. We are united in our grief today.

Leicester's story today is one of diversity. We have welcomed to our city families from across the globe and the Commonwealth. Some of those families were fleeing persecution with nothing but a hastily packed suitcase. Her Majesty's leadership of the Commonwealth stands not only as a reminder of the bonds of solidarity between the different nations of the Commonwealth, but as a symbol of inspirational hope for families fleeing persecution—hope for a better future for themselves and their children. We in Leicester were reminded of that only last month, as we recalled the 50-year anniversary of the expulsion of the Asian community from Uganda.

[Jonathan Ashworth]

Her Majesty celebrated Leicester's diversity; she was proud of our different faith groups. Our mosques have been recognising her death and expressing their thanks at Jumma prayers today; our Hindu temples have been placing garlands over pictures of her; and there are prayers in our synagogues, in our gurdwaras and in our Jain temple. We were particularly proud to host Her Majesty 10 years ago for the start of her diamond jubilee tour, for which all our communities came together.

Indeed, for the start of that diamond jubilee tour, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall) and I had the privilege of welcoming the Queen to De Montfort University in my constituency. After we had queued nervously to greet Her Majesty and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, in the corner of my eye, I caught her looking somewhat bemused—if not slightly askance—at her husband, who had asked me and my hon. Friend whether we were reds or blues. I do not know what his opinion was of our answer, frankly.

A few months after we in Leicester had celebrated Her Majesty at the start of the diamond jubilee tour, we were nervous because we had discovered the remains of the last Yorkist monarch in a Leicester City Council car park. That provoked all kinds of knotty constitutional questions for the palace, including what we were going to do with Richard III. With her usual aplomb, and the diplomatic skill about which we have heard so much, Her Majesty let it be known that she was following developments with great interest, and a couple of years later, she visited Leicester cathedral—the final resting place of Richard III—to hand out Maundy money on Maundy Thursday.

In February 1952, when this House debated a motion on the loss of His Majesty King George, Winston Churchill said from the Dispatch Box said he hoped the accession of Queen Elizabeth would usher in a golden age. In response the former Prime Minister and then Leader of the Opposition Clement Attlee said that he hoped the accession of Queen Elizabeth would lead to another glorious Elizabethan era more renowned than the first one. My God, she more than surpassed the aspirations and hopes of those two great Prime Ministers. Rest in peace, and God save the King.

5 pm

Sir Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con): It is a privilege to pay tribute to our late Queen on behalf not just of myself, but of my constituents in South West Devon. I want to focus on her excellent Christmas broadcasts every year, which have been mentioned by some colleagues. Her ability to connect with the whole nation was never better expressed than through her Christmas day broadcasts. In our household, as in many others, they were unmissable events, and in recent years the whole day was shaped around them. Each year, as we know, she spoke with great warmth and insight about the events of the year, with ever more personal reflections. She never shirked touching on painful events—not just the positives—knowing that all of our lives are made up of ups and downs.

In particular, the Queen used those opportunities to remind the nation of the true meaning of Christmas, namely the birth of her saviour—our saviour—Jesus Christ. On 3 August this very year, she said:

“Throughout my life, the message and teachings of Christ have been my guide and in them I find hope.”

It was a simple but clear explanation of the influences that had shaped her life. In our celebration of her greatness as a monarch, she would want us to recognise the significance of the gospel message that produced such fruit in her. If she was the rock on which modern Britain was built, it was because she stood on the true rock—the rock of ages. In our pluralistic society, containing citizens of all faiths and none, her declaration of Christian faith never jarred, grated or alienated, as we heard from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood), because it was authentic, and this was demonstrated through her magnificent Christmas broadcasts.

My final point is that I believe it is also possible to discern in the Queen's broadcasts another deep quality that she possessed. Even in her 80s and 90s, she did not stand still or remain static; she was moving forward—learning and developing year on year. She became more intimate with her subjects during those broadcasts, more personal and ever more bold. She had an appetite for progress and advancement to the very end. It was an authentic life shaped by her sincere faith, which produced in all the vicissitudes of life a remarkable woman and a great monarch. On behalf of the people of South West Devon, thank you, Your Majesty, for your life of service on our behalf. May you rest in peace and rise in glory.

5.3 pm

Steve Reed (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op): We have heard some really wonderful anecdotes and stories of Members' meetings with Her late Majesty the Queen. For most people who met her, those moments would have been more fleeting, but they lodge in the memory because of the huge importance the Queen has played in our life as a nation and our sense of who we are.

I first saw the Queen as a schoolboy during a silver jubilee walkabout in Windsor, feeling so excited, as so many other children would have done over the years, simply to snatch a photograph of her with my little plastic camera; it would be an iPhone today, of course. Another time was when she came to open the Lambeth Academy in Clapham. The students were beside themselves with excitement that the Queen had come to visit their school.

It is through these little moments that the Queen has been a constant presence that lit up our lives for as long as most of us have been alive. The stability of her presence eased our country through periods of drastic change as Britain moved from being the centre of an empire to becoming the modern, diverse and more inclusive country that we know and love today.

She really was, in T. S. Eliot's words, “the still point of a turning world...where past and future are gathered.”

My constituency of Croydon North is one of the country's most diverse, and people who have come to it from the Commonwealth feel a special bond with Her late Majesty, as a connection between their past and their future. Many others who arrived from outside the Commonwealth would consider their citizenship ceremony, in which they swore allegiance to Her late Majesty, to be among the most important moments of their lives.

During the platinum jubilee celebrations, we saw a great outpouring of love for Her late Majesty in Croydon North, as elsewhere, when our diverse communities

came together to celebrate a woman who united us as a community and as a country as nothing and no one else could do. Her loss will be felt keenly and personally.

Three months ago, my father died. The next day, a rainbow appeared over his house, which we took as a sign that he was at peace. I take the rainbow that appeared over Windsor castle in the same way: a sign that Her late Majesty has been taken into the arms of God and found her eternal peace. On behalf of the people of Croydon North, I offer my deepest thanks to Her late Majesty for a lifetime of service, my condolences to the royal family on their loss and my loyalty to our new King, Charles III, as he ascends the throne to meet his destiny and ours.

5.6 pm

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): We have lost our sovereign: the most remarkable woman and the longest reigning monarch in British history, who in 70 years barely ever put a foot wrong. She was perhaps the most famous person in the world, and possibly the most popular, too.

If the House will indulge me, it is almost a year since we lost our great friend Sir David Amess, who I mention because it is fair to say that he was rather keen on the monarchy, and on Her late Majesty the Queen in particular. I well remember how he was bursting with pride when she knighted him, with an investiture at Windsor. He subsequently told our local paper, *The Echo*,

“who would ever have thought that a boy from the east end of London would one day be knighted by a Queen in a castle?”

If he were here today, he would have paid the most fulsome tribute to Her late Majesty, so perhaps I can do that for him in lieu.

I had the immense privilege of serving Her late Majesty as Vice-Chamberlain when I served in the coalition Whips Office from 2010 to 2012. It is an ancient office, but essentially it has three modern functions, the first of which is to act as the monarch’s messenger to Parliament. On the first occasion when I had an audience with her, I was completely terrified. It was to the Queen’s credit that she well understood that people who met her, especially for the first time, were extremely nervous. She had the most wonderful manner in asking one or two extremely gentle questions—even a Member of Parliament could not get them wrong—to settle nerves. That wonderful skill with people was but one of the reasons why her subjects loved her so much.

Secondly, each evening when the House is sitting, the Vice-Chamberlain’s duty is to compile the royal message: a one-page summary for the sovereign of what had taken place in Parliament, printed on special paper, to be collected by a royal courier at 6 pm precisely. All went well until one evening when, as the message was just about to be printed, there was a complete IT failure in the Whips Office, which led to a state of pandemonium. By about 6.30 pm, the royal courier, who was now drumming his fingers, looked at me and said mischievously, “You do realise, sir, that if it’s more than an hour late, you’ll have to go down there and apologise to her in person?” At that point, my blood run cold. Mercifully, the Lord was kind and, five minutes later, a scream of delight emanated from the Whips Office when Claire, the senior Whip’s assistant, emerged with a look of triumph and simply said, “We’ve fixed it.” When I wished the courier Godspeed, I meant it.

Thirdly, following a rather unfortunate misunderstanding with Charles I in the 17th century, on the day of the state opening the Vice-Chamberlain has to go to the palace to be held hostage, as surety for the monarch’s safe return. When I once asked what would happen if something went wrong, the royal courtier smiled and said, “Oh, they’ll probably just cut your head off.” That was vaguely in the back of my mind on both occasions when I performed the duty. On the first, unfortunately the Duke was unwell, but on the second he accompanied the Queen as they came down the steps. I was standing there, in morning dress and with my wand of office, when suddenly he walked up to me and said, “Who are you?” I was stunned, but before I could reply the Queen said, with slight exasperation, “He’s the hostage”, to which the Duke replied, “Oh, jolly good.” They got in the coach and went to Parliament. When they came back, I bowed my head as they passed and said, “Well done, Your Majesty.” The Duke turned on his heel, walked straight up to me and said, “I bet you’re bloody relieved to see us.”

On her 21st birthday, Princess Elizabeth famously proclaimed that

“my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service”,

the service of her people. In modern parlance, she then did exactly what it said on the tin. My constituents in Rayleigh and Wickford and the whole country loved her for it. We have lost our Queen, but her legacy lives on. God save our King.

5.10 pm

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): On behalf of my constituents, the people of Glasgow and my fellow Glasgow MPs, I wish to pay tribute to Elizabeth, Queen of Scots. Her passing is a time of profound sadness. Queen Elizabeth was a constant in our lives, the only Head of State we have known.

Unlike most of the other Members who have spoken this afternoon, I never met the Queen, although as a young girl I went to see her at her silver jubilee, when she came to Glasgow and visited Kelvingrove Art Gallery. The crowds were so big that I could not see her, so my dad put me up on his shoulders and I was able to wave at this beautiful big car and the Queen as she came out. Many people in Glasgow have similar memories to that.

It is right that we remember and pay tribute to Her Majesty’s tireless work, her dedication to her role and her strong sense of duty. For members of the armed forces, she was their commander-in-chief. My husband’s commission parchment from Her Majesty hangs proudly in our home.

Like many in Glasgow, I have strong Irish connections. Many Members this afternoon have spoken of her wit and her ability to view a situation with clarity and wisdom. I am reminded of her visit to Dublin in 2011, the first by a reigning monarch for a century. The Queen understood that it was an historic event and that it required some delicacy. She wished to address the President, Mary McAleese, in Irish, but had been warned against attempting it for fear that she might make a mistake and the gesture would be misinterpreted. Undaunted, she began: “A Uachtarán, agus a chairde”—President and friends. Instantly, all tension was lifted. President McAleese mouthed “Wow!” and the audience at Dublin Castle burst into applause. Wisdom,

[Carol Monaghan]

understanding and respect such as that were why the Queen was loved by monarchists and republicans, and by people of all faiths and those of none.

To finish, I extend my sympathy and that of my constituents and of the people of Glasgow, and our prayers, to the entire royal family, who will most acutely feel this loss of a much-loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. May she rest in peace.

5.13 pm

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): I rise humbly and with great sadness to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen on behalf of my constituents. The outpouring of love and respect for her is heartfelt and genuine, demonstrating her reach into the most local of communities across the nation.

Given the length of her reign, it is no surprise that she has visited my constituency several times, most recently in Aylesford in 2019, but she has had an ever presence in a variety of ways. Before the news broke yesterday afternoon, I was at Chatham Town football club, celebrating its receipt of the Queen's award for voluntary service, bestowed upon it in this year's platinum jubilee honours list for work in the community. The club was just one of a number of people and organisations to have been honoured for the service they have given.

It was Her Majesty's love of sport that I wanted to comment on briefly—in doing so, I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. Her love of horseracing is well known. Her first runner was in October 1949, and her first winner three days later—in fact, her first of more than 1,000 British winners. She would have delighted in every single one, but many will remember her pure thrill when her horse Estimate won the Gold cup in 2013.

That joy extended to other sports, and the reports of her death carry countless photos of her smiling face with sporting superstars and globally recognised and coveted trophies. Tributes to her have flooded in from the world of sport, her value to which should never be underestimated. She was patron to numerous sporting bodies and crucial to the success of London 2012, hosting all the world leaders before the opening ceremony. She authored countless messages of luck and congratulations and hosted numerous receptions celebrating victorious athletes, and she was the proud mother and grandmother of Olympians.

I was lucky enough to meet her several times, all of them because of sport, and most involving a conversation about horses. The respect that racing, football and other sports continue to pay her is a measure of their appreciation of the support she showed them. Like many colleagues, I visit primary schools and have been asked, "Have you met the Queen?" It is often followed with, "Have you met Harry Kane?" [Laughter.] When I tell primary schoolchildren that I have indeed met the Queen, there is an audible gasp, and they are keen to hear more stories about her. I tell them that when I first met her my curtsy was awful and embarrassing, and I get the children to stand up and practise their curtsies and bows just in case they ever get to meet the sovereign.

Last night, as we sat as a family and watched the news break of her death, tears openly rolled down my cheeks and those of my other half. Our six-year-old

took my hand in his and said, "Don't worry, mummy; the King will look after us now." He is right. God save the King.

5.16 pm

Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): I rise humbly to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen on my behalf and that of my constituents. When I came to this House in 2001, I was placed on the esteemed Broadcasting Committee, dealing with the media and tv, which was chaired by the right hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale), who is not in his place at the moment. The only privilege we had, and the only reason anyone knew of us, was that we had an invite to the Christmas reception at the palace. As a new Member, I went along to the palace with my colleagues, and as the Queen was circulating I was lucky to meet her first and to introduce myself, and she was pleased to do that. Then, however, I took it upon myself, as the school monitor, to be the representative of the whole Committee and started taking them across to the Queen to introduce her to them.

My petulance did not occur to me until I came home and thought about what had happened, but her greatness was that she was not irritated or annoyed by what I had done. She must have realised that I was a newbie in Parliament and decided to encourage me. I never saw a harsh expression on her face or anything else. That is my enduring memory from when I first became a Member of Parliament.

Her late Majesty was the Head of the Church but, as others have said, she supported all religions. She also supported many other beliefs as well, such as those of the Māoris, the Aboriginal people and some African tribes, and she supported people who had no faith at all. Above all, she supported people. She had trust in people. She gave her life to service, in dignity and in humanity. We should pay our tribute not just in eloquent speeches but in raising our own levels and standards in this place, if not to emulate her then at least to try to get somewhere close and to see how much better we can be. That would be an enduring tribute.

The Queen was not just the monarch of the United Kingdom; she was also the Head of the Commonwealth. Only last week she wrote a letter to the President of Pakistan sympathising with the suffering of Pakistanis in the huge climate tragedy of floods.

I end by reciting a Muslim prayer, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood):

"Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon"—

to God we Belong, and to God we all return. May the Queen rest in peace.

5.20 pm

Mr William Wragg (Hazel Grove) (Con): If I was asked by primary school children, "Did you ever meet Her late Majesty the Queen?", I would sadly have to say no—there has been no practising of bows and curtsies as my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) described. Perhaps I have finally learned this afternoon the attraction of being a Government Whip: not only does it seem to increase the likelihood of

being called early in a debate such as this, but they certainly got to spend a great deal of time with Her late Majesty.

Bagehot described our easily understood constitution as the distinction between the dignified and the efficient. Supposedly, the efficient is the Government, but I will let new Ministers discover that in due course. The dignified is the monarch, of whom there can be no greater embodiment than Her late Majesty.

Much has been said of anecdotes, but I will briefly quote from Her Majesty's Christmas broadcast in 1974, because what she said then more or less sums up where we are today. She said:

"Here in Britain...we hear a great deal about our troubles, about discord and dissension and about the uncertainty of our future. Perhaps we make too much of what is wrong and too little of what is right. The trouble with gloom is that it feeds upon itself and depression causes more depression. There are indeed real dangers and there are real fears and we will never overcome them if we turn against each other with angry accusations. We may hold different points of view but it is in times of stress and difficulty that we most need to remember that we have much more in common than there is dividing us."

May Her late Majesty rest in peace. May God console her family in their time of grief. May God save the King.

5.23 pm

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): I rise on behalf of the people of Tottenham, who mourn the loss of Her late Majesty very greatly. In reflecting on Her Majesty, I begin by evoking my parents' generation, who arrived and are described as part of the Windrush generation. My mother was the kind of woman for whom there were only two important people in our house: the first was Jesus Christ and the second was Her Majesty the Queen. Anything to do with the royal family—many will understand this—involved a lot of memorabilia in our West Indian front room.

It is also the grace, dignity and strength with which the Queen approached the Commonwealth for which she should be remembered. She guided the Commonwealth from a community of countries that had been colonised to a voluntary association of 56 countries. She travelled to 117 countries in the course of those 70 years. Although she was assiduous in her duties, there was a sense that she knew right from wrong. In 1979, she went to Zambia. It was controversial at the time, and it heralded the independence of then Rhodesia and what we now know as Zimbabwe. She was rumoured to be very concerned about the apartheid regime in South Africa, and she had a long-standing friendship with Nelson Mandela. All that is noted as part of her sense of duty and her commitment to the Commonwealth.

However, as I said earlier, it is also important to remember her supreme governance of the Church of England. She did it quietly, but up and down the country, in every constituency, her place at the head of that very important English, British, Anglican institution is something that we should hold very dear indeed.

I have my own small story to tell, if you will allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is about the day I became a Privy Counsellor, which was the most important day of my life. It was 5 November 2008, and on that day I was very sleepy indeed. I was sleepy because my friend Barack Obama had become President of the United States the day before, and I had not slept when I got to Buckingham Palace at six o'clock in the evening. I knelt

on the footstool; my eyes closed; I bowed—and I headed towards the Queen's lap. She reached out and put her hand on my bald head. She was generous, and she was gracious in all the Privy Council meetings that I attended subsequently, for which I am grateful. She understood the importance of Barack Obama's becoming the 44th President of the United States of America, and she carried herself with great dignity.

I was at Dumfries House yesterday when I heard the news. Prince Charles was unable to meet us. We were there to discuss the Commonwealth, and his commitment to skills and young people. He will be a very, very good King.

5.27 pm

Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con): I rise, on behalf of all the constituents of Wimbledon, Morden, Raynes Park and Motspur Park, to pay tribute to our beloved monarch and all that she has done. I also want to express, on their behalf, our sincere condolences to King Charles III and the whole royal family on the loss that they have suffered. Many Members have spoken today about not only their ceremonial but their personal loss.

As has already been said by many colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr Wragg), her reign has transcended times of turbulence and times of gloom. It has transcended the mass usage of automobiles, telephones, jet travel and the digital age. Surely, as we mourn today, we reflect on the fact that it was her steadfast commitment to duty, to loyalty, and to our country and our people that helped us not only to overcome and embrace those changes, but shape—in a way that we now see is so much for the better—this country we live in, modern Britain.

Many people, as I go around Wimbledon, tell me that they are grateful for the visits she made to my constituency. Much has been said about the fact that she was a fan of horseracing. In the diamond jubilee year, she came to the All England to watch tennis. That was not exactly the Queen's favourite sport; she had not been for 25 years. She watched the game, and after she had left I said to one of the members of the committee, "Well, that went well!" He said, "She was charming; it was wonderful." I said, "She even appeared to be interested in tennis." He said, "Well, she did ask to know the result of the 4.20 at Ascot."

On behalf of all my constituents, my heartfelt thoughts and prayers are for our new King, and my thanks are for the life and reign of his mother, our beloved monarch Queen Elizabeth. God save the King.

5.29 pm

Carla Lockhart (Upper Bann) (DUP): I join Members across the House in expressing my deepest sorrow and that of my constituents in Upper Bann on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. To His Majesty King Charles III, Her Majesty the Queen Consort and the entire royal household: our love, thoughts and prayers are with you as you mourn the loss of such a special mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

All of us in this place and right across the country have been a blessed people to live under the second Elizabethan age. We have benefited abundantly from her leadership, wisdom and discernment, and from the

[Carla Lockhart]

grace of one who, for over 70 years, devoted her life to the unstinting service of this nation and the Commonwealth. When the United Kingdom faced dark moments, her radiance and fortitude shone through, guiding her people to better days. In times of celebration, she led the nation with a sense of fun, warmth and style, and with a sparkle in the eye. Prime Ministers were to come and go, but Her Majesty remained constant, steadfast and sure, and that sense of a surety for Her Majesty came from her faith—her love for Christ, which she often spoke of in her Christmas message. That faith gave her the strength to fulfil her earthly vocation, and while we thank her for her service today, she receives her heavenly reward for service to her King.

This country is the poorer for the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. The depth of grief is reflective of the love and affection in which she was held. Her adoring loyal subjects in Northern Ireland hold fast to the wonderful memories of Her Majesty's visits, which were often symbolic and a testament to her commitment to a better future for everyone in Northern Ireland. Importantly, she also ensured that those who served her in our most troubled times were sure of her appreciation for their service and sacrifice, and those victims of terrorism knew the caring spirit of the Queen. Every corner of this kingdom has now embarked on a new era. We commit to the service of our new King, His Majesty King Charles III: his, too, a life of service; his, too, a record of commitment to duty.

To close my remarks on Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I will quote from the Bible, 2 Timothy 4:7, a fitting text to her life of service to our nation:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith".

I pray that God will grant King Charles III wisdom and good health in his reign over us, and that he too will keep the faith, as his beloved mum before him. God save the King.

5.32 pm

Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con): In her address to the nation during the pandemic, resplendent, we remember, in her NHS scrub coloured dress and brooch, Her Majesty praised

"the attributes of self-discipline, of quiet good-humoured resolve and of fellow-feeling",

which she felt characterised our nation. They are qualities she modelled for us and for which we loved her, but to them she added a less definable quality: a presence, a splendour which came from her deep faith and her certainty that the Crown is at the very centre of our constitution. This, combined with her considerable beauty and charm, meant she lit up every room.

I will never forget the day she came to Banbury in 2008 on the 400th anniversary of the town's charter. Later that day, she opened the Oxford Children's Hospital. My largest donors were corralled for really quite a long time for security reasons before she appeared. The excitement in the room, and some very healthy competition, meant that that was the most lucrative hour I have ever spent in fundraising.

It is clear from the speeches today that we saw in the Queen a reflection of our own passions—for diplomacy, for charity, for institutions, for the countryside, for racing.

We feel that she loved every one of our constituencies. The combination of service and majesty is unbeatable, and this will endure. God save the King.

5.34 pm

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): Soon after the general election of 2001, there was a reception in Buckingham Palace. I had just been elected, and I attended along with several hundred others. Soon after I arrived at the banqueting hall, it was announced that the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh had arrived. After her entrance, the Queen moved around the hall, politely speaking to a number of the assembled guests. I was chatting to a Labour colleague but then I became acutely aware that there were hundreds of eyes focused in my direction. That was because the Queen had moved to my side and was obviously intent on speaking with me.

I introduced myself to the Queen in an uncomfortable way and we exchanged a number of pleasantries. I expected her to move on, but no, she was obviously intent on having a conversation with me—and what a conversation that was. I slightly awkwardly talked about the royal yacht and then went on to talk about the royal train. I recalled to Her Majesty how, as a schoolboy, I was excited to see the royal train pass near my home village of Cefn Cribwr. She was delighted by these comments and had realised by then that I was a thorough south Walian.

The Queen proceeded to ask me how Welsh devolution was progressing. These were the early days of devolution and I gave a diplomatic answer. She was pleased with that answer but then moved on to ask how I saw things with regard to the Assembly in Northern Ireland. Given that the Stormont Assembly was at that time suspended and the situation was extremely delicate, I gave a general response, explaining how difficult things were.

I will not say what Her Majesty's responses were, but suffice it to say I was extremely impressed by her. She showed her overwhelming desire to seek peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, but more than that, her comments showed impressive knowledge of complex issues and a real decency, integrity and compassion. These qualities were in evidence throughout her long reign and were clearly seen in all parts of the United Kingdom.

A few years ago, the Queen visited Ystrad Mynach in my constituency of Caerphilly. The people of the area will always remember her real warmth and genuine interest in them, but my memory of Her Majesty will always be how she had time for the children who met her. The Queen loved those children, and the children loved her.

Undoubtedly, Queen Elizabeth II was an exceptional monarch. We will miss her enormously. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

5.37 pm

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): I speak for all my constituents in Nuneaton when I speak of our deep sadness at Queen Elizabeth's passing and our gratitude for her long and distinguished reign. On behalf of my constituents, I convey our deepest condolences to King Charles III and our late Queen's family.

Like a number of Members who have spoken today, I have had the absolute honour and privilege of being the Vice-Chamberlain of the Household and the Comptroller

of the Household. When I was made Vice-Chamberlain, I was dispatched to the palace with my right hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew), who spoke earlier. We did the exchange of wands of office with Her Majesty. I was as nervous as a kitten, but it went extremely well and I was very pleased with myself.

Moments later, I was handed a Humble Address that I was to ask Her Majesty to sign, which I would then bring back and deliver in the House, as per the norm. I went back into the room and handed Her Majesty the Humble Address. She looked at me and said, “I don’t have a pen.” I searched around frantically inside my jacket—it seemed like an age, but it was only a few seconds—and I said, “Ma’am, I’m afraid I don’t have a pen either.” Quick as a flash, she said, “Don’t worry. Follow me.” All of a sudden I was on this surreal journey, trailing in the wake of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II along this long corridor—stopping on the way to give a bit of a fuss to one of the corgis.

We came to the Queen’s study, and I could see the volume of papers and the number of red boxes. This was two weeks before the first lockdown, and I could see the number of things that the Queen was doing at that time on our behalf. She signed the Humble Address with her own pen and then asked me about my wife and family. It was fantastic, and I came out of that room feeling on top of the world. It would not matter whether the Queen was talking to a President, a Prime Minister, a schoolchild on a school visit, or a patient in a hospital or a hospice, all of them would have gone away with exactly the same feeling. That was one of Her Majesty’s abiding qualities among many others. Thank you, Ma’am, for your dedication and service to our nation. God save the King.

5.40 pm

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): On behalf of everybody in the Wirral, particularly in my constituency, I extend our profound condolences to the royal family. We have all lost our Queen, but they have lost a beloved family member, and we hold them in our hearts.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Dame Angela Eagle) mentioned, the Queen first came to my constituency in 1957 and visited the famous Port Sunlight village and the Duke of York cottages named after her father. Since then, many in the Wirral have felt strongly about the Queen and have supported all that she has done.

I want to talk, above all else, in favour of the Queen’s constancy. The news of the end Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth’s reign has felt like the ground we stand on shifting beneath our feet. All that we have known has changed. Down the years, our country has been drawn together in celebration and in sorrow by Her late Majesty and it simply feels impossible to know how to react without her. She had a peerless understanding of the country that we love, hard won through her life, which saw our country’s growth and also its emergence from the darkness of war. Reflecting on what her generation saw, I am in awe of them. They knew not only the pain of loss, but the overwhelming devastation of war.

We have heard so often about that profoundly important visit to Ireland in 2011 and her role as a peacebuilder. The Queen’s example to us all is that of patient constancy, which is, I believe, the best path to change. In her 20s, she said that she could not do what the men before her in her role could do, but that, unlike them, via modern

communications, she could broadcast across nations. I think she was a fan of new technology—whether she was speaking to us all from the dawn of television or, as she did recently, speaking to us on Zoom from home during the pandemic, she was a marvel.

In politics, it seems so often that change comes too slowly, and when it does come, we fall back. When it comes to the Queen’s legacy, I ask myself how is it that our country makes progress. I do not think that any individual can make progress by themselves, but rather it comes through our institutions—those institutions that persist when individuals fail. That is what really shifts our country from darkness into light. That is progress, and it is what Her late Majesty made with the constitutional role that was hers. She could always see what the future had on offer, and she built a path for us all.

It has been utterly humbling to hear from leaders across the world, and I trust that that global outpouring brings her family comfort. Our country is not perfect, but in Her late Majesty’s example, we have seen not only the model of service, but the never-ending hope in our future that sprung eternal on these islands through her reign. Long live the King.

5.44 pm

Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con): Today marks the end of an era, the modern Elizabethan era. The Queen was the only monarch that I, almost everyone in this Chamber and most of our nation had ever known. I join Members on both sides of the House who have spoken so movingly in mourning the death of our longest-serving sovereign, Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and I pass on my condolences and those of my constituents in south Shropshire to members of the royal family who grieve her loss.

We reflect today with great sadness and sense of loss, but we also remember with great joy the inspiration she gave in devoting her life to the service of others. Her first of 15 Prime Ministers heralded her accession to the throne as launching “a golden age” and as “the signal for...a brightening salvation of the human scene.”—[*Official Report*, 11 February 1952; Vol. 495, c. 962.]

And so it proved in so many areas of human endeavour and achievement by her and her subjects over these past 70 years.

As others have mentioned, we will all probably remember where we were when we heard the news of Her Majesty’s death yesterday. Although she was 96, it still came as a lightning bolt of shock in the midst of the thunderstorms raging across her kingdom yesterday. I was with members of the Environmental Audit Committee at a half-full reservoir in Cornwall surrounded by trees. That seems strangely fitting, as I wish to touch very briefly on the commitment Her Majesty showed to the environment.

Through her love of nature and animals, which others have mentioned, she and her devoted husband Prince Philip, the late Duke of Edinburgh, undoubtedly planted the seed of their family’s enthusiasm for championing nature and leading the crusade to combat climate change, decades before it became fashionable. Only last November, in her message to international leaders and delegates attending COP26, she said:

“The time for words has now moved to the time for action.”

We saw her love of nature whenever she was walking or riding in the countryside around Balmoral or Sandringham. Her love of animals was legendary, and it was one of

[Philip Dunne]

the characteristics that connected her to her people. Her particular love of horses has been mentioned, and it was no accident that the Royal Windsor horse show was the event she enjoyed the most each year.

We all knew, even if we could not always comprehend it, her particular love of corgis, but her love of trees will leave a lasting physical legacy. I suspect she planted more trees than anyone else in public life, anywhere around the globe. The platinum jubilee Queen's green canopy has seen a million trees planted in her honour this year alone, and it will be a lasting reminder of her for decades, if not hundreds of years, to come.

Her only visit to the Ludlow constituency was in the year after her golden jubilee, when she came by royal train to Telford and visited Much Wenlock with Prince Philip to take in the Wenlock Olympian games, an early precursor to her role at London 2012. She showed that her priorities lay with her people by having lunch at the discovery centre in Craven Arms rather than at the gourmet delights of Ludlow. She went on to do a walkabout in the market square in Ludlow, where thousands turned out to welcome the first visit by a reigning monarch in more than 300 years. Most visits by her predecessors had been at the head of an army.

While tributes have been made today to his mother and matriarch to the nation, His Majesty King Charles III has been doing a walkabout among well-wishers outside Buckingham Palace. The Queen's example of engaging with us all is already being carried on by her successor. God rest Her Majesty. God save the King.

5.48 pm

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): On behalf of my constituents and the citizens of Sheffield, I pay tribute to the Queen and associate myself with the wonderful comments made from both sides of the House this afternoon.

I met the late Queen on a number of occasions as a Member of Parliament, but I want to refer to the first time I met her back in May 1991, when I was leader of Sheffield Council and she came to open the Sheffield Arena. We built a raised walkway into the middle of the arena for the opening, and I had to walk alongside her down to the microphones. Before we did the walk, royal officials came to me and said "Councillor Betts, there is a rather steep drop on one side of the walkway. Make sure you are on that side of the Queen when you walk along."

Before we began the official opening, the Queen talked to me and others with knowledge and understanding of what was going on in the city, of the loss of jobs in steel and engineering, and of the effect on people's lives and employment. She showed empathy for what was happening in our city. When we walked out to do the opening, there was a trumpet voluntary—we do things properly in Sheffield. The Queen stopped after a little bit and said, "Do you think they have seen us come in?" I said, "Your Majesty, they don't normally do trumpet voluntaries for the leader of the council." Then she said, "Do you know what we do next?" I said, "I rather hoped that you'd done this sort of thing before." But she had a laugh; she enjoyed the opening. She put me at ease and I relaxed.

My simple memories of the Queen, from that and future occasions, were of someone with a real understanding of, and interest in, the issues of concern to her subjects and my constituents. She had a personal warmth and a lovely sense of humour, and she put me at ease through her approach at a time when I was frankly extremely nervous, though she took what was happening in her stride. On behalf of my constituents, I simply say thank you to an incredible sovereign for an incredible life of service. God save the King.

5.50 pm

John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): I, too, want to reflect on the immense loss that we in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth have sustained with the passing of Her late Majesty the Queen. Like every other Member of this House, I can say with pride that the Queen knew well my constituency, in the Scottish Borders; she visited it many times in her seven decades of service as our sovereign.

I treasure memories of two of Her late Majesty's most recent visits to the Scottish Borders. In 2009, she came to the seaside town of Eyemouth in Berwickshire, and on 9 September 2015, seven years ago today, she opened the Borders railway. That was the day on which she became the longest-serving monarch in our history. On both of those days, the crowds were large—probably much larger than the organisers expected. I remember the enormous anticipation steadily building as the time for her arrival approached. There were local residents there of all ages and backgrounds. A thrill of excitement, like an electric pulse, ran through the crowd when they saw Her late Majesty. There was joy, disbelief and awe at seeing a global icon—the face on every coin and stamp—in the flesh; she was a smiling and radiant lady, here to visit them in their community. Those memories will last a lifetime.

As a Member of the Scottish Parliament for a decade, I had the privilege of meeting Her late Majesty in more informal settings. After each election, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh would host a reception at the palace of Holyroodhouse for the newly elected MSPs. As they moved around the room, the Queen clockwise and the Duke of Edinburgh anti-clockwise, there was a real sense of anticipation—the same as we experienced when she visited the Borders. It was amusing to see how some of my new MSP colleagues, who may not have been the most instinctive royalists, were suddenly reduced to a bag of nerves, but as the Queen joined our group, we were all immediately put at ease by her twinkly eyes and warmth. After brief pleasantries, she launched into detailed and informed questions about our respective constituencies. Given that there were 129 MSPs plus various other guests, the fact that she was able to remember such detailed knowledge was quite remarkable, but this was her kingdom and had been for longer than most of us had been alive.

The Queen was always fully prepared for whatever her duty demanded of her. She never spared herself, as we saw this week, when she fulfilled her last act of service: appointing my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. In good times and bad, we have always looked to the Queen for guidance and leadership, and were never left wanting. Her life spanned the end of the British empire and the start of the age of the internet. Few of us can remember a time without the Queen on the throne.

Our great nation is feeling tremendous pain at the loss of our beloved Queen. As we come to terms with that loss, let us give thanks that it was our good fortune to have her reign over us, happily and gloriously, for so long; and let us give our sympathy and support to His Majesty the King. In years to come, those children who waved flags in the Scottish Borders will tell their grandchildren of the day the Queen came to town. Each of them, each of us here and all our constituents will forever be able to say with pride, "We are Elizabethans." God save the King.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): As Mr Speaker announced at the beginning of proceedings today, at approximately 6 pm the House will be suspended while His Majesty the King makes his broadcast to the nation. Members present will be able to watch that broadcast on screens in the Chamber. We will then resume our proceedings to continue tributes.

The House will now be suspended while the King makes his broadcast to the nation.

5.55 pm

Sitting suspended.

6.10 pm

On resuming—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): God save the King. [HON. MEMBERS: "God save the King!"] What a very moving address from our new monarch. How privileged we are to sit here together in this Chamber and witness his ascent to the throne.

Let us continue now with tributes. The next tribute comes from Rosena Allin-Khan.

6.11 pm

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am truly humbled to follow what was, quite frankly, one of the most beautiful outpourings of love I have ever had the pleasure of witnessing. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I rise to add my tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of the people of Tooting, who are united in grief. So many have been in touch with their own memories and stories, yet one word shines through again and again, and that is "duty". That sense of duty underpins everything she did. Some recall her service in the British Army when, at a time with invasion imminent, she could have fled to Canada; instead, she stayed in London and put on a khaki uniform and a tin helmet. I remember best her service during the pandemic. Suffering the grief of the loss of her dear husband Philip, she cut a lonely figure at his funeral as she observed social distancing. She embodied the pain that so many people were experiencing at the same time and she led, truly, by example. She was a shining beacon of light in that dark moment and never once deviated from her duty.

It is almost 20 years since Her Majesty visited St George's University Hospital in Tooting to see the work of aspiring doctors and nurses, and to meet NHS staff. When I am there, I often see the plaque she unveiled of two hands clasped in friendship and mutual support. We all need to hold each other's hands a little tighter and to hug our loved ones a little closer.

I am reminded of the story told by trauma surgeon David Nott after his return from the horrors of fleeing war-torn Aleppo. When he met the Queen, the doctor was deeply distressed and could not face making polite conversation about his work over lunch. Sensing that, in that special way she had, the Queen touched his hand and brought forth a silver barrel of biscuits. "These are for the dogs," she told him. They proceeded to spend the lunch feeding the corgis under the table. "There," she said, "That's so much better than talking, isn't it?" Such intuition, such emotional intelligence, such kindness.

I mentioned Her Majesty's role in the war as a young princess. During the darkest hours of world war two, she gave a BBC radio broadcast and said:

"when the peace comes...it will be for us, the children of today, to make the world of tomorrow a better...place."

And she did. She made our world a better place. She showed strength as a woman and the strength to shape modern Britain. So let us commit to carry on that spirit of service and, above all, duty: duty to our constituents, to our country and to making the world a better place.

6.14 pm

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Tonight, the good people of Bedfordshire are grieving so deeply because they loved their Queen so dearly. Some of them, like me, were hugely privileged to be with Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh when she visited the elephant care centre at Whipsnade zoo in April 2017. Her Majesty had a deep interest in wildlife. She fed some of the baby elephants bananas, and that was something they were very pleased about. Afterwards, she visited the independent living centre in Dunstable, which was opened by Central Bedfordshire Council. She had a deep interest and passion in how older people were looked after and felt that they should not be isolated and lonely in their later years.

As many of us have said this afternoon, she was our rock, but in my brief contribution, I want to look at who was her rock. I commend to all hon. Members the book that was published in honour of her 90th birthday, "The Servant Queen and the King she serves". It is published by the Bible Society and the clue is rather in the name of the book. She lived out her faith and did so with humility, grace and kindness, but she was also not afraid to speak about it either, as she did in her Christmas broadcast in 2002:

"I know just how much I rely on my...faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning, I know that the only way to live my life is to...do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God...I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel."

It was the Queen's faith that enabled her to take the long view. As the daughter and wife of a naval officer, she had the attitude that this storm, too, shall pass. When she was facing difficulties that can sometimes seem to overwhelm us, she took the long view. It was her faith that enabled her to face her end calmly, because she knew that thinking death is the end is the great lie of the evil one.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory. I look forward to the reign of His Majesty King Charles III, who cares passionately for the wellbeing of all peoples across these islands and who has been way ahead of his time on issues like climate change and the environment. God save the King.

6.17 pm

Colleen Fletcher (Coventry North East) (Lab): I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on my behalf and that of the people in my Coventry constituency. For all of us, individually and collectively, this is a moment of great sorrow and profound national sadness as we mourn the loss of Queen Elizabeth II—our longest-reigning and most remarkable monarch, who always displayed an unwavering commitment and steadfast devotion to our nation and the Commonwealth.

For over seven decades, the Queen has been a symbol of stability and continuity, an ever-present part of the fabric of national life. For so many of us—me included—she was the only monarch we have ever known and was a constant presence throughout our lifetime. Indeed, as our society, our country and the wider world changed beyond all recognition around us, she was a reassuring presence of solidity and constancy.

Throughout her reign, the Queen certainly made her mark on the city of Coventry. She first visited Coventry in 1948 to inaugurate the new city centre and lay the foundation stone of the new shopping precinct as the city recovered from the devastation of war and the blitz on Coventry. Thereafter, she visited Coventry on several other occasions, most notably for the consecration of the new cathedral in 1962—I remember that very well; when I was a child, we all went along from school—the opening of the newly refurbished Walsgrave Hospital in 1970 and, latterly, the home front exhibition at Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in the year 2000. It was on that occasion that I met the Queen. I was a councillor in Coventry and took along my elderly mother-in-law, Val, to meet her, too. Even though Val was extremely nervous, she was able to chat to the Queen about life in Coventry during the war. Val never forgot that day for the rest of her life, and she spoke about it often. Watching Val, I strongly sensed people's allegiance and love for the Queen and her family. Following those visits, and the many others the Queen made to Coventry, she left a lasting legacy in the city and enduring memories for its residents, who I know will feel an overwhelming sense of loss following her passing.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and a much cherished monarch. Her life was one of extraordinary dedication and service, and her loss will be felt in every corner of our nation and right across the world. Rest in peace, your Majesty.

6.20 pm

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): I remember as a child being given a large pair of scissors and a huge stack of well-thumbed magazines and being asked to make a massive collage of pictures of the Queen and her family. It was the silver jubilee, and there did not seem to be any arrangement for a party, so my mother had decided to fling open the doors and hold a fête. We wrapped up presents to put in the lucky dip, we even arranged to have a candy floss machine, and somebody bought some ponies for pony rides—but we did not know whether people would come. I wanted to tell this story because this was in Omagh, in Northern Ireland, in 1977, in the middle of the troubles—but the people came. They came in their hundreds. They came from all walks of life. The Protestants came. The Catholics came. And they came because they loved our Queen.

People love our Queen. She has been the rock beneath our feet in troubled times and the light that has shown us the way in the darkness. They love her in Chelmsford, they love her across the country and they love her across the world. During my political career, I have had the opportunity to travel to many countries, especially in the past year, and I have felt that love and fondness again and again. It is particularly in many developing countries that I have felt that love, respect and gratitude. That is because, at every Christmas message, and in so many visits and events, the Queen used her voice to speak out for the most vulnerable and to make sure that their voices were heard. As the Development Minister that she appointed earlier this week, I pledge to continue that legacy for her.

I also know how much love and respect there is for our new monarch, King Charles III, especially for his work on the environment and climate change. My condolences, my thoughts and my prayers are with him and his family. I look forward to his reign. God save the King.

6.22 pm

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): Very much like the Prime Minister, I was not raised in a house of monarchists. Yesterday, when the first news came of the Queen's ill health, I was in the National Security Bill Committee. I was surprised by how deeply affected I felt by the news—I was extremely emotional immediately. It felt like that phone call that almost everybody who has lost somebody close to them gets, that says, "Get here soon. Now is the time." That made me wonder, "Why do I feel like this?" It is because it feels as if the Queen was a member of every one of our families—even a family like mine. We can project our own life on to hers. No matter how different that life is from the one that the Queen had, her universal experience feels like ours, and she feels like she is with us all.

That made me reflect on all the stories we have all been reading. There is a story for everybody about the Queen's grace. Anyone—no matter what their political persuasion or religion, and whatever floats their boat—can find a story going around at the moment about the Queen that leads to their bias.

Alison McGovern: She was clever like that.

Jess Phillips: Yes, she was clever like that. It is an incredible skill, and shows what an icon and a diplomat she was.

You can see the Queen as a traditionalist, you can see her as a modernist, you can see her as somebody with deep faith, you can see her as somebody who represented well people without a faith, but what I have found is that the Queen was a feminist. The brilliant story about the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia being driven quite roughly by the Queen around the Balmoral estate when women in Saudi Arabia were not allowed to drive is one of my top stories. But I saw a story that said:

"When HM Queen came to open the Rolls Building, she was ushered into a room in which were waiting all the judges. She looked at the ermine-clad...ranks of Chancery judges, smiled, and said crisply 'Where are the women?' A look of panic crossed multiple faces, until someone saw three female chancery...district judges in a dark corner. 'There they are!' he shouted. So the Queen went to talk to them."

What a woman, what a leader—who, no matter what sort of family they grew up in and no matter in which bit of the world, everybody feels they have a tiny little bit of her with us. God rest the Queen.

6.26 pm

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): In April 2017, as MP for South Leicestershire, I had the honour of meeting Her late Majesty the Queen and His late Royal Highness Prince Philip when the Queen hosted lunch for a small gathering at St Martins House in Leicester following the royal maundy service in Leicester cathedral. Along with the Prince, she was extremely gracious, listening with interest to the issues affecting Leicester and Leicestershire, and thanking those within our local community who do so much in the many charities in our area. It was a moment of great joy to have personally witnessed the late Queen at work. By placing duty at the forefront of everything she did, she was a role model of how public service should be conducted.

On behalf of the chairmen and councillors of the town and parish councils of South Leicestershire; the chairman of Harborough District Council, Councillor Neil Bannister, and his fellow Harborough councillors; the chairman of Blaby District Council, Councillor Iain Hewson; the Leicestershire county councillors of my constituency; all my constituents; and my family—my wife Maria, daughter Sophie and son Alexander—as the Member of Parliament for South Leicestershire, I want to give thanks for the seven decades of public service given by our late Queen, and I express my sincere condolences to His Majesty the King and the royal family. God save the King.

6.28 pm

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): On behalf of the people of Leicester West, I would like to send our deepest sympathy and condolences to His Majesty the King and the royal family. They have lost their mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, as well as their sovereign. I hope the fact that the whole nation grieves alongside them provides some small comfort at this difficult time.

Queen Elizabeth was a simply remarkable public servant, unparalleled in our lifetime, who always put her people and country first. She dedicated her life to duty and to others; it was never ever about herself. I think this selfless service is why she holds such a unique place in our history and hearts, and it is what she will be remembered for most of all.

The Queen's astonishing reign saw changes unimaginable 70 years ago. Her constant calm presence gave us stability through turbulent times, and her words of wisdom provided perspective and strengthened our resolve. I think in particular of her address to the nation during the covid pandemic. The Queen reminded us of how families had been separated during the second world war, and that although that was painful, it was the right thing to do. She also rightly said that the challenge of the pandemic was different from the war, because we joined nations across the globe in a common endeavour to beat the virus. There is nothing more powerful than hope for a better future—hope that better days lie ahead. That is what the Queen gave us so many times.

Finally, many hon. Members will know that I represent a very diverse constituency. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) said, we were absolutely thrilled when the Queen decided to begin her diamond jubilee tour in Leicester 10 years ago. Her loss will be felt in every community and by those of every faith, as well as by those with none. Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish or Jain, the Queen stood for the values we all share—what we hold in common, not what divides us—as does His Majesty the King. I saw that when he visited the Narborough Road in my constituency. Often called the most diverse street in the country, it has more than 20 different nationalities along the way. That was a huge day, and he was welcomed with excitement, joy and open arms, as I am sure he will be as our new King.

I send my constituents' thoughts and prayers to the royal family and our thanks to the late Queen for all she gave, and on behalf of us all, I say long live King Charles III.

6.31 pm

Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): On behalf of my Faversham and Mid Kent constituents, I echo the moving words that we have just heard from King Charles III: to Her late Majesty the Queen, I say, "Thank you. May you rest in peace"—a rest truly earned through a lifetime of service.

Most of us across the country cannot remember a time before Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth. She has been a constant in a changing and often dangerous world, a source of strength and steadfastness, and a leader by example with the courage to carry on, whatever the storm. She showed us that strength and courage need not be at the expense of kindness or humour. She touched the lives of so many people, old and young alike, in the UK and around the world.

I am sure that when visiting primary schools, we have all been asked, "Have you met the Queen?"—more often, in fact, than, "Have you met the Prime Minister?". Sadly, my answer to the first of those questions has always been "No", but I do have something that I am very personally grateful to her for. During the pandemic, Her late Majesty the Queen addressed the nation. It was a dark time, and I remember her address well, not only for the compassion and hope she expressed, but for one particular detail.

As Care Minister, I endeavoured to get social care staff thought of and talked about on a par with NHS staff. When I heard that the Queen was going to make an address, I sought to get a message to her. To this day, I do not know if it reached her, but what mattered is that when she got to the section of her address about healthcare staff, she spoke of health and social care staff in the same breath. She realised how important her words would be to care workers across country, and that brought tears to my eyes. After the bleak time of the pandemic, she then brought our communities together for her jubilee, a joyful celebration of what we have in common.

As a nation, we mourn her, but first and foremost in my thoughts are her family, who mourn a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother. I wish them strength and solace in a life so long and well lived. Our thoughts are with our new King. We know that he will serve with passion and dedication, and on behalf of my constituents, I wish him strength and good fortune as he takes on the responsibilities of our Head of State. Long live the King.

6.34 pm

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): This morning I was walking to the station at Wembley Central and an Afghan lady stopped me. Her language was, let us say, not much better than my Pashto, but through her accent I heard her say, “You are MP, yes?” I said that I was and asked if I could help her in any way. She shook her head and left me confused, because I thought I heard her say, “I at Green party, sorry”, and then she moved on. It took me a few moments to work out what she was actually saying. She wasn’t making a statement about her political affiliation, but saying that she had been at the Queen’s party, one of the glorious street parties that we held in Brent for the platinum jubilee. And in that simple word, “sorry”, she wanted to convey her condolences and share her own sorrow at the death of the late Her Majesty the Queen.

In Brent we like to claim that we are the most diverse place in the world. That may even be true. We speak more than 160 languages around the dinner tables, and we have welcomed generations of immigrants, people who came to build a better life for their children, and asylum seekers like that lady from Afghanistan. She spoke for every one of my constituents in Brent when she said, “I at Queen’s party, sorry.”

Every year for more than 40 years, my family has had a ritual. No matter whether the turkey is ready or not, Christmas dinner has to be finished in time to watch the Queen’s Christmas message at 3. I hope it does not seem disrespectful, but we used to grade them. Was it as good as last year? Would she focus on something new this time? Would there be mention of charities and visits to communities celebrating significant anniversaries or suffering from disasters? But two things were constant: the Commonwealth and her own deep, very personal faith in Jesus Christ, which was the guiding principle of her life.

Many have spoken of her life as a pattern of duty and service, and it was. But the virtues which, in my view, her life so manifestly displayed are what Christians call the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance. As St Paul says,

“against such there is no law.”

Integrity is not a very fashionable thing in the public sphere these days, but her life was one of real integrity. We thank God that she brought all those virtues together in her life. It was a life that was selfless; it was a life that was whole. And now it is complete. May her soul rest in peace, and may God save the King.

6.37 pm

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): It is an honour to be called to speak on this sombre day. On behalf of the people of South Suffolk, I send my condolences to the royal family and His Majesty King Charles III.

Like our previous Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), I will start by making a confession. I have never had the great honour to meet the Queen in the true sense, but I did work for her once. During my student holidays, I was a kitchen porter for Gardner Merchant, and one Christmas in the early 1990s I was recruited to do a 19-hour shift at Buckingham Palace for the Queen’s staff Christmas party. It did not end well.

Luckily, no one else was around, but in the early hours, while I was concluding the tidying up, I managed to upend an entire bottle of red wine over one of the Queen’s presumably very expensive carpets. What does one do in such a situation? Total panic sets in, and fear of being sent to the Tower of London. So I did the only thing I could do. A few metres away was a very large Ming vase, and I simply relocated it. For all I know, because I have heard nothing since, it is still there. Sorry, ma’am. I pledge my loyalty to His Majesty, and I hope that he is merciful and resists the temptation to put an invoice for cleaning costs in the post.

Above all else, I want to express the great privilege I feel to have lived in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and the great fortune I feel that my four children lived as Elizabethans and knew what it was like to live under this extraordinary sovereign who was deservedly loved and adored the world over for her total devotion to our nation and our Commonwealth. May she rest in peace, supported in her sleep by our eternal love and affection. God save the King.

6.40 pm

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): It is a true honour to be able to pay tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of my constituents in Oxford West and Abingdon. I restate the deep sorrow and sadness that many have already expressed.

The ties between the Queen and the community were strong indeed. In every milestone of her reign, Abingdon celebrated with an eccentric and much-loved bun throwing. She was also a regular visitor to our area; she inspected a military parade at RAF Abingdon in 1968, she opened Sophos at Abingdon Science Park in 2004 and she reopened the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford after its refurbishment in 2009.

One constituent remembered the following when he attended the official opening of the Joint European Torus fusion facility at Culham. He said:

“It was opened jointly by the Queen and President Mitterrand. As I recall, the Queen spoke first in English, and then in very polished French. A wonderful way to open a European project.”

Another constituent remembered:

“We were privileged to meet the Queen in Malaysia while living there. I took my six-year-old daughter, who was so excited to meet the real Queen and held a bouquet for her. When the Queen approached, my daughter, reluctant to release the flowers, asked, ‘Are you sure you are the real Queen? You are not wearing a crown, only a hat.’ The Queen replied, ‘I am sorry. The crown was a little heavy to wear today, but I hope you like my hat.’ My daughter, now convinced, released the flowers. I will always remember her warmth and humour while handling my daughter’s mistake.”

Those stories show not just her gargantuan work ethic but how her humility and humanity earned people’s loyalty. I am struck by how many people have been saying, “I am not a monarchist but I loved her.” The fact that she held people’s respect despite and not because of her title is testament to the genius that she brought to the role and is an example to us all.

I am sure that many have not got their heads around what life will be like without her. People have mentioned stamps and coins, but for me as a Brit who grew up abroad, it is the portraits. When we lived in Ethiopia in the ’80s, we would gather as a community at the British club or the embassy, and there she was, glorious in oils, gazing down on our festivities from some ornate framed

picture. In the '90s, when I was in Jamaica, where I remember visiting other schools as part of an orchestra practising both the British and the Jamaican national anthems in preparation for her state visit—of course, she was Head of State there, too. There she was again on the walls. The pictures were often smaller and more humble, but they were always there. Through time and space, she was always there, taken almost for granted, binding her people together, until yesterday, when she was not any more. Like many others, I cried.

My thoughts today are firmly with her family, and especially with King Charles at this incredibly difficult time. Our loyalty transfers to him and, as his pitch perfect address just this afternoon showed, we have absolutely nothing to fear. May our beloved Queen rest in peace. God save the King.

6.44 pm

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con): On behalf of the people of Mid Norfolk, I send our deepest condolences to all the royal family, Her late Majesty's many friends and the royal household. I also echo the comments of the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran) in paying tribute to the King's spine-tingling tribute to his mother that we heard a little earlier.

This news has stopped the country in its tracks. As many colleagues have said, whether we were lucky enough to have met Her Majesty or not, we all feel that we have lost our own, much-loved grandmother, but also something very precious—a part of us, a part of our nation. We stopped the clocks and the political debates out of profound respect for our longest serving monarch, who as Head of State on the throne has guided our nation through the most extraordinary 70 years, celebrated so sincerely by a grateful nation in the jubilee earlier this year; how wonderful that she had a chance to see that gratitude.

Our nation mourns a remarkable woman, who has become, quite simply, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister put it, this nation's rock. As mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and figurehead—not just of the royal family, but of all her subjects, regardless of faith, race or any other creed across this great nation—through tumultuous times she has been a shining beacon of dedication to duty, office, public service and nationhood, the exemplary spirit and embodiment of the very best of the United Kingdom, and a unifying sea anchor stabilising our ship of state in often turbulent seas. She was always cheered, as today, by mass crowds wherever she travelled, and nowhere more than in her beloved royal county of Norfolk, where, through her home at Sandringham, she and her family have always been held proudly in very close affection and esteem, not least by the many serving and former members of the armed forces in our county and our country. It has been the privilege of my life to represent that county in her Parliaments and to serve as a Minister of the Crown under her last three Prime Ministers.

Who among us will forget her 2012 jubilee address to both Houses assembled in Westminster Hall? Addressing, as she was, six former Prime Ministers on the front row, she said that she had had the privilege of having been served by 12 Prime Ministers, and added over the top of her glasses, with a wry chuckle, "And doubtless there will be many more to come." Perhaps she could see the next decade coming.

The many eloquent tributes, in particular from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my right hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) and for Maidenhead (Mrs May), the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) and the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), have highlighted the many virtues and legacies of our dear late Queen Elizabeth—indeed, the Great. I will not repeat them.

I want to highlight three very particular legacies that are close to my heart and the hearts of my constituents. The first is children: the Queen understood and believed deeply that all of us in public office have a special duty to the children who are our future. They cannot vote or make their case in this Chamber; they need us to speak for them. As she famously said, children

"teach us all a lesson—just as the Christmas story does—that in the birth of a child, there is a new dawn with endless potential."

Her duty to the cause of children around the country is legendary.

The second legacy I will mention is horses, hounds and the countryside. As a countryman and MP for a rural constituency, I thank Her Majesty, as well as her son and her grandsons, for always championing our rural heritage and way of life. From her love of the wilds of her native Scotland, to the high seas, the skies of Norfolk and especially her time with her beloved horses and hounds, she was indeed the monarch of the glen—and, may I say, the fens?

If the House will indulge me on a personal note, a great personal honour of mine relates to Her Majesty's love of racing and deep expertise in thoroughbred racing; my late father had the great honour of being the retained royal jockey over fences to her late mother in the '50s.

Finally, let me mention Her late Majesty's commitment to the unsung heroes of voluntary service in this country—the charity workers, community helpers and selfless servants who embodied the spirit of selfless public service that she always did. Let us take this moment to renew our commitment to them, but let us also renew our commitment to restore the fragile public trust in our democracy. Her Majesty the Queen took on the monarchy in the wake of the abdication crisis and a world war. It is a remarkable and unprecedented legacy that, after 70 years, she leaves the monarchy stronger than she found it, and stronger, perhaps, than it has ever been.

God bless your Majesty; may she rest in eternal peace. God save the King.

6.49 pm

Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): On behalf of my constituents in Salford and Eccles, it is an honour to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and to send our heartfelt condolences, love and prayers to her family, the royal household, all who loved her, and the nation, at this sad time. It is undeniable that she served us with unrelenting duty, dignity and kindness. Her dedication to uniting us all was a beacon of goodness throughout her long reign. She never failed to lift us up in the hard time and through the good time.

As we have heard tonight, on her 21st birthday, as a princess, she said:

"I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service".

[Rebecca Long Bailey]

She never broke that promise, keeping her pledge with love and warmth for more than 75 years. She really was a shining example of the best of us. May she now rest in peace. We extend our love and support to His Majesty the King as he assumes his new office, in what can only be a period of profound pain. God save the King.

6.50 pm

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I rise at this sombre time to represent my constituents in East Sussex to send our condolences to the royal family for their deep loss of Her late Majesty the Queen. East Sussex is a county that Her Majesty visited many times. She helped to commemorate the 900th year since the Norman invasion, visiting Pevensey bay where William the Conqueror first landed and then going to Battle town, where the battle of Hastings took place.

For many, we are mourning not only a glorious reign of public service for the past 70 years, but the one constant who glued together our past and the present. That encapsulates the service of Her late Majesty. She represented the historic traditions of the past, but she also sought to champion and support the ideas of the future and of the generations to come. Perhaps I may use Her late Majesty's link to transport in that regard.

There are many modes where she would be remembered, in land, air and sea, but I will go to the London underground. As a 13-year-old in 1939, the then Princess Elizabeth joined her sister Princess Margaret for her first trip on the London underground. The network's staff magazine, *Pennyfare*, reported:

"Both Princesses were greatly interested in the escalators, automatic ticket-machines and automatic doors".

Despite their status, the princesses sat in a third-class smoking carriage of the District line train.

Thirty years later, a further trip on the underground marked the opening of the Victoria line. There she operated the controls in the cab of the first train on that line, going from Green Park to Oxford Circus. Although the tube line was the first to be operated automatically, the Queen could be said to have been its very first driver.

The Queen took the controls at the front of the train on the opening of the Piccadilly line extension and the docklands light railway. Only this year, we remember her in those amazing photos as she operated an Oyster card at the opening of the Elizabeth line. She truly was an innovator and always interested in innovation.

Many in this Chamber and across the nation and the Commonwealth will not have met Her late Majesty. That matters not; what matters is that we all remember her and keep her as part of us, celebrating her duty to public service, her graciousness, her kindness and her devotion. We will not just keep that with us, but every day demonstrate it, and we will become better in her memory. May Her late Majesty rest in peace. God save the King.

6.54 pm

Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab): I rise to speak with great sadness to pay tribute on behalf of myself and my constituents to Her late Majesty the Queen, as our Head of State for 70 years, our longest-serving monarch, with an unrivalled sense of duty in

serving her people. It is that great sense of dedication and devoted duty to her people for which she is loved, cherished and remembered.

Her late Majesty had a role in so many events that defined our lives, both as Head of State and as a symbol of the values that we hold so dear as a nation. Her late Majesty was more than our Queen; she was part of our everyday lives, visiting cities and towns across Britain, the Commonwealth and the world, including her five visits to Bradford. She was woven into the very fabric of our society.

In my constituency, the Queen will be remembered for representing the very best of Britain. She provided the glue that held the nation together through these difficult times, providing continuity and certainty to the nation, often through turbulent and changing times. A Queen for all people, regardless of faith or culture; the grandmother of a nation; a loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother—a family and a nation mourn the passing of a much loved, admired and dedicated public servant who was our Queen. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

6.55 pm

Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con): On behalf of my constituents in East Hampshire, I want to convey our sincere sympathies to the royal family and express our heartfelt thanks for the life of Her late Majesty.

My own first consciousness of the Queen, like that of many others of roughly my age who have spoken, was in 1977, although unlike others who have spoken, I was not actually in the same place as the Queen at the time. My consciousness was just through the street parties, the bunting, the mug—which by the way I still have—and, if people remember them, the little round badges that we got to sew on to our Cub uniforms. I did not yet quite know how, but for the first time I got that sense that as Britons we are especially blessed.

I could not possibly have known that, decades later, I would have that rare opportunity, as others have mentioned, to meet the Queen. It was the honour of my life to be admitted to the Privy Council, but most especially to be able to attend one of those lunches at Windsor castle, which have come up a few times today, and to have the opportunity to talk directly with our monarch about the subject that I was representing, which was education. I have to say that the level not only of her knowledge about current issues, but of her interest to discuss it further, was remarkable.

Speaking of education, I find when I visit primary schools in East Hampshire that there are actually three questions that are guaranteed from the kids. The first is, "What is your favourite colour?", the second is, "What's the Prime Minister like?", and of course the third is, "Have you met the Queen?" I love that opportunity, because it is wonderful to talk to those children, the next generation, about her values, and I always take away a lot from it too.

We have heard some wonderful tributes today—some beautiful tributes, actually—to Her late Majesty, but I think probably the biggest tribute of all that any of us could pay, particularly those of us in this place, is to seek to learn from and to emulate her example: her selflessness; her steadfastness; her commitment above all to service; her readiness to forgive; her appreciation

of every individual she met; and her valuing of custom and tradition, but equally her adaptability and openness to change.

Our constitutional monarchy is unique and special—I found myself last night trying to explain to my own children exactly why and how. This family, through no choice of their own, carry a great burden and the unity of nationhood, and a much, much wider world role. Of course, with her passing that role carries on. The Crown endures.

So we mourn our beloved Queen Elizabeth, and we celebrate, too, her life of service.

“Eternal Rest grant unto her, O Lord,

And let perpetual light shine upon her”.

And may the Lord bless and guide our sovereign King Charles. God save the King. Long may he reign.

6.59 pm

Allan Dorans (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP): It is a privilege to have the opportunity to express my sincere personal sympathies and condolences and those of my constituents in Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock on the death of Her late Majesty the Queen.

The late Queen will be remembered with great affection, especially for her service, duty, humility, humour and faith. Our thoughts and prayers are with King Charles III, the Queen Consort and the wider royal family at this sad time.

I met the late Queen in 1973 when, as a 17-year-old cadet in the Metropolitan Police, I was invited with others to attend a royal garden party in the grounds of Buckingham Palace. Her late Majesty chose to speak with me, probably because I was in uniform; we all know how much she valued her uniformed services. Her royal presence, her smile and her gentleness left a lasting impression on me.

A few years later, when I was attested as a police constable, I took an oath of allegiance, which contained the words:

“I will well and truly serve the Queen in the office of constable, with fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality, upholding fundamental human rights and according equal respect to all people”.

Those words encapsulate for me many of the values, virtues and leadership qualities so clearly displayed by the Queen throughout a long and illustrious reign.

The oath also greatly influenced my service as a police officer, and I am sure many other generations of police officers, through the feeling that in every action I took I was somehow acting personally on behalf of the Queen for the betterment and benefit of our country. I am sure that everyone who has ever served as a member of our armed services will be able to relate closely to that sentiment, as will anyone who has proudly served in any capacity in the name of the Queen and all she stood for.

It is with both sadness and joy that we celebrate the unparalleled contribution the Queen made in her 70 years as sovereign, recognising her devotion to duty and the decades of public service she gave to the people of the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and the world. There is a distinct and profound sense of loss on the death of the Queen throughout Scotland, to where she is bound by close ties of ancestry, affection and duty. Her late Majesty was descended from the royal house of

Stuart on both sides of her family, and she has always held a special place in the hearts of the people of Scotland. I know she also held a similar affection for Scotland, its culture and its people.

The next few weeks are a time for reflection and remembrance and to give thanks to God for the life of an extraordinary individual, the like of whom we will never see again. Thank you, your Majesty, for your life of service; God bless you and may you rest in eternal peace.

7.2 pm

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): I stand here most humbly at the heart of our democracy to represent my loyal constituency of South Dorset and my family and friends who do not have a chance such as this to say farewell and thank you to the Queen for more than 70 years of service. The rich contributions in the House today show how she has touched every single one of our lives—it is extraordinary. I will end the story about David Nott mentioned by the hon. Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan) in her touching speech; I know David very well, and what she did not say is that the Queen rang him four months later and said, “Because of the difficulty we had last time, do come back and have lunch again,” and he did. That is the lady we are talking about.

One such friend is Admiral Woodard, the last admiral to serve on the royal yacht, who knew the Queen extremely well. Sadly, he lies very ill in hospital, but I know that both he and his devoted wife Rozzy would want me to tell the House just what a kind, remarkable and dutiful woman the Queen was and how she will be sorely missed.

None of us will forget what happens with momentous events or where we are. I was returning from Birmingham, where I had been with the Defence Committee for a meeting with Boeing. Like everyone in this House, from all the eloquent and excellent speeches I have heard, and like millions across the world, I had an overwhelming feeling of loss. It was personal—we have heard that so many times tonight—and shockingly real.

I was fortunate enough to have the honour to serve the Queen for nine years in the Army, meeting her twice and participating in her unique birthday parade on two occasions. There was not a Guardsman who would not have followed the Queen to hell and back, had she ordered it, such was the affection they had for her.

On that note, I hope hon. Members will allow me to tell a very short story. As I returned to Wellington Barracks one morning, I looked into the company office, and the company clerk was sitting behind his typewriter. He was covered in bruises—it looked as though he had run into a brick wall at 90 mph. I said to him, “What on earth happened to you?” In a deadpan voice, he explained that he had taken his wife out to the pub, when three troublemakers entered. During the evening, those troublemakers picked a fight with the couple and began to insult his wife. I intervened and said, “I quite understand; I see what happened.” He said, “No, no, sir. You don’t understand. My wife and I could take that, but when they began to insult the Queen—that’s when I got stuck in.” I gave him the day off.

Of course, it was not just the military who adored Her Majesty. The outpouring of grief from every corner of the world is testament to the level of respect and

[Richard Drax]

affection in which she was held. The Queen has been an integral part of my life, and all our lives, for so long. She has been the linchpin of our county. Her devotion to duty and country has been so extraordinary that I suspect many of us have taken her for granted, and like so many things that we take for granted, it is not until we lose them that we fully, fully appreciate their value. As I drove up today in the car, I could not help thinking that her parting reminds us all to hold dear to those we love, and to keep saying that we love them. On behalf of my constituents, my family and my friends, I say: "Rest in peace, Your Majesty." God save the King.

7.6 pm

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): I rise on behalf of my constituents to offer our condolences to the family of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth and to offer our loyalty to the new King. Queen Elizabeth II, who reigned for 70 years, is the only sovereign most of us have ever known. She was our constant in a changing world, our cornerstone at times of crisis, and our comfort when in sorrow. My nanna was a big fan. My mum, who is 70 this year, remembers as a child being read books about the young princesses and looking at photos of them all the time. I think the war years made that generation feel particularly close to the young Queen.

The Queen was a friend to Croydon and visited many times in her reign. I remember precisely how exciting it was as a Brownie lining up with my flag to welcome her when she opened the Queen's Gardens in the middle of my constituency—few things in my suburban childhood topped a visit from the Queen.

Of course, it is not just Croydon and this country who are mourning. The world is in sorrow. The front page of *The New York Times* this morning simply says, "Queen and Spirit of Britain". Many of us find it hard to imagine Britain without her. It feels bleak, but then I think, what would she do? What did she do when her own father, King George VI, died? I know that she would stand tall, face the day, pray to her God and do the best job that she could—and as the King said this evening, she would fearlessly embrace progress. That is the spirit we all keep alive.

Heavy is the head that wears the crown—quite literally, as it turns out. The Queen was once heard to say that wearing a crown was like wearing a 10-lb salmon on her head, but she bore the weight well. Her service, her humility and her constancy are what we can all strive to achieve.

The Queen's death comes at a time of real challenge for our country. If ever we needed to be more like her, it is now. Let one of her legacies be that we will all try to be a little more like her—service, steady progress, humility, constancy and some fun along the way. None of us will see another Queen in our lifetime, so we say "Thank you" to Her late Majesty, and God save the King.

7.9 pm

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): Madam Deputy Speaker, I concur with what you said after listening to our new sovereign King. What a privilege it was to sit here together in this House of Commons Chamber and listen to that address. It gives a whole new meaning to the expression, "Not a dry eye in the house." He put it beautifully, as always.

I want to say a few things on behalf of my constituents in Winchester and Chandler's Ford. Yesterday was, of course, one of the saddest days imaginable. We have known it was coming for a while now, not least after yesterday's comment from the palace on Her late Majesty's health—something they never do—but the sense of shock we feel today is palpable. The sense of loss for our great country and the Commonwealth—I too was at the conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, last month—is vast. This is a national moment but, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax) said, it feels intensely personal, and it is.

Her late Majesty spoke movingly of her late husband, the Duke of Edinburgh as her "strength and stay", as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) said earlier, but the truth is that she was our strength and stay, and that is why we are going to miss her so greatly.

I was extremely honoured to meet the Queen in 2012 at Buckingham Palace as a relatively new MP. We all lined up with our partners as nervous as one can possibly be, as those who were there will remember, but as so many have said—I have sat through pretty much every speech today—the nerves disappeared as soon as we interacted with Her Majesty, so we need not have worried. The Queen asked me which constituency I represent, so I said Winchester, and we briefly discussed how the city was—still is—searching for the remains of King Alfred, our favourite son. The Queen loved that and, with that trademark smile and much-mentioned twinkle in the eye, said, "They've just found one of my ancestors under a car park in Leicester!" It was not untrue, as she was, of course, referring to the remains of Richard III.

Our late Queen visited Winchester many times, including in 1959 to officially open Elizabeth II Court, the home of Hampshire County Council, and for the Maundy service in April 1979 in our great cathedral. It is the focal point of our county and the diocese and has been the scene of several services today and will be for many more over the weekend. We had the new King in Winchester just a few months ago to unveil—this is a mark of how he will wear the Crown—a statue of a famous Jewish figure in Winchester history called Licoricia. It was a pleasure to have him in Winchester that day.

I often remind my constituents that Back-Bench MPs and maybe even some on the Front Bench—I have been there too—do not really have that much power, but we do have quite a bit of influence. The longer we do this job, the better we get at using it for the benefit of our constituents. Our late Queen, as a constitutional monarch, did not hold any executive power—in fact, she could not even vote—but boy did she wield great influence through her vast experience, about which we heard from her Prime Minister and her former Prime Ministers, her knowledge, and the respect she rightly commanded all over the world.

There has been a lot of replaying overnight of the words spoken by the young Princess Elizabeth on her 21st birthday while in South Africa. The famous section of that speech was, of course, when she said that her whole life

"whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family".

However, a lesser-known passage of that speech reads:

"But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do".

I have always been struck by that comment as incredibly revealing and brave, because I think our then future Queen was saying, “I don’t embody the divine right of Kings and Queens”—so fabled in British history—“I have to earn it and keep it. I need your support.” I think she reigned in that spirit every single day of her 70 years—never lost in the majesty of it all, like some of her famous predecessors, but always knowing that she had to draw that strength from the support of her people and that she had to constantly be seen to be believed. Maybe those two famous appearances on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, at either end of that fabulous platinum jubilee weekend earlier this summer, showed that she knew that right until the very end. I am so glad that the country and the world had those incredible moments.

We have heard a lot today about schoolchildren and how they ask us if we have ever met the Queen. I get that too. I was with a school here probably a decade ago, when I was a relatively new MP, and as we were leaving one of the schoolchildren said to me, “Mr Brine, can I ask you a question that I didn’t want to ask in front of all the other children?” I said, “Yes, of course”, and this young lad said to me, “How did God save the Queen?” I still maintain that that is the best question I have ever been asked. For those who want to know my answer, it was “That’s one for your teachers”; but maybe our late sovereign lady now knows the answer.

As a Christian in this House, I believe that everyone—whether they live on the planet for a matter of hours, or for 96 hugely influential years as one of the most famous people ever to walk on it—changes our world by their presence in it. As others have said today, we are so, so lucky to have had Queen Elizabeth II in our lives. We are changed by it, and will evermore be so. So thank you, Queen Elizabeth II; it has been a privilege—and God save the King.

7.15 pm

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): I rise to speak on behalf of the people of Chesterfield and Staveley, who share the shock, sadness and pride at the passing of our beloved late Queen Elizabeth II, and to send our condolences to King Charles III, who spoke so well just a few moments ago.

Last night, prayers at St Michael’s church in Brimington were dedicated to Her late Majesty, and the bells beneath the famous crooked spire will be ringing muffled tones of mourning. Books of condolence have already been set up in Chesterfield Borough Council’s contact centre, and others are appearing across the borough as our town’s citizens come out to send their respects and regards to a truly remarkable woman, who has embodied our nation as our monarch for 70 years.

We have heard from so many people here who have had personal experience of meeting Her Majesty, but last night a friend’s son posted a video, which has gone viral, of the moment when his grandmother, sitting in the Toby Carvery restaurant, heard of the Queen’s passing. As she sobs uncontrollably, in the background we can hear her son’s bewilderment: “But you never even knew her, Mother.” However, the British people did not have to meet our Queen to feel that we knew her, or to feel bereaved at her loss. She was indeed a friend to so very many of us. She has been the constant throughout our lives—at every celebration and grand occasion,

naturally; but more crucially, in times of peril, worry and heartbreak, it was Her Majesty the Queen whom we looked to.

The Queen promised, on her coronation, to serve our nation faithfully, and the dedication, wisdom and fortitude that she has shown throughout every day of that service have inspired so many of us. She loved our country, the four nations that make up our United Kingdom individually and collectively, and she took great pride in the Commonwealth as she helped to lead our nation through its changing place in the world—as she moved from being the head of the British empire to heading the Commonwealth to leading a prominent nation at the head of the EU, and subsequently leading us into our post-Brexit future. She led us through two painful and divisive referendums without ever breaking her famous political impartiality, and she was there when our nation was tortured by the cruel pandemic, bringing us together as so many of us sat there afraid and alone.

An image that said so much about the Queen’s dedication to duty was that image of her sitting alone at her beloved husband’s funeral. No one would have begrudged her sitting with a family member, but it was typical that she should want the world to see that she was subject to the same restrictions so painfully being observed by her people.

Let me end by saying that we should all remember that her late Majesty’s family are grieving right now, yet forced, at this most painful moment, to grieve in public. Those organs of the press who believe they are defending Her Majesty the Queen by attacking her children or her grandchildren, or claiming to know better than they do how her family should grieve, do our nation and our royal family a huge disservice. The people of Chesterfield will always take pride in her selfless devotion, and wish His Majesty King Charles III a long, happy and successful reign. God save the king.

7.19 pm

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): I am honoured to be able to pay tribute to the remarkable life of Her late Majesty, who has touched all our hearts in so many ways, bringing comfort and guidance to all of us whenever it was needed.

Queen Elizabeth II holds a very special place in the hearts of the people of Taunton Deane. She made a visit in 1987, which was the first visit by a monarch in over 300 years, since the Monmouth rebellion and the infamous battle of Sedgemoor, in which the royals and the monarchy were almost overthrown.

It is a well-known story in my constituency that Queen Victoria was once passing through the west country on a train heading to Devon, and as she passed through Taunton she asked for all the blinds to be drawn, because she did not want to see rebellious Taunton, even though the Monmouth rebellion had been so many years before. The train stopped in Taunton, where a civil party was waiting for her, but she refused to alight. Many years later, this incident was related to the Duke of Edinburgh, who was furious and shared the story with Her Majesty the Queen, who was determined to set the record straight, which is why in 1987 she made the visit to Taunton. We still thank her for it, as we are back in the good books—hopefully that can happen to the rest of us; there are similar things going on in this

[Rebecca Pow]

place. I think that demonstrates the power that Her Majesty had, and how she always wanted to set the record straight and be fair. I am delighted that since then she has made other visits to Taunton and Somerset.

I would like to recount a small, personal story about Her Majesty. I cannot lay claim to any of these bowings or going to Buckingham Palace with all the big titles that one may get in this place, although the stories that we have heard have been absolutely brilliant. A long time ago, in 1985, I was working for the National Farmers Union in Taunton. I ran an organisation called Taste of Somerset, which consisted of all sorts of small, independent food and drink producers. It was the first such initiative in the country, and I had to set up a big marquee at the Royal Bath and West show, of which Her Majesty was a patron. I had the honour of presenting her with a Taste of Somerset hamper. I was beside myself with nerves, as many colleagues have said was the case when they were going to meet the Queen. I had had an outfit made and my hair done, and I had practised my curtsy—I was beside myself. Along she came, and she was utterly charming and delightful. All she had to do was give that smile, which made me feel so comfortable that I forgot my nerves. My mother still has a photograph on the sideboard of her beautiful smile, and me handing over the basket.

Beside that picture is another one of Prince Charles walking through the family farm—I grew up on a Duchy farm. That is another treasured photograph on our sideboard. I remember that day so well, as we were all invited and walked across the farm talking about trees, cows and the countryside—everything Prince Charles was passionate about. The other thing I remember about the event is that we had lunch together and he ate my pudding.

I tell that story, because beside the photograph is a letter that Prince Charles—now the King—sent to my mother only at the beginning of this week, expressing condolences on the loss of my dear father, the farmer, who died and we buried him last week. It was the most wonderful, personal, emotional letter that we could wish for, remembering all the visits to the farm. That is the mark of the man. How sad that in literally three days the tables turned and we are offering our condolences to Prince Charles, who is now our wonderful King. I send deepest condolences from the people of Taunton Deane.

Briefly, Her Majesty was a cornerstone in all our lives. She was Head of State for 70 years, and presided over all our ups and downs. Everyone across the House and even outside has used a list of words with which no one could disagree: the epitome of goodness; steadfast; honourable; warm; humorous; strong; engaging; understanding; and inspirational, most of all—I think you would agree, Madam Deputy Speaker—for women.

I just want to say: thank you, thank you, thank you. How fortunate we are to have lived with this person as our Head of State. She passes on so many attributes to King Charles III. He treads in giant footsteps—even though Her Majesty had tiny feet—but I know that he will, in his own unique way, take the nation and the Commonwealth forward in an exceptional way, just as his mother did. May Her blessed Majesty rest in peace. God save the King.

7.26 pm

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): The people of Newcastle have always held a strong and proud sense of our own identity as Geordies, as working people, as citizens of the United Kingdom and, for seven decades, as subjects of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Her death leaves us bereft in ways we cannot fully comprehend.

Queen Elizabeth cared about the things that we Geordies care about. She was, like so many Geordies, a veteran of our armed forces, devoted to our servicemen and women. I am proud that the Queen's Own Yeomanry are headquartered in my constituency. The Queen loved her sport, as we do. We remember with great affection when she presented Newcastle United with our last FA cup trophy in 1955. We look forward to King Charles III making a similar presentation in the near future.

Like the majority of my constituents, I never met Her late Majesty, but her presence graced our city. She first came to Newcastle Central in 1954—a day she said she would never forget. I remember when she opened Eldon Square in 1977 and our Metro in 1981, and I regularly look upon the plaque commemorating her opening of our beautiful city library.

As Head of State, Queen Elizabeth was a profoundly important global figure. She could have tried to retain the imperial aura of the monarchy's past or faded into the background as a distant symbol. Instead, she found a way to be a point of constant stability for our parliamentary democracy—a forceful presence, reassuring us that our unwritten constitution had a human embodiment beyond those of us who sit for a time here in Westminster, and that, should it come to it, our ancient liberties and our modern rights had a formidable guardian.

When I heard the news, I was disorientated, in awe of the Queen's service and unable to understand my country without her. But I also thought of when, as a young woman in the 1980s, I was devoted to the cause of ending apartheid in South Africa, at a time when many British institutions were entangled with that evil in a way that made me doubt whether I belonged in the country of my birth. The Queen stood in solidarity with the Commonwealth in the face of apartheid South Africa. Her love for the Commonwealth as a community of equals, and her fundamental understanding that racism and fascism are evil, ensured esteem from Newcastle Central to Newcastle, KwaZulu—across our Commonwealth.

I end where I started, in Newcastle. The Queen's platinum jubilee was celebrated with enthusiasm in our leafy avenues and in our less-cared-for council estates. I particularly remember a tea party at the Holly Court retirement home in Blakelaw. The love, respect, enthusiasm and laughter we shared that afternoon in the Queen's honour were so sincere and so genuine, and they were made all the more poignant because the organiser, Mrs T, had just received a British Empire Medal for services to the community and was so, so proud.

We miss the Queen, we are grateful to her and we say, God save the King.

7.30 pm

Alex Burghart (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): It is a real honour to be called in this debate, on a day when there have been so many moving contributions from

both sides of the House. I cannot help but feel that, once again, Her late Majesty has brought out the best in all of us. It is also a real honour to represent my constituents of Brentwood and Ongar in Essex. More fervent royalists are not to be found on this Earth.

I have been thinking over the past 24 hours of my great-grandmother, who lived with me when I was growing up, because the feelings I am experiencing now are similar to those I experienced when she died. It is a strange sensation, because it reminds me that family is not limited to blood, to the people we know or to the people we have met. Indeed, one of the powerful things about the chemistry of nationhood is that it gives us deep affection for and deep loyalty to people we have never met and will never meet, and this is true both across the nation as it is today and across the nation through time. This is something that Her Majesty embodied in her 70 years on the throne and in her 96 years of life.

She connected us not just with one previous generation but with many. She had known her grandfather George V, who had known his grandmother Queen Victoria, who as an infant had met George III. George III had spent his youth surrounded by people involved in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. So it is within four conversations that the whole modern scope of our constitutional monarchy was brought together—four pecks on the cheek that bring those generations to one point.

We can take things further, because today is the 935th anniversary of the death of William the Conqueror in 1087, as I am sure the House is aware. When one thinks that Her late Majesty's life encompassed more than one tenth of that time, it makes us realise how close the centuries are. When we think of our great Union between England and Scotland—315 years old this year—22% of that time saw her on the throne. She was not just a witness to history, she was a part of it, and she leaves it to us as her legacy.

A nation may chase after its past, but it will not catch it. What it can hope to do is to imitate it and to use its strengths to fight the monsters of today and the future. This Her late Majesty knew, and this we will do in her memory. God save the King.

7.33 pm

Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab): As we collectively mourn the loss of our Queen, Elizabeth II, I join others in sending my prayers and condolences, and those of my constituents, to the King, the Queen Consort and the whole royal family. As deputy leader of the Welsh Labour party, I send our condolences to all the royal family.

We all have our own memories of the Queen, and mine stretch back to the 1960s. As a young child, I stood outside my primary school in Brynhyfryd to watch her car drive past. I cannot quite remember the purpose of her visit, but I remember the buzz of excitement among my classmates and how honoured we felt just to catch a glimpse of her.

I also remember the honour of receiving an invite to the Queen's garden party years before I entered this place. I was heavily pregnant at the time and had no interest at all in going anywhere, but I was not going to miss the opportunity to be part of something so special as Her Majesty's garden party, because she was special. Her dedicated service for more than 70 years will be remembered forever. She served our country with loyalty,

with dignity and with grace. Even as her health began to fail in recent years, her commitment never faltered. She will be missed immeasurably by this country, the Commonwealth and, indeed, across the world, but nowhere more so than among her own family. Our thoughts remain with them foremost at this time.

It was an honour to see her when I was a little girl. It was an honour to be invited to a garden party. It is my greatest honour to pay tribute to her today on behalf of the communities across Swansea East. She served us well and has earned her sleep. Rest in peace our Queen. God save the King and God bless the new Prince and Princess of Wales.

7.35 pm

Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con): It is with the deepest sadness that I rise to speak on behalf of the people of Erewash to pay tribute to our late sovereign, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

In an era of unprecedented change, Her Majesty has been a constant beacon of strength and stability whose sense of duty and public service remained until the very last moment of her life.

While, today, Britain mourns the passing of our Head of State, we must first and foremost remember that the King and his family have lost their beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother—a sense of grief and sorrow that will be familiar to all of us who have lost loved ones. I wish to extend my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the King and the whole royal family at this sad time.

It is estimated that around one third of the country has either met or seen the Queen during her reign. It is fair to say that she will have touched each and every one of us in some way or another. For me personally, I am immensely proud to have achieved the Queen's Guide award. I know that the values I learned en route to that award have helped me to serve as a Member of Parliament today.

As a woman born in the first decade of the Queen's reign, I, like so many others, view Her Majesty as an icon and a role model. She was not only a beautiful lady in mind and spirit, but someone who approached the heavy burden of the Crown with grace and good humour in order to serve us—her people—perhaps aided by one or two marmalade sandwiches at times.

Although not originally destined to ascend to the throne, in 1952 our new Queen stood out as one of the few married working mothers, and certainly the only female Head of State of any major western power. Seven decades later, and following Her Majesty's example, women have firmly cemented their position in the workplace. They are represented in every sector, from construction to Government—perhaps the most poignant reminder of which was the appointment, just four days ago, of my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Norfolk (Elizabeth Truss) as the Queen's third female Prime Minister.

Now, as the second Elizabethan age draws to a close and our new Carolean era begins, our country, the Commonwealth and its people stand ready for whatever challenges may lie ahead, better prepared for having been led by Her Majesty for more than 70 years, and united behind our new sovereign, King Charles III. God save the King.

7.37 pm

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): We have heard some glorious stories today about gin, cheese, fiddling with wands and what it was like to work with the Queen. But as I came into this place today and saw the trains full of people carrying flowers on their way to Green Park, it struck me that, for most people, it was just the Queen herself, and not to work with her, that was inspiring. I saw that when she came to Walthamstow during the diamond jubilee. The civic pride was evident, not least because we felt that we had won the competition with other nearby boroughs and that we were going to get to feed her. Even the most cynical, or those uncertain about royalty or put off by pomp could not help but bask in the glorious sunshine and the joy that came that day. Indeed, as she was driven round the fountain to the cheers of the schoolchildren, the Queen later told our late council leader, Chris Robbins, that the noise was deafening and like a pop concert—after all she had sat through enough to know what they sounded like.

It was surreal that day, but it embodied that sense of excitement—that awe we all felt when we were finally able to pass that MP rite of passage, “Have you met the Queen?” and look the schoolchildren in our communities in the eye. I have no doubt that there will be the same set of questions for King Charles. That interest was returned: it was so clear to me on that day that what she cared about was not the pomp of the politicians or the officials, but the people she got to meet.

It is only fitting that, in paying tribute to the Queen on behalf of the people of Walthamstow, I use their words. The borough commander, Simon Crick, who speaks on behalf of our local police, says that for them, she was a constant reassuring presence in an often turbulent world. Our council leader Grace Williams remembers the Queen’s devotion and service to our country, the Commonwealth and our people in a time of extraordinary change. Dr Ken Aswani, who speaks on behalf of our local NHS, says:

“She will remain a source of energy to us for many years to come to enable us to move forward together.”

Libby, a local volunteer who was born in 1953 and therefore named after the Queen, says she

“can honestly say I’m proud now to have been named after this incredible woman”.

Donna said:

“She carried herself so elegantly yet felt like everyone’s grandma at the same time.”

I represent a community with links across the world, and many constituents referred to that. Martin says:

“Her visit to Ireland, standing up and opening her speech in Irish was a stunning moment and her contribution to peace here can’t be overstated. Want to write more but just can’t find the words.”

Anthony records his appreciation for the Queen’s work in the Commonwealth and her defence of religious freedom around the world. Dorte, a Danish and British dual citizen, says that during the pandemic,

“She sent a ray of hope believing that one day we would see each other again.”

Philip reflects on how she book-ended his life; over time, he saw those postage stamps change. He first watched TV to see her coronation, and now on TV he hears of her passing. We now contemplate life without

her sparkle and cheer to bring us together. People from all walks of life in communities such as mine were inspired by her.

Let us put on record our thanks to those people who, in coming days, will help us commemorate the Queen, including the police, the officials, and volunteers. One Queen, beloved; one King with well wishes; and all of us brought together in mourning. God save the King.

Several hon. Members rose—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Before I call the next colleague, I would like to briefly give my own tribute on behalf of the people of Epping Forest, whose voice would otherwise be unheard. Her late Majesty was held so dear in all our hearts for her kindness, cleverness, dedication and grace. As a role model for women of future generations, she was unsurpassed. We have all been so fortunate to live and serve during her reign.

I call Eddie Hughes.

7.42 pm

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): I rise to speak on behalf of the good people of Willenhall, Bloxwich and Walsall North, and curiously, also on behalf of the good people of Tonbridge and Malling, because their excellent MP will be unable to speak this evening, as he is sat comfortably on the Front Bench, though we are united in our thoughts. We convey our strongest condolences to His Majesty the King at this time of intense sorrow for him, his family, and the entire country.

I make no apology for the fact that I will be slightly more upbeat in the rest of my contribution. We are, after all, celebrating an incredible life well lived, as the King said this evening. Wherever she went, the Queen spread joy and happiness, and that was reflected back to her. That joy and happiness was also spread, I am delighted to say, to Walsall. In 1962, she came to visit a big local employer in Walsall, Crabtree Electrical Industries. From there, she headed to the town of Willenhall in my constituency. She must have enjoyed it, because she came back in 1977. On the silver jubilee tour, she visited Walsall and then headed to the town of Bloxwich in my constituency. She had not had enough, though; she came back again in 2000 for the opening of our iconic art gallery. My friend Simon was her close protection officer on that day, and as we toured the gallery, I was slightly distracted by the fact that he had a gun in his pocket. I am delighted to say that the visit passed off without incident, and we sent Her late Majesty safely on her way. It was lovely to have her there.

That does not end Walsall’s association with Her late Majesty. I will address an omission from a number of this evening’s contributions: we have all talked about how lovely her humorous double act with Paddington was, but nobody has referred to the fact that the handbag from which she withdrew that marmalade sandwich was made in Walsall. The affiliation that we feel in Walsall and right across the country is incredibly warm. We will all miss her. May perpetual light shine upon her, and may she rest in peace. God save the King.

7.45 pm

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): It is an honour to pay tribute to Queen Elizabeth on my behalf and that of the constituents of Hull West

and Hessle. It is with deep sadness that I make my contribution, because I could see how loved the Queen was in Hull West and Hessle, particularly on the day of the jubilee celebrations, when everyone was out celebrating the reign of the Queen, from our very youngest people—babies in prams and their mums, enjoying themselves—right the way up to our older residents.

On the way down on the train today, I spoke to my mum, who said that she was feeling really unsettled and had been a bit upset. My mum never met the Queen—to be honest, neither did I—but the fact that she was feeling unsettled by the Queen's death illustrates what a constant she has been in each and all of our lives, and how she has been relied on. My mum said, "Emma, I was one and a half when the Queen came in. It's all I've ever known." Through everything that my mum has lived through, there has always been the Queen. My mum said, "I almost felt that she'd always be there." We know now, of course, that no one can always be there.

The Queen's passing has touched us all in Hull West and Hessle, across the United Kingdom, in the Commonwealth and—I am pleased to see—internationally as well. I truly believe that having the Queen as our Head of State has enhanced our reputation as a country. Just look at those front covers around world; look at the tributes coming in from world leaders. What other world leader would have the number of tributes and the real adoration that our Queen has had? We could rely on her. We knew that if we sent the Queen to meet dignitaries around the world, it was going to go well and would make our country look good, and that gives a sense of real pride. That came from her and what she did.

She was our Queen but, as many others have said, she was also the royal family's mum, their grandma and their great-grandma. God bless the Queen as she is reunited with her beloved husband, and God bless King Charles III.

7.47 pm

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): My thoughts, and those of Gillingham and Rainham, are with His Majesty King Charles III and the rest of the royal family.

I will refer to a prayer from St John Henry Newman, a great British saint with a global impact. It was a privilege and honour for me, as the then Prime Minister's special envoy for freedom of religion and belief, to be part of the 2019 delegation led by His Majesty the King for the canonisation of John Henry Newman.

The prayer I wish to share, "The mission of my life", begins:

"God has created me to do Him some definite service."

Her late Majesty's selfless commitment to public service is an example to us all of definite service. The prayer continues:

"He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another."

God gave Her Majesty all our work, and she did it with complete distinction, commitment and grace, always giving without expectation of any return. John Henry Newman continues:

"I have my mission—I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next...I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons."

Her Majesty was most certainly an amazing link that brought us all together from all parts of the United Kingdom, from all parts of the Commonwealth, from all parts of the world, and from all faiths and none, based on her values of kindness, compassion, respect and acceptance of others.

John Henry Newman goes on to say:

"He has created me for naught. I shall do good."

Her Majesty certainly did that. Finally, he says:

"I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments".

Her Majesty was most certainly an angel of peace and a preacher of truth. Your Majesty, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Your values—what you stood for—will forever live on and be an inspiration for us all.

I also say this: there could be no one finer than His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, now King Charles III, to take our great country forward, given his values and what he stands for. There is one thing that has not been mentioned so far: for decades, His Majesty King Charles III has been committed to interfaith dialogue. He been committed to bringing together people of all faiths and none. Some 80% of our world has one faith or another. If somebody such as His Majesty King Charles III is committed to bringing people together, and people know his commitment to interfaith, he can bring our world together for the common good. God save the King.

7.50 pm

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): I rise this evening to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of myself and my constituents in Blaydon. My memories of the Queen will be shared by so many people. I remember poring over the royal photo books that my aunties had, which showed the Queen's work during and after the war. Those books meant so much to them, with my mum just three years younger than Her Majesty and her sisters not much different. I was so pleased to hear a few weeks ago that my youngest aunt still has them.

I remember us lining the streets as schoolchildren, enthusiastically waving flags at the royal car as it drove past, and the huge anticipation of that fleeting glimpse. I remember seeing Her Majesty from a distance or on TV at those great state occasions over so many years. So many of us will have personal memories from across the 70 years of her reign.

Just recently I had the real pleasure of joining many of my constituents—young and not so young—to celebrate the Queen's platinum jubilee. We started the weekend with a jubilee breakfast in Kibblesworth, instructed in advance to wear red, white and blue. We lit the jubilee beacon in the rain at the Land of Oak & Iron heritage centre in Winlaton Mill. For lunch, we were waited on in the sunshine by our young carers group in Highfield, with flags and bunting. We took part in the jubilee picnic in Crawcrook in the sunshine. There were so many loyal toasts and celebrations to mark Her Majesty's 70 incredible years and to thank her for her service.

Her Majesty was no stranger to the north-east, visiting us often, and she was always welcome. I also think of her personal connection with the Blaydon constituency through her mother—through the National Trust Gibside estate and the Bowes-Lyon family connection there.

[Liz Twist]

I do not have wonderful, personal stories of Queen Elizabeth to share, but like so many of my constituents, I know the tremendous regard in which Her Majesty was held and the impact she had on the life of our communities. I know the high esteem and affection in which she was held by so many of us for her dedication and sense of duty, and for her willingness to join in and be part of our occasions, whether it was the James Bond helicopter flight at the Olympics or taking tea with Paddington for the platinum jubilee. Thank you, Your Majesty, for your steadfastness and work over 70 years. May you now rest in peace.

7.53 pm

Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con): On behalf of my constituents in North Norfolk, I rise to pay our respects after the 70 year reign of our sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II. We have been asked not to repeat stories that have been told by other Members, but I think I am on fairly safe ground talking about carrots, coconuts and Her Majesty all in the same speech.

Of course, Norfolk has very special and enduring memories of Her Majesty, thanks to Sandringham, which is located just outside my constituency to the west of the county, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for North West Norfolk (James Wild). Although I never met the Queen myself, I want to share a simple story involving Sandringham and Her Majesty. It is one that I was involved in many years ago. It provides, I think, a wonderful insight into her personal character and a touching human story of a remarkable and wonderful lady behind the scenes.

As many back home know, my family business was run from Holt, famed for many royal visitors across the years. We ran the town supermarket. We were supplied with vegetables by a company that very proudly had a royal crest for doing so. This story involves Christmas and why our supplier was late one year with the Christmas vegetable delivery.

One can imagine the scene: the good burghers of my constituency lined up to get their carrots, coconuts and brussels sprouts, all looking a little bit frantic on Christmas eve morning when the vegetable delivery failed to turn up. When it eventually did turn up, a rather stressed delivery driver, who was also the owner, relayed at length how tired he was because he had personally been up all night scrubbing the Queen's vegetables, ready for the royal household delivery. However, he had made one huge mistake: he had forgotten the Queen's very special order and had had to turn around to go back and get it himself.

As a little upstart, I of course had to know what the special delivery was. He said, "Every year, the Queen asks us to put on the side 10 carrots and two coconuts halved, drilled and hung with some string." I looked rather quizzical at that and wondered how the royal family would share two coconuts around the table for their Christmas lunch and eat them with a piece of string with the husks still around them. I was told that what the Queen liked to do on the cold crisp morning of Christmas day itself was step out from her bedroom into her private garden to hang the coconuts on a tree. She would then retire to her bedroom and watch the birds eat the coconuts.

I said, "What about the carrots?" "Ah yes," he said, "they have to be a particular size and absolutely cylindrical so that they fit into the Queen's jacket." What, I thought, is going on with that? He said, "They are her special treat for the royal ponies. Every single Christmas morning it is her tradition to feed them the carrots." So, there was this man from Norfolk, up all night scrubbing the Queen's carrots when, little did he know, they were for the royal ponies. That story shows the human, touching and loving side to the Queen, who loved not only her family and her nation, but her animals.

Her Majesty the Queen dedicated her life to the service of others. She was an example to us all and will be remembered eternally. God save the King.

7.57 pm

Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): In a world that is often confusing and unsettled, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II charted a course through stormy weather not simply as the mother of our nation but as the keeper of the flame. In the darkest of times when hope was seemingly lost, she cut a reassuring figure.

In 1966, when a landslide smashed into Pantglas Junior School in Aberfan, killing 116 children and 28 adults, she visited the village and openly wept, for she, too, was a young mother. Fifty-one years later, in 2017, after a terror attack in Manchester at an Ariana Grande concert, the Queen provided comfort to the survivors and families by visiting them all in hospital. During lockdown, when many of us were missing our loved ones, she moved the nation to tears with a simple message: "We will meet again." In doing so, she gave us all hope that in the end it was all going to be alright. All of us want to be reassured that whatever we are doing, whatever we feel, whatever we are going through, it is going to be alright in the end. But now, with her passing, it feels as though it will be a long time before it is alright again.

Historians often cite powerful monarchs such as Henry VIII, who ruled the country with an iron fist, his father Henry VII who took the Crown on the battlefield, or his daughter Elizabeth I, who saw off the most powerful navy ever assembled in the form of the Spanish armada. Our Queen simply gave her heart to this nation for 70 years, proving beyond doubt that love is a far more powerful weapon than any used in any war. Her passing is another loss to the generation who lived through the depression of the 1930s, saw the rise of fascism in Europe, knew the horrors and hardships of war and then, without complaint, rolled up their sleeves and got to work rebuilding this bomb-damaged country. The work of the Queen and millions like her during those years means that we can enjoy the freedoms that we do today.

When we came together to celebrate the Queen's 70th jubilee in June, we all knew, in our heart of hearts, that her long reign was drawing to a close, but we all hoped that we would have a few more years of that glorious smile of hers. There were those of us who thought, somewhat irrationally, that she really was immortal, and for as long as the Queen was in our world, everything was going to be all right. Now she belongs to the ages.

In times of sadness, I have always found great comfort in the words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who wrote in the poem "Ulysses":

"We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

As the Elizabethan era draws to a close, let those words guide us and our new monarch, King Charles III, in all the hard days ahead. As we grieve as a nation, let us celebrate the life of Queen Elizabeth II and draw comfort in the knowledge that she is safe in the hands of almighty God. God save the King, and God bless the new Prince and Princess of Wales.

8.1 pm

Danny Kruger (Devizes) (Con): It is an honour to follow such an inspiring speech by the hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans). I speak on my behalf and that of my constituents in Devizes, particularly the many members—serving and former—of Her Majesty's armed forces, who have served under her colours and sworn their oath to her.

President de Gaulle said that he had
"a certain idea of France".

We have no need for such abstractions. We do not need an idea of the United Kingdom; we have had, for 70 years, an actual person who represented the best of our country and its character. Others have spoken of the character of the late Queen and, not knowing her, I cannot add anything to that. Those primary school visits are an absolute agony for me—I go from one classroom to another disappointing the children because I have not met the Queen. However, I want to talk briefly about what she stood for.

Philip Larkin's poem has been quoted often today, with its perfect line, "She did not change"—she did not change, even as we did. As we heard, she presided over the most extraordinary period of change, yet she was emphatically not a relic of the past. We loved and valued her because she was a conduit of something precious, from the present to the future.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) said that we could find what we want in the Queen, whether we are a modernist or a traditionalist. We find both in her, of course. That is the real value of tradition, and not because it fossilises the past. A real traditionalist, as someone said, is someone who tends the flame of their culture, not someone who worships its ashes. Those of us with conservative instincts need to remember that.

The Queen was a great futurist, as was the Duke of Edinburgh. As my hon. Friend the Member for South West Devon (Sir Gary Streeter) said—others have made the same point—if modern Britain was founded on the rock of Queen Elizabeth, that is because her life was founded on the rock of ages, on her Christian faith. I read today that as the country became more secular in recent decades, she became more publicly religious. It is worth noting that while she dedicated her long life to the service of the people, she held herself accountable not to us, but to a higher power. This was the source of her joy and her goodness.

My sympathy goes to her family, her friends and her household in their grief, and I give my thanks to her. She is doing in death what she did in life: bringing us together, making us smile, reminding us of the things

that really matter, and making us proud of our country and grateful for her example and her service. May she rest in peace.

8.4 pm

Rosie Duffield (Canterbury) (Lab): We have heard so many incredibly moving and unforgettable speeches today about Her late Majesty, and we will certainly hear many more. It is impossible to pay full tribute to 70 years of continuous public service in just a few minutes, so I wish to focus briefly on Canterbury, the heart of the Church of England. We have had the honour of welcoming Her Majesty to Canterbury Cathedral on numerous occasions in her role as Supreme Governor of the Church of England. She was well represented on all occasions by her lord lieutenant of Kent.

It is in that light that I share the tribute paid by Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, who said:

"Through times of war and hardship, through seasons of upheaval and change, and through moments of joy and celebration, we have been sustained by Her late Majesty's faith in what and who we are called to be."

In March 2015, Her late Majesty the Queen visited the cathedral accompanied by her husband to unveil statues of them both. Although the memories of Her late Majesty will live on in the hearts and minds of all of us, it is those physical tributes that will retain her legacy for generations to come. No matter one's political persuasion, occupation or way of life, she commanded respect from people of all backgrounds and was an inspiration to women the world over. She focused on the good things in life, and the characteristics and experiences that unite us, as well as the issues that need to be tackled in a collegiate fashion. Some of us can relate well to the apparent rebellious streak we saw when she left the palace and walked among the crowds with her sister, or drove herself around in her Land Rover.

That humour and wit that allowed us to relate to the greatest diplomat in our recent history, and the stability that allowed us as a country to have certainty at times when it was desperately needed—the remarkable thing about Her late Majesty was that that was never a burden to her. Her tremendous experience allowed her to guide the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and the world through tough times. Her dutiful actions and the messages that she conveyed to us have undoubtedly made the world a much better place. Rest in peace, your Majesty. The nation will never forget our favourite grandma. God save the King.

8.6 pm

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): It is a true honour to be here at this time in our nation's history and to be able to speak about my sorrow and the great grief of my constituents in South Thanet. Yesterday was a day that we all knew would come, but we all hoped that it never would. We were all trusting that the huge longevity of the Queen Mother, who died at 101, would give us more years of the Queen in her place, giving us certainty and calm through her powerful and steady service to our country, her realms overseas and the Commonwealth.

As yesterday developed—it was a day that I will never forget—from mid-afternoon I felt a deep sadness, and as the official announcement came out at about half-past 6,

[Craig Mackinlay]

my emotion was overflowing. I asked myself why. Why did I have this emotion, this love, for a 96-year-old whom I had never met and who died peacefully after a life well lived in a home that she loved, surrounded by family? Few in this House would have met her properly, apart from Prime Ministers. Most interactions would have been brief and fleeting—they are moments that everybody cherishes—with that most remarkable lady. I was saddened because she had been ingrained in my life, and in all of our lives. She was that true and reliable person that the country had grown to rely on for all of our lives. We grew up looking every day at banknotes, coins and stamps with that image, which was replicated literally hundreds of billions of times in this country, in her overseas realms and across the Commonwealth. We knew her on a daily basis.

Across those 70 years, this remarkable woman saw new nations form. She saw empires collapse. She saw Governments here and abroad come and go, and she met most of the characters involved. We looked to her at this nation's times of great crisis and great joy. Consider this: the first Prime Minister whom the Queen called on to form a Government was Winston Churchill, who was born in 1874, and her last Prime Minister—our current Prime Minister—was born in 1975. That spans a period of more than 100 years, which is quite staggering. She was on the throne for close to 30% of the entire time for which the United States has been in existence. The changes that she lived through were staggering, and yet she adapted seamlessly to each and every one.

The Queen was the rock that we thought would stand forever—she was our Head of State, Queen in many other realms and dominions, and Head of the Commonwealth—but she was more than that. I feel she was the true matriarch of the world, and I think we are seeing that in the grief and the tributes from across virtually every country in the world today. There is no part of this United Kingdom and no constituency that she did not touch with either a visit or a patronage, and in my patch of South Thanet people still talk about that visit to Ramsgate in 1993 and Margate in 2011.

It is at times like this that we see our constitution in play. All roads of that continuity—the community, Government, our armed services, our police and justice—led to her, and now we see a smooth transfer of the Crown to her dear son. She managed to keep the magic and mystery of monarchy, while we in this country and everybody around the world took her into our hearts. In our dear Majesty's words after 9/11:

“Grief is the price we pay for love.”

We grieve now, and we look to a new era under Charles III. Rest in peace, Your Majesty. Thank you for your service, and God save the King.

8.11 pm

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): It is with a very sad sense of pride that I rise to speak on behalf of my constituents in Edinburgh West, many of whom have already visited the Palace of Holyroodhouse to lay flowers and pay their respects to Her Majesty in Edinburgh, a city she loved. She was at one of my very first events as an MP when she opened our magnificent Queensferry crossing. Most recently, she was celebrated at jubilee parties across the city.

I confess that my first thought when I heard the confirmation on Thursday that we had lost the Queen was of family—first, her family of course, but then my own family. When, as a child, I went to my first sighting of the Queen at the launch of a ship on Clydeside, I remember my grandmother telling me how wonderful the Queen was. She tried to explain to me about the war, the spirit and what the family had meant, and I thought I understood what she was saying. I thought I got it, until the night in 2020 when the Queen spoke to us at the darkest moment of the pandemic. She gave us hope; she told us we would meet again. It was not just that she empathised with our situation, but that she shared it.

I realise now that perhaps the reason why the Queen held such a special place in our hearts was that she shared our memories, our thoughts and our pain. She was also a link back to the loved ones we have lost, in that she had shared in the difficult times that they went through. Today, the speeches, reminiscences and memories we have heard in this place have all been very moving. They have all had a touch of gratitude and thankfulness for the fact that we have been part of those 70 years of her reign, and a heartbreaking recognition that that era has come to an end.

I think Her late Majesty would have been extremely proud to see our new King devote himself to the service of this country in the way that she did. While we might find this parting very sorrowful, and indeed heartbreaking, we now know that there is a future. Although our country will change—we will not have the constant figure we have had for 70 years—the transition will be smooth, there will be a future and it will be good. While we thank Her Majesty and wish that she rest in peace, we know that our future is secure. God save the King.

8.14 pm

Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): I rise on behalf of myself and my constituents in North West Cambridgeshire to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen.

It is fair to say that all of us in this Chamber have had Her Majesty as part of our lives, and I mean that quite literally. She demonstrated an extraordinary sense of duty and commitment to public service. Her Majesty has left an imprint not only on our country and the Commonwealth, but across the world. She holds the world record for being featured on the most global currencies, and her passing is being marked across the world. For example, in India they will have a national day of mourning this Sunday.

As well as being our Queen, she was, of course, a global figure with a global understanding. This was summed up when she spoke at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kampala, Uganda, in November 2007, when she said:

“Recognising that each one of us is made up of layer upon layer of identity and that each of our unique personalities has ties to culture, religion, community, country and beyond, is the essence of open and tolerant communities.”

Like many others, I was very fortunate to meet Her Majesty on a number of occasions. The last time was on 8 July at Windsor castle, when I was sworn into the Privy Council before receiving the seals of office for Northern Ireland. I will treasure her wonderful smile to me as I shook her hand and as I took the oath of allegiance holding the Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu book

used on such occasions. After the ceremony, I was allowed to keep the copy on which I had taken the oath. The occasion is all the more special for me because, while there was subsequently a virtual swearing into the Privy Council, I was the last person to be sworn personally by Her Majesty into the Privy Council.

It is extraordinary that so many global leaders confess in their biographies that on meeting Her Majesty, they were so nervous, and then they add that she very quickly put them at their ease, often with a joke. We will miss her.

I conclude by saying that my prayers and thoughts are very much with the royal family at this difficult time, and particularly with King Charles as he takes on his enormous responsibilities. God save the King.

8.17 pm

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab): On behalf of my constituents in Weaver Vale, I pay tribute in this period of mourning to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Her remarkable and constant presence was signified by duty, public service and selflessness. That is a lesson for each and every one of us in this Chamber and beyond. Those 70 years of public service, commemorated by her platinum jubilee, have touched every part of our communities, the nation, the Commonwealth and the globe. They gave a sense of permanence, stability and constitutional leadership, with neutrality towards this political sphere.

Queen Elizabeth II was a reassuring constant, as right hon. and hon. Members have said, and that was an enduring feature in times of transition and of war. She was also a figurehead in times of celebration, including when the Runcorn shopping city centre was opened in my constituency in 1972, and I remember the commemorative mug and 50p coin that I received, as well as the fun street parties, to mark the silver jubilee in 1972. As an 11-year-old boy, I really appreciated that, and I still do to this day. More recently, her reassuring compassion was evident in the dark times of the covid pandemic.

We now enter another historical transition, while we mourn the loss of the late Queen Elizabeth II. I and my constituents send our deepest sympathies to King Charles III and the royal family. God bless them all. May the late Queen Elizabeth II rest in peace.

8.20 pm

Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con): I rise on behalf of the people of Waveney to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen.

With the nation's guiding light taken from us, there was last night for a moment, from my perspective, a sense of helplessness. What do we do? How are we going to get on without her? The answer is that we learn from the high standards of dignity, duty and humility to which she adhered throughout both her life and her 70-year reign. We shall always fall short of the summit that she reached, but if we get to her foothills, we will have succeeded. Great Britain and the Commonwealth have faced numerous challenges over the past 70 years, and the world has changed a great deal. She was our shield to any arrows of adversity, and despite the enormous responsibilities that she bore on our behalf, she never, never put a foot wrong.

Her Majesty was a family person, and in some respects we were all part of her wider family. She enjoyed those aspects of life that we all enjoy—animals and pets, whether corgis, ponies and horses, or racing pigeons; family meals, whether that be barbecues, picnics or Christmas dinners.

As we have heard, Her Majesty had a lifelong passion for horse racing. Back in coronation week in 1953, her horse Aureole ran second in the Derby, the nearest she ever got to securing that cherished prize. One might have expected a hint of disappointment, but there was none. She joined the rest of the nation in celebrating the victory of national icon Sir Gordon Richards in his 28th and final attempt to win the race for the first time. An aureole, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a radiant light around a head or body. Our aureole has been extinguished, but her legacy will endure forever.

The Queen ascended the throne as we emerged from the ravages of the second world war. As she departs, we face more adversity and an uncertain and worrying immediate future. If we strive to conduct ourselves as she did, if we apply a mere modicum of her wisdom and sound judgment, then we will get through it. Your Majesty, on behalf of the people of Waveney, thank you for all that you have done for us. Our deepest condolences to all of your family. God save the King.

8.23 pm

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, for affording me the opportunity to pay tribute on behalf of my constituents on this sad day.

Aberdeen has had a long association with, and fondness for, the royal family. Beautiful granite statues of former monarchs can be found watching over many parts of our city. People across Aberdeen are feeling a profound sense of loss today. In 1964, Aberdeen suffered one of our darkest hours. A typhoid outbreak in the city hospitalised 500 people and led to three fatalities. Dr Ian MacQueen, our chief medical officer, described Aberdeen as a “sort of beleaguered city”. Our reputation as a centre for tourism was badly damaged. Hearing of our local issues, and at very short notice, Queen Elizabeth diverted a planned journey to Glasgow in order to visit Aberdeen. This thoughtful gesture, which expressed the Queen's confidence in the safety of visiting Aberdeen, has been long remembered by our city.

Throughout the years, Her Majesty has retained a relationship with our city. In 1970, she visited the VSA—Voluntary Service Aberdeen—children's centre in Aberdeen's Hardgate. The Association of Social Services, VSA, has been honoured to secure the patronage of every monarch during its 150-year history, from its founding patronage of Queen Victoria in 1870.

In 1990, Queen Elizabeth II opened the Bon Accord centre in Aberdeen. The people of Aberdeen love to turn out for a public event and this one was no different, with crowds thronging to try and catch a glimpse of her. Even Aberdonians who were not present on that day will almost certainly have walked past the commemorative plaque that she unveiled.

In 2017, the Queen again visited Aberdeen to open the Robertson family roof garden at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. Like so many of my constituents, I have had occasion to seek solace in the roof garden while a loved one was in hospital. We very much appreciate that she came along to open that garden.

[Kirsty Blackman]

I want also to mention Her Majesty the Queen's long involvement with the Girlguiding movement. In 1953, she became the Girl Guides' patron and remained a stalwart supporter for all her years. She first joined the guides aged 11, taking part in camping trips and earning badges for swimming. Over the years, thousands of girls and young women across the UK and overseas have worked hard to achieve the highest award in guiding: the Queen's Guide award.

I send my personal condolences to the Queen's family. In 2011, my great-granny passed away—also well into her 90s. I well remember the devastation and sense of shock that we all felt. She had been there for so long that we had begun to think that she would be a constant presence in our lives and there would never be a day that we would be without her. I can therefore feel an echo of what the generations of the royal family who follow her must be feeling today, and I send out my heartfelt best wishes to them at this time for getting through this difficult moment.

From the people of Aberdeen North, I thank Queen Elizabeth for her lifetime of service.

8.26 pm

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con): On behalf of the residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington, I pay the deepest tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen, who served our country and the Commonwealth with the most remarkable and selfless devotion.

The Queen's life was interwoven with the Royal Borough of Kensington. Indeed, her coronation robes were actually woven in Kensington, at the Royal School of Needlework, which was then in South Kensington. Many of the late Queen's family have lived in Kensington, at Kensington Palace, including her late sister Princess Margaret. Of course, it is currently the official residence of the new Prince and Princess of Wales. The Queen also sent her son, His Majesty the King, to his first school in Kensington: Hill House on Pont Street. We are delighted to have those associations with Her late Majesty and His Majesty the King.

There are so many things that I could talk about in the exceptional reign of Her late Majesty, but I will focus on two things: the length of that reign and her incredible empathy with her people. Her first official visit to the Science Museum was in 1938 at the age of 11, when she visited with her sister and grandmother. Her last visit to the Science Museum was in 2019. That is a relationship with one institution that spanned a remarkable 81 years. She had those relationships with my constituency, including with the V&A, the Natural History Museum, and the Commonwealth Institute, which she was so passionate about, when it was on Kensington High Street. Remarkably, someone said to me yesterday that the Queen's reign of 70 years is 30% of the existence of the United States of America; that is remarkable.

Secondly, I want to talk about her empathy with her people. During the course of the last 25 years, sadly my constituency has had two tragedies: the Grenfell Tower fire and the Ladbroke Grove rail crash. In both instances, the Queen visited very, very quickly, and she gave the most remarkable comfort and succour to the bereaved,

the survivors and the residents. She was so humble and she only thought of those who were suffering, rather than of her own emotions. Thank you, your Majesty.

I send all the condolences of the Royal Borough of Kensington to His Majesty the King and his family, and I wish His Majesty the King a long and healthy reign. God save the King.

8.30 pm

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab): Watching the family rushing to the bedside of the gravely ill Queen yesterday will have brought back traumatic memories for many of us who have received the heart-stopping call with news of the imminent death of a loved one. As we remember the Queen's 70 years of dedication and loyal service, we first pay our respects to a grieving family; they have lost a mother, a grandmother, a great-grandmother and a friend who was very special—and so has our country.

This is a profoundly sad moment for the UK, the Commonwealth and the world. Our Queen Elizabeth II is an icon throughout the world, who makes our nation proud. She earned our respect and embodied all that is good about public service, duty, fortitude and diligence. Her reassuring presence, her dignity and constancy, especially in times of discord, bound us in a way that we may only be about to understand. She has been a role model for the ages. I pay tribute to her remarkable life's work; the legacy she leaves and the lives she has touched will echo through the ages.

It was a delight to see our community come together for the jubilee celebrations. The outpouring of love was heartfelt and enduring. The days and months ahead will be very difficult. May we come together in peace, kindness and respect as we remember our Queen and prepare for the next chapter in our nation's history. On behalf of the people of Bedford and Kempston, thank you, Ma'am, and long live the King.

8.32 pm

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): I rise to associate my constituents with the tributes made today to Her late Majesty and, on behalf of the people of Brigg and Goole and the Isle of Axholme, to swear our loyalty and commit ourselves to our new King.

We have heard some fine tributes in this Chamber today and from leaders around the world. One that resonated the most with me was that of Her late Majesty's 12th Canadian Prime Minister, who yesterday said of her that she was one of his favourite people in the world. That resonated with me. I did not know Her late Majesty as Mr Trudeau did, but it resonated with me because we all felt that she was somebody we knew. She was one of my favourite people.

When I think about why, of course it is due to her constitutional role, her role in this country and all her dedicated service to this country, but for my generation I think it is also because she represents our grandparents' generation. I was born in the year of her silver jubilee—although I look a lot younger—and my grandparents were the generation who were coming of age in world war two, as she was. Yesterday was the anniversary of the very day, some years earlier, when we rushed to my grandfather's bed to say goodbye to him. My grandfather Donald Theakstone and my grandma Betty so loved the Queen that they collected everything there was to do with her. For my generation, she links us to our grandparents.

Unlike others in this place—perhaps this speaks to my failures or lack of achievement as a politician—I have not knelt before Her late Majesty, had a sword put on my shoulders, or been made a KBE or a member of the Privy Council. However, this year, for work outside this place I received the Queen's platinum jubilee medal, and it was one of the things I am proudest to have received. I did not get it at a castle—we had to drive to Rotherham and pick it up from an NHS office—but I was so proud to receive that medal, and I will cherish it for evermore, with the image of Her Majesty on it.

I did meet her just once, here, in 2012. I have no great story to tell of that, because I am afraid I rather let myself down. We met her as new Members when she came to address both Houses, and I was so flustered, as a working-class lad from Hull meeting the Queen, that I did not know what to do. We had been given some protocol information beforehand, but all I remember is that Her Majesty came up to our group and, before she could say anything, I, in my Humber tones, shouted out "Brigg and Goole!" She just looked at me, smiled and said "Oh!" and then moved on to the next Member. So I do not have a great story of our interaction. But it was a privilege and an honour of my life to have met Her late Majesty, and on behalf of my constituents, I just want to thank her for her service. As we say in the Jewish faith, "May her memory be a blessing." God save the King.

8.35 pm

Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab): It is an honour to rise, on behalf of the people of Cardiff North, to pay tribute and offer my deepest condolences to His Majesty the King, and to the whole royal family as they mourn the loss of their mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, Queen Elizabeth—our longest-serving, greatest monarch, who devoted so much to our country throughout her long and exceptional life. Communities across Cardiff North share in their grief, as we all share in their grief.

The magnitude of this loss should not be understated. Through our lifetimes, through difficult times and upheaval—whether at home or abroad—the Queen has been our constant for 70 years. Her life of service and dedication, and her love for all of us, demonstrate her values, and these we must hold on to as we move into a new era, keeping her memory alive in our hearts through this historic moment of change. As a loyal public servant, her bond with all four nations of the UK was unmatched. Of course she loved Scotland, but I know that she had a special place in her heart for Wales. She was gifted a playhouse, Y Bwthyn Bach, from the people of Wales when she was six years old—apparently it is still in the grounds of Windsor Great Park—and when the Senedd was established, she insisted on being there in person for every royal opening, which is where I met her. She surprised us all with her encyclopaedic knowledge of Welsh politics and of devolution, taking pride in the fact that she knew every single detail. She understood the role that devolution had—and has—within our constitution.

Her connection to Cardiff was strong. She visited many times, and not just to cheer in the rugby and enjoy our music. Footage from 1971 shows her opening Wales's largest hospital, our University Hospital of Wales, spending time chatting with patients, never holding back and always taking as much time with people as possible, her compassion shining through. We have also seen her passion: her speech at COP26 last year was one of the

most powerful, calling on world leaders to act with urgency on climate change. Her determination is only surpassed by that of our new King. He is a passionate environmentalist and conservationist, and I am confident that his passion for combating climate change will shine through his reign.

Queen Elizabeth was our symbol, our leader for so long, but more than that, she was an incredible woman. Unassuming, principled, kind and loving, she was able to lead when times were difficult, but she also showed a constant love for all of us—something that we all felt. We will miss that, and as we mourn, we think of the loved ones we have lost, and of loved ones we may not see. Today is a reminder to hold them close, to reach out, to mend scars and wounds and to move forward with love. Life is short, and if nothing else, we must remember what is most important.

I want to remember someone close to me, and to end with one of my late father's favourite quotations from Dylan Thomas:

"Do not go gentle into that good night...Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

8.39 pm

Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con): I rise to extend the love and heartfelt condolences being expressed in Eastbourne and Willingdon today to His Majesty the King, the royal family and the royal household—how mightily our sovereign lady will be missed. Her legacy, of course, will be global in its reach, but will find form in very local ways too. In my constituency, one such way will be in the shape of the Queen's green canopy.

This 10-year community jubilee project has a goal of planting 5,000 trees from the foot of the South Downs at Bede's all the way to the highest point in Eastbourne at Butts Brow. The project will regenerate and reimagine this beautiful and inspiring landscape for generations yet to come. It is special, too, that it was Her late Majesty's father, King George VI, who formally opened the town's downland in 1929, and it is perhaps rather poignant that it was Her late Majesty who planted the first jubilee tree at Balmoral. The project is a fitting tribute, as Her late Majesty's love of the great outdoors is well known.

Well known, too, is the Queen's deep Christian faith. One of the first messages of love and appreciation in Eastbourne's book of condolence today reads, "In her wisdom, charm, devotion to duty and warmth, she was a guiding light for our country", and so she was. In her humble and gracious way, however, the late Queen would have testified to the guiding light of Christ in her life. In the very last devotion she used to prepare for her coronation, she prayed:

"God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in mine eyes, and in my looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in my heart, and in my thinking. God be at my end, and at my departing."

Elizabeth Windsor has run her race quite majestically. May she now rest in peace and rise in glory. God save the King.

8.42 pm

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD): As we mourn the loss of Her late Majesty and celebrate her extraordinary legacy, I wish to convey condolences on behalf of my constituents to the King and the entire royal family. We feel her loss deeply.

[Munira Wilson]

Twickenham is home to a royal palace, a royal park, more platinum jubilee street parties than any other English borough, and a rugby stadium whose rousing renditions of “God Save the Queen” have now been heard for the final time. I will share three quick stories of how the Queen’s kindness and humility touched the lives of my constituents.

Last year, Park Lane stables, a riding centre for disabled people in Teddington, was facing eviction. Campaigners were desperate to keep it open, so as the Queen’s love of horses is well known, they went straight to the top. Natalie O’Rourke describes the letter they received back from the palace as like a “modern day fairy tale”. It was an invitation to the Royal Mews to visit Her Majesty’s horses. One campaigner Caitlin said of the visit:

“we were drawn in to their community, we mattered, we were cared for.”

The Queen could make everyone feel at home.

Her late Majesty visited Twickenham many times during her reign, most often, of course, for the rugby, as she was patron of the Rugby Football Union for 64 years. Tom Gaymor remembers the Queen opening Twickenham stadium’s east stand in 1994. While he was a 13-year-old ball boy waiting in the players’ tunnel, the Queen stopped, greeted them and asked questions of them all. He told me that

“her grace and genuine interest in each and every one said everything about her human side and love for her role.”

My constituent the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, Sir Kenneth Olisa, accompanied the Queen to Grenfell Tower in the days following the fire. Despite the unbelievable tragedy, when the Queen arrived, the crowd broke into spontaneous applause. He said that she showed then, as she has so many times, her ability to unite, console and bring her hope to her people in their times of need.

I want to finish with what I personally most admired about Her Majesty: her deep Christian faith, which underpinned her commitment to devote her whole life to public service, to her country and her Commonwealth. During the platinum jubilee, the vicar of St Mary with St Alban in Teddington reminded us of the words of the Queen’s 2016 Christmas message.

“Christ’s example,”

she said,

“helps me to see the value of doing small things with great love, whoever does them and whatever they themselves believe.”

Queen Elizabeth II did many things with great love. Few of them were small. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

8.45 pm

Amanda Solloway (Derby North) (Con): It is the greatest honour to be here today to pay tribute on behalf of my constituents in Derby North and of course to make my own tribute.

Since the heartbreaking news yesterday that simply took my breath away, I have been reflecting on the influence that the Queen had on me and many people across the world. All my life, I have known the legacy that she has given us. All of my life, I have admired this amazing woman, and today my heart is so sad to say goodbye to her. She was universally our Queen, she

cared passionately for us all and truly embodied what it means to serve. She promised to devote her whole life to serving her people, and her generous heart never missed a beat. It was a heart of compassion, love and kindness. Through joyous and turbulent times—so difficult that I can hardly imagine it—she carried herself with grace and dignity, a role model for future generations, just like the generation of my wonderful grand-daughter. She was the very best of all of us—the very best of humanity: strong, yet compassionate; loving and steadfast. She laughed with us as a country, her fantastic smile lighting up our lives. She mourned with us, and led us through the darkest of times: a great diplomat, leader, mother, wife, grandmother and great-grandmother and, like me, an animal lover.

The Queen carried us through the very worst of times, and held our hand through the very best. My constituents of Derby North thank her from the bottom of their hearts for a lifetime of service, for her guidance and her never-faltering service. To quote King Charles III, it was

“a life well lived”.

Thank you, your Majesty. Rest in peace.

8.48 pm

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): I rise to pay tribute on behalf of my constituents of Lewisham East and to express my own sadness.

Our late Queen Elizabeth II was the nation’s longest-serving monarch, who reigned for seven decades. She was for so many of us a constant, enduring and reliable figure for our great nation. I was deeply saddened by the news that our beloved Queen had passed away. She served her country with dignity and grace. One of the finest quotes I have recently heard about her is

“neither did she explain herself and neither did she complain”.

She rose to each challenge with grace, and she dedicated her life to her nation. She was a Queen who loved and who in return was loved.

One of my earliest memories of the Queen was meeting her when I was seven years old during her visit to south-east London. Strangely enough, my mother’s earliest memory of seeing the Queen dates from when she was around the same age, many years earlier in the Caribbean. My mother said that

“in Jamaica children used to run to her”.

Nothing really changed there. She was adored by many across the Commonwealth and, indeed, the globe.

I remember that as a child, my greatest street party was in 1977—the silver jubilee. I fear that many of us are giving away our age, as we all seem to remember the silver jubilee. She gave us all much cause for joy and celebration, and I am grateful that she was able to mark her platinum jubilee earlier this year. It brought together thousands of people across Lewisham, where over 100 street parties were held to celebrate her many achievements. Her departure reminds me that there is a time to live and, indeed, a time to die. Let us in this place do our very best to do what we can while we live to make a difference to the lives of others.

In the meantime, my thoughts are with her family, our nation, and all those who mourn our beloved Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, across the Commonwealth and across the globe. May she rest in peace. Long live the King.

8.50 pm

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I recall my first encounter with the Queen on a visit to a foreign country: her 1994 visit to Russia. She went to Moscow and St Petersburg at the request of Boris Yeltsin, and I had been invited along to conduct economic negotiations with Russia. It was based in St Petersburg on board *Britannia*, a ship that thoroughly impressed all the Russian visitors. The press made much of the trip's difficulties for the Queen. They were obsessed with the details of which jewels she had brought, and whether any of them had once belonged to Russian duchesses. She was not interested in the slightest in that, and she took Boris Yeltsin fully in her stride—quite remarkable, when we remember what he was like. The trip was a great success for UK plc, and the Queen took a great interest in what we were doing and the results of the visit.

As His Majesty said earlier, we remember a life well lived. We celebrate that life for all the human qualities, as well as the duty and service that so many Members have spoken about. God save the King.

8.52 pm

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): “Forgetting the things which are behind us, and reaching for the things that are before us, pressing on to the mark, to the high calling of God through Jesus Christ.” The words of the apostle are not only the religious philosophy of our former monarch, but they indicate her style of leadership. She did not allow the past to be a burden. She did not allow the past to hold her back. She stretched forward constantly to the mark, shooing this country forward to a better place, to an ideal, to get over the line. Indeed, her Christmas speech each year summed that up, as she witnessed for her Lord and Saviour, for her God. I was deeply impressed and struck by the King's speech this evening, in which he powerfully and singularly dedicated himself to his mother's God. It should encourage us all that he learned from that example of urging this kingdom forward in all its strands and steps.

My constituents are broken-hearted, as I am sure are yours, Mr Deputy Speaker, about what has happened to our kingdom over the last few hours, but they will be emboldened by the memories of Her Majesty's visits. On her last visit to North Antrim, she visited Bushmills. It looked like a box of Quality Street, with a contingent of the Irish Guards decked out in red tunics and Séamus the dog walking through the village. When the Queen arrived to unveil the statue of the war hero Robert Quigg, she said to me as I welcomed her, “Is this all yours?” I hesitated and said, “No, Ma'am, this is yours.” With a twinkle in her eye, she said, “Quite.” [*Laughter.*] I will never forget it; it was a lovely moment.

King Charles also visited the constituency when he was Prince Charles. He was way down at Gracehill in Ballymena, but for some reason he too made it to Bushmills. I do not know what it is, but there is something about a liquid that sits in a barrel for 12 years that he seems to like. I know that my constituents are delighted by his patronage of Bushmills.

Our kingdom is a lesser place, and we have lost a wonderful sovereign, but I want to repeat what the King said this evening:

“Let us...draw strength from the light of her example.”

God save the King.

8.55 pm

James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con): It is only three months since I stood here to join the wonderful tributes to mark Her Majesty the Queen's platinum jubilee. Today the House and the country feels immense sadness at her passing, but that is tempered by the opportunity to recognise her extraordinary life of service, and by knowing that she witnessed the heartfelt displays of affection towards her in the 70th year of her reign.

That unprecedented occasion was celebrated passionately in North West Norfolk, which is unsurprising as my constituency is home to Sandringham, the much-loved private retreat of the late Queen and her family for generations. The continuity that the estate has provided to her family means that her Norfolk home occupied a unique place in her affections. She loved the time she spent there.

Having ascended to the throne at such a young age, Sandringham offered the Queen an escape from the public eye. It was a place where she could relax with family. She was often spotted behind the wheel of a Land Rover, and she enjoyed walking her dogs, country pursuits and her prized horse stud. People living in the villages around the Sandringham estate had great affection for the Queen, and she was a very special part of those close-knit communities. They have happy memories of encounters with the Queen because, as well as the private time she spent there, she chose to undertake many visits over the years. Whether as a member of the Sandringham women's institute since 1943, and then as its president, taking tea and cake with the ladies, presenting local children with awards or visiting charities and businesses, she was a constant and cherished part of life in west Norfolk.

Perhaps surprisingly, she was even able to go about her life there without fuss. Famously, when out shopping one day, a woman remarked to her, “You look just like the Queen.” To which the Queen is said to have replied, “How reassuring”—presumably with a twinkle in her eye.

Her affection for Sandringham was matched only by that of the Duke of Edinburgh, who gave such love, support and service to Her Majesty. It was from the long library at Sandringham that the Queen delivered the first televised Christmas message in 1957. And perhaps one of the most profound comments in recent times was made during her pandemic broadcast, to which others have referred: “We will meet again.” That simple phrase expressed the hope that we all needed, and the immediate response to her passing yesterday was people coming together at Windsor, Buckingham Palace, Sandringham, Balmoral and elsewhere to share their grief and to give thanks for an amazing life.

On behalf of my North West Norfolk constituents, I offer the deepest condolences to the entire royal family. God save the King.

8.57 pm

Ms Anum Qaisar (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I rise to pay my respects on behalf of my constituents in Airdrie and Shotts. It is, of course, with great sadness that we are here today to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen. Over her 70-year reign, she was a figurehead across the four nations and across the world. She worked tirelessly and demonstrated an unwavering commitment to her role as Head of State.

[*Ms Anum Qaisar*]

Her Majesty took the throne in her 20s, and in the years that followed she guided the four nations through monumental changes. She served as a pillar of hope and stability during times of uncertainty, and she was a constant in the lives of many people. Indeed, she is the only monarch that many of us have ever known.

I was born in Scotland, but I am also a grandchild of the Commonwealth. Many people, especially the older generations—including my grandmother, Salamat Begum, and my grandfather, Haji Abdullah—held the Queen in high esteem. When I was growing up, they often told us stories about when they moved from a small village called Saraba in Pakistan to Rochdale, before settling in Scotland. They told us about how they found the Queen to be an inspiration.

Her Majesty simply meant so much to so many people. She was, of course, a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother. I, along with the people of Airdrie and Shotts, send my condolences to her family. They are in our thoughts and prayers. May she rest in peace.

8.59 pm

Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to pay tribute, on my behalf and on behalf of my constituents in Meon Valley, to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, and to pass on our condolences to the King, the Queen Consort and all the royal family.

This is one of the saddest times this country has faced. We have lost our guide, and we feel a strange sensation of being adrift; that something is not quite right in the world; that our anchor has been swept away. It is an unease that will fade as life goes on, and I know that Her Majesty would want it that way. She was a woman without pretension, solely dedicated to her country and the Commonwealth through her unstinting service up to her final days, as we saw. How we will miss her smile and her continuity. We knew this time would come, but it was a shock none the less.

I thank Her Majesty for her 70 years of service. She will remain an example for everyone—in particular, she is an example for those in public service of how we should serve. Hers was a leadership that so many of us would like to emulate. The tributes from across the world show what an inspiration she has been, and they must be a comfort to her family and to the country as we come to terms with our collective loss.

I was born 10 years after the Queen came to the throne; like many here, I have known only one monarch. The monarchy has been part of our island's fabric for more than 1,000 years. It has been left in good shape and with an able successor at its helm. I will be proud to serve His Majesty King Charles III as a Member of Parliament and as a British subject. God save the King.

9.1 pm

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): I send my thoughts and condolences, and those of my family and my constituents, to the royal family today—a time of immense grief and pain for them, as they have lost not only their sovereign but the beloved head of their family.

Few remember a time without Queen Elizabeth II—her Christmas messages, her visits and her presence at state occasions. For 70 years she was a beacon and guiding light for us all. As a woman in the public eye, she was a perfect example of grace and dignity, often in the face of adversity.

For many of my constituents in Brentford, Isleworth, Hounslow, Osterley and Chiswick, the Queen was known for her tireless work to promote and celebrate dialogue and tolerance between all faiths and cultures. That is why I particularly remember her 2004 Christmas message, in which she described her visits to a mosque in east London and to the gurdwara in my constituency. She relayed the story of a visitor to Britain who had described travelling from Heathrow into London on the Piccadilly line at the end of the school day, and of being delighted that children from different cultures and faiths getting on and off the tube train could be at such ease with each other—something that was not possible in his own country. Many of those young people would have been my constituents and attending our local schools.

In times of crisis, the nation turned to the Queen for her compassion and her wisdom. From her speech to children being evacuated during world war two, to her national message at the height of the coronavirus, the people of the UK turned to Her Majesty at the most testing times. She always upheld the promise to serve that she made when she was 21. She devoted herself to service—to our country, to the Commonwealth and to us all.

Today marks the end of the Elizabethan age, but Her Majesty's memory and her legacy shall live on. May she rest in peace. Long live King Charles III.

9.4 pm

Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con): I rise to speak on behalf of the constituents of Loughborough, Shepshed, Quorn, Barrow, Sileby, Hathern, Mountsorrel and the Wolds villages to express their deep sorrow at the loss of our sovereign, Her Majesty the Queen.

Loughborough had the privilege of hosting Her Majesty on a number of occasions during her reign, including in 1996 when she opened the new English and drama building at Loughborough Grammar School, which was named the Queen's Building in her honour. Her Majesty also visited in 1966 when she signed and sealed the Royal Charter of Incorporation that granted university status to Loughborough College of Technology, which became Loughborough University.

We were also very proud to be involved in the Queen's baton relay in the lead-up to the Commonwealth games in Birmingham this summer. I spoke on behalf of Loughborough constituency in the Humble Address speech for her platinum jubilee earlier this year, saying that the Commonwealth is, of course, the jewel in the crown. Throughout her reign, Her Majesty has overseen its modernisation to ensure that it represents everyone and brings together communities from across the world, and that is undoubtedly true.

Loughborough will again be on the world stage this weekend when bells will ring across the country and across the world. Many of those bells will have been made in Loughborough at Taylor's Bell Foundry, the world's largest working bell foundry, including the casting of the Great Paul Bell at St Paul's cathedral. We will be filled with both sadness and great pride that our bells

say goodbye to our sovereign Queen and also welcome our new monarch, King Charles III. Loughborough is honoured to play its part in marking this solemn and moving occasion in British history.

In closing, I quote Her late Majesty when she said that

“grief is the price we pay for love.”

There will be a great deal of grief felt over these next few weeks and that is because there was a great deal of love for her throughout the 96 years of her life. Truly, she was Elizabeth the Great. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

9.6 pm

Sam Tarry (Ilford South) (Lab): I wish to place on record my tribute alongside so many who have spoken today already and offer my personal condolences to His Majesty King Charles III on behalf of all of our communities in Ilford South.

Like many parliamentarians across the House, I have always had a profound respect for the Queen and for the role that she has performed within our nation. I have admired the sage advice and wise counsel that she gave to so many leaders over the course of the past seven decades.

As the son of an Anglican rector and canon of Chelmsford cathedral, someone who has grown up in the Church and someone who has grown up in the churches of Ilford, I have understood so much, as part of my life, the role that the Queen has performed as Head of the Church of England. In a constituency such as Ilford, where people really do do God alongside their politics, with so many people of so many faiths attending religious institutions on a daily basis, she has been held fondly in the hearts of so many—for her religious beliefs and her faith, and also, of course, for her public service.

The Queen's longevity is perhaps encapsulated best in the fact that the first Prime Minister she swore in, Winston Churchill, was born in 1874, while the current incumbent of No.10, whom she greeted just days ago, was born in 1975, a span of more than 100 years—an entire century—which is truly astounding. She was also an inspiration to our nation; a steadying influence for millions to look up to amid the turbulence and flux so often in British politics. She was the anchor that so many needed during times of crisis. I remember very clearly witnessing the strength that she had in the wake of the 7/7 bombings that hit London, on the streets of our capital. She was able to show her tenderness in meeting the victims of the terrorist atrocities, while, at the same time, stating defiantly that

“those who perpetrate these brutal acts against innocent people should know that they will not change our way of life.”

And they did not.

The Queen was also an inspiration for our war generation—my great-grandparents and grandparents who served fighting the Nazis—shining a light on the role that women performed tirelessly in those war years. I remember reading one story about how, aged just 18 in 1944, she begged her father, King George, to let her join the war effort. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the King resolutely refused to let her do so. However, undeterred, she continued to plead with her father until he finally relented and let her join the Auxiliary Territorial Service. She was soon donning a pair of coveralls, driving a

military truck, and working as a mechanic. In doing so, Queen Elizabeth became the first woman in the royal family to join the armed forces, and the first serving monarch to do so in more than 1,000 years.

In the immediate aftermath of the second world war—in fact the day after VE Day on 9 May 1945—Elizabeth took part in a tour of some of the bombed areas of Ilford, in recognition of the terrible conditions that east London and that part of Essex had endured under the relentless bombing raids of the Luftwaffe. On her walkabout, on which she was joined by King George, the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret, she was shown Ley Street in Ilford—it is not far from my constituency office—which was next to the bombed-out local cinema.

Throughout her time as monarch, Elizabeth was supportive of the people of Ilford. I recall one of her last trips to Ilford, on which she visited Valentines mansion in Valentines Park to mark her diamond jubilee in 2012. Crowds thronged to the park, and the love and respect that people across every generation had for the Queen was abundantly clear. As Head of the Commonwealth, the Queen was held in particularly high regard by my constituents, many of whom have origins and heritage in the 54 countries to which our Commonwealth extends.

I will quickly relay a memory of meeting the Queen when I was a young scout in the 2nd Seven Kings troop in Ilford, and seeing at first hand the work that Elizabeth did as patron of the scout movement. I recall fondly climbing to the top of a tree in Gilwell Park to see her walk past. My scout master asked me to come down, and to speak to her directly. Even at such a young age, the work that the Queen did as patron of the scout movement was an inspiration.

In closing, I send my heartfelt condolences. The Queen's death casts a long shadow over our nation and everyone in the Commonwealth, but the lessons that she taught us will live on for many years to come. God rest the Queen, God bless all who mourn her, and long live the King.

9.11 pm

Simon Baynes (Clwyd South) (Con): Across the length and breadth of my constituency of Clwyd South, people have paid heartfelt tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen. Part of what made her so special was her combination of majesty and modesty, which made her both a remarkable Head of State and an approachable person whom millions have enjoyed meeting or seeing at close quarters, at home and abroad.

In Clwyd South, people have been recalling her many visits over the years, including to Corwen in 1949, when she was still Princess Elizabeth, and to Llangollen in 1953 on her post-coronation tour, when she attended the Llangollen international musical eisteddfod and took a trip on the Llangollen steam railway. Those visits continued over the years—to Overton-on-Dee, Wrexham and elsewhere. In all those cases, people felt a special connection with this smiling, friendly and unassuming monarch, supported so magnificently by Prince Philip.

Unlike many other speakers today, I never had the honour of meeting the Queen in person, but I am proud to say that both my mother and I shared a birthday with Her late Majesty, namely 21 April. Also, as a small boy in 1964, I remember the excitement in my family when

[Simon Baynes]

my father commanded the Queen's Guard at Balmoral. We spent the summer in Ballater while he carried out his official duties, supported by my mother. Like everyone I have met who has served the Queen in an official capacity, my father thought the world of her.

As has been mentioned many times, yesterday there were rainbows over both Buckingham Palace and Windsor castle. I like to think of the Queen's reign as a rainbow of dedicated service, overarching my life and that of the nation. I felt that most strongly in the wonderful address, to which many Members have referred, that she gave the nation in April two years ago, at the start of the covid crisis, in which she said:

"The moments when the United Kingdom has come together to applaud its care and essential workers will be remembered as an expression of our national spirit; and its symbol will be the rainbows drawn by children."

The Queen embodied our national spirit with her great sense of community, kindness and dedicated service, for which we are eternally grateful. My thoughts and prayers, and those of my constituents in Clwyd South, are with her beloved family. God rest her soul. God save the King and bless the Prince and Princess of Wales.

9.14 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): On this sad day, I rise to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We are a nation in mourning, and I know that I speak for my Bath constituents when I say that we will all sorely miss her.

Whether or not we met Her late Majesty in person, we feel that we knew her. She had a personal relationship with all her subjects, and she managed to combine her office as monarch of an ancient and great kingdom with the warmth and personal touch of a wonderful human being. Her great personal qualities of empathy, integrity and humility stood as an example to us all. She of all people could have been pompous, but she never was. She saw herself as a servant all her life. That is rare, and we all owe her a huge debt of gratitude for that unstinting service.

She was not just a British monarch; she was a world leader, renowned and respected throughout the world. I grew up in Hanover, Germany, where there were no monarchs. Everybody was actually rather squeamish about tradition, but given the royal connection between Britain and Hanover, people were perfectly happy to adopt Queen Elizabeth as our Queen. Indeed, when I was young, she was perfectly useful for correcting our manners—"You'd better learn to behave in case you meet the Queen."

Her undoubtedly impeccable table manners aside, the late Queen represented—to the core—the best of British. In times of great turbulence, she stood as unifier and peacemaker. She clearly loved people and respected each and every individual for who they were. Her legacy must live on as we enter a new chapter. May she rest in peace. Long live the King.

9.16 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): Some wonderful tributes have been given from across the House to a simply amazing woman, our nation's unshakeable rock in storms, our favourite granny and, above all, our Queen—much loved, and now deeply mourned in Gloucester,

across the United Kingdom and abroad. Her late Majesty touched lives not just in the 14 countries for which she was Head of State, or even the 54 countries that make up the Commonwealth family, but across the world.

On 1 July, I represented Her Majesty's Government at the inauguration of President Marcos of the Philippines, and passed on congratulations from the world's longest-serving Head of State to its most recently elected. The President's face lit up. He said, "The Queen is amazing. We all watched the platinum jubilee celebrations, and she has set the platinum standard for Heads of State." Whatever our individual memories of Her late Majesty—whether of individual meetings, seeing her at visits such as those to Gloucester in 2003 and 2009, or simply watching her smash hits on TV with James Bond and Paddington Bear—he was right: the Queen is the platinum standard; the extraordinary example of leadership through service to which we all aspire.

I offer the royal family my sympathy and that of Gloucester residents. We are all grateful for that extraordinary legacy. None of us will ever forget our world's Queen or her second great Elizabethan age. I believe that King Charles's own long record of service, and his moving speech this evening, should give us all great confidence for the future. Thank you, Ma'am. God save the King.

9.18 pm

James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op): This morning I left my Ealing North constituency to come to Parliament by boarding an Elizabeth line train. As we know, the mark of Queen Elizabeth II on our banknotes, our coins, our stamps and so on will gradually give way over time to the mark of King Charles III, but in our part of the country, those stations and trains mean that my constituents and I will always have a physical tribute to our greatest monarch running through our borough.

To the great disappointment of the countless primary school children who have asked me since I was elected, I never had the chance to meet the Queen as an MP, but I know that I was not alone in feeling her presence across Greenford, Perivale, Northolt, Hanwell and Ealing during the platinum jubilee celebrations in June. In our diverse part of London, people of all ages, all backgrounds, and all faiths and none, came out to celebrate the reign of our Queen and our love of our community and country. After the separation of the pandemic, we were celebrating the Queen's jubilee with our neighbours, and that celebration itself helped the Queen's assurance during lockdown—that better days would return—to come true.

At those jubilee celebrations, as in the House of Commons today, everyone had their personal reflection on the Queen and what it was about her that they most admired. For me, what stood out above all else was her most incredible sense of duty and her awesome devotion to service, which, quite simply, was her life. On behalf of the people of Ealing North, I offer our deepest condolences to the King and the royal family, and our most heartfelt thanks for the life of Queen Elizabeth II, whose legacy will live on forever.

9.20 pm

Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con): It is my solemn honour to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of the people of my city,

Peterborough. Peterborough loved and mourns her. Her reign managed somehow, across its seven decades, to penetrate each of our lives and bring us together. Now we are brought together in grief.

My constituents come from across the Commonwealth and beyond. The Queen mattered to each of them. That was her magic, and I saw it at work throughout the jubilee celebrations in my city just a few months ago, with different cultures, religions, creeds and nationalities all coming together to celebrate a truly remarkable woman. For our armed forces and our public servants, for organisations, charities and families, and for me, there is one less certainty in an all too turbulent world.

The Queen visited Peterborough in 1952, while still Princess Elizabeth, attending the agricultural show at the old showground in Eastfield. As our Queen, she visited on four more occasions. In March 1975, the Maundy Thursday service was held at Peterborough cathedral, where she distributed the royal Maundy coins to 49 men and 49 women, in a ceremony attended by more than 3,200 people. She later went for a walk in Bridge Street and dined at the town hall with her husband, the late Duke of Edinburgh, and city councillors. She returned to Peterborough for her silver jubilee, again arriving to crowds of people at Peterborough station. She opened our magistrates court and the Cresset in Bretton, while not forgetting to make a detour to the national Shire Horse Society's centenary show. Another decade on, when she returned for the 750th anniversary of our cathedral, she also opened the Edith Cavell Hospital, now Peterborough City Hospital. Her final visit was to the east of England show, where an extra 3,000 visitors made their way through the turnstiles to catch a glimpse of Her Majesty.

Sadly, she will never return. I find it difficult to put that into words. It feels like losing a family member, even though I never met her. The institution is far more than the individual, but the Crown was greater for resting on her head. No monarch brought such selfless dedication to the role asked of them. Few before held the strings to our country's heart. With Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the most tangible connection to our history is gone. But with His Majesty King Charles III, her legacy will continue long into our future. Peterborough proudly proclaims through its tears, "God save the King."

9.23 pm

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab): I am saddened, but truly grateful and humbled, to have the opportunity on behalf of my constituents and my community in Pontypridd and Taff Ely to add to the tributes here today commemorating the extraordinary life of Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II. May I first echo the sentiments of colleagues across these Benches in offering my sincere condolences to the royal family and to all who knew and loved the Queen? While we all may know what it feels like to lose someone close, it is difficult to comprehend the loss of such a central figure, knowing full well the whole world outside is watching.

I share the sentiments of the huge number of local residents who have been in touch to share their sorrow at the news of Her Majesty's passing—mainly my mam, but then she did name me Alexandra Mary. Many of my constituents have great pride in working at the Royal Mint in Llantrisant, and they have spent their

working lives ensuring that the Queen's portrait is nothing short of picture-perfect on all the coins in our pockets. They have expressed their admiration for Her Majesty's lifetime of dedicated public service, and her commitment and devotion to this great nation.

As history's longest-serving monarch, Her Majesty played an incredibly important role in uniting the nation through turbulent times. Her Majesty loved this country, she loved Wales and we all loved her in return, which is why we all grieve today and for what I imagine will be some time to come. All of us here in the UK and across the Commonwealth are indebted to Her Majesty. We have so much to be grateful to her for, and for that I say thank you—diolch yn fawr, Ma'am.

Her Majesty was committed to the demands of duty and the sacrifices of service, and she understood the responsibility bestowed on her. Listening to colleagues across the House recount stories and tales of meeting Her Majesty in person, I too would like to share with them all my most cherished memory of my encounter with the late Queen. As a little girl who always dreamed, like so many, of one day becoming a princess, having the privilege of singing for Her Majesty as part of her golden jubilee tour in Trehafod was a day I shall never forget. Waving my paper flag, y ddraig goch, belting out "Calon Lân" with hwyl, and getting to see with my own eyes the actual real-life Queen was nothing short of magical.

The Queen had a natural sparkle, a wicked sense of humour and the ability to make everyone she spoke to, waved at or simply smiled at feel as though they had had the most treasured interaction. We may never see another monarch like her. As a nation, we will miss Her Majesty enormously. May she rest in peace and rise in glory. God save the King, and God bless the new Prince and Princess of Wales.

9.26 pm

Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con): Mr Deputy Speaker, "Grief is the price we pay for love",

as the Queen herself so memorably said. As I laid flowers outside Buckingham Palace this morning, I was struck by the scale of the grief felt at her passing, for as my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Jane Hunt) said, the greater the love, the greater the grief.

In some ways, the Queen was an ordinary woman—a person like us. She loved dogs, marching about in wellies, horseracing, a gin and Dubonnet, a good wind-up and sporting the ultimate rainbow-hued wardrobe.

"If I wore beige, no one would know who I was",

she is reported to have said. Like us she suffered grief, loss and family troubles, but she had to endure their being played out in the pages of the world's press. She did so with great dignity. We felt we could relate to her and that we knew her. Even though many of us may never have met her, she held a special place in our hearts.

In many ways, of course, the Queen was also an extraordinary woman. There cannot be many who can pull off walking in a 1 kg crown, but also claim to know their way around a car engine, or who have let Brian May serenade them from the roof of their house. Few could have provided such stability and reassurance through seven decades of the greatest social, economic and technological change, adapting to that change without

[*Ruth Edwards*]

letting it change her. Her reign saw the first man on the moon and the invention of the internet. When she ascended the throne, Great Britain had an empire; when she passed away, she was the head of a family of nations.

The Queen was the head of our national family. Constituents in Rushcliffe have told me that her loss feels personal, more perhaps than they imagined. Whatever our politics or creed, from the youngest to the oldest and from the most remote corners of our islands to the bustle and clatter of our biggest cities, the Queen bound us together—the thread through our national story. In triumph she was our anthem, and through trials our strength. Her courage and steadfastness were an example to us all. Who will ever forget her message to the nation at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, with her reassurance that we would meet again?

We meet here today to remember a woman who lit people's faces with joy, a sovereign whose reign is one of the greatest in history and a public servant who gave her whole life to us—her people, her country and her Commonwealth—right until the very end.

9.29 pm

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD): Throughout her extraordinary reign, Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was a beacon of stability, duty and selflessness. Many of my constituents in St Albans will find it impossible to imagine Britain's public life without her. On a personal level, I met the Queen a number of times when I worked in Commonwealth affairs trying to advance democracy and human rights. The Queen was not just a constant; a few times a year, for Commonwealth Heads Of Government meetings, Commonwealth youth meetings and the annual multi-faith, interfaith Commonwealth Day service and reception, she was literally part of the day job. The Queen and the Commonwealth—the only modern intergovernmental organisation like it—were inseparable.

Each year, we Commonwealth Secretariat staffers loved celebrating the diversity of the Commonwealth on Commonwealth Day, but it was sometimes slightly surreal. The annual Commonwealth Day reception at the secretariat was rumoured to be the only event in the Queen's diary where she did not know who she was going to meet. There was no official line-up—it was all organic and not organised—and there was no protocol on ordering people and guests by rank or into different rooms. As a result, it was not unusual to see the Queen greeting a disorganised throng of diplomats and high commissioners—often with their husbands and wives—who were jostling to a backdrop of Fijian dancers in coconut bras, Ghanaian acrobats and British pop stars from the 1980s all jockeying for position to get a glimpse of the Queen or to shake her hand.

On one day, I was tasked with taking a group of dignitaries to Buckingham Palace for an audience with Her Majesty. One such dignitary had just got a new smartphone and was particularly keen on telling all the other group members about its merits in spectacular detail. When we arrived at the Palace, we were all told, quite rightly, to turn our phones to silent and to put them away, but, during our polite conversation with the Queen, this person tried to persuade Her Majesty that she should get a phone just like his. He proceeded to

take it out of his pocket and started to press buttons. He thrust it under her nose and plucked up the courage to say, “Your Majesty, I think you should get a phone like mine.” We all stood in stunned silence. She just said, “Who do you expect me to text?” It was fantastic—he blushed like a schoolboy. That one-liner was wildly refreshing, and the rest of the group were incredibly grateful.

So many people who met the Queen have many memories and stories to share, including many of my constituents. Many of them will remember the three occasions when the Queen visited St Albans cathedral and abbey, where a book of condolence is now open. The Queen's passing feels like the end of an era, but on behalf of myself and my constituents in St Albans, I extend my thoughts and prayers to the royal family. Rest in peace, Your Majesty, and thank you.

9.32 pm

Chris Loder (West Dorset) (Con): I rise to speak on behalf of my constituents in West Dorset to pay tribute to our late Queen, whom we have loved and admired for our entire lives, to share in the deepest sorrow of the nation and to send our deepest sympathy to King Charles and the royal family. Queen Elizabeth was one of the few constants in our transitory life. The past 24 hours have truly brought home to us not only the life and service of our Queen but our own service to our community and nation.

Queen Elizabeth was a woman of great kindness and faith, incredible inspiration and steadfast leadership, and was a family role model for all of us. The Queen was of my grandparents' generation, whose sense of selfless service and duty, particularly during times of difficulty, has allowed us to lead the lives of freedom and democracy that we enjoy today. Her late Majesty's generation is one of selflessness, not of entitlement. Her generation is one of tenacity, of character and of wisdom that we must look to continue in our own lives.

Since my own grandparents passed away, I, like so many, have looked upon our Queen as the grandmother of the nation. That is why the loss that we feel is so sad and so difficult to describe. I am not able to put it better than Martin Lee, the rector of Sherborne, who said this morning:

“Our country has been held in her hands. With gentleness and firmness, she has never let go, always putting the needs of the nation before herself.”

In West Dorset, we have the fondest memories of many occasions that the late Queen Elizabeth visited us—first, in 1952, in our county town of Dorchester. The Queen visited my home town of Sherborne twice: once in 1998 when she unveiled the great west window at Sherborne Abbey, and again as part of her diamond jubilee tour in 2012. She returned to Dorchester in 2016 to open Queen Mother Square in Poundbury. Those fond memories have endured with us for many years and will continue to do so.

We, the people of West Dorset and the citizens of the United Kingdom mourn our Queen, but our new King and his family are mourning his mother. It is therefore with profound affection and the greatest sympathy from West Dorset that I wish His Majesty the King to know that he, the royal family and the late Queen Elizabeth remain steadfastly in our thoughts and prayers at this very sad time. God save the King.

9.35 pm

Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): On behalf of myself, my family, and my constituents in the county borough of Merthyr Tydfil and the upper Rhymney valley, I send our sincere condolences to His Majesty the King and all members of the royal family.

As we know and have heard, most of our fellow citizens have known no other monarch. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has been an ever-present rock of stability throughout our country and the Commonwealth, and around the world. Her presence has indeed been the glue holding our country together for so long. It is so difficult to think of our country without her. There is no greater example of unstinting and exemplary public service anywhere. We have been so lucky to have lived during these times, and to have witnessed her service, grace and dignity, which were an example to us all. We will undoubtedly never see her like again.

From an early age, Her Majesty followed her parents' example of duty, which was so important in holding the country together during world war two. For over 70 years, she has been a constant, and has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to the service of the nation and the Commonwealth. She was the longest reigning monarch in British history, and the longest reigning female monarch and second longest serving monarch in world history. She served right to the very end, as she declared she would do on her 21st birthday in 1947. Just a few short weeks ago, communities across all four nations of the United Kingdom and across her other realms, the Commonwealth and the world were all celebrating the first ever platinum jubilee. As she appeared on the Buckingham Palace balcony for the last time and witnessed the outpouring on the Mall, I hope that she was in no doubt as to just how much she was loved.

We all have examples of Her Majesty's links to our communities. In my constituency, the most poignant is the community of Aberfan. Her late Majesty visited following the tragedy in 1966 and a number of times during her reign, which was a comfort to many in the village and beyond. Her last visit to the community was as part of her diamond jubilee tour in 2012, when she opened the brand new Ynysowen Community Primary School.

On behalf of the people across my constituency, I say thank you for your life of service, Ma'am. May you rest in eternal peace and rising glory. God save the King, and God bless the new Prince and Princess of Wales.

9.38 pm

Saqib Bhatti (Meriden) (Con): That was an excellent tribute, like so many tributes today; it just goes to show that we are all united in our grief. The heartfelt speeches from across the House have echoed the pain and sorrow that have been felt across the country and the Commonwealth since the devastating news yesterday. On behalf of my constituents in Meriden, I express our heartfelt condolences to the royal family as they mourn the loss of a beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Our nation weeps with them and for them.

Her Majesty holds a special place in the hearts of my constituents, because it was on a spring morning in 1971 when she opened Chelmsley Wood shopping centre, and most of the village of Chelmsley Wood turned out to greet her. The royal party was running behind schedule that day, but the Queen was undeterred and took time

to speak to local residents. That same day, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were shown the proposed site of the National Exhibition Centre. They would return five years later, in 1976, to open the NEC, where excited members of staff stood in line to greet Her Majesty. This is particularly apt, because the NEC was a major venue for the Commonwealth games.

Her Majesty always demonstrated kindness, generosity and dedication. I have my own experience of this, because in March 2007, when I was finishing my degree at the London School of Economics, I was invited to meet Her Majesty on Commonwealth Day. I was nervous and excited, and she was very gracious with her time. It was only later when I asked a friend, "How did I do?" that he said, "You said a lot, but none of it made any sense." [*Laughter.*] I hope my tribute is better today, but Her Majesty never let on and she wished me all the best in my endeavours.

For decades, Her Majesty has been a cool-headed constant steward of our great nation. She was always there when we needed her. She showed us what it meant to keep calm and carry on. I will never forget how, in the pandemic, she gave reassurance to the whole nation and told us that we would meet again. We were blessed to have her and she really was the best of us. She lived a dedicated life of service and devotion to her husband, her family, her country and the Commonwealth. Every single one of us in this House would do well to emulate her lifetime of selflessness and public service.

Today, we mourn a monarch and we pray for her. As we reflect on her legacy and we look to the future, I say only this: may she rest in peace. May we always be grateful to have experienced her reign. To God we belong and to God we return. God save the King.

9.41 pm

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the delightful tribute to the Queen by the hon. Member for Meriden (Saqib Bhatti). On behalf of myself, my constituents in Dundee West and all peoples of the ancient royal burgh of Dundee, I would like to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen and send my deepest condolences to the royal family at this difficult time.

Her Majesty dedicated her life to public service and, having acceded to the throne at an unexpectedly young age, she reshaped the monarchy in the changing generations she has reigned. She will be remembered in history as Britain's longest-serving monarch. Throughout her reign she served with dignity and compassion. Everyone I know personally who met her has spoken of her real and genuine warmth.

The Queen, of course, had a strong Scottish heritage. The Queen Mother's home was Glamis Castle in Angus, not far from my city of Dundee. As a result, Her Majesty frequently visited her maternal grandparents there as a child. Indeed, one of the earliest photographs of the Queen visiting Dundee is as a child shopping in Webster's Toy Shop in Whitehall Crescent with her grandmother, the Countess of Strathmore. Throughout her lifetime she continued to visit my city, and many of Dundee's parks and public spaces were officially opened by Her Majesty. As then-Princess, she officially opened Camperdown Park in 1946. Seven decades later—70 years later—she unveiled a plaque to officially open Slessor Gardens at our city's redeveloped waterfront in 2016.

[Chris Law]

Buckingham Palace was, of course, not the only balcony that the Queen waved from. In 1969, she arrived by train into Dundee and visited Dudhope Court, one of the city's 44 multistorey blocks. While there, she was welcomed by a local Dundee family and waved from their balcony to the crowds gathered below. I am also told that she stayed back for a cup of tea. Thousands of people gathered to watch the royal yacht Britannia berth in the city when she made her first royal visit to Dundee as Queen in 1955, with the Duke of Edinburgh.

I know that thousands will now wish to sign the book of condolence that has been opened at Dundee city chambers to allow members of the public the chance to express their feelings at the death of Her Majesty. She will always be remembered in Dundee, Scotland, the Commonwealth and the world for her unwavering service that never ceased until the end. Thank you, Ma'am, and may you rest in peace.

9.43 pm

David Johnston (Wantage) (Con): When the announcement was made yesterday of Her Majesty's passing, my tears started immediately. There have been a lot of euphemisms for that in the House this afternoon, but I cried in the way that I would for someone I was close to. Of course, I had never met her. I wish I had met her. I had once been in the same room. That was as close as I got, but it was too big a room and there were too many people. She entered at the opposite end to where I was and everybody swarmed and I did not stand a chance, but I did have the privilege of meeting two members of her family, including our new King who spoke so movingly earlier this evening. In them we saw what she had inculcated in her family and in the nation, and the example that she set. It is no surprise that the same words are used over and over again in the tributes: duty, sacrifice, dedication and selflessness. She personified those. However, we have also heard about her passion for her family, for her country, for horse-racing and for her dogs, and about her humour and mischief, which we saw at the Olympics and quite recently at the platinum jubilee celebrations with Paddington Bear.

Of course we all rise to speak on behalf of our constituents, and in those celebrations, just a few weeks ago, my constituents in Wantage and Didcot showed the great love and devotion they had for her, with street parties all across the four towns and 64 villages I represent. There were far too many for me to get to all of them, although I tried my best. It is a constituency with a long rural history, the birthplace of Alfred the Great, and, like every other part of the country, we have been blessed with visits—to Wallingford and to Harwell, to open the Diamond Light Source.

However good any of us think we are at visiting things in our constituencies, none of us is anything like Her late Majesty with 70 years of day after day visiting things and attending opening ceremonies. At the peak, she was patron and supported more than 600 charities. We have lost the most impressive servant to our nation that we will ever see, and we should be forever thankful for what she has given us.

Winston Churchill—that should give an indication of how early it was in her reign—said that, “all the film people in the world, had they scoured the globe, could not have found anyone so suited to the part.”

How true that was. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

9.46 pm

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): I pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen on behalf of myself and my constituents in Enfield, Southgate. In our grief, we remember a lifetime dedicated to extraordinary public service. Her steadfast commitment to the values of duty, public service and family provided comfort to so many here and around the world. My thoughts and condolences, and those of my constituents, are with the King and the royal family at this most difficult time.

As we all know, the Queen was the one constant in our lives. At times of incredible change, at times of crises and in good times too, she was Britain's reassuring and constant presence. In 1953, the whole country joined in celebration to mark the Queen's coronation. I am reliably informed that in Enfield, Southgate there were many local events to mark the occasion, including a parade and procession and athletics games in Broomfield Park. Footage from the time is incredibly poignant after Thursday's news, but also after this summer's platinum jubilee, where communities were once again able to come together to celebrate the Queen.

In 1953, the Queen's coronation speech was broadcast over loudspeakers in Broomfield Park, but because of the rain many listened at home on the radio. This summer we had no such problems. We had street parties across the borough, with bake-offs and crown competitions, and it was wonderful to bring the community together in that way 70 years later. Today, those events are all the more moving as we pay tribute to the Queen's life and her service to our country. I am sure we will see the same sense of togetherness again as the nation mourns over the coming days.

She was our longest-ever serving monarch; like most of us I do not remember a time before Queen Elizabeth II. In that time, she saw 15 Prime Ministers, but somehow managed to stay above party politics. As we know in this House, that is no mean feat. For 70 years, she embodied and represented the nation with unwavering duty on the international stage, a symbol of stability when things were changing.

The outpouring of emotion internationally that we have seen since the news is testament to Her late Majesty's success in achieving that. She was not only well regarded, but loved around the world, something I witnessed again and again when meeting foreign representatives from other nations, who without fail would always pay tribute to the Queen. Those who had had the pleasure of meeting her would always share stories of her kindness, her warmth and her sense of humour.

As we remember Her late Majesty, I personally will remember how she continued to serve the country with duty and kindness until the very end. The Queen was an example for us all. May she rest in peace. God save the King.

9.49 pm

Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con): I rise to express the admiration and deep love of the people of Rutland and Melton, the Vale and Harborough villages for Her Majesty and our heartfelt sympathy for the royal family. Since her death, our communities have been sharing their stories of her and their love.

We have been blessed with three visits. The first was in 1967, when she travelled on the royal train with her beloved Philip, and 3,000 children awaited her. She visited our Oakham castle and presented a ceremonial horseshoe, because our tradition is that the first time a peer of the realm, their Majesty or any member of the royal family visits our county, they must present a horseshoe. She gave us an enormous horseshoe, and in the heart of it was a small horseshoe from one of her race horses, which was very touching. It now hangs upside down—some say that that is unlucky, although in Rutland we say it will stop the devil from bedding in—on display in our castle.

Her Majesty's second visit was in 1984, when she came to Uppingham and Oakham Schools, and the Hospital of St John and St Anne. Finally in 1996, to enormous crowds, she visited Melton Mowbray, walking up Nottingham Street and of course stopping at Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe. She finished her visit by going to RAF Cottesmore. These visits remain in the hearts of our communities.

I have to confess that, over the last few days—it was only yesterday, but it feels a lot longer, doesn't it?—my tears have fallen when stories of joy have been shared, because it is then that we see the great love that we feel for her. My tears also fell when His Majesty said the word "mama", which I think touched so many of us. I believe that this Christmas we will all shed tears again, because no Christmas will ever be the same again. I hope we will all raise a drink for her at Christmas. Finally, my overriding memory of yesterday, and one that will stay with me for life, is the double rainbow that we saw. I see it as a sign of Her Majesty returning to her love, to Philip—to the side of her beloved husband—and him showing her the way. As with all ages of history, the end of an era brings a new dawn. On behalf of all the people of Rutland and Melton, I say simply: thank you, Ma'am, and God save the King.

9.51 pm

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): I rise today on behalf of the people of Aberavon to pay tribute to our late Queen and to send my deepest sympathy and condolences to the royal family at this time of loss and grief.

The Queen will always be remembered by our nation and by the world as the epitome of loyalty, humility and grace. She always put service to her country above all else, and we shall never forget her duty-first, no-nonsense approach to everything that she did. Her unique talent lay in her ability to connect with the nation and to reflect our thoughts, our hopes and our fears. She inspired affection and respect, and she was a source of comfort to us all.

The last seven decades have been times of seismic political, economic and social change, and throughout these turbulent years Her Majesty was a beacon of consistency and stability. She never failed to steady the ship. She was the personification of keeping calm and carrying on. Indeed, her leadership during the pandemic was testament to this. In echoing the immortal words made famous by Dame Vera Lynn, "We will meet again", she evoked in her typically understated manner the stoic spirit and measured optimism that guided us through that period of crisis and hardship.

On behalf of my Aberavon constituents, I thank the Queen for all that she gave to our country and I convey my very best wishes to King Charles as he assumes his new responsibilities and begins writing the next chapter in our national story. Long live the King and long live the Prince and Princess of Wales.

9.53 pm

Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con): Her Majesty the Queen has been a given in our lives, an anchor as certain as the sun setting each day. But her star has set for one final time, and there is no worldly scale big enough to show the weight of our loss. I, like many, felt that she would always be there. On behalf of my Dudley North constituents, I wish to express my sincere and deepest sympathies to His Majesty, the royal family and indeed the entirety of the royal household.

Her Majesty embodied everything we all aspire to stand for in this place: dedication to public service, dedication to family and dedication to people. The magnitude of what Her Majesty delivered in her time for us all is impossible to measure. While I never had the privilege of meeting her, I felt a presence there, a guiding hand, one that was available to us all—including Paddington Bear.

In Dudley North, I mourn alongside my constituents, a community united in grief. Her Majesty first visited Dudley in 1957, as a relatively new monarch, to view the beautiful Coronation Gardens dedicated to her. Coincidentally, my constituency office overlooks them, so I will always have a physical reminder to follow her example of dedication and public service.

Fast-forward some decades to the 1970s, but ultimately the 1990s, and Her Majesty found herself in Dudley once again, although a little higher in altitude, at Dudley castle and zoo—which made her the first monarch to visit the castle since her namesake Elizabeth I in 1575. Her Majesty was given a tour of the centre before unveiling a piece of commemorative glass and receiving a crystal key to the castle as a gift from the borough. Many of the messages that I have received are from constituents reminiscing about her visit. It is clear that she left a lasting impression; what is also clear is that when God made our Queen, He broke the mould.

We will all take comfort in coming together to remember the guiding light Her Majesty has been to us all. Long live the King.

9.56 pm

Helen Morgan (North Shropshire) (LD): As one of the most recent MPs to swear allegiance to the Queen, I am saddened and humbled to have the honour of paying tribute to her now on behalf of my constituents, and on their behalf I offer my condolences to the King and to the rest of the royal family for their sad loss. Many constituents have been in touch over the last 24 hours to share their feelings of love, their sense of loss, but most of all their gratitude for the Queen's devotion, her leadership and her warmth during her 70 years of public service.

While the nation is united in sorrow, the anecdotes shared here today—and by my constituents—have shown me that we can celebrate the Queen's life with joy as well as sorrow as we remember her on this occasion. I have smiled as some of my more senior neighbours have shared memories of the coronation back in 1953. Those

[Helen Morgan]

memories are vivid, and are still fondly thought of seven decades on. Every television was wheeled out so that neighbours, friends and family members could huddle together for a glimpse of the gracious young Queen, and there was a whole programme of celebrations in the town of Wem. I was recently shown an original programme, in perfect condition.

I am thankful that the platinum jubilee provided the chance for those communities to unite once again, and to show the Queen just how much she was still loved after 70 years. She was celebrated across North Shropshire, by the soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment based at Tern Hill and by the helicopter pilots being trained at RAF Shawbury—who included her grandsons, the new Prince of Wales, and Prince Harry a decade ago. We were very grateful for the opportunity to welcome her to both sites. From Wem to Whitchurch and from Ellesmere to Oswestry and Market Drayton, we lit beacons across the countryside as a symbol of gratitude to our longest-serving monarch—and how appropriate that was, for Queen Elizabeth was a beacon of stability to us all throughout those seven decades. But now a new era begins. Christmas this year will be very different. We will gather round our televisions again, but this time it will be to hear a speech from King Charles III rather than our Queen. In North Shropshire, we will raise a glass to both of them.

In 1957, the 31-year-old Queen promised to give “these old islands” her heart and devotion. She stayed true to her word for every minute of her 96 years, and for this we are all grateful. We hope that she rests in peace. God Save the King.

9.58 pm

Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con): I want to join colleagues in expressing my deepest sorrow at the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the sorrow of my constituents in Hyndburn and Haslingden. Our condolences are with the King and the royal family.

It is difficult to put into words the grief and profound sense loss that are felt, but after the rainbow that has been mentioned, as I paid my own tribute last night at the gates of Buckingham Palace in the darkness, the heavens opened and the rain poured. It felt as though the weather portrayed our grief. The nation's heart was broken.

For many of us, the Queen is the only monarch we have known. It is hard to overstate the value of the stability that she gave this country and the nations around the world for which she was head of state. When our politics or our society seemed so fraught, the Queen was a constant in our lives—a reminder of strength, dignity and stability, and a reminder of what unites us.

In 2012, we had the privilege of a royal visit from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh during her diamond jubilee. My personal memory of that day is that I stood on the balcony of Accrington market hall at the age of 17 outside my dad's café, Milly's, as she came to greet us. Her eyes twinkled and her warmth shone through. The crowds gathered in their thousands. They smiled, they sang and—one feeling that could be felt within the crowd—they loved.

During her 1957 Christmas address, the Queen said that while she could not lead us into battle, give us laws or administer justice, she could give us her heart and her

devotion. All these years later, we can surely all agree that she did just that. She was our greatest public servant, our greatest diplomat and our stability. She has been the true light in our lives that none of us really believed would ever go out. May she now rest in peace. Thank you, Ma'am, and God save the King.

10.1 pm

Christian Wakeford (Bury South) (Lab): I am both proud and sorrowful, although I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Sara Britcliffe)—I emphasise the word friend, because grief does bring people together.

I imagine that I speak for many when I say that I have taken some solace in hearing some of the tributes today from those who got to meet or know Her Majesty. I was never fortunate enough to have met her, but it almost feels like I had—just like everyone else in this Chamber—because there was something familiar to all of us. We will all take a bit of her with us; I like to think that the bit I will take is the humility and the kindness that everyone speaks about.

This great and proud country went through many trials and tribulations during the Elizabethan age, but she was one of the constants, providing stability through wartime as much as in peace. As many have mentioned, regardless of our political views, her sense of service to the country that she loved is to be admired and treasured, and it is something that we should all be proud of. I know what I was doing when I was 25 years of age, and I would not have been able to take on the responsibility of a country, let alone a whole host of them in the Commonwealth. I certainly could not have helped to strip an engine either.

I put on record the condolences of those in my constituency of Bury South, in the townships of Radcliffe, Whitefield and Prestwich, along with my condolences and those of my family. I think particularly of this year's jubilee celebrations, when my daughter, who was in nursery at the time, came back home from nursery so proud that she had learned the national anthem. She did her rendition for daddy and sang, “God save our normal Queen”. Unfortunately, Lavinia, the words were not quite right, but the sentiment was there.

Her Majesty was no stranger to Bury either, visiting as a young girl in 1938 and a further six times after that. Her most recent visit was in 1992, when she opened St Peter's Square Metrolink station and took a ride to visit Bury town hall, which she had opened 38 years prior.

What stood out for me most about the Queen's service was not just the length, but the fact that she seemed to genuinely enjoy every single moment of it—from historic meetings with world leaders right down to visiting primary schoolchildren, she made everyone feel like they were the only person meeting her. She was a mother, a grandmother, a great-grandmother, a wife and a sister. She was a rock to the nation, but more importantly, a grandmother to the nation. She was all sorts to everyone, but she was always a Queen. The saddest thing is that there are children born today who will never know a Queen, let alone the Queen.

Finally, I think all my constituents will agree with one simple message: thank you, Ma'am. May our Queen rest in peace, and long live the King.

10.4 pm

Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con): I rise in deep sadness but with immense gratitude for the life and service of our beloved late sovereign, Queen Elizabeth. First, I want to place on record the love and respect of my constituents in Wolverhampton North East for Her Majesty. Many have already contacted me about the devastating sense of loss and grief that they feel at Her Majesty's passing, and I thank them for sharing their thoughts with me. It is an honour to pass them on in this place.

It is extraordinary that so many of us who never met Queen Elizabeth can be so affected by her death, but for everyone in Wolverhampton, the United Kingdom and across the Commonwealth, she was a huge presence in our lives. The Queen visited Wolverhampton several times, including our schools and factories. I think that my favourite story is from a visit in 1962, before I was born. It was a visit to Molineux and she was presenting colours to the North and South Staffordshire Regiments and the Staffordshire Yeomanry. She apologised to Wolverhampton Wanderers for her high heels making marks on our hallowed turf at Molineux. Thirty-thousand Wulfrunians cheered her that day, and I know that the strength of feeling for our monarch remains as deep today as it was then.

For millions of us, Her Majesty was a constant presence at so many events in our lives. Every Christmas, I, like millions of people, felt like the Queen was in my living room. Surrounded by my family, we waited every year for her words of wisdom and comfort. Last year, during her last Christmas address, she spoke about her upcoming platinum jubilee and how she hoped it would be

"an opportunity for people everywhere to enjoy a sense of togetherness".

At so many jubilee events for Her Majesty, my neighbours became my friends, and in all the platinum jubilee events that I attended in Wolverhampton this year she certainly succeeded at bringing us all together.

Because of Her Majesty's age, and because we knew that she was struggling with some ill health, the celebrations this year were poignant as well as joyful. I am sure that I am not the only person who, through a smile, also shed a tear when Paddington Bear thanked Her Majesty for everything.

She has united our nation once again. On this sad occasion, she now unites us in national mourning. Our thoughts must be for her beloved family, the royal family and especially our new King Charles III as he takes on such responsibility. I hope that the outpouring of love for Her late Majesty will bring the royal family some comfort over the coming days and weeks. I want to express gratitude for her life and many qualities. She was a shining example of strength and of selflessness in public service. May our beloved Queen Elizabeth rest in peace and rise in glory. God save the King.

10.7 pm

Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con): This day is a day many of us wished would never come, but many of us also believed that it would never happen. I need not remind Members of Her late Majesty's unwavering service as Britain's longest-serving monarch; her calmness and stoicism during difficult times; and the continuity

and stability she offered our country and our people. She personified the virtues of loyalty and humility, never complaining and setting a towering example for world leaders, future monarchs and ordinary people alike. Her Majesty was the embodiment of our nation's identity, and for many people she was the United Kingdom, with her uncanny ability to appear unchanging yet also move with the times. She epitomised the concept of a constitutional monarch and took this responsibility incredibly seriously, thus cementing the role of the constitutional monarchy in this country, remaining above politics yet imparting profound wisdom to unnumberable Prime Ministers and parliamentarians over seven decades.

It was not her constitutional link to the lawmakers of this land that made her one of the greatest monarchs in our history, but her affinity with every single man, woman and child in Britain and the Commonwealth. Nowhere was this better exemplified than during her visits, for it was in places such as Rother Valley that Her Majesty excelled. Her visit to Rother Valley in 1977 was an unrivalled success. She was greeted at Maltby Comprehensive School by over 7,000 children from across Rother Valley, and on Maltby fields more than 20 schools and youth organisations put on displays. Countless Rother Valley children would cherish the memories of that visit, but my favourite story is about a 10-year-old girl from Letwell, who was dressed in a purple velvet cloak, holding a plea for the Queen printed on a cardboard sign. It read:

"Dear Queen of England, please crown me Queen of Aston Fence School. Love Allison".

As the Queen passed by, she duly obliged. Taking the sign, Her Majesty asked Allison, "So, you want to be crowned, do you?" Then, carefully picking up the home-made crown, held on a velvet cushion by Allison's page boy, seven-year-old Mathew Orton, of Woodhouse Mill, Her Majesty regally placed it on Allison's head, thus crowning her the queen of Aston Fence School. That anecdote, like many from across the country, encapsulates what Her Majesty meant to Rother Valley, the United Kingdom and the world.

Despite all the grandeur, the pomp and ceremony, and the serious constitutional role that she played, Her Majesty's most winning qualities were humour, kindness and the famous mischievous twinkle in her eye. She was a cultural icon, but beneath it all, she was the nation's grandmother. She loved all of us, and was beloved by all of us in return. I send my deepest condolences to the royal family on behalf of my own family—Natalie, Persephone and Charlotte—and all the people of Rother Valley.

Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon her.

May she rest in peace. I offer my humble allegiance and loyalty to His Majesty King Charles III. God save the King.

10.10 pm

Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con): Her late Majesty was always warmly welcomed to Northampton, so the town mourns her passing most sincerely. Looking over some of the old coverage of royal visits to Northampton, since the sad news yesterday, it is clear how much joy she brought on every occasion. Many Members from both sides of the House have succeeded in communicating the almost magical combination of

[Andrew Lewer]

majesty and personable friendliness, and yet within that, one was always aware of her sheer presence—even when stood as an infant in a lay-by in 1977 with my dear mother, Mrs Sandra Lewer, waving a dock leaf and getting a wave from the limousine in return.

Two of the occasions on which I met Her Majesty illustrate that duality. On the 800th anniversary of the Maundy service in 2010, she presented the ceremonial money to another inspirational woman, the late Sister Merle Wilde, one of the last of the Methodist Order of Deaconesses. There was tradition, dignity, majesty.

At the diamond jubilee two years later, I met Her Majesty at a much less formal event. When introduced, I found myself, for reasons too obscure to detain the House with tonight, talking to her about doughnuts. Her Majesty took it in typically good part, thankfully, but I sensed rather than saw a certain look pass between the then lord-lieutenant, who was also thankfully a friend of mine, and my wife, who had much to say about it afterwards. Her Majesty was personable, cheerful and filled with humanity. Blending that with her dignity and bearing was brilliantly described as “alchemy” by the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) earlier.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, and Mr Deputy Speaker for your indulgence tonight, and for that of the House staff as well. It is really appreciated and it has meant a lot to us to be able to do speak this evening. May God bless Her late Majesty the Queen and keep her safe. God save the King.

10.12 pm

Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con): I add my remarks to the outpouring of love, affection and gratitude for the life of Her late Majesty on behalf of the people of Broadland. It is a sombre day as we grieve, so who would have thought that we would have laughed so much as we remembered her extraordinary life? I have loved listening to colleagues' speeches as they have recalled their mishaps with Her Majesty.

Through those stories, I have learned much about her deep graciousness. I was never lucky enough to meet her, but I still grew up with her as part of my family, for that was the impact of her life on all of us. Through her service, she reached into our homes and our hearts. Whatever else was going on in our lives or in the country, the Queen was always there—a steadfast anchor of rightness. She did not represent the people; she embodied them through her steady selfless service, year after year, decade after decade. By her life, and how she lived it, she pointed out to all of us the real values by which life should be lived: integrity, devout faithfulness, duty.

We in return have demanded constant attention, constant attendance and constant access, irrespective of any difficulties in the Queen's own life. We have often demanded the most at the hardest times, yet she never faltered or stepped back. She stayed true to her young oath. What a wonderful woman. What a wonderful monarch. Her heavy burden, which she somehow managed to wear so lightly, has now passed to the King. His wonderful speech to his peoples today shows how he has shouldered it. May the Queen rest in peace. God save the King.

10.14 pm

Julie Marson (Hertford and Stortford) (Con): It is a solemn honour to rise in this debate to pay tribute to Her late Majesty the Queen, both personally and on behalf of my constituents in Hertford and Stortford. It is humbling to follow so many wonderful and fine tributes.

The King himself, in his moving address, made reference to a speech that many in the Chamber have mentioned, in which his mother the late Queen, on her 21st birthday, made a declaration that her whole life, whether long or short, would be devoted to our service. We know now that her life was long and that for every day of her 70-year reign she magnificently honoured that solemn vow.

In that same speech, the Queen said:

“I am thinking especially today of all the young men and women who were born about the same time as myself and have grown up like me in terrible and glorious years of the second world war.”

It is that, alongside her vow of devotion to duty, that resonates with me today. Perhaps it is because she was speaking about those like my own parents, now themselves in their 90s and children of the east end and the blitz.

I am struck more than ever that Her late Majesty, both as a person and as a monarch, represents a link between our generations. She is a tangible human link to our nation's past—to its struggles, but most of all to its finest hour. She is also a link to our own individual pasts—our personal histories and those of our families. We have heard many of those stories here today.

The Queen, with her ability to evoke the spirit of what we rightly call the greatest generation, gave what in my view was the finest speech of the covid crisis. She said that she hoped

“those who come after us will say that the Britons of this generation were as strong as any,”

and of course she said that “we will meet again”. Her late Majesty personified that link with our past and with the greatest generation. We shall not see her like again.

Arthur Balfour was Prime Minister in 1901 and addressed this Chamber on the death of Queen Victoria. He said then that

“the end of a great epoch has come upon us”.—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1901; Vol. 89, c. 20.]

With the passing of our Queen, the end of a great historical epoch has indeed passed, but we are all privileged to have lived at least some of our lives in the great second Elizabethan age. We mourn her but we cherish her memory and her lifetime of service. God bless Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. God save the King.

10.17 pm

Greg Smith (Buckingham) (Con): It is humbling to take part in this very special session as we mourn Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We have heard powerful tributes and wonderful words. As I have sat and reflected for coming on 10 and a half hours of those wonderful tributes, I have thought that, actually, there might not be the words in our language—there might not be the phrases powerful enough—to express the sheer scale of the significance of the reign of Her late Majesty to our country, the overseas territories, the Commonwealth and the whole world. But on behalf of my constituents in the towns of Buckingham, Princes Risborough and

Winslow, and the villages that surround those ancient market towns to make up the Buckingham constituency, I wish to pass on my condolences to the whole royal family, to our new King, His Royal Highness Charles III, and to the new Prince of Wales, for the profound loss that they feel as a family and we share as a nation.

As I looked back through the history books, I saw that Her Majesty was gracious to visit my constituency on a great number of occasions. Looking at the pictures, you can see the joy on people's faces as she greeted them. Be it a walkabout in the town of Buckingham, when she visited the university while Lady Thatcher was its chancellor, or her visit to Waddesdon. There are the pictures that hang in The Stag, newly reopened, of her visit to the village of Mentmore some time ago. You could see the joy in people's faces as she joined them. We have lost a most incredible lady, a world statesman, and someone whose like, I fear, we will not see again.

From the great privilege of watching His Majesty King Charles III on the screens in this Chamber earlier, I am full of hope and confidence that he will carry on her legacy; that he will be a great King. On behalf of all my constituents and myself, I say may Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II rest in peace, and God save the King.

10.20 pm

Peter Gibson (Darlington) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your indulgence post 10 o'clock for those of us who are here; it is really appreciated. It is a privilege to follow so many incredible tributes to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth. She was a committed public servant, fulfilling her promise to our nation to serve us her whole life. That service was delivered with honour, duty and integrity. She stood as an inspiration to us all. On behalf of the people of Darlington, I send sincere and heartfelt condolences to His Majesty King Charles III and the whole royal family.

Throughout her long reign, Her late Majesty travelled more widely and met more people than any other monarch, and her travels included two visits to Darlington. The first was in 1967. Her late Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh visited Darlington on the 100th anniversary of the town being awarded a royal charter by her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, and Her late Majesty granted supporters on the town's coat of arms. At the time, there were plans to concrete over much of the town and to remove much of its Victorian heritage. I understand that the royal party asked several probing questions of those plans, which included the removal of our clock tower—inspired by the Elizabeth tower of this palace. I am pleased to say that the plans were largely dropped, and our clock tower still stands proudly over our town today.

Her late Majesty returned to Darlington in 2002 as part of her golden jubilee tour. The town turned out in force to line the streets and welcome her. The floral offerings were so many that scouts were needed to help carry them to the car. The crowds were so big that the palace issued a statement the following day noting the unexpectedly large crowds. The Queen was truly loved by the people of Darlington, and she will be deeply missed.

Just yesterday morning, at Auckland castle, I attended a ceremony for the presentation of the Queen's award for voluntary service to the community peer mentors in County Durham and Darlington, recognising the public

service and duty in my constituency that Her late Majesty embodied. We mourn her. We miss her. Her place in history and her lasting legacies are rightly assured. Now reunited with her husband, may she rest in peace until she rises in glory again. God save the King.

10.23 pm

Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing us to sit late tonight. Bosworth has an affinity and eternal history with the monarchy. We had the battle of Bosworth in August 1485, which saw the death of Richard III and the crowning of Henry VII, so my constituency has a palpable, visible history with the monarchy, which is still there and proud today.

We have heard over and over the description of duty. I challenge any Member in this House to find a better person in British history to personify duty. To me, she is Queen Elizabeth the Dutiful.

As Members of Parliament, we have the honour of representing and reflecting the opinions and feelings of our constituents, and something that had never before happened, in over 1,000 years of monarchy, is the ability to feel that immediately because of social media—the chance for us to reflect the feelings of the nation. I have been struck by a poem that has been sent to me by several constituents and many councillors—I am sure that it will have graced the screens of other hon. Members, too. I would like to read it, because it is visceral and encapsulates the feelings of the nation:

“Philip came to me today, and said, ‘It’s time to go.

I looked at him and smiled, and I whispered, ‘Yes, I know.’

I then turned and looked behind me, and saw I was asleep.

All the family were around me, and then I could hear them weep.

I gently touched each shoulder, with Philip by my side.

Then I turned away and walked, with my angel husband as a guide.

Philip held my hand, and he guided me on the way,

To a world where Kings and Queens, are monarchs every day.

I was given a crown to wear, or a halo, known by some.

The difference is up here, they are worn by everyone.

I felt a sense of peace, my reign had seen its end.

70 years I had served my country, as the people's dearest friend.

Thank you for the years, for all your time and love.

Now I am one of two again, in our palace up above.”

May Her late Majesty rest in peace. Long live the King.

10.26 pm

Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con): On behalf of the people of Hastings and Rye, I express our sadness and grief at the death of our beloved sovereign Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

Her late Majesty came to Hastings and St Leonards 25 years ago, filling local residents with pride and joy. She visited a number of places, including West St Leonards Primary Academy and the Hastings Fishermen Museum, opened Priory Meadow shopping centre, and was presented with a winkle by the Winkle Club.

Our Queen spent her whole life dedicated to her people in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. It was a life that she did not choose herself, but one that

[Sally-Ann Hart]

she was born into. The burden of her birth was one that she carried so diligently, dutifully and lovingly, with the support of her faith in God, her beloved late husband Prince Philip, her family and her people.

I thank Her late Majesty for her life of selfless public service, her love, her dedication and her stoicism. She shone a light to us all—a light that gave comfort to those in need; a light that gave hope to those in despair; and a light of unity to all her peoples across our four nations. She brought light where it was most needed; a beacon of stability to us in this place.

I speak on behalf of the people of Hastings and Rye when I express my deepest sorrow at Her Majesty's passing, and extend our prayers and condolences to her family—our royal family. With his accession to the throne, His Majesty King Charles III will bring in a new era, and we offer him our loyalty and love for a long and happy reign. Long live the King.

10.28 pm

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con): On behalf of the constituents of Aylesbury, I convey deepest condolences to His Majesty the King and all members of the royal family following the death of Her late Majesty the Queen. She played a huge part in the lives of each and every one of us; she was the constant through good times and bad, celebrations and crises. Her tireless dedication and unwavering service, to our nation and to her realms in the entire Commonwealth, are unparalleled and will never be forgotten.

Her late Majesty visited Aylesbury on several occasions during her 70 years on the throne. She came in 1962 as part of a celebration of the 10th anniversary of her accession. Pavements thronged with well-wishers, and she popped into the homes of two residents. She visited again in 1969 to open Stoke Mandeville stadium, the birthplace of the Paralympic movement.

Her Majesty came to Aylesbury once more to mark her golden jubilee in 2002. The love and affection that we feel for her in Buckinghamshire was vividly demonstrated across our county time and again, and most recently during the platinum jubilee celebrations. Coming together for parades and picnics, dog shows, tugs of war, and three-legged races, people the length and breadth of my constituency—from the youngest child to the most senior citizen—wanted to demonstrate their gratitude and appreciation for the commitment and duty shown by the Queen throughout her incredible reign.

My own memories of Her Majesty are, I suspect, very similar to those of the vast majority of the public: I never met her, yet she was always there. I remember making a scrapbook on the Queen and her family for a Cub Scout badge, a tea party in my village for the silver jubilee, watching her name HMS Lancaster in Glasgow, and seeing her on the royal barge during the diamond jubilee flotilla. They are snatched glimpses and modest memories, yet the loss is still felt keenly.

One singular honour that I was extremely fortunate to receive was to gain Royal Assent for a private Member's Bill that I had taken through this place. I was humbled to have that privilege just a few months ago with the passing into law of the Approved Premises (Substance Testing) Act 2022 at Prorogation. In some ways, the words, "La Reyne le veult" are a small formality, but in

others they represent a great moment symbolising the relationship between Parliament and sovereign—a relationship that we celebrate today.

We have heard wonderful and eloquent tributes, but no words will ever adequately encapsulate Her Majesty's reign let alone the profound loss and deep sorrow that we feel today. Our nation is poorer for having lost her, but oh, how much richer for having known and loved her. May she rest in eternal peace. God save the King.

10.31 pm

Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con): If one wanted an example of how much affection the people of Ipswich had for Her late Majesty, they would need to have been in Ipswich on the weekend of the jubilee. We have heard today that, apparently, more parties were held in Twickenham than anywhere else in the country, but I am not entirely sure about that. I am not sure what the measurement was, but I think Ipswich was definitely strongly up there. All communities came together. I remember my jubilee card competition—I thought my Christmas card competition was popular until I had the jubilee card competition. We had more than 1,000 entries. The winner from Ranelagh Primary School was incredibly proud to have her card go to the Queen.

Her late Majesty visited Ipswich many times, but there are two visits that really stand out for me. One of them was in 1961 to Chantry. At the time, it was a fledgling housing estate. It became the largest housing estate in Europe. It is now a community of 15,000 to 20,000 people, and it is the beating heart of Ipswich and our town. I also think of 2002, her golden jubilee, when she visited the Ipswich waterfront. That just indicates how much the town has changed in her reign, and also her uncanny ability to time her visits. It gave a sense to the people of Ipswich that she was monitoring closely the town's development and cared passionately about her subjects who lived there. That care and love was reciprocated.

I must admit that I am a big fan of "I Vow To Thee My Country". I am also a big fan of "Jerusalem". I have, on occasion, speculated that perhaps one of those hymns should have been our national anthem. But right now there is nothing I would not give just to have sung "God Save the Queen" a few more times—perhaps for a few more years. There is nothing that I would not have done. Right now, we need to ask ourselves what Her late Majesty would want us to do. What she would want us to do is unify as a country and face the challenges ahead, and proudly say, God save the King.

10.33 pm

Dr Ben Spencer (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con): I rise to speak on behalf of my constituents in Runnymede and Weybridge as we and the nation mourn. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was an inspirational figure who embodied selfless service. She provided stability, support and succour in challenging times.

Runnymede and Weybridge has the privilege of being a neighbour to her home in Windsor, and my constituency is adorned with plaques inscribed with her name. We have a statue of Her Majesty at the Runnymede pleasure grounds, unveiled at the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, which shows just how far we have come in Runnymede since 1215. Her first public visit following lockdown in March 2021 was to Runnymede and Weybridge, where she attended the centenary of the

Royal Australian Air Force at the Air Forces Memorial, which she had opened in 1953. That is a fitting example of her commitment to duty and service throughout her reign.

I saw at the recent jubilee what the Queen meant to my constituents; there were all the celebrations, garden and street parties, and the lighting of the Chertsey beacon. One of the highlights of the jubilee for me was my school visits, on which I saw countless portraits of the Queen created by local schoolchildren. They were mostly da Vincis; there were some Picassos. Every one of them represented Her late Majesty. As we mourn her passing, the scale of the impact on all of us, the UK and the Commonwealth is clear.

If we all aspired to have even a fraction of the compassion, integrity and dedication that the Queen displayed for the world, we would be in a much better place. I hope that part of her legacy will be that each and every one of us uses this time to reflect on her example and what it can teach us. In the long tradition of the monarchy, her attributes will live on in the reign of our new king, Charles III. Runnymede and Weybridge sends its love, thoughts and prayers to His Majesty the King and all the royal family. If our grief is raw, I cannot imagine the pain that the Queen's family are feeling. Our Queen was loved throughout the world; her legacy lives on. God save the King.

10.35 pm

Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con): I rise with great sadness to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II personally and on behalf of all the people of Blackpool South. Throughout her long reign, Queen Elizabeth was a figure of national pride, a symbol of stability and continuity, and an inspiration to so many, myself included. Just as importantly—we must not forget this—she was a loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

Just a couple of months ago, I attended street parties across Blackpool for the platinum jubilee. The celebrations brought together people from all backgrounds and faiths, and the old and the young; it was testament to her ability to unite the whole country and to keep the monarch at the forefront of our nation's life during a reign that saw unparalleled social change. She opened up the family to the general public, and made us feel as though we knew her personally. In return, over the decades, we loved her and shared in her joy—and her grief, most notably on the sad loss of her rock, Prince Philip, only last year. Those constituents of mine who had the privilege of meeting her always, without exception, spoke about her warmth and humility, and how she made them feel so special.

When Her late Majesty was born, it was not likely that she would become Queen, let alone Britain's longest-reigning monarch, but from the very beginning, service to her country was in her DNA. Her devotion to this country is encapsulated in a remarkable speech that she gave on her birthday, when she was just 21. She stated that

“we must give nothing less than the whole of ourselves”,

and took on the noble motto, “I serve”. Unquestionably, she gave the whole of herself to this country. That is epitomised by the way that she served the country until the very end; she swore in her 15th Prime Minister just three days ago. It will take a long time for the tremendous

sadness felt by us all to pass, but we can be comforted by the way that she touched the hearts of so many and served our glorious nation so well.

The example that Queen Elizabeth set has been instilled in King Charles III's sense of duty and service. At a time of immense sadness for him, he has taken on the responsibilities of the Crown, and the leadership of our nation and the Commonwealth. Our thoughts and prayers are with him, and we offer him our loyalty and devotion at this difficult time, just as we know that he will give his to us. As we move into a new era in this great country's history, Her late Majesty will always remain in our hearts. God rest her soul, and God save the King.

10.39 pm

Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing the sitting to be extended for Members who want to pay their tribute. I know that I speak on behalf of all my constituents in Warrington South when I extend my heartfelt condolences to His Majesty King Charles and the royal family on this deeply sad occasion.

Yesterday was a day that we all knew would come, yet still could never quite envisage happening. It is a testament to Her late Majesty's longevity, both in life and as our Queen, that throughout all of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth we are deeply moved by the loss of the one constant in our life. Indeed, last night when I walked along the Mall to Buckingham Palace, that affection was really evident, with young and old, and people speaking different languages, all coming to lay flowers and light candles; there were spontaneous rounds of applause, the national anthem was sung, and people were paying their respects—truly a Queen for all the people.

We are fortunate in Warrington to have had Her late Majesty come to visit on no less than four occasions. Way back in 1968, she was given a tour of the newly refurbished Bridge Street. In 1979, she and her late husband the Duke of Edinburgh toured the new Golden Square shopping centre. Most recently, in 2012, she and the duke opened the Orford jubilee hub, in the year marking her 60th anniversary on the throne. Many Members have talked about the twinkle in her eye, but I have to say that, looking at the photographs from those visits that have been republished today in the *Warrington Guardian*, it is the impression on other people's faces that is really striking; the true legacy of our Queen is the impact that she had on so many people.

We will now inevitably look back at 2022 with great sadness, but we must also reflect on what a joyous occasion it was to mark the historic platinum jubilee. At each of the many events I attended in Warrington, it was clear how deeply she was held in the whole nation's affections: a mother, a grandmother, a great-grandmother, and the Queen to each one of us. That celebration of her long reign over us allowed people to come together, be part of a community and share a special time.

For now, as we mourn the passing of a truly great monarch, we wish our new King every success as he assumes the mantle of responsibility that has so diligently been carried by our late Queen over the past 70 years. On her 21st birthday, the then Princess Elizabeth declared before at all that her

“whole life, whether it be long or short”

[Andy Carter]

would be “devoted to our service”. That life was long and that service was certainly devoted. God bless Her late Majesty and God save the King.

10.42 pm

Dean Russell (Watford) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and your team for extending the day and for staying so late in the evening to allow these speeches.

It is with great sadness that I rise to pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen on behalf of myself and my constituents across Watford. We have heard loving tributes from across the House today, and we all mourn her loss and will grieve together. But what is grief if not a reminder of the strength of our everlasting love? We did love Her Majesty the Queen. Many of us never met her, but, as we have heard today, we all felt we knew her. In fact, we loved her as if she were a member of our own family, and many of us often invited her to our own Christmas day, after dinner. Her image has been ever present in our lives, like family photos on our fireplaces; we may not always look at them, but we are reassured that they are there. Now she is gone, but her legacy will last forever.

For every tear we wipe away, a precious memory remains. As we have heard, many of those memories are from visits to our constituencies, and I have stories from my constituency of Watford. In 1946, when she was still a princess, the Queen visited the Herts show in Cassiobury Park; in 1962, she alighted the royal train at Watford Junction; and in 1981 she visited Parmer's School.

In 1977, for her silver jubilee, she visited the Rolls-Royce factory in Leavesden. I admit to having a special family connection to that factory, because that is where my wife's parents first met. I share this story because I still recall my in-laws' excitement and pride when they received a card from the Queen when they reached their diamond wedding anniversary. Sadly, my father-in-law, John, who was married to Pat, has since passed away and is always sadly missed, but I can still vividly recall the image of his proud smile when he showed me the letter from our wonderful Queen.

Perhaps therein lies the truth about why our grief is so strong for Her Majesty: she connected with us so personally, and our memories feel like those of family. Yes, she was a constant in a world of change. Yes, her compassion brought us humanity, even when the world could seem so cruel. And, yes, her words of wisdom brought hope, even when all seemed so lost. But perhaps Her Majesty's true majesty was that her unbounding kindness made each of us feel like we mattered to her, and that is why she mattered so deeply to us. She was loved not just because of what she was, but because of who she was—our nation's very own great-grandmother, our compass, our matriarch, our guiding light. So I say thank you, Ma'am. You were loved by us all. In your honour, we lovingly support your son and heir, King Charles III. God save the King.

10.45 pm

Virginia Crosbie (Ynys Môn) (Con): Today we are united in mourning our beloved Queen Elizabeth II. For 70 years, she has been a source of stability and comfort. She is the only monarch that many of us have known.

I begin my tribute by remembering the warmth and joy that the Queen brought to so many of us. She knew how to have fun and make us smile. We all remember when, joined by her beloved corgis, she teamed up with 007 to parachute into the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic games, or when she took tea with Paddington Bear earlier this year. I attended jubilee events across Ynys Môn and saw the joy that the Queen brought to people's lives. People came up to me, from Amlwch to Pentraeth, to share their personal experiences of meeting her.

As the head of our armed forces, Her Majesty was immensely proud of their professionalism and dedication. I know that the team at RAF Valley, where the Queen came to visit her grandson, and Ynys Môn's veteran population will feel immense pride in having fulfilled their oath of allegiance to her.

The Queen was a frequent visitor to Wales. She visited the port of Holyhead and Beaumaris castle, opened Oriel Môn in Llangefni on Anglesey, and was awarded an honorary doctorate from nearby Bangor University. During her diamond jubilee visit to Wales, she said:

“I have travelled the length and breadth of this country during my sixty years as your Queen. Prince Philip and I have shared many of the joys and sadnesses of the Welsh people in that time and have always been struck by your sense of pride and your undimmed optimism.”

Her Majesty's dedication to service and her contribution to public life are unparalleled. She provided inspiration to millions of women aspiring to the highest offices. She was a patron for Girlguiding and a long-serving member of the Women's Institute, which had its first meeting on Anglesey.

We have shared the ups and downs of the Queen's life, as she danced with us in victory and success, and mourned with us at times of grief. Her sorrow at the loss of her devoted husband, Prince Philip, was felt by us all. Although our sense of loss is immense, we must take comfort from the fact that she is once more at his side.

As our United Kingdom moves into a new era, I welcome the announcement by our new King today that his son, Prince William, who began his married life on Anglesey, where he was stationed as an RAF search and rescue helicopter pilot, will become our next Prince of Wales.

On behalf of the people of Ynys Môn, may I say diolch yn fawr, express my sincere thanks for a life well lived and send our condolences to the Queen's family? God save the King, and God bless the Prince and Princess of Wales.

Mr Speaker: Finally, we have Louie French.

10.48 pm

Mr Louie French (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Queen lived a wonderful life of duty and service, and was an inspiration to generations of people across the world. It is a huge honour for me to pay tribute to her on behalf of the people of Old Bexley and Sidcup and also my family here in the UK and overseas in Canada. As a community, country and Commonwealth, we now come together to mourn the loss of our Queen,

who was ever present in our lives, whether on national occasions, when singing the national anthem at public and sporting events, or—personally my fondest memory—when we watched the Queen’s speech over the family Christmas dinner. We all have our own personal and shared memories of the Queen, who will forever be in our hearts.

I am immensely proud to have discovered in the build-up to the platinum jubilee that an online poll confirmed Old Bexley and Sidcup—my home—as the most royalist constituency. When a French journalist asking for an interview told me that, I stopped and thought about my experiences locally, both growing up and now. Similarly to colleagues, at every primary school visit, the first question I was asked was, “Have you met the Queen?” As far back as I can remember, what do we do at most community events? We stand together and sing the national anthem. I am sure that those experiences are shared across the country. Little did I know last week when I sang the national anthem with the ambassador for Nepal at a community event with our brilliant Bexley Nepalese Gurkhas and Nepalese community that that would be one of the last times that I would have the pleasure of singing “God save the Queen.”

During the wonderful platinum jubilee celebrations, there were more than 140 official street parties in Bexley. I understand that was one of the highest numbers in London, reflecting how cherished the Queen was locally. It was my immense privilege to attend many of those community events.

I remember the excitement when the Queen last visited the London Borough of Bexley in 2005 to officially reopen Danson House in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath and Crayford (Sir David Evennett), just over the border from mine. She was greeted by crowds of well-wishers. It is also important to remember a previous visit to Bexley. In 1953, she visited Erith in the constituency of the hon. Member for Erith and Thamesmead (Abena Oppong-Asare) after devastating floods. That is a reminder of how the Queen was there for us throughout the good times but also the bad, and of how her presence brought both comfort and hope to people at times of concern in an ever-changing world.

The Queen was an inspiration to millions around the world. She was a fashion and sporting icon through her love of the horses. She was the mother and grandmother of our great nation, and who can forget the corgi emojis from the platinum jubilee, which highlighted the evolution of technology during her reign and how she embraced it? Mr Speaker, I think I found something there that no one has said in 11 hours.

Rest in peace, Your Majesty. As a working-class lad from Bexley, it was my greatest honour to swear an oath of allegiance to you on entering this place. You make us all proud to be British—and, in my case, an Englishman. We will continue to serve loyally your heir and son, King Charles III. All of the royal family are in our thoughts and prayers. On behalf of the people of Old Bexley and Sidcup, I say, “God save the King.”

Mr Speaker: This is the House is at its best. United in grief, we are brought together with so many stories and memories in the moving tributes that have been paid. We have had 182 contributions and tributes today. A big thank you to you all, and a big thank you to the staff of the House, the police, the security, the catering and everybody involved—and especially the Clerks, who are in their fine wigs today. Thank you to you all for what you have done.

Business without Debate

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 9, the time at which the House shall meet tomorrow, and the duration of that sitting, shall be fixed by the Speaker.—
(*Mr Bone.*)

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Craig Whittaker.*)

10.53 pm

House adjourned.

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Friday 16 September 2022**

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